



**Metropolis Conversation Series
Number 6**

**Growing Up In Cities:
Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth**



**Workshop Report
Prepared By
The Canadian Commission for UNESCO**

**Ottawa, Canada
August 2002**



**CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO**

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Since its beginnings in 1996, the Metropolis Project has created a formidable network of policy professionals and scientific researchers drawn from governments, universities, inter-governmental organizations, think tanks, and non-governmental agencies here in Canada and in over twenty other countries. This network has greatly enlarged the body of knowledge and expertise available to policy and program development experts, has increased sensitivity amongst academics to the needs of government and inter-governmental bodies, and has led to more productive relations with NGOs.

With the maturation of the Project, we are now able to deploy a more powerful policy-research "tool" in our efforts to improve the management of the profound changes wrought by migration and growing diversity. We intend to increase the power of our debates and our discussions through a series of small and highly focused conference workshops. Our experience leads us to believe that the **Metropolis Conversation Series** will prove to be of significant value, especially to those grappling with policy challenges of immediate concern.

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To plan a session in the Metropolis Conversation Series, to identify or articulate substantive issues, to develop a roster of participants, to commission background papers, to develop the format of the session, and to discuss follow-up, please contact:

Howard Duncan
Executive Head
Metropolis Project
365 Laurier Ave West, 15th floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1L1

Tel: (613) 957-5916
Fax: (613) 957-5968
E-mail: howard.duncan@cic.gc.ca

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METROPOLIS CONVERSATION SERIES

CONVERSATION NUMBER SIX

GROWING UP IN CITIES: “CREATING BETTER CITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH”

Acknowledgements

This Conversation was organized by Geneviève Talbot, Élisabeth Barot and Katherine Berg of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, and Katherine Pestieau and Erin Tolley of the Metropolis Project Team. The workshop was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada. Financial assistance was also provided by the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) programme of UNESCO, and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

This report was written and compiled by Ms. Kathryn White of Black and White Communication. Ronald Bisson, facilitator of the workshop as well as Louise Chawla and David Driskell, UNESCO experts, also contributed to the preparation of this report. Jeff Holt, of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, was responsible for the report's design and layout.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is an arm's length consultative forum that advises the Canadian government on its relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and coordinates its activities in Canada. For more information on the Commission and its activities, please contact us at the coordinates below:

CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
350 Albert Street, Box 1047
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V8
CANADA

Fax: (613) 566-4405
E-mail: info@unesco.ca
Web Site: www.unesco.ca

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Growing Up In Cities Workshop Report
Prepared By The Canadian Commission for UNESCO

I A CANADIAN CONTEXT

Three significant issues have emerged as Canada comes to terms with governance in the twenty-first century. First, it has become an increasing imperative to recognize and support “*competitive cities and healthy communities [which] are vital to our individual and national well-being...*” (Speech from the Throne, 2002 September). This is a fundamental acknowledgement of the importance of our urban centers. In Canada, a full eighty percent of the population resides in cities. Second, Canada is, as evinced through a number of international, national and provincial undertakings,¹ committed to citizen consultation in decision-making and has been seen as a leader in this aspect of governance. Such wide-ranging citizen-engagement has been developed and refined by governments, civil society and industry; however, an important segment of the population, which is frequently not integrated in the consultation process, is children and youth. In particular, children and youth who are marginalized in some way from the mainstream—through poverty, racism, discrimination or other risk factors—have been amongst the last groups integrated into decision-making consultations. While there are notable and model exceptions to the exclusion of children and youth from real decision making (the *War Child Conference* hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the *Toronto Youth Cabinet* formed and supported by the City of Toronto to be a resource to City Council on youth issues, and Québec’s provincial youth organization, *Forum Jeunesse*), youth engagement in decision-making in their communities has been sporadic and not integrated as sustainable programs, in spite of the expertise of children and youth in local barriers and bridges they confront in their environments.

¹ For example, internationally, the Habitat Agenda preamble and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; ‘Agenda 21’ from the 1992 Earth Summit; UNESCO Man in the Biosphere (MAB).

