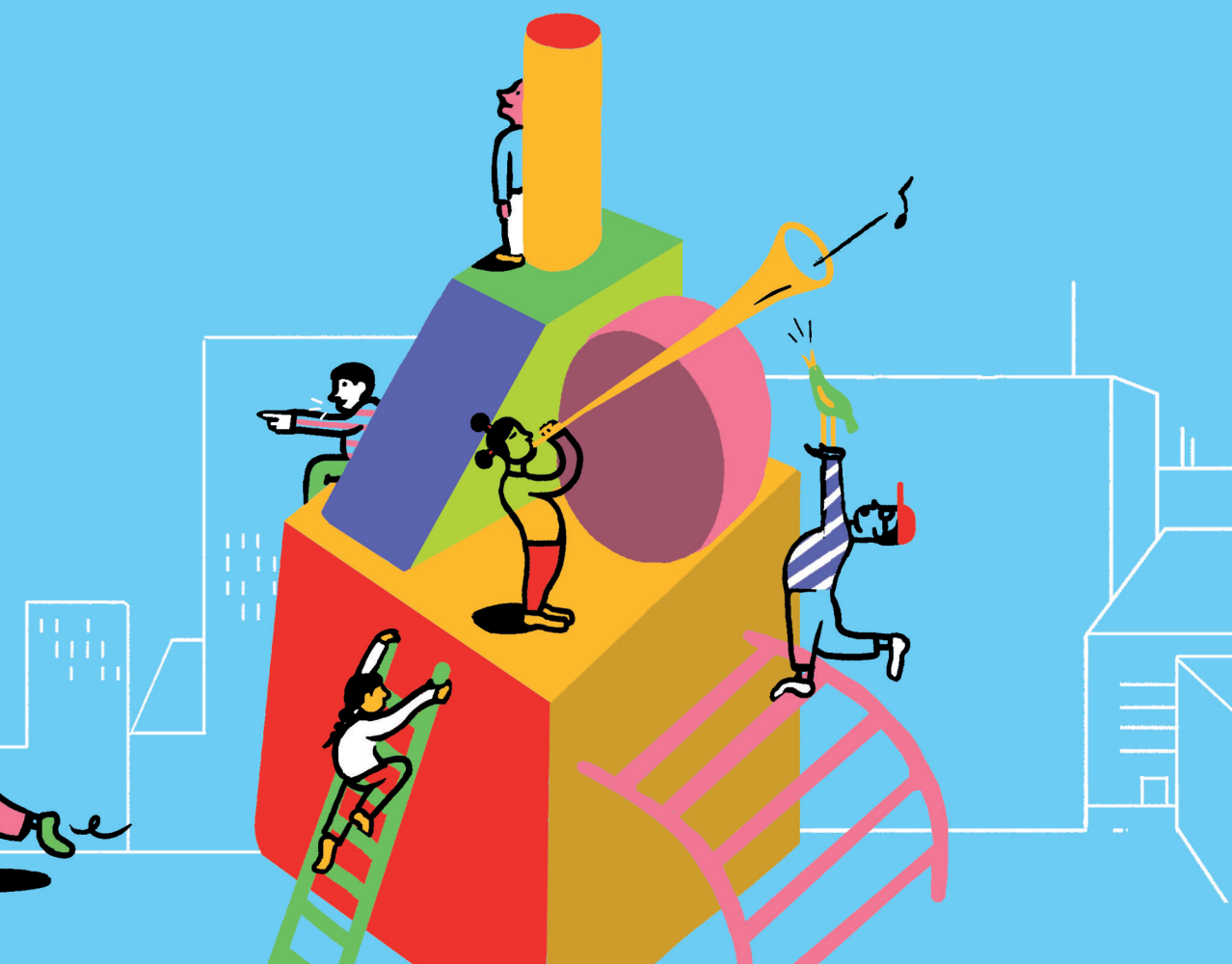


# Encouraging children's participation in municipal services and projects

Framework document

# BCN



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## PRESENTATION

Barcelona City Council has a long track record of promoting children's participation, with various experiences over the years. Most of these are included in the annexe to this document. However, we needed to go further. So the Department for the Promotion of Children at the City Council took the **initiative** to launch a cross-cutting participation steering group with the challenge of **advancing together in the field of children's participation**<sup>1</sup>. This collective challenge considers children's participation in the city **from a new paradigm**. Children need to be involved in defining and planning participatory initiatives in the neighbourhoods, the districts and the city. But they also need to co-design them and co-lead the processes defined for achieving what they propose.

This Children's Participation Steering Group, made up of City Council and University of Barcelona representatives, was created with the following goals:

- **To boost children's participation** in services, programmes and projects, through co-responsibility and lead roles.
- **To contribute methodological tools and features** that enable participatory processes to be developed with children, and to guide the application of these processes.
- **To roll out children's participatory experiences** and generate a new reference framework which recognises the value of children and enables them to find a way for transforming their reality.
- **To empower and inform** children, so they can think about their surroundings and define them in accordance with their needs, and to give them strategies for defending their rights.
- **To compile participatory experiences** so they can shed some light on children's participatory initiatives.

Once these goals were set out, the group began sharing **experiences** of children's participation being implemented around the programmes and initiatives of various actors in Barcelona, as well as the **conceptions** and approaches to children's participation. Their aim is to move on from these experiences and build common references that will make it possible to increase, improve and drive children's participation in Barcelona.

The guidelines presented in this framework document are based on characteristics that ensure the unique character of the initiatives and which assess their development by reflecting on the actions of those involved and the search for children's participation. The steering group

**This framework document features common references that have come out of the steering group's internal work and which guide the participation initiatives that involve children as active and co-responsible Barcelona citizens.**

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, children are understood as they are in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines children as anyone under the age of 18.

therefore prioritised the following key features this practical reference tool would have to have:

- **Flexible.** It needs to be capable of different uses and envisage different options for promoting participation in diverse contexts.
- **Responds to diversity of experiences.** Recognising that each process is different, this document should offer a range of methodologies enabling it to be adapted the process to each context's requirements.
- **Shared outlook.** It needs to ensure we join forces and all pull in the same direction.
- **Facilitates participation based on equality.** It needs to ensure we are guided by children as leaders of the process.
- **Pragmatic.** It needs to guide us towards the new paradigm and act as a tool that helps us to create a common language between adults and children and also to be pragmatic.
- **Easy, specific and practical.** It needs to be a specific and easy-to-use document that enables us to coordinate initiatives quickly, one that is practical, allows changes to be made and which sheds light on how we can move towards this new paradigm.

Finally, the framework document's goals, which mark the horizon of this change of paradigm, were also agreed by the steering group. These goals have been spelt out in four challenges for making headway on the issue of children's participation at Barcelona City Council:

1. **Share a reference framework** for guiding participatory initiatives that include children in tackling issues that motivate and concern them in their immediate surroundings. This reference framework needs to enable teams of municipal experts and professionals to share references for further enhancing the possibilities of and opportunities for children's participation.
2. **Facilitate methodological tools** that guide the know-how of the teams of experts and professionals in accompanying participatory processes with children. These tools must enable the teams to build participatory processes with children.
3. **Assess the elements that guide professional practice** to promote children's participation in the initiatives they are responsible for (having references, being determined to make progress on this shared goal and keen to do better enable progress.) So, we need to review and reflect on how we encourage participation as part of our professional responsibilities towards the city and children. This is the only way to enhance the quality of children's participatory practices.

4. **Be more optimistic** about the fact it is both possible and necessary to make progress on children's participation by promoting it. Our work needs to be based on the conviction and confidence that children's participation, like any other kind of citizen participation, transforms everything that surrounds it.

Moreover, this children's participation steering group has become an interdisciplinary workspace as well as a training space and a space for generating knowledge. Consequently, after having drawn up this document, the group remains active with a programme for working on new challenges.

The document you have before you is the first in a series of initiatives that includes programming a workshop to make the case for children's participation and exchange knowledge of new experiences. Other lines of work under way include incorporating the aim of promoting children's participation in the terms and conditions of municipal contracts in areas that affect children's lives, as well as municipal support for associations that promote children's participation through general calls for grant and subsidy applications for district and city projects, activities and services (method of promoting children, point H.a), which began in 2018 and remains in force in the 2019 call.

Barcelona needs to enrich itself with the contributions and actions of children in response to the issues that concern them and us. Being capable, as professionals, of promoting children's participation in services, programmes and projects on the basis of co-responsibility and central roles will enable us to pool our energy and efforts in moving towards a fairer, more caring and more diverse city. Professionals must recognise the overwhelming need to incorporate children's voices and their capacity for doing things to increase the city's democratic quality. At the same time, we need to feed processes where children build their image as active citizens who share responsibility for their environment, processes that encourage children's empowerment as rights subjects capable of transforming that environment and defending those rights.

For many years now, Barcelona City Council has been promoting children's participation from a diverse range of areas and levels, from listening to children to consulting them directly or through deliberative processes, among others.

A series of different children's participatory experiences carried out in recent years are described below. They are all significant when it comes to creating a culture of children's participation in the city.

In addition, the self-learning process started in 2017 by professionals from the city and district council departments involved in the City Council Children's Participation Steering Group, with support from Barcelona University, is expanding this paradigm of children's participation with a common conceptual body among this municipal group of experts, facilitating the launch of new participatory experiences with children. This annex before you is therefore a document under construction that will gradually be expanded with new children's participatory experiences.



## JUSTIFICATION

Barcelona safeguards the social and political rights of its citizens. It is constantly looking for innovative strategies and initiatives to promote the well-being and quality of life of those citizens. Here, children need to play a more prominent role. They need to be a resident and user of educational services to occupy public and social space as an active citizen committed to a fairer city. The city needs to include children as citizens in a more conscious way.

We need to recognise the best interests of children, re-assess their opinions, by promoting their capacity for action and offering spaces for them to exercise their right to citizenship. There are three basic reasons cited for defending children's participation in the framework of cities (Trilla and Novella, 2011):

- A legal reason. It is a right of citizenship and children are today's citizens.
- A pragmatic reason. Participation in general, and, therefore, children's too, represents an improvement in those areas it occurs in. We all win with children as active and activist participants; the city wins.
- A democratic reason. Equal opportunities, participatory governance and the development of committed and cooperative citizens depend on active and activist involvement from very early ages. *Tots fem ciutat. Som-hi!*

One of our legal reasons stems from the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC), one of the first documents to tackle children's civil rights (Articles 12-18). Since the convention's appearance in 1989, the right of children to be heard (Article 12) has been popularised as one that recognises the right of children to take part in everything that affects them. And it was at the 43rd meeting of the Committee on Rights of the Child, held in Geneva (Switzerland) on 15 September 2006, that an annual day of general debate was added for studying the significance and importance of Article 12. That debate led to the drafting of the **General comment No. 12 (2009) "The right of the child to be heard"**, which represented a big step forward in the conceptualisation, significance and compliance of Article 12. The reason for that is it re-affirms that article as one of the Convention's four general principles (together with the right to non-discrimination, right to life, survival and development and the paramount consideration of the child's best interest) of value in itself, although the interpretation, respect and implementation of the other rights should also be taken into account. It provides an excellent roadmap for achieving the right to be heard. It clearly delimits the meaning of participation, as well as presenting the conditions that states and other players connected with children have to meet before they can make the cultural leap in relation to children and participation. For the first time it recognises that the application of Article 12 is surrounded by a certain resistance and restrictions on the part of the adult world who have been blocking and holding back its implementation. So it insists on the need for preparing and educating adults to understand how to listen to children and make their parti-

cipation effective. Should it fail to take these proposals and recommendations into account, our document would be useless or might just be forgotten.

