



shaping healthy communities



**Urban
synergies**
group

9th World Urban Forum Side Networking Event Report

**shaping healthy cities
for and with children**



Suggested citation for this report: Mews G. (2018). Shaping Healthy Cities for and with Children: Side Networking Event Report. 9th World Urban Forum. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Canberra, Australia.

Shaping Healthy Cities with and for Children

9th World Urban Forum Side Networking Event Report.

© Urban Synergies Group PTY LTD 2018.

The text of the “Shaping Healthy Cities with and for Children” in this report is used by kind permission of Urban Synergies Group PTY LTD.

Copyright © Photographs and Report Design, Daniella L. Mews, 2018.

Copyright © Text, Gregor H. Mews, 2018.

Edited, Bryony Cooper, 2018.

First published in Australia in 2018 by Urban Synergies Group PTY LTD,

e: info@urbansynergiesgroup.org

w: www.urbansynergiesgroup.org

This edition published in Australia in 2018.

Printed on recycled paper.

All rights reserved.

table of contents

background of the event	4
summary of the discussion	5
recommendations	7
sustainable development goals	7
children's assembly	8
concrete commitments identified	9
core themes	10
our partners	12
impact of involvement at WUF9	13
about Urban Synergies Group	15
become involved	15



background of the event

If we want to succeed to create safe, inclusive, accessible, green and public spaces for all, we urgently need to address the importance of children's health and well-being in cities. The success of the **New Urban Agenda** will be determined by the degree of success in mobilising people and partnerships that can enable transdisciplinary collaboration supported by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) providing benefits to the most vulnerable community groups.

Strong alliances and an action focus is needed that is informed by research evidence including public health and public space. A child healthy environment is a city that embraces the 'Right to the City' concept to ensure that no one is left behind and where all children have the 'Right to Play'.



The objective was to bring together a transdisciplinary range of international established thought leaders and key advocates that are well positioned to drive positive change that leads to better health outcomes of children in cities. Also the side networking event was a platform for knowledge exchange and networking amongst stakeholders that enabled tangible actions at grass roots and city levels worldwide improving the health and wellbeing of the next generation. In order to harness the collective wisdom in the room the focus was on the engagement with the audience. Together we workshopped tangible actions that can help to drive change, empower children, adolescents and fosters new partnerships.

Why does children's health and wellbeing in cities matter: Listen to our Founder and Director Gregor Mews as part of the concerted efforts with UN-Habitats World Urban Campaign. Click the link: [Children's health and wellbeing matters in cities!](#)

summary of the discussion

The event was structured into three elements.

1) Participants were invited to gain a lived experience to socially connect with previously unknown people in a fun and engaging way. The play activity for all ages was carefully curated and moderated by Gregor H. Mews and demonstrated that people can socially produce a space through play. He highlighted some of the defining characteristics of play.

2) A panel of international thought leaders on public space and distinguished advocates for children's rights were invited to share their perspective on the topic and critically reflect on the current state of play and children's health in cities.

Dr. Luisa Bravo, President of City Space Architecture, highlighted the importance of public space for all as a fundamental basis to enable urban happiness to occur.

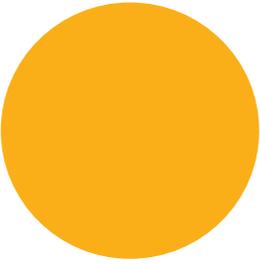
Dr. Sudeshna Chatterjee, Board member of the International Play Association and CEO of Action for Children's Environment, shared with the audience why play is not optional but fundamental to children's health and well-being. Her thought provoking facts on alarming trends of the unhealthy living conditions in informal settlements in India and the relationship between play, place and health demonstrated that we need a paradigm shift through concerted efforts of all stakeholders with a **genuine spirit of collaboration** in mind.

Ms Joyati Das, international leader on Children Rights and Associate to the Future Cities Program at the University of Melbourne, stressed the importance of having the right enablers in place to allow for a shift to occur. These enablers included: knowledge building, technology, good governance, policy change, partnerships, planning and design.



Dr. Manfredo Manfredini, University of Auckland, raised awareness about the current conditions under which urban societies produce space, which leads to fragmentation of space by imposing new forms of interaction in public space through technology. This can be perceived as a threat to children's health and wellbeing if deployed uncontrolled while overwriting physicality in cities.