II UNESCO'S MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION & THE GROWING UP IN CITIES INITIATIVE

In 1993, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), through its Intergovernmental Programme in the Human and Social Sciences, established the Management of Social Transformation (MOST) programme, providing an international platform for supporting comparative, interdisciplinary and policy relevant research. Out of the MOST programme came *Growing Up In Cities* (GUIC), a project that seeks to understand the urban environment from children's perspectives and involve young people in implementing changes in their local areas. The project's origins are in the advocacy planning movement of the 1970s; in this case, under the leadership of the highly respected and innovative urban planner, Kevin Lynch. *Growing Up In Cities* pursues several simultaneous goals: it seeks to document how children use local environments and how they evaluate local resources and restrictions; it then seeks to apply these insights in order to understand how the urban environment affects children's lives, implement actions in response to the priorities young people have identified, and formulate indicators of 'enabling environments' in creating child-sensitive urban policies. GUIC uses a participatory research model that engages children and youth as both subjects and agents of research, works directly with children to help them speak for themselves, and propose changes to their environment. It also seeks to link community organizations in cooperation with academics to provide a rigorous social science framework to the process. The eight-nation² revival of GUIC under the international coordination of Louise Chawla, and also fostered by the MOST programme, had—and continues to have—outcomes beyond those envisioned by Lynch in the 1970s. Included as part of these are child-based indicators of environmental quality, physical improvements in local environments, and changes in policy and governance.³

² Johannesburg (South Africa), Northampton (UK), Bangalore (India), Trondheim (Norway), Oakland (USA), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Melbourne (Austria), Warsaw (Poland).

³ See Appendix 1

III THE WORKSHOP

In August 2002, a group including youth leaders involved in various processes of youth civic participation, civic politicians, federal policy, citizenship and development officials, academics, youth from city councils, NGOs (the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Institute on Governance) and community group youth workers were brought together by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to introduce them to the Growing Up In Cities model of youth-focused participatory research and to explore opportunities to expand, adapt and sustain child and youth participation in Canada through this model. The goal of the discussion was to identify the next steps for involving young people in community evaluation, planning and action.

IV CREATING INCLUSIVE PROCESSES FOR CITY DECISION-MAKING

It was widely recognized that efforts in Canada to engage children and youth in city decision-making are in an emergent state—not yet broadly sustaining or coherent. A number of significant initiatives, however, were cited as good practices and as lessons learned in authentic engagement of youth. One of the youth participants reflected, “Successful [engagement of youth in decision-making] for youth may be quite different [than that of adults],” thereby raising the notion of ‘success’—the definition of which is quite subjective—in evaluating child and youth engagement as well as participation.

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This gap in indicators of engagement was addressed, in part, by the ‘Ladder of Participation’⁴ created by Roger Hart, and presented by Louise Chawla and David Driskell. The illustration identified eight levels of young people’s participation in projects ranging from non-participation—manipulation—to the greatest degree of participation—child-initiated, decision sharing with adults.

There was a palpable impatience in the group to move forward in incorporating youth participation in communities and, further, to do so in a meaningful and national way. A number of Canadian initiatives modeling effective engagement of children and youth in

⁴ See Appendix 2

city and community decision-making were described. These projects and processes shared inventiveness and are described later in this report. The impatience in the group, however, was focused on the fact that even with innovative Canadian initiatives, these initiatives were sporadic and lacked strong institutional support. At this point it was recommended that the GUIC model stand for Growing Up In Canada and that the moment be seized to create a number of GUIC projects in a number of Canadian cities to begin to provide nationally useful comparative data.⁵

V PHASES OF THE GUIC MODEL

It became helpful during the dialogue to hear more about the methodologies of GUIC. In a GUIC initiative, once the action-research team has been formed, the networking and alliance building which takes place in getting a project on the ground is as much part of the process as the later phases. This includes building coalitions with established youth-friendly groups, and identifying community leaders who will bring support to these projects as well as disseminate the results. The project itself always builds on a detailed description of communities by the youth who inhabit them. The techniques for this description include interviews, group discussions, and youth-led walking tours of communities, where the young people indicate 'good' and 'bad' aspects of their area; and photography, which may be displayed in public spaces where the larger community can become engaged in providing a historical perspective of the buildings and spaces photographed. This assessment phase, like all phases, integrates academic researchers with community facilitators, ensuring that outcomes provide meaningful quantitative, hence comparative, data, while engaging the young researchers in the process and in their communities in this new way. This interactive or participatory research establishes baselines to track changes in young peoples' conditions and provides material to mobilize public support for improvement or changes. Finally, the process provides training in the techniques which it is built upon, thereby leaving a legacy of robust capacity building.