Another legal reference is **Act 14/2010, on the Rights and Opportunities of Children and Teenagers in Catalonia** (LDOIA), which grants participation a privileged place among its principles and proposals for bodies to coordinate it at local and national levels. Its preamble holds that children's participation in the issues that affect them will help to shape their citizen status, and these guiding principles include that of active citizenship in Article 11. Article 3 highlights public authorities as those responsible for facilitating participation channels. Article 34 emphasises how children's participation needs to be present in every space of community life space for children and underscores the responsibility of public authorities in offering them opportunities. And Article 27 that provides for the creation of area and national children's participatory bodies. We have taken out the following articles:

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**“Article 11. Active citizenship**

**1. Public authorities must promote the effectiveness of the right of children and teenagers to play an active part in building a fairer, more caring and more democratic society.**

**2. Public authorities must foster solidarity and social sensitivity for the purposes of increasing social participation among children and teenagers and generating new social spaces that boost responsible participation by this sector of the population and which are aimed at promoting positive communal life and social integration into local and neighbourhood sphere”.**

**“Article 34. Right to participation**

**1. Children and teenagers have the right to full participation in their most immediate centres of community life and in the social, cultural, artistic and recreational life of their environment. Public authorities must offer children and teenagers the necessary opportunities for their progressive incorporation into active citizenship, in accordance with their degree of personal development.**

**2. Public authorities must establish procedures for gathering their opinions on the policies, regulations, projects, programmes and decisions that affect them”.**

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Another reference framework is the **Pact for Children in Catalonia**. Between 2011 and 2012, the Catalan Government promoted a thorough debate between social, civil, institutional and political players around the present and future of children, and worked with them to draft the Pact for Children in Catalonia, in order to give effect to Act 14/2010. This is an instrument of consensus that proposes making progress on children's rights, duties and well-being. It is an innovative document on children's participation, as far as Catalonia and the Spanish State are concerned, because it recognises the need to foster the political

participation of this sector of the population and boosts its various levels. It ranges from the most basic level, such as that of the family and school, the institutional decision-making bodies and the services involved, to two other higher levels, the local – through the strengthening of children's councils – and the national – with the creation of the National Children's Council. Its basic ideas include the following:

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*“There needs to be a change of mentality in our society with regard to relations between adults and children, to break with dependence and the current paternalism and move away from the idea of a child as a person with rights to a new reality where CHILDREN are treated as citizens with rights and responsibilities and with capacities for exercising them”.*

*“It also refers to social participation: “[...] becomes a social and cultural necessity [as well as one of] justice and exercising democracy. There needs to be an awareness that children and teenagers, as a social collective, are an active part of society, with rights and duties, and that this requires the exercise and practical application of democracy with all its rules”.*

*“All children and teenagers must have ACCESS TO different and varied PARTICIPATORY EXPERIENCES different degrees and intensities, as it is through these that children form links with the community, commit themselves to it and involve themselves in its transformation, improving their immediate reality, exercising and interiorising their sense of citizenship” (p. 14).*

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On an international level, we should note *The Eurydice Report* (2012), which pointed out that “Citizenship education is therefore more effective if it is supported by a school environment where students are given the opportunity to experience the values and principles of the democratic process in action” (p. 13). The recommendation from the **European Commission's “Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage”** (2013) establishes social and community participation (play, recreation and being heard) as one of the three key pillars.

And, more recently, during the Sustainable Development Summit (September, 2015), the 70th General Assembly gave its approval to the **Agenda 2030 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), which highlights, among other things, the promotion of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16).

The Catalan Government has stated its aim is to advance towards a coordinated and informed civil society that plays an active part in decision-making processes. It has also made special mention of ensuring participation and represen-

tation by all age brackets of the population, thereby preventing the interests of certain age groups from being under-represented.

So far, the legislative frameworks that must be complied with have been described. We will take a close look at what the reference frameworks would be in Barcelona, beginning with the **Citizen Charter. Barcelona Charter of Rights and Duties (2010)**. Article 22(e) establishes that all minors “have the right to take part in preparing the city project, and that the City Council will promote citizen participatory experiences and spaces aimed at children and teenagers” (*Citizen Charter. Barcelona Charter of Rights and Duties*, Article 22(e)).

Barcelona is an **Educating City**. In 1990 it was the driving force behind the creation of the Educating Cities movement, where it took the firm and decisive step to turn the city into an educational player and space and, above all, to recognise how the city could transform itself through education. The city needs to create an educating dynamic which incorporates citizenship into the design of the social project that guides and defines it. It needs to incorporate it not just to ensure that every voice is represented within the project and, therefore, no one feels excluded but also to ensure the education of citizens with an increasingly central and competent role in the building of the city project. This process also represents a city that is shaped by citizens and which enables them to exercise their right to take part in public decisions. With regard to children's social participation, it must be said that the latest revision of the Charter continues to include children and young people in the concept of “all residents”, without any specification, which demonstrates the city's lifelong educational impact. It also makes clear that the responsibility for educating citizens and putting that education into practice lies with all citizens. This is stated under Articles 9 and 20 of the Charter revised in Genoa.

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### **Principle 9**

*“The educating city shall encourage citizen participation from a critical, co-responsible point of view. To do so, local government must provide people with the information they need and foster, from an integrated perspective, orientation, and educational activities in ethical and civic values”.*

*“At the same time the educating city shall use its institutions and civic and social organisations to stimulate citizen participation in the collective project, taking into account private initiatives and other forms of spontaneous participation”.*

### **Principle 20**

*“The educating city must offer all its inhabitants, as an increasingly necessary objective for the community, education in the values and practices of democratic citizenship: respect, tolerance, participation, responsibility and interest in things public, its programmes, heritage and services”.*

*“Citizenship presupposes a specific perception of the city, learning new cultural and democratic values, a sense of identification, awareness of belonging, participation, commitment and solidarity; the city is located in the field of values”.*

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Barcelona has been recognised by UNICEF as a **Child-Friendly City** since 2007. At present, one of the things that being a Child-Friendly City means is leading a city based on the Convention on Rights of the Child and promoting children’s participation in the municipality itself, as well as putting children on the local political agenda. Participation is one of the fundamental pillars, to the extent that there is a call for the city to have a regular children’s participatory body and to involve children in designing plans for children. We list below the 9 basic pillars for building a child-friendly city or town, including the first which is basic: “children’s participation”.

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- 1. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION: promoting the active involvement of children in issues that affect them; listening to their points of view and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes.*
- 2. A CHILD-FRIENDLY LEGAL FRAMEWORK: ensuring legislation, a regulatory framework and procedures that are consistent with promoting and protecting the rights of all children.*
- 3. A CHILDREN’S RIGHTS STRATEGY FOR THE WHOLE MUNICIPALITY: developing a detailed and exhaustive strategy or agenda for building a Child-Friendly City, based on the Convention.*
- 4. A CHILDREN’S RIGHTS COMMITTEE OR A COORDINATION MECHANISM: developing permanent structures in local government that guarantee a priority consideration from the children’s perspective.*
- 5. ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN: ensuring that there is a systematic process that analyses and assess the impact of legislation, policies and practices on children: before, during and after their implementation.*
- 6. A BUDGET FOR CHILDREN: ensuring an appropriate commitment to resources and an analysis of budgets allocated to children.*
- 7. A PERIODIC REPORT ON THE STATE OF CHILDREN: guaranteeing the gathering of information and appropriate monitoring of the state of children, as well as their rights.*

*8. INTRODUCING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: guaranteeing awareness of children's rights among adults and children.*

*9. INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN: supporting NGOs and developing independent human-rights institutions (minors' ombudsman or children's commissioners) that promote children's rights.*

*Source: UNICEF (2015). Pongamos a la infancia en la agenda política local. Manual básico para responsables políticos municipales. [Let's put children on the local political agenda. A basic manual for municipal political decision-makers]*

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Among the lines of action of the 2012-2022 Citizen Commitment to Sustainability, whose values include championing a fairer, more local and more self-sufficient Barcelona, one that stands out is "5. Educating and empowering citizens in the culture of participation. Intensifying and innovating democratic processes on a city and neighbourhood scale and within each organisation". In 1995 Barcelona City Council signed the Aalborg Charter. The commitments assumed included providing the city with a local Agenda 21 where citizen participation was one of the fundamental areas for advancing towards a better city.

The 2017-2027 Barcelona Strategy for Inclusion and Reducing Social Inequalities, approved on 9 April 2018, puts citizen participation at the centre when it comes to defining problems, designing solutions and, finally, applying them, and points out that such participation helps to bring about sounder projects with greater possibilities of success.

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*"Reducing inequalities and fighting against exclusion mean having an effect on a wide range of areas in people's lives. We can distinguish eight areas in a life that is developed in a social and institutional context where social exclusion factors may operate: the economic and financial situation; the relationship with work (whether commercialised or not); the spaces for exercising citizenship and participation; health and personal independence; social and family relations; spaces for training and education; housing and the urban environment." (p. 20)*

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So, 2017 marked the start of a review process of the **Barcelona Participation Regulation (2018)** which governs the ways that citizens can take part in deciding on public policies and which it declares to promote in order to achieve participation that is inclusive as possible. For the record, the first draft submitted for consideration did not recognise age inequality. Children and teenagers were hardly recognised as active citizens. It is thanks to contributions from the Children and Teenagers Equal Opportunities Working Group of the Municipal Social Welfare Council, together with the Children's Rights Network of the



Department for the Promotion of Children, that the regulation recognises children as fully fledged citizens in the city project more explicitly, although not until the age of 17. The excerpts where children's participation is recognised more clearly are as follows:

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#### ***“Preamble***

*16. Participatory processes, and participatory bodies in particular, need to set up spaces, resources and specific tools **to encourage child and teenage participation** in accordance with the rights recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child; **Act 14/2010, of 27 May, on the Rights and Opportunities of Children and Teenagers, and Decree 200/2013, of 23 July, on Catalan Local and National Participation Councils for Children and Teenagers.***

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#### ***Article 3, Right to participation***

*4. The City Council needs to offer the necessary opportunities **for the gradual incorporation of children and teenagers into active citizenship, according to their level of personal development, by establishing procedures that are designed to gather their opinions on the policies, regulations, projects, programmes or decisions that affect them, and creating social spaces that boost the responsible participation of this sector of the population while fostering community harmony and social integration on a local and neighbourhood level”.***

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The “Childhood and Citizenship Focus 2017-2020: Plan for childhood and teenage growth and experience in Barcelona” envisages a legal framework for the above-mentioned children's participation, with the aim of coordinating strategies and initiatives to meet its municipal obligations in accompanying children and teenagers as they live and grow up in Barcelona. It puts the emphasis on **FOCUS 3. Participation in social and community life (participatory rights)** to promote all its commitment and responsibility to ensuring children and teenagers can exercise their citizenship.

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*“FOCUS 3. I take part in social and community life. Participation rights.*

*The third focus covers challenges and initiatives in relation to the civil and political rights of children and teenagers, as well as specific issues such as the right to play and free time. It is about participation rights, understood not just as the right to have their opinions heard and taken into account during the decision-making process on issues that affect them, but also the right to play an active part in and be considered part of social and community life. (p. 26)*

*CHALLENGE 7. Make progress on the right to be heard and the central citizen role of children and teenagers.*

*Despite the fact children have the right to take part in drawing up the city project,*

*and the Citizen Charter envisages the City Council will promote citizen participation experiences and spaces for children and teenagers, and although there are occasional valuable experiences and some municipal programmes that work with participatory methodologies, the city has no proactive, systematic, cross-cutting strategy to promote these regular spaces, significant processes and systematised experiences for discovering and taking into account citizens' opinions and experiences up to majority age.*

*Instead, we are faced with some uncoordinated municipal programmes, promoted by various City Council units with few standard criteria, that are more geared to education on participation than to citizen participation, where it is hard for districts to give account of the social initiative and/or community experiences being developed in the neighbourhoods which, though many of them are valuable, are often of limited scope in time and space" (p. 31).*

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It is highly unlikely that all the reference frameworks promoting and recognising children's participation feature there. The intention is not to be exhaustive but rather to establish that there are already municipal reference frameworks which recognise child and teenage participation as active and committed citizenship.

The city is committed to continuing drawing up an action plan that facilitates and promotes child and teenage participation based on the foundations that this framework document represents.

Given these reference frameworks and the stated intentions of municipal experts and decision-makers alike, now is an opportune time for implementing suitable public programmes that will lead to specific initiatives in the daily lives of children and offer a diverse range of participatory opportunities.



## 1. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION. DEFINITION

The concept of children's participation was recognised in the 1989 Convention on Rights of the Child, which includes the right of children to take part in everything that affects them. In fact, children's participation ought not to be very different from citizen participation, as they said themselves at the Barcelona Public Hearing:

*“Participation is a right to make political and social declarations, without the fact we are minors status being a constraint. It is a voluntary activity we take on our own initiative and with the desire of expressing our own ideas. We also know that it involves responsibility and commitment. Participation means sharing, helping, showing solidarity, communicating, reaching common agreements, working together with others, meeting new people, exchanging opinions and collaborating in your environment. Participation means having opinions, saying what you think and being heard. It also means taking part in the decision-making process”* (Barcelona Children’s Public Hearing, 19 June 1997).

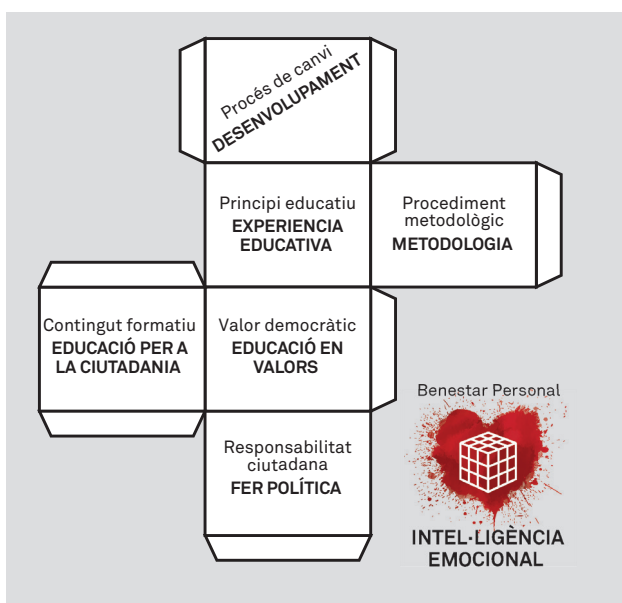
This definition has aspects in common with the definitions given by other authors on children’s participation, such as Roger A. Hart, who defines it as *“the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship”* (Hart, 1993: 5). That same author refers to children’s participation as dynamic, circular, flexible and adaptable to contexts and circumstances.