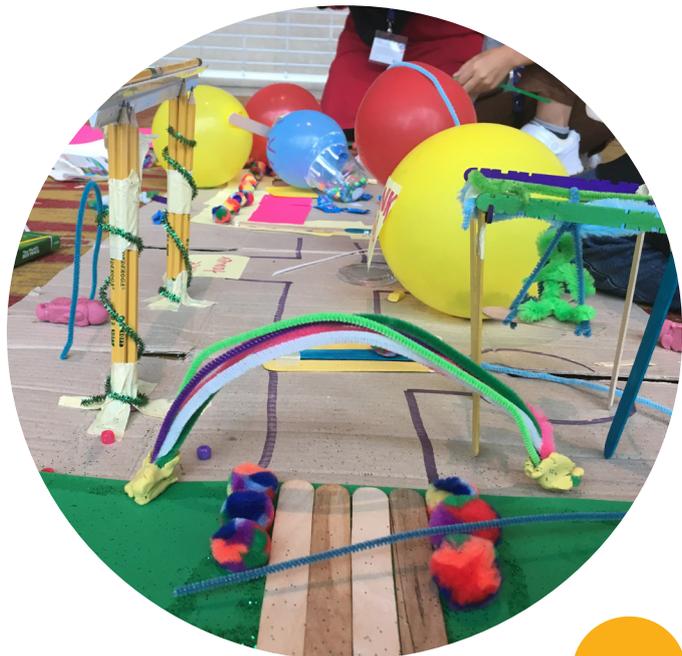


Mr. Gregor H Mews, Director of Urban Synergies Group and Adjunct Professional Associate to the University of Canberra, summarised the critical state of children's health and wellbeing in high and middle income countries. The fact that children today walk less than ever before in human history is alarming. The current fitness standards are rapidly declining and in the case for Canberra, Australia, hospital admission rates for endocrine and circulatory diseases increased up to 85 percent in the last five years alone. He ended with tangible solutions that can effectively address the issue with interventions in the built environment, co-design and spaces for play.

Dr. Hendrik Tieben, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, provided compelling visuals on **public spaces for social encounter** in hyper dense environments, while seeking to find answers where to find under used places to play and what are the obstacles and opportunities to transform them.

3) During the networking component participants were asked to share their personal childhood story of play in a public space with others and discuss effective solutions to create better health and wellbeing for children in cities.

Ms. Bryony Cooper, sustainable transport specialist, moderated the event and shared some personal insights on the experience and impact of car use in relation to children in urban systems.



recomendations



The New Urban Agenda strongly calls for cities for all supported by actions that leave no one behind. The document makes several direct references to vulnerable people including children and youths as well as to health and wellbeing. Under the theme ‘Cities for all’, the 9th World Urban Forum (WUF9) brought together 22,000 delegates from 165 countries envisioning cities of the year 2030.



The side networking event discussed several actions and found agreement on the need for co-design to empower children and youth in planning and design processes in a meaningful way. Children are the natural experts on the local environment and should be treated as such. Interventions in the built environment require interdisciplinary and tangible actions, for example, when creating slow speed or vehicle free spaces for play, and when designing natural play spaces. Place making and urban tree planting initiatives, can become vehicles to increase **awareness** of the right to play supported by seed funding. The impact of technologies that overwrite physicality can be a threat to the “Right to the City” concept and therefore urgently requires more research to support evidence based decision- making and ensure public spaces provide health and wellbeing benefits for all.

sustainable development goals

How those recommendations can support the achievement of specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)?

Overall this event will contribute to the following SDGs:

- 3 Good Health and Wellbeing**
- 10 Reducing Inequality**
- 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities**
- 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals.**

children's assembly



Play matters and we need to include sufficient public space for play in cities in order to ensure the health and wellbeing of children and ultimately the longer term prosperity of our urban societies.

concrete commitments identified

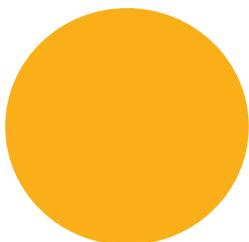
- Raise awareness on Children's Right to Play (Article 12 & 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- Rediscover design for feeling, life and safe infrastructure.
- Tangible actions that reduce the speed and amount of traffic on local neighbourhood streets, protection and enhancement of public spaces through co-designed place-making interventions with and for children in cities.
- Urban tree planting initiatives (green oases for healthy child play).
- Action research to enable safe routes to and from school as well as on digital technologies that overwrite physicality of public space.