⁵ Appendix 3 describes the Growing up in Cities Sites 1970-2002.

Seeing the community through young eyes...

“Think back to your childhood. Think about a place that you loved to be – outside of your own home – and what it was about that place which made it so special to you? Think about a place you avoided, that was a bad place. What made it bad?”

VI CANADIAN SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION

A member of the Toronto Youth Cabinet described a process of having to build credibility in order for the Cabinet to be recognized and be seen as legitimate by elected officials and staff at Toronto City Hall. A forum for “youth ‘experts,’” providing continuity and capacity building, was suggested as the first of many recommendations related to training. Political support for youth involvement is essential.

Examples of poorly integrated youth participation were many and included a project for Muslim and non-Muslim training on tolerance following the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001. While the young people recruited for the process ‘brought lots to the table’, the immense resource they represented had been ignored until after these events.

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The Native Games hosted in the summer of 2002 in Winnipeg, and in particular the Mayor’s decision to invite many youth to the city for these events, provided a moving example of youth engagement and provided meaningful awareness-raising of youth participation and leadership. In spite of its success, it was not integrated into a larger, sustainable approach.

A New Brunswick activist city councilor acknowledged that “kids [are] having a problem understanding thier place.” A Human Resources Development Canada initiative was described that linked local schools to co-op education opportunities to prepare young people for the world of work. While outcomes seemed very good, it was acknowledged that it was not a youth-designed project. Other initiatives focusing on recreation had been more successful by the measure of youth participation but a need for a project like GUIC was recognized.

A cautionary note was provided regarding starting something without being able to sustain it. “Our youth get discouraged and the group breaks up and that energy is lost.” This was according to a young city councillor from New Brunswick, identifying an immediate and urgent

need for city councils themselves to have training in youth participation. The conflicting imperatives of municipalities and provinces and territories were described as presenting barriers to integrated youth engagement. Many municipalities would describe youth participation as 'social', with councilors then saying it is a provincial matter, or that the federal government needs to support it. In fact, all of these levels of government need to be engaged and need their own training.

In an innovative piece of activism in response to the acknowledged reality that 'youth don't vote,' a member of the Toronto Youth Cabinet described a process of partnering with adult community leaders in one city councillor's ward to show that youth do matter to the community. The power of strategic partnerships "*even with those who we might not want to partner with*" is key.

In another example of strategic partnering, a New Brunswick councillor described getting seniors to support youth initiatives around recreation. Cross-generational partnerships, particularly with seniors, were endorsed and service clubs were cited as a lever to this partnership. Official status for youth groups was one way to support partnerships and build the credibility of youth groups.

Using the Internet to reach youth who are often unaware of initiatives for them provides a modality which is well suited to the young audience. In the same way, a newspaper in Toronto called "Catch the Flavour," which is completely youth run, builds civic literacy.

The role of politicians in building this civic literacy as part of a participatory cycle was questioned. How do we connect with institutions where youth are found? Schools, an obvious example, seem to be places where politicians and politics could become more integrated into life.

The difficulties in reaching marginalized young people were explored. Getting to disenfranchised youth is a challenge. In one example of a group working with police on youth violence, the youth leader pushed for the inclusion of the young homeless since this problem impacted greatly on them. Strategies and tactics for this engagement must be refined and adapted.

As a key indicator of programme development, personal stories were recounted along with social science data for the role of one, supportive adult – outside the immediate family – as being essential to young people becoming engaged in participation and leadership.