Other authors, such as Chawla (2001), state that participation involves a decision-making process on issues that affect individuals and both personal and community life, something that occurs in interaction with others, by working to achieve shared goals. It also explains the value it has when processes are formal and intentionally create structures for guaranteeing commitment to building meanings and taking shared decisions.

As for our own context, Trilla and Novella (2014) refer to participation as:

*“a personal and collective experience that enables involvement in social projects that promote psycho-educational development, the building of values and the exercise of active citizenship through deliberation and committed action on the issues that concern them and which they feel to be their own”* (Trilla and Novella, 2014: 16).

At present, if we wish to talk about participation, we need to do so from a multi-dimensional conception (Novella, 2012), integrating the other dimensions which, in daily life, are activated in the same experience, such as democratic values, educational content, working methodology, the principle that promo-



tes development, the admission of the active role of children as citizens, the sense of belonging, recognition of potential, way of understanding the world and being in it, and so on. We need social and educational practices which coordinate this dimensionality from design to practice.

Definitions that different authors contribute have elements in common and a few nuances too; what is required here is the appropriation of a definition by those wishing to make it a reality. The City Council's

aim to promote and extend children's participation began on the basis of creating a work space that enabled reflection on, building knowledge of and managing practices around such participation. An important point was that of working for a shared definition of what children's participation is. Meeting and deliberating on the concept of children's participation as a human team tasked with promoting it enables a joint framework expressed and agreed on to guide professional practice from shared goals.

When the steering group was set up in October 2017, up to four definitions were identified by groups.

### Definition 1

*Being an active and committed part of the social (public and private), political and territorial community where they have been living since the start of the process, thereby enabling them to contribute their ideas, recognising and giving value to their contributions. Working for their implementation in cross-cutting public policies for all areas (public and private) using prior awareness, going beyond the representative models, creating regular stimulating, motivational and flexible spaces and processes.*

### Definition 2

*"Right" of children to express opinions, propose, implement and/or assess issues that affect and interest them in a given context, who need to be heard by the various players in this context. This requires: INFORMATION, co-construction, co-responsibility, and co-production. And meeting the deadlines.*

### Definition 3

*Exercising citizen rights and duties (commitments). Empowering\* children to act politically.*

- Children decide on the design / way of taking part.
- Children need to participate with several age groups that are not always

*their own.*

- *Participation in every area and at every level (public and private).*
- *Pro-active role of reference adults.*
- *Having access to full information, tools and resources necessary for taking part under equal conditions.*

*\*Under this definition, the group questioned the use of the term empower. They point out that children say adults do not empower them and this, in any case, is a process they carry out themselves. What can be done is to give some adult power to others.*

#### **Definition 4**

*Playing an active part in a process in which you listen, learn, express yourself and deliberate on a subject of common interest to contribute, add and transform through free and respectful engagement.*

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After a lot of work to build references for promoting children's participation in several projects and spaces, the professionals put together the following definition:

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*Children's participation is the process of involvement through which children exercise their rights and assume their responsibilities as active and committed members of the city they live in.*

*A process that is coordinated at several decision-making levels within public and private areas and spaces where they express opinions, propose, implement and/or assess issues that affect both them and their community.*

*Processes that need to ensure recognition of their contributions and value, as well as their connection to the area.*

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## 2. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

Children's participation requires a multi-faceted vision that enables an approach to tackling the complexity sometimes surrounding it. Ensuring children's participation in city issues is a challenge to which we cannot remain indifferent and one which we are rising to as its staunch advocates. The activist intent of promoting children's participation in Barcelona is governed by a position guided by certain basic principles that seek to raise children to full citizens. These principles are as follows:

1. **Recognising children's capacities and expertise.** We need to change our way seeing and looking at children. We need to take into account that children are citizens capable of getting involved in city issues. They have lots of tools at their disposal for doing things with the information of their environment. Their potential and capacities enable them to tackle and deal with issues that concern and/or motivate them, and to seek the fairest solution for everyone. We need to bear in mind too that they are great experts in the reality, institutions, facilities, services and projects they are involved in. They have experience that cannot be substituted or underestimated and which they need to share and use so everyone can advance and improve the practices they are involved in. Capacity and expertise allow them independence in leading participatory projects and initiatives that have to be boosted.
2. **Inclusion.** Children need to be included as citizens in the city's defining spaces and the institutions they take part in. This group of citizens cannot be replaced by others or kept out of sight. We need to stop thinking about children without children. Children should be integrated and treated as full citizens within the participatory structures of the institutions and services they attend. They have to stop being treated as users and consumers of activities, so they can become the architects of social changes and transformations. Improvements and innovations for children's participation cannot be sought without children. They need to be incorporated into every analysis and assessment scenario, so that their particularities and unique features as a group can be respected. They need to be included on different levels of tackling their needs and those of citizens in general. Participation in the case of children, as with all other citizens, needs to be inclusive and reduce inequalities based on social class, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation or functional diversity, among other things.
3. **Mainstreaming.** Children are present in every area of the city. That is why every area needs their presence, but not just for dealing with their needs. They also have to be included as an active player in tackling the challenges that relate to them. Children's participation has to be tackled through a mainstreaming and interdepartmental approach. All the city councillors' and commissioners' offices need to be strengthened. Collaboration be-

tween areas is not enough. What we need is a specific focus and a specific impetus from each department. A mainstreaming approach to children's participation would provide us with more capacity for dealing with it in a particular, specific and precise way. As well as the possibility of obtaining more and better contributions for pooling resources in the search for improvements in the city's quality.

4. **Diversity.** We need to refer to and follow the principles of fairness, equal opportunities and inclusion. And, above all, put the emphasis on attending to diversity as a substantive principle. We need to bear in mind the various types of children there are in the city. We need to deal with and respect individual features such as age group in relation to the paces and ways of tackling the issues, time management, ways of communicating and managing information and other components shaping the paces in participatory processes. Especially important is respect for the difference of opinions that children have on issues and how they are dealt with. Attention to diversity requires flexibility in tackling and defining the processes with children to incorporate their diversity as potential.
5. **Voluntary membership.** Children's participation has to be essentially voluntary, which is why freedom to choose and decide have to be promoted if they wish to be involved, as well as the extent they wish to be involved and the aspects they wish to concern themselves with. Participation needs to be based on children's interests. Children need to be promoters of participatory initiatives or actions. And they also need to be informed of the participatory initiatives and processes surrounding them and requiring their participation. Freedom to decide on involvement has to be accompanied by transparent and adapted information on the initiative's features. The quality of this information, which guides decision-making, will have an impact on the degree and quality of the commitment.
6. **Co-responsibility.** Children have to have an opportunity to exercise their citizenship as a collective responsibility. Besides the individual response that is responsibility, children need to be included in collective responses in the face of shared social and community challenges. Responsibility is linked to "ethical duty". We understand responsibility as an ethical exercise arising from within the person as a citizen. Promoting children's participation should enable children to be participants in taking on commitments and carrying them out in actions where they are jointly responsible initiatives with other players involved in finding solutions.
7. **Transparency.** Including children in participatory initiatives and/or processes requires a public and horizontal availability of information and the conditions for their development. Children need to have access to all the information that is generated in the process. We need to ensure they are

experts in everything that relates to participation and all the channels in which they can express their opinions and/or positions on public policies. It is essential that the information they need to have access to uses an appropriate language adapted to their stage of development. Transparency is not just about having access to information but also about understanding and having management opportunities.

8. **Geared to transformation.** Child and teenage participation needs to be designed to build, pool, contribute and transform aspects of the environment; and work has to be carried out for child and teenage participation from the perspective of respect and freedom. The challenge of making further progress needs to be within children's reach and has to give meaning to the collective commitment that children take on by making themselves jointly responsible for participatory initiatives. Children have to feel called on to socially contribute to their community's advances. They will meet to tackle challenges that will mobilise them to look for changes and improvements. Deciding to get involved in a participatory initiative will enable them to make a collaborative contribution to improvements and changes that alone they could not imagine or identify.
9. **Creativity.** Children's participation needs to be open to creative innovations. Participatory processes where children are actors in and agents of change have to be conceived from other parameters than the ones usually used with adults. Different and differentiated proposals have to be sought where they feel included, recognised and with possibilities for taking part. This should enable them to leave the routine and infantilising dynamics they are accustomed to. The tasks and initiatives they are involved in need to be innovative and motivating. They need to offer them the possibility of feeling they are making significant and valuable progress.

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### 3. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION CONDITIONS

Conditions for children's participation have been one of the aspects most analysed by theorists (Franklin, 1997; Treseder, 1997; Chawla, 2001; Landsdown, 2001; Hart, 2001; Trilla and Novella, 2001; Shier, 2009; Agud 2014; Agud, Novella and Llena, 2014) and by international committees. Among the latter, it is worth highlighting the Committee on the Rights of the Child which, in General Comment nº 12 (2009), points out and proposes several guidelines, recommendations and measures for effectively implementing the right of children to be heard. But it is Section C (paragraphs 132, 133 and 134) that sets out the conditions to be met for achieving an effective, ethical and significant application of Article 12 (paragraph 133).

Possible general conditions have been identified for children's participation in the context of Barcelona City Council, based on the steering group's work, where the strengths and weaknesses of children's participation were analysed, and with the current context taken into account.

1. **The need for political commitment.** It is on the basis of recognising children as active citizens that the will of the political players to promote children's participation and to put the tools and resources at their disposal for its effective implementation is called for. A commitment that requires the government team to take a step forward and incorporate children as active citizens in the city's transformation. It requires recognising children as actors in the initiative. That will help to foster proximity between children and politicians and add value to actions or decisions taken by children. It is essential for the various councillor's offices to be willing to ensure cross-cutting, interdepartmental work, as well as providing human resources who are trained and capable of taking on the challenge of promoting children's independence and self-leadership.
2. **Promoting processes,** initiatives and practices of permanent and regular participation. Despite the difficulties that a big city like Barcelona may have, it is crucial for participatory processes to be generated in different places and on different levels. Although many experiences have revolved around school, we need to go further and extend them to other spaces where children can be called on as citizens to take part in every aspect that affects them. We are talking about promoting processes that can be carried out in the various spaces where children are, travel and/or which they are part of, as well as in the services aimed at them. The stability and regularity of these spaces is what will guarantee their continuity and good results.
3. **Participation freely decided on by children.** Children need to be able to decide freely on how much involvement they want to have in participatory processes. On the issues and how they want to take part. Their decision as

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regard their levels and forms of involvement has to be respected. So they can make this decision, children need to have all the information on what it involves, what it is about, and what the sense and usefulness of it is, as well as what the limits and conditions are, so they have all the relevant details that will help them understand what it entails. Deciding freely is more than saying whether or not they are taking part; they need to be able to determine how they implement such participation and how they will be organised, which is also a way of recognising children and giving them a central role.

4. **Participatory co-leadership.** Children, as fully fledged citizens with potential and capabilities, can carry out their own processes. Adults have the challenge of co-designing and co-leading participatory processes together with them. It is understood that children need to exercise their right to be part of the citizenry, as fully fledged citizens who participate and design, rather than merely consuming participation. Children's participation needs to be conceived not only for receiving information, but for designing, giving opinions on and preparing proposals around this information. It is a question of including children in the entire process. They need to be considered for their expertise and capability; in that respect they are participation researchers and assessors. They need to be included in every stage of the process. They need to play an active part in making decisions, coordinating proposals and implementing them. In other words, children need to be independent and have to be offered the resources for acquiring and leading it
5. **Involving the various players.** Children's participation has to occur in several areas and tackle various issues. Those issues involve every area, so all the councillor's offices, entities and associations would have to take children into account. This implies coordinated work and networking on the part of the various players involved. Given the diversity in Barcelona, we need coordination between facilities, services, neighbourhoods and districts. That means increasing and extending all children's participation based on various processes and spaces at every public and private level. Children have to be able to take part wherever they are capable of taking decisions, designing and taking action.
6. **Allocating appropriate resources.** One thing that flows from political will is the need to allocate the appropriate resources for implementing participatory practices. And allocating resources is linked to educating professionals who work with children so they change the way they see and relate to them. That means rethinking the ways of being in and developing relations with citizens where dynamics need to be facilitated, spaces offered and all citizens incorporated into the processes of designing, taking and acting on decisions. So, the appropriate resources that we are referring to are spaces, time, professionals and new ways of doing things, such as

resources at the disposal of citizens.