The implementation of the New Urban Agenda is a core commitment of Urban Synergies Group as part of our knowledge exchange initiatives, research within the higher education sector and service provision for the market which we deliver worldwide with our interdisciplinary associates. The resource distribution throughout the network is one direct outcome of our strategic aim to shape healthier communities worldwide.

The **collective wisdom** to drive change is based on the presentations of participants, brainstorming and sharing personal knowledge of lived experiences during their childhoods. Each group presented their summary to the wider audience towards the end of the event.

These are the three core themes that emerged out of the discussions amongst the 60 participants from around the world:

- Safe independent childhood mobility (walking and cycling)
- Encounters with nature in public spaces and
- Design connected play spaces for all.



Let's
take over
public space with
parents watching over
kids in a group. This
is a neighbourhood
strategy in Bombay
with Sunday play
events

Pockets
of mystery
tucked away
throughout
the city

Not
super
design but
flexible
design

Get
everyone
involved -
children, parents,
neighbours
and engage
with multiple
stakeholders

The
freedom
of riding in my
countryside
village

Opportunity
to learn about
fruit and vegetables
in an urban
environment





Capacity for formal and informal spaces in open space systems, make deliberate effort to create healthy environments



Taking ownership and restricting car access

Give children time and space to create their own games

Urban acupuncture



Shaping the inclusive city



Community gatherings in centres



Connection to nature and food

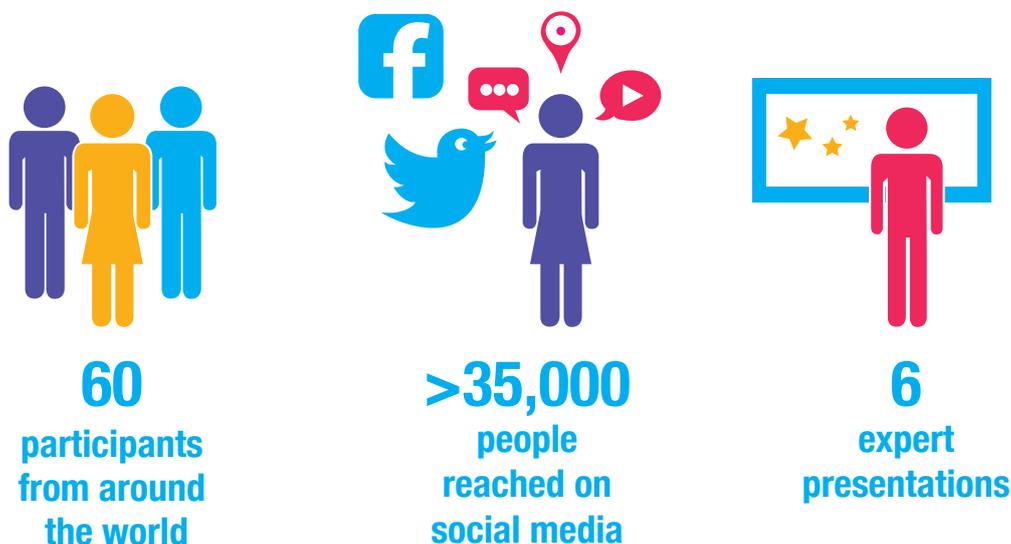
our partners at WUF9



香港中文大學
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



impact of involvement at WUF9



150 children from all over the world participated in sharing their vision for a healthy, safe and inclusive city as part of the UN-Habitat Children's Assembly under the leadership of Ms Joyati Das, child rights advocate and global advisor to UN Habitat to lead child rights at WUF9. During the conference, the Children's Assembly was supported by several child focused agencies including UNICEF, Plan International, Urban Synergies Group, International Play Association and many Malaysian civil society organisations, schools including schools for refugees and child rights agencies. USG was delighted to lead one of the sessions and lend its expertise to make the Assembly participatory and a success.