The Province of Québec's Youth Forum '98, a government-sponsored conference that was the impetus for a province-wide, youth administered program and fund, offered the most integrated example of youth participation in decision-making and programme development. Youth have been integrated as full participants in decision making—including financial decisions, thanks to the advocacy of Québec youth, as well as the open-mindedness of the provincial leadership. In the weeks following this GUIC workshop, the groups (representing 18 regions of the province) were further awarded funding of \$15 million dollars over three years—a demonstration of sustainability. Lessons learned from this innovative process were that youth need to change structures of government where there are barriers to youth engagement; youth need to be listened to, and to 'infiltrate' government; and that all generations need to evolve together and not be seen as being against each other and their rights to participation.

VII ACADEMICS' "CORNER"

Taking part in this workshop were three Canadian academics who had some special association to the topic of youth engagement (See Bibliography). These participants were invited to speak separately of their work as well as participate in the conversations of the workshop.

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Tullio Caputo emphasized the importance of 'normalizing' youth participation. Using the language of human rights, gender or environment, this could also be referred to as 'mainstreaming'. Caputo placed integrated youth participation in decision making in the context of social cohesion and of seeing their participation as social capital. He described the need to work at three levels: on the ground or local level, the political level and organizationally. After his survey for Health Canada, *Hearing the Voices of Youth: Youth Participation in Selected Canadian Municipalities*, he concluded that for some communities, this issue is simply not on their radar screens; that communities need documentation of processes and structure for youth engagement; that training materials, especially for schools, are essential; that best practices must be gathered and archived; and that the engagement of youth needs to be articulated in ways that are meaningful for policy researchers and developers to ensure that decisions that support these needs are made.

Henry Milner addressed the notion of the federally created 'citizen' with a federal government that really has little access in the provinces. With the exception of the province of Québec, which seems to be

ahead on this issue at a province-wide political level, municipalities are 'left' with issues of citizenship. He identified this fragmentation of many municipalities, coming up with various approaches or no approaches at all, as a problem. Milner also identified from his own work the lack of interest young people have in acquiring information about citizenship or engagement. His research identified that it is youth as a sector who are not voting – not the more commonly accepted notion that all Canadians are voting less. How do our policies reach those who are not engaged when it is so difficult to reach those who are now ready to be engaged? One of the answers to his rhetorical question was to note what the province of Québec is doing: making youth engagement a priority.

Madeleine Gauthier spoke more specifically to the dialogue of the workshop, questioning how GUIC would apply in the Canadian context. She advocated training as an essential element to intervene in structures and organizations. Identifying pre-conditions for youth engagement was an aspect of the research element of GUIC which was particularly useful. Would it be useful to train leaders, mentors or perhaps to have levels of apprenticeships? The importance of the media and a media strategy that sought to overcome some media barriers (e.g. negative stereotyping of youth) from the beginning of a GUIC initiative was stressed. The publication of results of GUIC projects was also identified as essential in building the credibility of the initiative with academics and policy makers.

VIII CANADIAN LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH LEADERSHIP

There were three projects or programmes presented by youth participants or leaders working on the projects.⁶ Lessons learned as well as good practices that have been building – but not yet recorded from these initiatives – were highlighted. The projects presented provided a living illustration of working at different levels of institutional/organization/youth engagement: On the ground—Gatineau Youth Commission; municipal/political—Toronto Youth Cabinet; and provincial/political/institutional – Forum Jeunesse Québec.

⁶ Available on request.

In common, these projects all confronted tokenism and lack of legitimacy and the young people involved struggled with solutions to address these challenges. They also spoke of the need for training. Two types of training were mentioned: the need to train adults who are in power on the importance of youth participation in the decision-making process, and the need to train young persons on the importance of participation and how it can help them achieve their goals. Youth also need training in writing proposals and enhancing presentation skills. There is also a need for a 'champion' or youth-friendly adult who can provide key support to each of these projects at pivotal times. Sustaining young people's engagement in these processes was a key challenge: one presentation referred to this lack of sustained engagement (and therefore, decreased experience and capacity) as a 'revolving door syndrome' and noted the toll that this takes on 'corporate memory.' The presenters all confirmed the important role the media played in maintaining or enhancing support for their engagement. Only the Toronto group spoke about the resistance to representative engagement of minority youth and marginalized youth. The need to address social issues in an authentic way with this community was urged.