7. **Accessibility for the various types of children there are in the city.** Participation has to be accessible to all children. There has to be a guarantee that each and every one can participate and that inequalities on the grounds of gender, social class, ethnicity and/or functional diversity are corrected. In that regard it is not enough for information to be offered; strategies also have to be sought for access to all children and their families. Spaces need to be offered where participation is open and flexible, depending on the children's possibilities, with easy and understandable processes. Proximity also has to do with the relationship that adults establish, which needs to be more horizontal, and power has to be shown to be shared.
8. **Close to children.** One condition which participatory processes must include is that they need to be close to children in several ways. On the one hand they have to encourage action in local environments, with appropriate and sufficient information, and be at a suitable level of abstraction and complexity for those taking part. On the other hand, the closeness of participation to children ought to ensure they exercise their right. In other words, given they are boys and girls, it should be recreational. Children need to be able to feel good when they participate. Play is crucial, but it has to be balanced with an active methodology so that the sense of the process is not lost. Play for play's sake is not participation.
9. **Building bridges between peers, players and other citizens.** One of the aspects enabling networking has to do with the ability to foster relations between the different players in a particular area, to build bridges and to offer channels for conveying information to all of them, using appropriate language and disseminating information that is important and relevant. Another aspect is building bridges with politicians and experts in various fields, so that the bases can be established for forging relations for exchanging ideas and work together. Introducing and disseminating children's participation practices, often unknown to most people, will help to develop more comprehensive work. These channels will enable extended participation to reach beyond the groups taking part, relating them to other children, to facilitate everyone's representation. Real participation requires looking after the information that children and adults alike are given and to foster relations that help them. Participation requires information, time, relations and commitment.
10. **Involving entities and networking.** There needs to be a propensity to networking among families, entities and services relating to children, recognising the responsibility and capacity for action of all the players involved. This means building links in the heart of the community between children, politicians and citizens. We have to encourage the creation of networks between children and other citizens, by promoting the interaction of the

[illegible]

## 4. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION CIRCLES

Barcelona's children participate in various scenarios and do so in a more or less spontaneous and organised way. This is a form of participation strongly associated with being present and developing the activities that are put to them. There is also another, more spontaneous kind of participation that is found in self-organised spaces for play or managing free time with friends. The challenge lies in raising children's awareness that they can lead participatory processes if they want to and the initiatives they give rise to. They do not have to wait for these processes or initiatives to be organised by municipal experts or teams.

The need to take a step forward and recognise children as a key participant means furthering the participation they are already carrying out and exploring other forms in other city settings. That means qualitatively increasing the extent of children's involvement. For that to be possible, children must be treated as citizens and their expertise recognised.

As with adult participation, there is no single formula for defining children's participation.

We have identified the different forms that children's participation might take in the city in participatory circles. These circles will be shaped on the basis of how the principles and conditions presented are put into practice, and depending on the unique features of each area and the players involved. They are not exclusive but inter-connected participatory circles which may also have different levels of realisation. The nature of the participatory circles will be determined by the way that they adopt two essential components: degree of leadership in the participation and research. These two components, essential in paradigm changes, will define the various levels of specification possible in the same participatory circle.

**DIALOGUE circle as citizens.** This is the participation of approaching and building citizen identity based on addressing children as citizens over issues relating to their citizenship and which they need to be informed about. There has to be a guarantee that the language which the city maintains with children is inclusive and promotes horizontal dialogue with them. Municipal staff need to see children as reference citizens on issues that affect them. We need to review the ways we relate to children in the everyday life of the districts or in the programme and project frameworks. They have to be incorporated as direct spokespersons in communications and announcements (activity leaflets, signing permits, City Council letters, on the level of bulletin boards in schools and open centres, etc.)

**ANALYST circle of the environment.** This circle deals with recognising children's capacities for knowledge and analysis. Children's voices are very valuable as they develop from the exclusive experience and shared experience they have

from their involvement in the city's various environments. Their opinion is based on first-hand experience and deliberation with others who share that experience. In this circle the perception that children have of their environments enables them to identify the relevant aspects of these settings, develop ideas and positions and build a collective perception. This analyst circle might have three distinctive levels:

**Level I. Gathering ideas and contributions without deliberation.** The purpose is to collect what children think and know without any contact with them. This can be done through district town hall postboxes, website email boxes, surveys, etc.

**Level II. Building ideas based on meetings and deliberations.** The purpose here is to bring out opinions that expand their potential as they enter into a deliberative dialogue where ideas only emerge but are put into play through exchanges and comparisons with those of other children. The contributions are developed in meetings and new contributions are made which go beyond individual thinking. This could be done by organising consultative meetings, for example, over the use of a square during the summer holidays, remodelling a space or service times.

**Level III.** This is the level where building ideas involves elements of participatory action, but through the use of words. Contributions imply contributions of actions that are represented in the narrative they build. For example, revising the childhood plan for contributing elements that increase children's participation in the lines of action.

**Transformational PARTICIPATORY ACTION circles.** This participatory circle attempts to identify and offer the necessary elements for children to go into action. In this case, it goes beyond the analysis or construction of ideas. The emphasis is not focused on the narrative content contributed but also involves process action that will have an impact on and transform the environment. The initiatives children are called to and their participatory involvement enable things to be done with the ideas they imagine and plan to be co-responsible citizens. In that respect, several levels of participatory action complexity can be identified.

**Level I. Occasional and sporadic participatory action.** Children are included in a one-off participatory action process. This means they have been summoned for an action defined externally by a collective. To a certain extent they are invited to take part in a transformational initiative. This could be to plant trees in a park, for example.

**Level II. Temporary participatory action.** Children are included in an initiative that lasts between a fortnight and three months. It involves a deliberative process for planning the action jointly, as well as its practical implementation. To a certain extent, they are active in defining and imple-



menting the initiative.

**Level III. Participatory action on the scale of a project.** Children are included in a participatory action of a project nature lasting more than three months. This level of participatory action is on the scale of a project and therefore requires responsibility for transforming a reality, from planning the participatory initiative to its implementation. For example, remodeling a children's play area in a square.

**PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT circles.** The purpose of this circle is participatory assessment. In other words, involving children through participation in an assessment process. The approach to such an assessment invites children to question themselves and review the conditions of the services and spaces they are immersed in. It leads to their active participation in the spaces they are involved in, assessing social and educational proposals as well as the features of the participation itself. So it can be divided into three levels:

**Level I.** Co-constructing, revising and innovating the services and projects they are involved in. This would be a process or diagnostic assessment that could contribute innovative and transformative elements.

**Level II.** Complaint, report. The assessment would be made by taking contributions to higher levels and in the light of evidence where their contributions would otherwise not be taken into account. These contributions would therefore be raised to the level of complaint and/or report.

**Level III.** Innovating in the participatory process Children's involvement lies not only in identifying areas for improvement and innovation in services and projects but also in contributions in the ways they participate.

**GOVERNANCE circles.** The purpose of this circle is to involve children in the decision-making process within the institution, service and/or project they are involved in. The intention is include children in decision-making and governance structures. As many as four levels of children's involvement in governance could be identified within the framework of an institution and/or service.

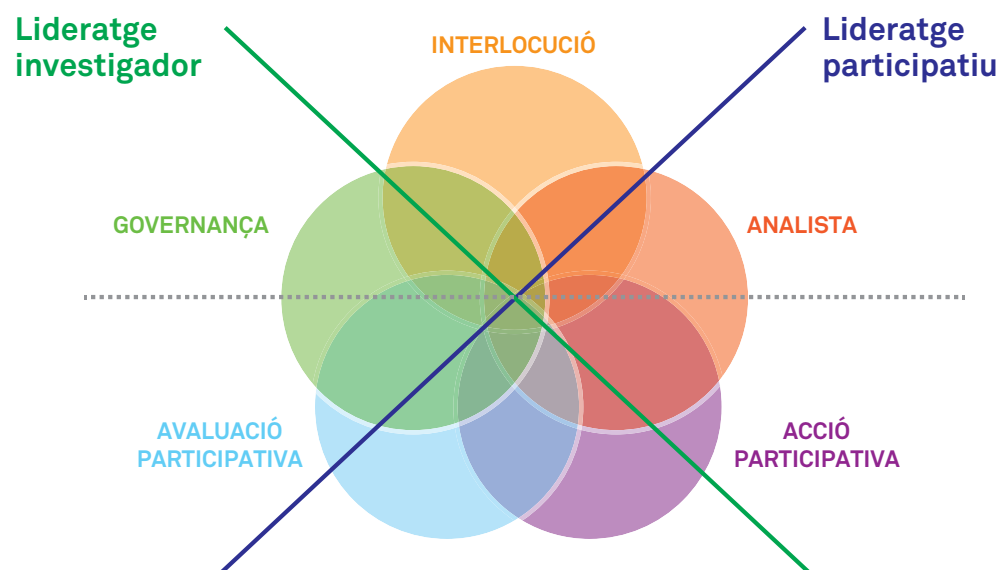
**Level I.** Children's intra-group governance. Each children's group has to have its own space for activating and managing their participation, as well as for regulating their community life and the issues that concern them. Assemblies in children's groups enable them to be managed as groups, their participatory functions to be defined and the issues which concern them to be reviewed. Issues around which they can coordinate participatory action. And they also establish possible committees and/or working groups.

**Level II.** Children's inter-group governance. This enables meetings between

children from various groups analysing and acting on common issues and initiatives. For example: an assembly/council with members from the various groups or a delegate meeting.

**Level III.** Children's governance within the decision-making structures of the services and/or entities. This would involve ensuring children's participation in spaces for making decisions on the work and purpose of the service or entity. The children's collective would have to have members who could represent it in the entity's various decision-making structures.

**Level IV.** Governance in the facility's management spaces. This would mean children's participation in the decision-making structures referring to the physical space shared by several entities and/or associations.



*Children's participation circles in the city*



## 5.

# HOW CAN WE PROMOTE CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION? METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

### 5.1. Some guidelines for organising participation with children

Coordinating children's participation to ensure it is an authentic process, where children really take control of the process, requires taking into account a few guidelines that should govern our practice. These guidelines, based on certain principles and conditions, need to guarantee children's rights, protection and well-being. We highlight the following guidelines:

**Promote horizontal relations. Make it clear that the process is theirs and that we merely facilitate and support them.** To be able to coordinate authentic children's participation, that is, where it is the children who take charge of the process, the first step is to be clear that we adults are merely facilitators. We are a technical resource at the disposal of citizens, in this case, children, and whom we support, advise and facilitate processes for but under no circumstances do we take over their process. That means we have to establish relations horizontal relations where the various groups involved are considered in the same way without inequalities of any kind or differences between those involved arising. Professionals have to be at the disposal of children seeking independence and self-management. This independence relates as much to taking decisions as implementing initiatives carried out independently by children. Combining several methodologies promoting teamwork and collaboration will help to facilitate the processes.

**Establish suitable and fast information channels.** The most appropriate communication channels need to be sought in order to **send and circulate information** to all those involved in the participatory process. The information has to be clear, transparent and suitable for the diversity of children. It will need to be drawn up taking into account appropriate and relevant language so that the issues can be understood and decisions taken. Children have to be able to establish their own communication channels and ask for opportune clarifications when working documents are being used which they have to give an opinion on or be able to analyse. At the same time, these channels need to facilitate dissemination of the actions carried out among the rest of the young population. They need to be channels that enable information which is important, pertinent, clear and appropriate to be sent and circulated to the groups taking part, dealing with their diversity and possibilities of access to those channels.

**Ensure a respectful, safe, appropriate and pleasant environment.** The participation spaces must ensure that children feel comfortable, safe and recognised in the spaces they take part in, so that relationships of trust are built up which help them to feel good, and boost their self-esteem and recognition of themselves and others. These spaces must facilitate their self-awareness as players where dynamics are generated that enable them to go from discovering and thinking to being activists, and which allow them to go from having a passive role to having

a reflective and active one. All children can have a place there. They need to have full information, which has to be clear and respectful, and to be able to express themselves as they feel, and do so in a way that is appropriate to their needs and the time. Respectful and active listening has to be allowed. We need to be capable of getting closer to the culture and language of children and listening to them, assessing their contributions and acknowledging them. Their different points of view and diversity of experiences need to be respected. This respect requires words not to be manipulated or used improperly, such as taking them out of context or making use of them only where they serve our interests. Respectful listening means providing the necessary arguments when the proposal is not shared and/or is not possible. Here adults have to be able to facilitate and accompany this process by offering support where necessary and leaving the door open to requests that may arise from the group. These environments have to be lively, flexible and under permanent construction and reconstruction based on providing times for reflection on and assessment of how they feel within the group.

**Start from the children's interests, motivations and possibilities.** Another aspect that has to be considered has to do with what the relevant issues are for children, the ones that affect them more directly, the ones they are interested in and the ones which, through their knowledge, expertise and experience, they can contribute to. While it is true they can contribute to many aspects of the city that have no direct relevance for them, there are issues which particularly interest and motivate them. In that sense, we have to talk to them, listen to what their interests are and seek a balance between the issues of interest and the collective needs.

**Clarify the proposal, seek the meaning and value of participation at the start of the process.** To participate you have to be clear where you are participating, why and for what purpose the process is being carried out. Children have to be able to see it makes sense and will have consequences, that is not a rhetorical exercise or just another educational exercise. They have to know what the project is, be able to understand it and become enthusiastic about it. Understanding its significance and value means the motivation of those behind it and those taking part in it will grow. That will enable them to enjoy the process, create affinities and a level of involvement and commitment that will help to promote changes and transformations.

**Create a process for adopting the organisational structure that will enable leadership.** This is the most important thing: at the start of the process make the children jointly responsible for how they want it to be, the way they want to work and the organisational form that suits them best. When a proposal is made for their participation in a municipal context, children are usually incorporated into processes designed for adults that already have a previously established legal or reference framework which may be more or less enabling. We should ensure

they are involved in designing this framework or, where that is not possible, in adapting or possibly modifying the current one. Invite them to create their own reference framework for establishing how to take part. Some of the organisational structures that could be considered would be a steering group or committee, a standing committee, thematic committees, working groups, assemblies and so on. Whatever they are, they will need to be defined and supported by the children's group.