Explore our facebook live stream from the side networking event. Click here to see the [input presentations and outcomes](#) at the event. Hungry for more? Here are some key-articles and the links related to WUF 9:

- [Our Common Urban Future](#)
- [Call for action: A paradigm shift and new alliances for children health & well-being in cities](#)
- [The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030](#)
- Take part in the [Happiness Survey](#) of our partner organisation City Space Architecture.
- [Time for a paradigm shift towards health and wellbeing](#)
- Urban Thinkers Campus "[Shaping Spaces for GenZ](#)" generating through co-design and evidence based research three tangible ideas that can help to improve children's health and wellbeing.
- Perspective Statement "[Right to the City](#)"



about Urban Synergies Group

Urban Synergies Group is an **international think + do tank** based in Canberra, Australia, that provides services, training and raises awareness.

Our mission is to find the best ways to improve urban systems without borders by creating effective synergies in a complex global environment that enable better health and well-being outcomes for all people.

We are creating bridges between cutting edge academic research, non-government organisations, governments and practices, enriching community spirit by sharing our success.

Urban Synergies Group is funded by donations from companions such as trusts, individuals and commissioned services. We operate internationally and offer independent advice in support of the overall health and wellbeing of people in urban systems.

become involved

Choose a pathway that suits your personality and purpose, because your **individual actions** and choices matter! Express interest now either as a friend, associate or companion by accessing <https://urbansynergiesgroup.org/get-involved/> or by getting in touch through our email info@urbansynergiesgroup.org

© 2018, Urban Synergies Group, ABN 73 610 612 470
Disclaimer: This perspective statement has been developed by the Urban Synergies Group for general information. The statements and recommendations it contains are, unless labelled as 'expert opinion', based on independent review of the available evidence. While care has been taken in preparing the content of this material, the Urban Synergies Group and its employees cannot accept any liability, including for any loss or damage, resulting from the reliance on the content, or for its accuracy, currency and completeness. This material may be found in third parties' programs or materials (including but not limited to show bags or advertising kits). This does not imply an endorsement or recommendation by Urban Synergies Group for such third parties' organisations, products or services, including these parties' materials or information. Any use of Urban Synergies Group material by another person or organisation is done so at the user's own risk.



“In the end we depend on the creatures we made.”
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust II

For urban health and wellbeing information:

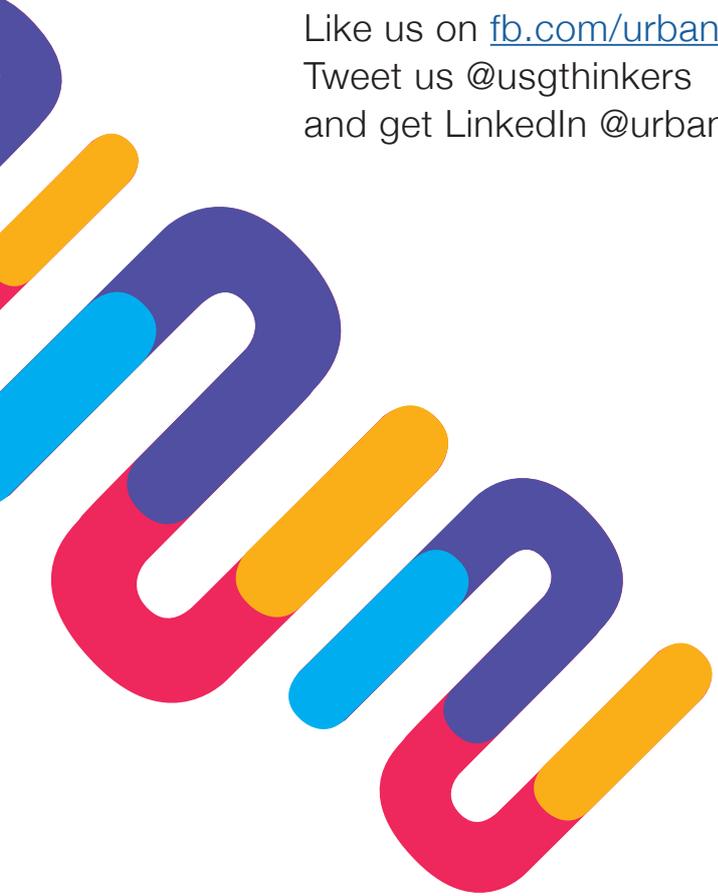
w: www.urbansynergiesgroup.org

e: info@urbansynergiesgroup.org

Like us on fb.com/urbansynergiesgroup

Tweet us @usgthinkers

and get LinkedIn @urbansynergiesgroup



**Urban
synergies
group**