IX CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

A wide-ranging dialogue emerged focusing on next steps to creating a 'made-in-Canada' Growing Up In Cities. Guidance provided by the international coordinator of GUIC, Louise Chawla, emphasized that the model was just that: an idea of how to undertake a meaningful project of youth engagement in their description of what they valued in their community and a way to take action and implement changes, while at the same time building robust research data. Dr. Chawla described the process of securing funding for the 1990s version of GUIC, which included such anomalies as an Italian foundation funding the Oakland, California project. Because the research partnership is so important to the model, the role of a motivated graduate student was key in a number of the GUIC sites. This involvement, by and large, also keeps costs down. An interdisciplinary approach to the research side of the project was recommended: Kevin Lynch, the originator of the project was an urban planner; Louise Chawla is an environmental and child psychologist. There were other successful models of research partnerships composed for example, of an anthropologist, architect and a city council member (local politician).

It was unanimously agreed that Canada could benefit significantly from the momentum, networks, research data and extant capacity through

launching a GUIC initiative. An ‘across Canada’ national initiative was also endorsed for the rich comparative data that would be gathered. The national approach would answer the concerns of those who felt that, ultimately, citizenship was a national value as well as responsibility.

Twinning of potential Canadian GUIC sites with communities in the developing world was recommended to integrate a global perspective, to enhance the comparative database as well as adhere to the project’s leading global context. Combined with Canadian sites’ attention to the engagement of marginalized youth in their own communities, bringing in less developed countries as ‘partners’ was identified as a means to engage more meaningfully in identifying, shared or unique, experiences, gaps and risks to communities.

A significant challenge described by the GUIC practitioners was the show of paternalism from local officials and from some NGOs. Local officials, in some cases, viewed children’s needs as, for example, saving a sports field, when the children themselves wanted clean water and sanitation or safety from violence in their play environments. Negotiation and representation skills which could address this paternalism were outcomes of findings from both GUIC and Canadian experiences.

A Toronto Youth Cabinet member was excited by the possibility that a GUIC Canadian project could give a picture of what his life and experience is like as a disenfranchised minority. His excitement in getting a Growing Up In Canada initiative implemented was the power it would create through its case studies. Decisions at the municipal level are often reactionary – “First, something goes wrong. Then we do something.” A GUIC initiative would provide answers to the Councillors who have asked “Why are some young people so angry?” While the answers were obvious to him, he realized that having national data that could, for example, reach into Aboriginal communities in New Brunswick and elsewhere and compare them to other marginalized communities would serve both the needs of policy makers as well as those of youth.

A ‘hub’ or center was called for, since a number of workshop participants were going back to their communities to build GUIC ‘readiness’ now. While UNESCO had a role in supporting and championing the 1970s and 1990s project – notably through publishing results and providing a small travel budget – the Canadian Commission for UNESCO does not have these resources. The staff of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, however, will continue to be supportive through the creation

of an Internet network, the provision of a report as well as assisting with supporting dialogue. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) was cited by a municipal councillor working on a youth committee as potentially being a unifying and central support. There were federal bureaucrats who also saw that their role could be in identifying pre-existing 'envelopes' or funds to which FCM, representing those with interested municipalities, could apply.

A plurality of participants in this workshop gave their names and offered to support the initiative to bring GUIC to Canada. It was agreed that further dialogue and data is necessary before a next meeting is held, for which the listserv will serve as a registry. Some participants, notably in New Brunswick and Manitoba, felt that dialogue in their communities with youth and other potential 'supporters' would be undertaken immediately.

Strategic steps will be:

- To continue to solicit interest in public spheres as well as through community newspaper and other vehicles;
- To engage FCM and potential funding bodies early in the process;
- To gather and share a basic overview of what Growing Up In Canada will have as ideals, goals and outcomes;
- To undertake a basic assessment to ensure that the sites are representative;
- To identify sustainable aspects and tools in supporting the initiative;
- To map assets and resources—from funding to community youth leadership and identification of the communities; then to gather for training.