**Ensure the children's involvement at all levels of the process attempting and promoting self-management and sustainability.** We need to foster practices right from the start that put children at the centre. They need to be able to decide how they can function and how they will be organised and work. These are steps that will enable their recognition and make them citizen players and stakeholders in their process. A process where they must be co-designers, co-responsible and co-producers. They need to be able to propose, create and give shape to their ideas. They need to be involved in initiatives they themselves propose or which they are invited to. They need to take part in co-leading projects and assessing both the processes and the results. Assessment is a constant that has to be part of the process from the beginning. Being jointly responsible, they have to be able to design and assess their own participatory process. They need to reflect on what their participation is like and what they can do to improve it. This is called meta-participation.

**Promote inter-generational spaces for exercising citizenship.** An inter-generational approach will help to break down barriers and encourage relations between citizens of various ages, which will facilitate the discovery of other experiences and needs in the city, and boost processes in search of joint solutions. It will help older people to understand other languages and respect children's points of view. This reciprocal respect, this joint work, is a feature of democratic quality. Families also have to be involved or informed so they know what child and teenage participation is, what benefits it brings and the impact it has on the community.

**Diversify participatory experiences.** Diverse participatory experiences have to be offered. Acknowledging children as citizens means inviting them to get involved in processes that go beyond consultation or doing very specific projects. Offering other spaces will allow them to interact with other players and issues, avoid monotony and bring a different, fresh perspective to other spaces or spheres where that was not previously possible.

**Generate processes seeking transformation.** Children's participation in the city needs to be aimed at looking for improvements in the quality of life and promoting the personal and social development of children participating in that, but also that of all citizens and the city itself, even though the expectations have to be realistic and it has to be clear what the real possibilities are. Processes have to be geared to change and therefore need to work in that direction. Inter-

nal dynamics have to be generated and processes led to enable them to identify the possibilities of advances in the places and on the issues they participate in, as well as in their own group. They will transform the city as well as themselves and their practices.

**Promote spaces for continuous assessment in the participatory process.** Children need to carry out assessment processes not just of the participation they are part of but also of the issues they tackle. Assessment will enable them to fulfil their research role and make progress in the processes they carry out, as well as enable them to review and assess the work done. Assessment will also be useful for them to analyse and reflect on their participation, for the purposes of designing and modifying it, if need be, and innovating around it. Stopping to think about participation helps children to conceptualise it and give shape to it, depending on the challenges that the participatory environment sets them.

These guidelines need to be defined and organised from the framework of the five ethical theories proposed by Roman (2016). Those ethics are as follows: a) deontological ethics, which reject exploitation and seek to promote an independent life; b) dialogical ethics, which seek consensus based on the definition of some pre-established regulations; c) consequentialist ethics, which seek people's well-being and fewer injustices; d) the ethics of virtue, which seek excellence from professionals and institutions, and e) the ethics of compassion, hospitality and care. Being highly aware of these ethics humanises the processes and brings the relations between those involved closer, while promoting the building of a more worthy image of children adapted to their condition as citizens.

## 5.2. SOME METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGIES

Methodological strategies enable the participatory process to be tackled on the basis of the goals that the children's group have set out. There are many different strategies that can be used when working in participatory processes. They all have to respect the children's pace and desires, enable their self-organisation, help them to think about their participation and role, while also allowing them to act. In addition, they need to help progress to be made on the issues that are proposed.

Below we present some of the strategies required for boosting and extending children's participation in the process of developing the initiative.

a)

**Knowledge, cohesion and belonging strategies.** Being part of a participatory process requires awareness of the meaning that it has and the implications it involves. It is important to learn about the representation of their "social ego" and "citizen ego", and to enable them to be recognised as part of "we citizens" they interact with. Sometimes too so they can vi-

sualise what other members represent. The techniques we choose must contribute to constructing the identity of the group: who are we? Why are we here? What are the implications of being here? What is expected of us? What does it mean being part of this group? Who are we as a group? What can each person contribute? How can our differences enrich us? Therefore it has to enable us to become aware that we are a group and can work as a group.

Accompanying a participatory process has to help children to be aware of what it is that they will be doing, what the implications will be, what responsibilities they will be taking on, and so on. They need to be able to think what the necessary conditions will be for carrying out the task. That will facilitate the group's cohesion through a sense of being part of a collective drawn together by shared goals, respecting and appreciating the need for and richness that diversity brings.

b)

**Strategies for cooperating and establishing collaborative relations.** Developing a participatory process requires establishing relations of trust and cooperation within the group itself and with others too. In this case, the cooperation strategies have to encourage interactive and collaborative processes, where all those involved are co-responsible for the process and establish relations for joint action. Teamwork, so everyone can see the need for their participation, that is, where both individual and collective responsibilities can be seen.

Children can take part as representatives of other groups, so mechanisms need to be put into place that will enable work with the reference groups, promoting the necessary meeting, dialogue, exchange and production spaces and ensuring the results are collected and used. It is about creating a collaborative circuit a task that not only has to be done with the reference groups. Children have to be able to work with other groups, institutions and organisations in the area or context in which the participatory process is being carried out. Techniques need to be used that encourage joint work, that see the need for everyone as part of the group, and the richness that diversity brings. To enable that we need to think about the best ways of organising and the best communication channels.

c)

**Information and communication strategies.** In this case we are referring to strategies aimed at enabling important and relevant information to reach children in a clear and intelligible fashion, with a twofold intention: to be able to take decisions as well as get to know the issues they are dealing with. The aim is also to look for ways where children are not just information receivers but collectors too, as well as producers playing an active part in deciding on the information they need, how they wish to gather and process it, and the contents they wish to produce. They need to be part of

the process for collecting, producing and processing information.

On the other hand, strategies need to be found to enable them to present and promote who they are, what they do and what their opinions are on issues of collective interest. Here the strategies and techniques that are chosen must also promote relations with other players they have to communicate, pool ideas and proposals and convene with. Information is important in all cases but so too are the communication channels that are used. They therefore need to be the most appropriate for the diversity of participants and so the information can be circulated clearly in a way that everyone understands.

d)

**Deliberation-building strategies: presentation, dialogue, discussion and taking a decision.** These are strategies aimed at enabling all participants to establish dialogue and exchange opinions based on developing a critical opinion, with the intention of jointly building a shared position on the progress that has to be made. This implies being able to have clear and sufficient information that enables children to form their opinions so then they can then present and share them in a secure and trusting environment. Being able to outline opinions and hold a dialogue a respectful dialogue, in the various ways and at a pace they define as a group, will enable collective reflections and analyses to be made for reaching a consensus or taking decisions through cooperation.

The techniques we choose must enable children to argue and consider various different opinions and positions, to establish the pros and cons so they can develop a perspective, a critical take on the issues that concern them, first on an individual level and then collectively. That way they will be able to reach agreements and make commitment that can guide their actions.

e)

**On leadership: planning, organisation and assessment.** To ensure that children are as independent as possible and can lead the processes they run, we need to think of strategies that will help to implement decisions once they have been taken. That means being able to give shape to their proposals, to design a project and be the architects of what they have agreed to build. And that means seeking strategies for reflection, planning, organisation and assessment.

They have to be able to reflect on the meaning of the initiative they want to implement, what that requires, what its limits and possibilities are. They need to be able to understand and analyse what the options and possible scenarios are for choosing, prioritising options, identifying resources and the other players that may also be involved. They have to plan the actions they intend to carry out. This will also involve considering techniques that might help with long-term thinking and location in time, techniques that



will help to strengthen and distribute the assumption of responsibilities. They have to be able to establish the various roles in the process (who takes part, who coordinates, who leads a discussion, action or process, who gives advice and who gathers proposals or materials, among other issues), how they wish to coordinate relations between the teams or groups, how they will work in cooperation or networking with other players or collectives. Systems have to be established for monitoring and organising responsibilities and tasks.

Assessment is especially important, as it is a constant in any process. It enables the elements for taking decisions to be identified, to see what the best options are or how they function as a group, as well as how their proposals have worked out. It will enable them to make changes and modifications during the process or guide further action. It is also important to look for techniques that help them to assess their own participation and development as a group of citizens.

It needs to be borne in mind that different techniques will be chosen in each block of strategies. Some techniques can be used as much for some blocks as for others. What is important to consider in making the selection is ensuring the techniques we use are:

- Suitable for achieving our goals and for the specific time in which they apply.
- Easy to understand and explain, bearing in mind the diversity of participants, and meanings and intentions are clearly outlined.
- Diverse, not just to avoid ending up doing mechanical things but also to encompass the various ways of doing things and learning.
- Fun and flexible so they can be adapted to the time. Let's remember they are not the end but the means.
- Flexible and adaptable to various times and goals.

### 5.3. STAGES FOR LAUNCHING PARTICIPATORY INITIATIVES WITH CHILDREN

Children's participation in the city can take numerous and varied forms. Faced with the challenge of changing the paradigm, the one element that has to be guaranteed in any of the initiatives is to involve children in defining, designing, monitoring and/or assessing it. In short, in the process. This process is shaped by important stages and times that concentrate components which gradually

give significance to and promote children's participation.

Below we describe the stages that would shape a participatory initiative process driven by a municipal team from its gestation to when it promotes new challenges and new participatory initiatives. The process that is proposed can have several levels of complexity. It will have to be adapted, depending on the nature of the initiative and the decisions taken by those involved in the process. Although many features can be transferred to other practices, the stages proposed are typical of a consultative participatory process jointly led by children. In each case the meaning and challenge of the stage will be specified.

### Stage 1. The decision to involve children in a participatory initiative

The development of children's involvement within a team of experts in a participatory initiative is full of uncertainties and questions that will be revealed as certain issues are internally agreed to. But above all it will depend on how convinced the team is of the need for and value of their involvement and the significance it attaches to their participation.

The team must understand the reasons and conditions in which the children will take part. There are three highly relevant questions that have to be resolved from the start. They are fundamental for decision-making and will determine the development of the proposal.

- **Why are we incorporating children into the initiative? What is the purpose of involving them?** The reasons for their incorporation are symbolic (because it is about time), educational (training in the process) and/or political (civil rights in action). All three at the same time, without doubt, but it is necessary to be aware which is the prevailing approach for ethical reasons and in the interests of coherence. Their incorporation needs to be based on recognising children as capable citizens who are experts on the issue to be tackled.
- **What is the role of children in the initiative? How do we understand their participation?** The role ascribed to children in the initiative can be that of mere information providers describing a reality they know very well through accumulated experience, analysts and experts who reflect on events and their possible responses, assessors in action and experience of the issue they are dealing with, or researchers and experts in solution-seeking processes. Whatever it is, it is important for it to be specified and defined within the team of experts and explained to children in the clear way what is expected of them.
- **What is the level of involvement expected of the children? What is the degree of adult commitment?** The initiative proposed needs to be something



more than a one-off consumerist or merely decorative activity. Children's involvement has to enhance the quality of their contributions and the process, so it needs to be in depth and be approached not just from their contributions but also in jointly designing their participation. Offering a space that involves a commitment from all the parties means being open to the implied increase in children's involvement and that it will mean making contributions we are ready to incorporate. We need to define whether we are ready to review the purposes, content and forms of participation with children, that is, co-design their participation. Of course, it is essential for the expert team to ensure that the children's contributions will be binding, lead to feedback and have an impact on transforming the setting. Adult-child co-leadership, only adult, only child. These are aspects that we need to work out and understand so that we can work on and encourage their participation.

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Other questions need to be raised at this stage too, namely: What is the extent of the children's connection with the issue being tackled? What is the children's background? How many will be able to get involved and take part? What other children will be linked to it? How will we reach these other children? What is the work schedule? How will the hours of work and time for achieving the goals set be adapted to each other? How will language be adapted? Who will be the reference for children and their families? What communication mechanisms will be used? These are questions we need to ask at the start and reformulate with the children involved to enable not only co-responsibility for and the co-design of what they do but also the goal they are pursuing, how they are involved and how they wish to put it into practice.

This stage will give way to the next once contact with the children begins to invite them to a space for sharing the initiative, its meaning and the initial participation proposal that is made. It is very important to have children as references, for us to address them as interlocutors, and that they are the ones who will voluntarily decide to join us. In this processes children inform and share their decisions with their families, and it is they who will authorise their participation, or not, by signing the relevant documents. The team can contact the family reference person to give them more information and respond to some of their queries, as well as share recognition of the children as reference citizens.

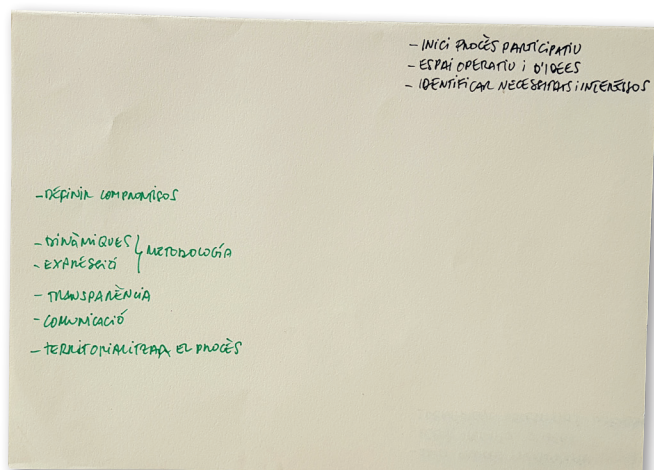
## Stage 2. Working out the task, defining the initiative process and promoting participation magnetism

The action that would kick off this second stage would be the formal establishment of a children's group to work on the initiative. This is a time for public recognition and joint commitment to the city's improvement as co-responsible citizens. It is also a time for forming the group, strengthening what unites them and what they share. They must be known and recognised as actors for change.