In parallel to, and part of, this process is more deliberation with youth and their integration into all aspects of development.

In conclusion, the group was reminded by David Driskell, GUIC co-presenter, urban planner and leader of the GUIC Bangalore, India, initiative, that supporting youth participation also means knowing when to get out of the way. The opportunity GUIC presents in every neighbourhood in every country is moving youth participation from mere tokenism to real decision-making power (and its concomitant responsibilities). “Who’s not at the table?” is a question at the heart of GUIC.

In Canada, arguably one of our most valuable assets is our willingness to embrace diversity. The federal research agenda, focused on social cohesion, growth, and human development, is a consistent fit with the objectives of Growing Up In Cities. Through the eight countries who have hosted the GUIC revival in the 1990s, the leading ‘positive’ indicator for a quality environment for children was social integration; that is, that children feel welcome and valued in their community. This initiative, and the Canadians from across the country who came together to explore—and left committed to action—speaks to an opportunity for Canada to continue to extend its welcome to all citizens in civic discourse and decision-making by ensuring that the tools and supports are ready to include youth in building a cohesive society.

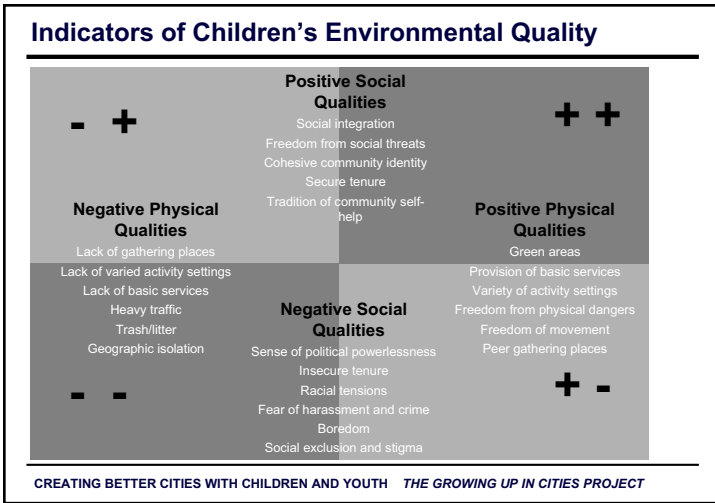
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APPENDICES

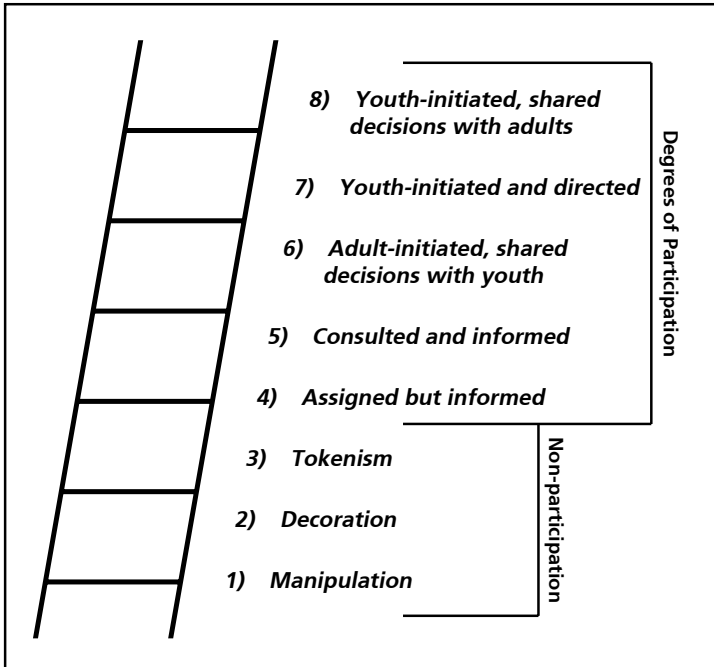
Appendix 1: Child-Based Indicators of Environmental Quality Findings from the Eight-Nation Revival of Growing Up In Cities

(Page 229, *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*, Louise Chawla, Editor)

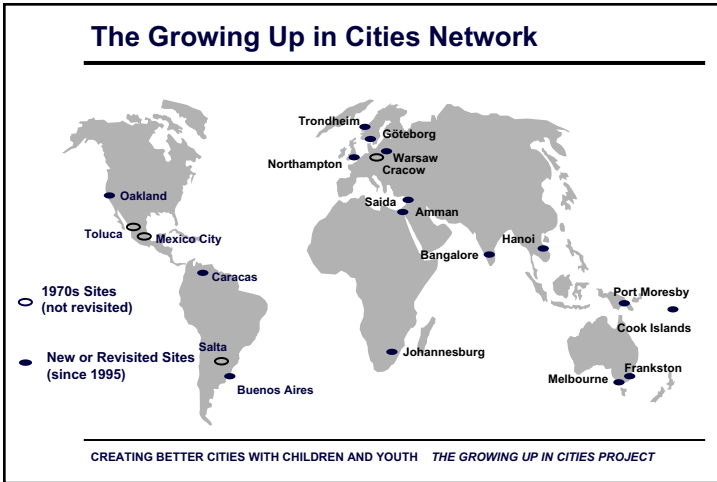


Appendix 2: Ladder of Participation

(From Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF)



Appendix 3: Growing Up In Cities Sites 1970 – 2002



Appendix 4: List of Workshop Participants

Alexandre Gauthier
Commission jeunesse

Christine Lessard
Ministère du Patrimoine Canadien
christine_lessard@pch.gc.ca

David Driskell
Visiting Scholar
Cornell University
driskell@bdplanning.com

Elizabeth Hoffman
Canada's Coalition for Public
Information
hoffman@mb.sympatico.ca

Erin Tolley
Research Analyst
Metropolis Project
erin.tolley@metropolis.net

Gail Cockburn
Child Protection
ACDI
gail_cockburn@acdi-cida.gc.ca

Gilbert Cyr
Councillor
City of Campbellton
gilbert.cyr@gnb.ca

Henry Milner
Professeur Associé
GRIG-Université Laval
henry.milner@grig.ulaval.ca

Janet Neves
Policy analyst
Federation of Canadian
Municipalities
jneves@fcm.ca

Jean Séguin
Director-Promotion Division
CIC
jean.seguin@cic.gc.ca

Joel Richardson
President
The Cities of New Brunswick
Association
joel.richardson@gnb.ca

John Capelli
Program Officer
Institute on Governance
jcapelli@iog.ca

Kehinde Bah
Chair
Toronto Youth Cabinet
koinpin@hotmail.com

Louise Chawla
Whitney Young College
Chawla393@aol.com

Madeleine Gauthier
Professeure Responsable
Observatoire jeunes et société
madeleine_gauthier@inrs-uqs.quebec.ca

Marie Bernier
Commission jeunesse de Hull
mariebernier@comnet.ca

Marie-Ève Proulx
Association des régions du Québec
jeunesse@regions.qc.ca

Marie-Hélène St-Onge
Responsable-Secteur Gatineau
Ville de Gatineau
st-onge.marie-helene@ville.gatineau.qc.ca

Mary Peters
Youth Initiative Directory
HRDC
mary.peters@hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

Meg Darragh
Institut on Governance
mdarragh@IOG.CA

Megan Bradley
International Development Research
Centre
mbradley@idrc.ca

Nathalie Veilleux
Coordonnatrice d'activité
Ville de Gatineau
veilleux.nathalie@ville.gatineau.qc.ca

Paul Black
YouthFluence
blackpf@gov.ns.ca

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Rachna Contractor
City of Toronto
rachna.contractor@utoronto.ca

Ronald Bisson
Facilitator
r@bisson.ca

Roy Boudreau
Conseiller
City of Campbellton
mayor@campbellton.org

Ryan Teschner
Toronto Youth Cabinet
r_teschner@hotmail.com

Sherri Hanley
Federation of Canadian
Municipalities
shanley@fcm.ca

Tullio Caputo
Professor
Carleton University
t.caputo@sympatico.ca