The purpose to this stage is to rebuild the initiative put to them. In other words, until now it has been the expert team that has represented the initiative and the process of how it should be implemented. Now is the moment for this proposal to be turned into an initiative co-designed with the group of children involved. To and extent, the idea is that the children's group should identify and work out the task. They will have to identify what they believe they can contribute for making progress on the issue in question and what can help to improve the city and its child population. Their comments would be returned with a proposal and political/technical validation/commitment. Then, the challenges and the process to be designed for meeting them would be identified in a forum. The working methodology will be agreed as well as the organisational structures for carrying it out. This working plan will be notified to, shared with and validated by all those involved, and then presented to the reference politicians.

In some way at this stage, a joint response with the children's group has to be given to the following questions: What is the task we are taking on? What are the challenges that define it? What is the work plan? How will we organise ourselves to implement it? What are the workspaces? And what should these space be like? What work committees have to be established? What is the work schedule? How will we review the work process?

The interlocutors who are important for the initiative need to be identified at this stage. Account must always be taken of the children taking part in the initiative and also the other children in the area, as well as the technical staff acting as a bridge. In addition, community and service entities, other players and groups will also have to be identified. Thought will have to be given to how to address them. Once identified, the goals, spaces and methodological tools will have to be developed jointly, as will why we wish to consult and what we will do with the proposals. That would include:



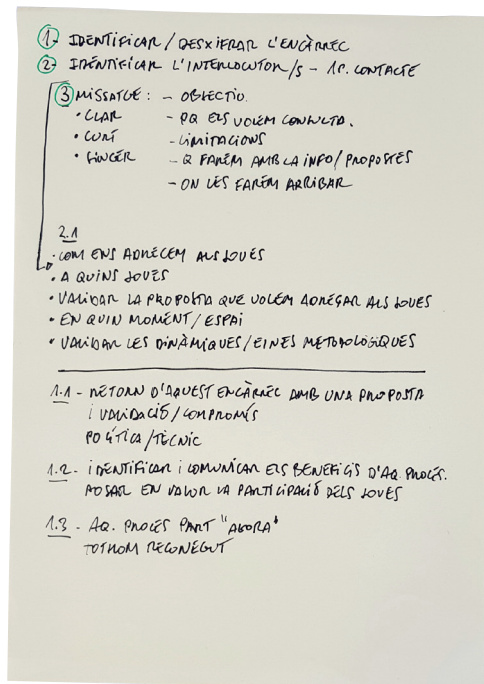
**Defining commitments** and responsibilities (schedule and timing, roles, return and so on).

**Dynamics:** expressive methodology for facilitating communication.

- Transparency: ensuring authenticity and commitments.
- Mainstreaming **communication** and operability of the process.

**Territorialisation** of the process, making it experiential and local.

The children's group will contribute the elements for a more local pro-



cess to gather opinions and contributions from children as a whole, where they are participating as representatives. This is the most usual case, given how difficult it would be for all the children in a particular area to be part of it. To some extent, therefore, the children would design the search for contributions from their collective. This stage would end when the process for investigating the challenges posed has been coordinated. The approach with other children and the contribution towards thinking up and designing tools and mechanisms that will make it possible promote the children's leadership. This stage will have strengthened the work group and the sense they have, having incorporated elements for assessing and reviewing the achievement of the challenges proposed.

The generation of **participation magnetism** (Novella and Llena, 2018) occurs within the children's group involved in co-designing, although it is also a challenge that they set themselves for involving more children in the process and exercising their citizenship.

### Stage 3. Coordinating the process, activating the work plan and identifying the responses to the challenges defined

This stage starts when the process agreed in the co-design stage the children have been active in is coordinated. The proposals seeking participation magnetism and the generation of information it has been proposed should be collected to identify the responses to the issue being investigated are set in motion.

In the process carried out at this stage it will probably be necessary to set up a monitoring committee to readjust some of the actions specified, depending on their impact on everyday life. Depending on the initiative and functions assigned to the children's group, as well as the number of children involved, the action at this stage will be more or less developed by the municipal team or by a support company. It is important to recognise what action possibilities the children's group has as well as the support they need from other players to activate the work plan. The children need to decide on what they want to involve themselves in more and what they can delegate to other players. To some extent, the presence of children has to be regulated by the children themselves in line with the interests and the possibilities of action they have. This is the time for analysing and assessing their capacities and specific actions for the issue they wish to deal with.

When the contributions from the city's children have been collected and prepa-

red for analysis, it is likely the activity of the children's group will increase. And this activity will probably be organised by thematic committees or according to some logic they have identified and recognised. Reading and interpreting the information collected will enable them to make some contributions more specific. The forum will be the best space for comparing results and for sharing and generating contributions. Where work has been done by thematic committees, the children's group will have to have a global vision and compare the evidence of each thematic block.

In this stage it is as important to identity the contributions and their preparation as it is to know how to communicate them so they reach politicians and the rest of the city's residents too. The communication strategies that will enable everything that has come out of the contributions received to be reported back to those involved and the general public.

This stage will end with a report being produced on the results obtained and the response of the children's group to the challenges put to them. Experts and/or other professionals may have more of a hand in drafting the report, but reviewing and validating it will be in the hands of the children. They have to ensure that what is collected is really what the children involved have expressed.

#### Stage 4. Conclusion of the process and report back

A participatory initiative will conclude once the children's group reports back, disseminates and validates the results with other children and summarises the contributions in a report, or not, to the reference politicians who set the group this participatory work. That is how the citizen commitment process will conclude, although it is highly likely that it will continue through individual connections as citizens and also as a collective.

As part of this stage, the adult group will have to review the work plan that they planned at the start. That review will have been ongoing throughout all the stages in order to adapt to everything happening in the process and review the suitability of the decisions taken. But in this stage its purpose is to assess the process and recognise the challenges met, as well as the way they were met. It is a space for strengthening their citizen capacities, the value of the collective contribution made and identifying elements that boost their involvement as citizens. The strengths and weaknesses of the process provide the group with elements for continuing with their work and linking that to the exercise of their citizenship. That link could be promoting the association movement, individual links or carrying on with the group set up.

It is very important in this stage for the work done by the children and their status as citizens to be recognised. The meeting and report back space with the political figures involved not only requires an appreciation of the work done

and the commitment made, but above all explicit mention of the political response to the contributions made and specification of some of the direct actions that will flow from the report. Children need to be able to see the impact that the work done might have.

A children's monitoring group could be set up which oversees the implementation of the politicians' commitments as well as some of the issues or queries generated by applying the contributions. At this stage it is important for children to value both the results and the process they had led.

Analysing the process will enable them to identify the participatory strategies and procedures they will transferring to other experiences.

A participatory process of involvement in the area and with the collective they belong to ought to end by giving rise to new participatory challenges that the children's group would lead independently, organised and supported by the City Council. The challenge lies in expanding the opportunities that children plan and imagine.

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## 6.

### QUIET GUIDANCE. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PROMOTING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

In this section we will develop some guidelines of a more practical nature that will facilitate the start of the process for improving children's participation and boost its continuity and their empowerment. These guidelines are the result of the advances which the group's members recognise they have achieved, and which have been analysed and classed according to the content they contributed.

Below you will find advice on incorporating children's participation and comments of municipal experts which shed light on taking on and leading the process.

• These days there are mandatory legal frameworks for children's participation. Using them as a reference, the government team has opted to increase children's participation as active citizens. The challenge, as a city, is to make committed progress in promoting diverse and varied types of children's participation "with" and "from" children. Improving facilities, services and projects requires children as the main experts on and analysts of their needs and uses.

"Child participation is a right of children and an obligation of states for complying with the various legal texts" (*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, among others).

"The important thing is political will and intent in wanting to work in a manner committed to children's participation, something that will facilitate a clear assignment and possibly foretell the sustainability and inclusion of children's proposals."

"We need to understand the complexity of these types of projects and above all the value of working with citizens' expectations and what ought to be the best way for managing that." "We need to promote children's participation to get to know their point of view on services, programmes and projects, to adapt them more to their needs and improve them (children's views are indispensable as is their capacity to see things which we adults fail to notice)."

• We all win with children's participation, as does the city. It may seem difficult at first, even impossible, but it is an opportunity for increasing the quality of the process and the contributions that arise from it. It can begin with small initiatives that are sustainable, offer guarantees of perceived success by all the players involved and make them optimistic about what is possible.

"If our work provides a possibility for incorporating the opinions and contributions of citizens who are now children, we will see how the possibilities of innovating and improving projects/services/facilities we



are working on increase considerably.”

“If you incorporate children, it improves the entire process. It may prove difficult for us at first to see how you can take account of children’s opinions but if you think about it for a bit, if you put yourself in their skin and include them, you will see how the whole project is enriched. If we simplify the language, everyone understands you better.”

“Believe in participation and be pro-active. Add value to the system.”

Children are citizens of the present, the here and now. We have to break away from stereotypes and prejudices about their capacities and possibilities for participating, build an image of citizens with expertise and bearers of proposals. The participatory initiatives promoted need to ensure participatory fairness in terms of social class, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and functional diversity, among other things.

“It is false that children are future citizens. They already are fully fledged citizens today, so they have to be able to give their opinions and take responsibility for whatever happens around them.”

“Have an open mind. Push prejudices and stereotypes aside.”

“Recognise children as people with ideas and initiatives. Politicians should be aware that children are of real value when it comes to making progress in building the city.”

“During all these months, the image of children has changed, and the necessity and usefulness of everyone incorporating their vision/approach/contributions (expertise) into the life of the city.”

Teams of municipal experts have to define what they understand by participation. They need to build their shared and meaningful reference framework for shaping the participatory initiatives.

“To ensure children are part of the city’s life, we not only need to define properly what we understand by children’s participation but also to rethink the concept of participation itself.”

“We need to broaden our outlook regarding the concept of children’s participation.”

Sincerity has to be guaranteed from start to finish. The teams of professionals must honestly define what they understand by participation, what its purpose is, the degree of involvement it enables and the process that is initially envisaged. Then they will share that with the children in language.

ge that is easy to understand, so a process of negotiation and consensus will begin on the conditions under which the participation will take place. Thus the participatory process will be co-designed by children and their reference adults. A greater presence of children will be achieved to the extent that they are incorporated into the definition of the participation itself. To be consistent in the participatory process, we will have to ensure it is jointly agreed and avoid undermining or instrumentalising children's participation as much as possible.

“Adapt the information and ensure it is sufficient.”

“To encourage participation with children, first of all it is important we are sincere and make it clear from the outset what we will be extrapolating from their contributions, to what point participation is consultative or binding, to avoid being deceived and making them feel tricked and exploited. It is important to highlight their status as experts in the field in question.”

“The importance of starting from a clear and rigorous participation project, with explicit goals and a clear methodology, putting children at the centre.”

“Keep the methodological challenges in mind: rigour, transparency, governance, (spaces for taking decisions), ongoing and participatory assessment, indicators that measure the empowerment of the children, self-organisation, inclusion, the impact of the process and proposals.”

• Children's participation should not copy adult dynamics. Other types of logic for managing space and time need to be incorporated. They need to be linked to children's interests and motivation, and they need to ensure recreational and creative dynamics that are adapted to their uniqueness as citizens. They have to ensure the generation of a participation magnetism.

“We need to put ourselves in the shoes of children in all their diversity, consider how they see themselves, their motivations and needs, and the languages they use, to enable them to take part in and decide on the issues that affect them.”

“Adapt the process so they are the key figures (we adults merely facilitate and support them), promoting their involvement (with the feeling they are heard, valued, useful, comfortable, can see a result, etc.) and making the processes fun and recreational (active methodology).”

“Encourage the use of internet tools and maybe also mobile devices, within the methodology of the programmes to improve participatory

communication and dynamics.”

“A relational and area-focused strategy linked to participation: local approach, plurality of views, accessibility, continuum, respecting children's time.”

“Children are creative and innovative by nature and are therefore priority agents of change. We adults have to be capable of seeking different and innovative proposals that motivate them to get involved so that their contributions are a big plus.”

- Children involved in participatory initiatives and/or processes need feedback on the impact of their contributions. Their participation must enable them to recognise some of the advances they contribute and which are incorporated into their environment, however small they may be. Including them in assessing and monitoring the process increases the quality of the participation.

“Children's proposals need to lead to specific initiatives linked to improving the quality of life of children themselves and other citizens, with assessment and monitoring by children, using internet tools too.”

“Give an account and feedback: explain what decisions have been taken on the proposals received. The professional team has to ensure the children's contributions are binding, that there will be a return on them and they will have an impact on transforming their environment.”

We are reaching the end of the document. And perhaps you don't know where to start. Don't worry. We've all had that feeling at some point. The uncertainty of what designing a participatory initiative entails is complex because many diverse elements play their part in it. The qualitative leap this change of approach aims to promote cannot be achieved overnight. But what is clear is that we should not delay it any further. And if we want to be consistent and sincere with children, we need to promote change with them. So, when you have the chance, suggest it, go for it and invite children to think with you about how you can make it possible. Sit down together and define the challenge, the way to tackle it and you will see, gradually, without realising it, you will be promoting citizen participation with children. They are excellent collaborators, they have the expertise and commitment of citizens who love their city.

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## ANNEXE: GATHERING EXPERIENCES ON CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN BARCELONA

For many years now, Barcelona City Council has been promoting children's participation from a diverse range of areas and levels, from listening to children to consulting them directly or through deliberative processes, among others.

A series of different children's participatory experiences carried out in recent years are described below. They are all significant when it comes to creating a culture of children's participation in the city.

In addition, the self-learning process started in 2017 by professionals from the city and district council departments involved in the City Council Children's Participation Steering Group, with support from Barcelona University, is expanding this paradigm of children's participation with a common conceptual body among this municipal group of experts, facilitating the launch of new participatory experiences with children. This annexe before you is therefore a document under construction that will gradually be expanded with new children's participatory experiences.

### • Public hearing for Barcelona's children

The Barcelona Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB) promotes this participatory process, which for the last 24 years has been inviting the city's children and teenagers (6th-year primary-school, secondary-school and special-education students) to send proposals to the city government team and city councillors in each district on a specific, different issue each school year. The programme runs activities in the ten municipal districts and at a city level too. After a collective reflection process over the course of the school year, children present their conclusions (commitments and proposals) at public hearings presided by the district councillors and the Mayor, with a municipal pledge to give them a reasoned response. Children monitor the response to their proposals. The ten districts organise activities from the Public Hearing project for Barcelona's children, including district hearings.

### • Laia's Proclamation: the Children's Voice

Laia's Proclamation is an activity promoted by the City Council Department for the Promotion of Children which gives a voice to children in 3rd, 4th and 5th years of primary school so they can give their opinions and put forward proposals for improving the city. It has been held since 2004 with the aim of getting children to take part in drawing up the proclamation read out every year at the Santa Eulàlia festivities. Now it is an educational programme that puts the emphasis on democratic and citizen participation. The public reading of the Proclamation is intended to give more prominence to children, disseminate and raise the profile of their work and convey their proposals to both the City Council and the general public. Seven of the city's districts take part in Laia's Proclamation.

It entered a new stage in 2015, with the aim of making children's participation increasingly real and thereby enabling the establishment of a direct dialogue with political decision-makers. Grouped by school within the same district, they draw up a District Manifesto, which is read out in the district council chamber and includes a part where children address political decision-makers and convey their projects, suggestions and complaints to them. In that way, a very rich dialogue is established that is highly valued by all those involved.

### • 2019-2024 Urban Mobility Plan

In 2018 the Area of Urban Ecology carried out a diverse and extensive participatory process to draft the 2019-2024 Urban Mobility Plan. In addition to sessions open to the general public, activities were planned with specific groups (children, elderly people, women, people with functional diversity and so on). Six meetings were held in June 2018 with classroom groups from four of the city's schools. The participatory dynamics highlighted the children's perceptions of mobility-related problems and gathered the solutions they proposed.

### • 2020-2030 Play in Public Spaces Plan

Under the 2020-2030 Play in Public Spaces Plan, a participatory process was held with children on transforming Parc Central de Nou Barris and Parc de la Pegaso. This project, enshrined in the Barcelona Strategy, and the government measure presented on 23 February 2018 at the Full Municipal Council Meeting, gives a lot of scope for promoting a change in recognising the social importance of play in public spaces as an urban policy. In all, 170 children took part in this co-creation process.

### • Youth Get Informed and Take Part Points (JIP Points)

The Area of Social Rights Youth Department offers a municipal social and educational action service for teenage students aged 12 to 16 at (state and state-assisted) secondary schools and other post-compulsory education students (Baccalaureate and vocational training cycles). Invariably coordinated with school management, this service is offered through "Youth Get Informed and Take Part" Points, known as JIP Points, and implemented in a regular face-to-face assistance space that enables young people to put queries to and establish a relationship their animator.

One day a week at breaktime these professionals provide a service at secondary schools, although their work usually involves a lot more: training and coordinating delegates, classroom talks on topics of interest at tutorial time,



organising information campaigns, animation activities, support for setting up projects and activities on the initiative of students, helping them with facilities and resources, etc. This service is not limited solely to having an impact through stimulating strategies in schools. It also enables the student activities to be carried out outside school too.

By the end of 2018, JIP Points were operating in 79 of the city's secondary schools (IES) during breaktimes or at the times young people arrive or leave during school hours.

We should also mention the main goals of the Secondary School and Vocational Training Centre Information and Animation Service, which are to:

- Inform and guide students on various areas of their life so they are equipped to take independent and responsible decisions, while ensuring equal opportunities: academic pathways, educational recreation, employment and the world of work, municipal resources, health, youth travel, and so on.
- Detect the student community's information, training and other needs.
- Promote cultural, sports, educational and free-time dissemination and creation activities, in and out of school.
- Facilitate relations and ties between school students and the facilities, youth services and youth associations or organisations in the districts, through joint and/or complementary initiatives or activities.
- Promote participatory social initiatives for secondary students in and out of school.
- Foster the acquisition of consultation habits and participation mechanisms by providing technical and methodological support for the children's initiatives, putting the emphasis on both the result and the process, understood as an educational opportunity.
- Boost existing representative and participatory bodies in secondary schools.

#### • **Baobab programme: educational leisure from a community perspective**

The Baobab programme promoted by the Barcelona Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB) aims to promote and consolidate educational leisure in several of the city's neighbourhoods where it is either weak or non-existent. In particular it aims to promote and boost leisure activities organised by young people who, inspired by the association movement, carry out voluntary work with an explicit educational agenda targeted at children and young people. The Baobab philosophy puts children at the centre. Children's groups at summer camps co-construct the project they wish to work on during their long holidays and which they reflect on and assess every day.

## • School paths, friendly spaces

The Barcelona Municipal Institute of Education is behind the School Paths, Friendly Spaces project, designed so the city's children can gain personal independence and quality of life as they come and go to and from school, go to play centres, do sport etc. The project also promotes a commitment to community participation. Classroom delegates take part in the diagnostics, which is included in the goals of each school.

The programme was implemented in the Gràcia, Eixample, Sant Martí and Sants-Montjuïc districts in 2006. In December 2018 there were 114 schools spread across all the districts with a School Path already inaugurated and a further 28 schools which will be able to inaugurate one between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.

## • School Delegates Programme

The Delegates Programme is a tool for educating children in participation from the school itself. Launched by the Youth Department, the Barcelona Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB) and the School Council, it aims to promote the culture of student participation in city schools.

Taking advantage of the fact that schools are a privileged social space for learning to participate and educating in the basic skills of citizenship, the Delegates Programme works on participation from a comprehensive perspective, based on the idea that the best way for student to learn how to participate and organise themselves is through their own participatory practice.

This programme involves training aimed at the classroom delegates and student representatives on the School Council, although student assemblies are not exempt. The Barcelona Youth Council runs the training which animators from the JIP Points that serve the schools take part in. After the training, delegates receive support, mentoring and advice from the JIP animator on promoting participation. The goals at this stage of the programme are to:

- Promote participatory social initiatives for secondary students in and out of school.
- Foster the acquisition of consultation habits and participation mechanisms by providing technical and methodological support for the children's initiatives, putting the emphasis on both the result and the process, understood as an educational opportunity.
- Boost existing representative and participatory bodies in secondary schools.

Finally, for the 2019 elections, School Councils aim to use the Decidim Barcelona platform to make council elections and voting processes at schools easier, to facilitate student participation.

- **Children's participation in the municipal government measure Childhood and Citizenship Focus 2017-2020: Plan for childhood and teenage growth and experience in Barcelona**

This municipal plan is the framework for planning and mainstreaming the main policies affecting children and teenagers in the city. It incorporates some of the children's contributions through a participatory process based on a recreational and educational model that was implemented in 2018 at 22 centres (a school and 21 children's play groups, toy libraries and open centres) that 321 children aged 6 to 13 took part in. The proposals collected were based on the four rights and ten challenges of the Focus. The main concern of children is for all forms of violence against children to be prevented, detected and dealt with; in second place, better health; third, social inclusion and equal opportunities, and fourth, more inclusive leisure opportunities for children. According to the participatory process evaluation survey, 80% of children considered the dynamic as "fun" overall, 91.6% found it was "very" or "quite" easy to make proposals for improving the city and 91.2% thought it worth making proposals and that it was useful working to improve the city.

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- **Children speak: the subjective well-being of children in Barcelona**

"Children speak: the subjective well-being of children in Barcelona" is a programme for finding out the well-being of children in the city, from their perspective and with them at the centre. Launched in 2018 by the Barcelona City Council Area of Social Rights, and run by the Barcelona Institute for Children and Teenagers, it aims to be a periodic research tool of wide social and territorial scope for finding out what children aged 10 to 12 are like in several areas of their lives. The programme is based on participatory methodologies and research geared to change, from analysing children's proposals for improving their well-being.

The "Children Speak" programme is based on the right of children to be heard and have their opinions taken into account, as well as their right to be a central player and for everyone to act thinking of their interest. Therefore it is implemented in three stages:

1. Survey on subjective well-being: data is collected on the well-being of children by asking them directly rather than the adults they live with. Taking part in the survey were 4,000 city children aged 10 to 12, with a representative sample for all the districts, thanks to the involvement of 52 city schools.

2. Participatory workshops: 84 participatory workshops were held at participating schools where 2,000 children helped to interpret the survey's results and proposed improvements for their well-being intended for the City Council and other authorities, schools, families and the children themselves.
3. The Children's Agenda: the knowledge generated in the survey and during the workshops was analysed and summarised in an agenda of proposals from Barcelona's children. The aim is to open up social dialogues and informed debates to find solutions to their demands, with responsibilities shared. The Speaker Group, made up of some thirty children aged 11 to 13 who had taken part at every stage of the programme, was tasked with introducing the Children's Agenda to the city's political decision-makers, municipal services, entities and social players, beginning with the Mayor.

The Children's Agenda was presented to the Full City Council in 2018 and to the City Citizen Council's Standing Committee in 2019.

### • Participatory appraisal with children on health and the neighbourhoods

In 2017 the Barcelona Public Health Agency promoted a participatory appraisal with children on health and the neighbourhoods. The aim was to incorporate the child population into the community health appraisal, to improve participation in community processes. Qualitative methodologies were used with groups aged 10 to 14 which identified the main positive and negative aspects, taking into account professional awareness for incorporating them and adapting tools and methods suitable for making children's participation feasible.

### • SL projects on children's rights in collaboration with *betevé*

The Children's Rights Network, promoted by Barcelona City Council, has launched service-learning (SL) in radio, television and website formats run by children to introduce their vision of children's rights through audiovisual media.

### • Applied research entitled "Psycho-social interventions in families with children at risk under the framework of basic social services"

In January 2016, the Institute for Research on Quality of Life at the University of Girona, working together with Barcelona City Council's Area of Social Rights, presented an analysis of the efficacy of the professional practices of social services aimed at children at risk and their families, to identify interventions, strategies and techniques for improving children's risk situations. The social services centres chosen were: Raval Sud, Numància, Sant Gervà-

si, Vall d'Hebron and Besòs. The opinions of not just professionals but also assisted families, children and teenagers were collected. Thirty-nine interviews were carried out with users (7 with children and teenagers and 32 with adults, of whom 7 were fathers and 25 mothers). Out of all those interviewed, 18% were children and teenagers. The level of satisfaction obtained presented differences according to whether it was an adult or minor under the age of 18 who answered: the average overall score from children and teenagers was higher than that from adults.

Interventions, strategies and techniques relating to the change or improvement of children's risk situations were identified, such as the participation of children and teenagers in the social services centres and work carried out directly with minors and their families; receiving and giving shelter to families; the techniques and factors of the service they influence, as well as intervention monitoring and assessment.

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### • Children's participation in the 2016-2019 PAM

Children and teenagers were given an opportunity to help draft the Municipal Action Programme (PAM) for the first time in 2016. Twenty-four meetings were held in eight districts (Nou Barris, Horta-Guinardó, Gràcia, Sarrià-Sant Gervasi, Les Corts, Sants-Montjuïc, Eixample and Ciutat Vella), with 382 attendees who presented 146 proposals.

### • Regulatory Rules for Citizen Participation

The Regulatory Rules for Citizen Participation approved on 6 October 2017 set out the regulations for promoting and implementing participatory democracy in the city. They state that the Convention on the Rights of the Child approved in 1989 by the UN General Assembly guarantees participation rights for children, including appropriate information, freedom of expression, being heard and that their opinions are duly taken into account in every decision that affects them, according to their maturity.

In the case of citizen initiatives, these are legitimated where they are signed by registered city residents over the age of 16. People under the age of 18 may take part in participatory bodies and processes and in some cases do not need to be registered as city residents. Finally, only people over the age of 16 who are registered as city residents may vote in citizen consultations.

### • InfantLab

Organised by the Department for the Promotion of Children, the InfantLab Day was held on 20 November 2017 to underscore the opinions of children and teenagers on defining how they had to take part in city life. Around a

hundred children and teenagers gave their opinion on the features this stable participatory framework should have to ensure that their opinions and interests were listened to and taken into account during the planning of city policies. The children asked for their participation to be easy, useful and fun.

## • Children's participation projects in the districts

### • Children's participation projects in the Ciutat Vella District

"Let's decide the development of Plaça Carme Simó": a participatory process for deciding on the plans for a new square being created in a space next to the Escola Baixeras. Participatory workshops were held between December 2016 and February 2017, which included children aged 6 and 12 as well as adults in designing the spaces. Children were taken into account from the beginning as it was a space they had to use every day, not just with the school as a playground space, but with families too. The children's proposals on it were turned into a long-term urban development project and playground equipment that would be used at breaktime. The project involved the Escola Baixeras and its Students' Families Association.

"A participatory process for remodelling the Rambla del Raval, Plaça de Salvador Seguí and Plaça de Vázquez Montalbán": a participatory process for remodelling these spaces to transform Rambla del Raval's linear dynamics and help to encourage more activities and uses of its spaces. The participatory process took place from June to September 2017 and then an urban development project was drafted. This had a participatory dynamic because children and teenagers aged 10 and over were asked to locate on a map the things they would like to have in the remodelled space. Raval's *Festa Major* (annual festival) provided an opportunity for developing these dynamics and reaching a larger number and greater diversity of participants, bearing in mind gender criteria, cultural contexts, age groups, etc. At the same time, several of the neighbourhood's associations launched other participatory process with children under the Raval Sud-Gòtic Sud Neighbourhood Plan, to discover how they perceived the area and what proposals they had for its redevelopment.

Finally, in 2019 and adopting an intercultural perspective, work began on the uses of the squares.

### • Children's participation projects in the Eixample District

In 2016 primary and secondary schools in the Esquerra de l'Eixample neighbourhood that were part of the "Friendly Path" set up the Children's Council, with the intention of giving school-age children direct access to their district councillor so they could convey their demands and discuss with them twice a year. Prior to that, the children had been given an explanation of the district's structures and executive bodies, as well as those of the City Council. This

discussion process has been set out in a government measure entitled “Let’s fill the streets with life”, under which demands have begun to take shape.

- **Children’s participation projects in the Sants-Montjuïc District**

The La Marina Child, Teenage and Family Board (TIAF) is a community network for improving the well-being of children and teenagers and which runs the project to encourage their participation in La Marina’s neighbourhoods. It does that by sharing knowledge of children’s realities in various spheres (family, school, leisure, sport, the mass media, cultural, civic, neighbourhood and so on) and through some 2,000 people for promoting regular initiatives aimed at increasing the opportunities, levels and scope of participation of La Marina’s children and teenagers. Notable initiatives carried out have included setting up a working group with teachers from the neighbourhood’s state schools to design an education plan on child and teenage participation in schools, and pushing for a group to be set up to advise on, co-design and validate participatory proposals aimed at their peers, as well as how to communicate them in the various spheres and how to ensure they have a bigger role in the TIAF. The project has been submitted to the Neighbourhood Council, which will produce a monograph in 2019 with a critical review of these participatory spaces as far as including young locals is concerned, and will promote innovation in that regard.

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- **Children’s participation projects in the Les Corts District**

The “Tria el verd de la Colònia!” project (#elverdellacolonia) is a participatory process held in 2018 to set out the citizen proposals and criteria for preparing the final plans for a new public green space inside the Colònia Castells block, measuring 10,000 square metres. Participatory workshops and days were held where a special role was played by people who, often, are not given enough prominences or an important role: women in their diversity, children, young people, elderly people or people with functional diversities. The Decidim.Barcelona platform was used for monitoring the participatory process, enabling information to be given on all the meetings, minutes to be consulted and proposals to be made online that were later discussed at face-to-face meetings for further proposals. The methodologies were adapted to the needs of the various groups. Drawings were used with children at toy libraries and some schools to establish closer links with them. A space was proposed for encouraging activities and games for all age groups (children, teenagers and older) and all forms of diversity that would include movement for promoting free creative play.

The district’s schools take part in Laia’s Proclamation and, since 2015, the district’s manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

And 2019 will see the start of a participatory process relating to the Carnival festival, so it can be adapted to children’s needs, setting up a committee



made up of children. A couple of examples of completely new initiatives resulting from this initiative are awards ceremonies for children's parades and juries made up of children.

- **Children's participation projects in the Sarrià-Sant Gervasi District**

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

- **Children's participation projects in the Gràcia District**

Activities are being promoted to change the uses of the squares, given there are disputes between local residents, above all in Plaça del Sol and Plaça de la Virreina, where alcohol consumption is very high. The aim is for children to contribute towards the decisions in this participatory process, so a games kiosk has been proposed in order that children themselves choose what they want to play in the squares. The plan for children to actively participate in programming activities for the district's squares during the autumn of 2019, creating a space for participation space and taking decisions so they can decide how to liven up the squares and what uses they are put to.

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

- **Children's participation projects in the Horta-Guinardó District**

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

The target is to include children's participation by 8 May 2019, to mark World Play Day, so a proposal has been made to involve reference figures in the process, or even a group that could take responsibility for a space.

The Rambla del Carmel participatory process held in 2018 managed to get its young users involved in the participatory process. As a result, a draft plan for improving the Rambla will be drawn up in 2019.

- **Children's participation projects in the Nou Barris District**

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

- **Children's participation projects in the Sant Andreu District**

The Plaça dels Drets dels Infants party-wall project was the final result of the representation process held with students from the Escola Ramon y Cajal and the Escola Ramon Berenguer III. The children's proposal was re-interpreted and technically validated by the Globus Vermell team of architects, the Municipal Institute of Urban Landscape and the Sant Andreu District. Children's participation in children's activity centres (participation of minors

and family members in the service's dynamics) were also included among the successful bidder's obligations in the technical specifications.

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

- **Children's participation projects in the Sant Martí District**

Participation has been incorporated as a basic feature in children's facilities and the Department of People Services is considering setting up a council, board or meeting with the district's children.

The district's schools take part in Laia's Proclamation and, since 2015, the district's manifesto has been put together by the children taking part.

- **Training for professionals**

- **Children's Participation Steering Group**

In 2017 the Department for the Promotion of Children created the Children's Participation Steering Group for municipal professionals to make headway in the area of their participation, based on knowledge of the experiences taking place, sharing the knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses and promoting new initiatives for children's participation. During 2018, the group has drawn up a guide entitled "Encouraging children's participation in municipal services and projects", while in 2019 it will work on improving existing participatory processes with children and how to develop new forms of their participation. The group is now expected to be expanded with professionals from other authorities and the possibility of building bridges with entities in the area of children and teenagers will also be assessed.

- **Training days on children's participation with the Change Factory model**

In 2018, training days were held on children's participation and attended by 36 professionals from the City Council, entities in the Network of Children's Rights and various social entities working with children and teenagers. The Norwegian team, Change Factory, made up mostly by young PROs, used their personal experiences to illustrate the keys to the Norwegian participation model, which involves valuing children's knowledge and putting it on the same level as that of researchers and professionals. During these sessions, students from the Escola Lluís Vives presented their proposals in relation to the Childhood Focus of the City Council Commissioner for Participation and Active Democracy.

- **Entity projects with subsidies and/or agreements**

- **"Visc, convisc i participo" project**

The "Visc, convisc i participo" project, run by the Barcelona Youth Council

with support from Barcelona City Council, is an educational action project which, based on dynamics typical of informal education, promotes participation as a personal and collective learning tool and as a mechanism with a capacity for having an impact on and transforming the environment. It also explains the various channels for student participation both in and out of school, putting special emphasis on the youth association network. This project is aimed at 3rd- and 4th-year students at the city's secondary schools. It is normally included as part ethics or similar courses, or in the Tutorial Action Plan.

- **Barcelona Youth Council**

The Youth Council is a platform of associations and collectives representing organised youth in Barcelona. It networks to promote associations, generate discussions on the problems and concerns of young people and helps to contribute proposals and build alternatives.

- **Project for Promoting the Participation of Children and Young People**

The Federation of Care and Education Entities for Children and Young People (FEDAIA) runs the Promoting the Participation of Children and Young People project, for the purposes of disseminating and promoting "I tu, què opines?" ("And you, what do you think?"), a project to encourage the participation of children and teenagers in designing, implementing and assessing public spaces and incorporate children and teenagers in the entities' participatory bodies.

- **Social action project of the programme for fighting against child poverty**

One of the activities of this Save The Children project is designed to ensure children can exercise their right of social participation, thus increasing their direct participation in the programme, and in designing, implementing and assessing its activities. Children's and teenagers' civil rights, in particular that of participation, are also promoted among the children themselves and their families.

- **Barcelona recognised as a Child-Friendly City**

In 2006 UNICEF recognised Barcelona as a Child-Friendly City (CFC), a status renewed in 2018 for designing effective public policies in line with the Agenda 2030 approach. These policies are based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (rights and fairness approach), promoting child and teenage participation (participation approach) and giving an impetus to alliances between all the players involved with children at the municipal level (alliance approach), and they contribute towards achieving the goal of improving the children's well-being, by defending their rights, fostering their participation and making their city environments more habitable, especially for younger children.

- **Radio, a participatory tool**

Intress: Institute of Employment and Social Security, a member of the Children's Rights Network, held a workshop in 2018 to introduce the Convention on Rights of the Child with radio broadcasting tools in schools. The students taking part thereby raised the awareness of other children and teenagers, adults, the educational community and neighbourhoods on the rights of children and violations of such rights.

Radio broadcasting media were provided for implementing this project, in collaboration with the Les Corts Educational Resources Centre.

- **"Participant plegats guanyem"**

Training provided in 2018 by professionals from entities and Intress services: Institute of Employment and Social Security in Barcelona, the Cibarjau Open Centre and the Josep Pallach Shelter for the effective participation of children and young people, and with their involvement. Work with children and young people at schools (6-10 schools) with the establishment of a ten-point list on participation, the preparation of a public document on needs and practical participatory tools, and the promotion of young people's and children's participation in the neighbourhood's spaces and school

- **Barcelona and our rights**

The Catalan Federation of Children's Youth Clubs trained professionals from recreational entities in children's and young people's participation in asserting their rights, putting emphasis on participation, non-discrimination and peace.

- **"Protagonistes, ja!" The Diomira Association's Defence of Children's Rights**

The main goal behind the publication *Protagonistes, ja!* is to spread and promote the rights recognised under the UN Convention on Rights of the Child, especially participation rights, for the purposes of disseminating projects, initiatives and good practices that are implemented in the area of children and teenagers and to offer a space for the direct participation of children where their opinions, proposals and experiences are collected.

- **Promoting children's participation at international meetings**

- **International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) in Barcelona (November 2018)**

Young people from the IES 4 Cantons who took part in a service-learning (SL) pilot project on Children's Rights on *betevé* during the 2017-2018 school year presented their experience at the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy on 17 November 2018. This event also saw the presentation of the "Children's Agenda, proposals for improving our well-being".

- **Audiovisual media for social transformation event**

Several participatory experiences involving children and young people were presented via local and international mass and audiovisual media, to mark the International Day of Educating Cities (November 2018). Notably the Nicaraguan young reporters' media club, an experience that inspired the Children's Rights Network to carry out the pilot service-learning radio, television and website project with betevé (Barcelona TV) at IES 4 Cantons.

- **Children's participation in primary and secondary schools**

- **Primary and secondary schools that have children's councils or participatory student processes**

State primary schools: Baixeras (Ciutat Vella District); Encants i Frutuós Gelabert (Eixample District); Barrufet, Bosc de Montjuïc, Francesc Macià, Seat i Jaume I (Sants-Montjuïc District); Pau Romeva (Les Corts District); Dolors Monserdà-Santa Pau (Sarrià-Sant Gervasi District), Josep M. de Sagarra i Rius i Taulet (Gràcia District); Pit Roig, Àngels Garriga, Parc del Guinardó, Heura, Torrent de Can Carabassa, Font de'n Fargas and Escola del Mar (Horta-Guinardó District); Mestre Morera (Nou Barris District), Octavio Paz and La Maquinista (Sant Andreu District); La Llacuna del Poblenou, Fluvià and Miquel Bleach (Sant Martí District).

State secondary schools: Institut Escola Costa i Llobera (Sarrià-Sant Gervasi District); Institut Escola Antaviana (Nou Barris District), and IES Barri Besòs (Sant Martí District).

State-assisted schools: Escola Thau and Sant Ramon Parroquial (Les Corts District), Institució Montserrat and Escola Lloret (Sants-Montjuïc District), and Escola Virolai (Horta-Guinardó District).

- **Barcelona's rights education benchmark schools**

In 2018 the Nou Patufet and Encants primary schools were recognised as Barcelona Benchmark Schools for Education in Children's Rights and Global Citizenship. This recognition, awarded by UNICEF and the Catalan Ministry of Education to promote education in children's rights, goes to schools that introduce rights, encourage participation, provide a protective environment against risks and promote a good school atmosphere.

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