



BEE or not to be. LINKING BUILT ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING PROCESSES

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Abstract

The paper reflects in practice and theory on the link between built environment education and youth participation in urban planning processes. The discussion is based firstly on an evaluation of the EU-project “Fantasy Design – Children in Community (2009-2011)”. The project explored innovative ways of design education in four countries focussing on participatory design processes involving young people in design projects. Secondly, the paper is based on an analysis of results of the youth workshop “Young Cities Now! Youth.City.Laboratory”. The workshop invited adolescent who participated in different urban development projects all over Germany to reflect upon their experiences. As a result the young participants formulated a manifesto.

Taking into account further empirical knowledge on linkages between built environment education and youth participation the case studies show, that built environment education is an important way to qualify current practice of participation. Strong linkages between education and participation seem to be evident but further investigation is necessary. The authors will argue that a deliberate integration of the two fields can be very productive.

1. Introduction

Children and adolescents have a vital understanding of spaces, buildings and neighbourhoods. They are experts for their needs. They will be “framers” and decision makers in cities of tomorrow. Hence, the participation of children and young people in planning processes receives more and more attention in urban planning. Planning cities for children and young people today still means planning for a largely unheard section of society. There is a rising acceptance and willingness to seriously let young people and children participate and collaborate with adults to discuss, plan and implement improvements in their cities and neighbourhoods. At the same time the participation processes place enormous demands on young people.

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Educational processes that focus on design and planning skills help children and young people to form a stronger and more reflective voice when it comes to formulate their spatial needs. Built environment education is such a multifaceted and interdisciplinary way for young people to learn about their own environment and gain necessary skills in designing it.

The obvious overlapping of built environment education and community participation could qualify both. In order to initiate a debate on linkages between youth participation in community and built environment education this paper introduces both concepts and afterwards discusses practical experience from two projects which worked on the interface between the two fields, meaning: the both presented participation processes were also aimed to be educational processes. The examples will be reflected in the light of the existing theoretical debate.

2. Youth Participation in Planning Processes

Communities face today manifold challenges of organisational, economic and social nature. The creation of youth- and child-friendly cities and neighbourhoods involves a complex and difficult process of negotiation. An important basis for this is a broad and inclusive decision-making pattern, which engages stakeholders with different backgrounds, motivations, opinions and resources and makes also the voices of young people and children heard. Through the participation of the civil society, planning processes and their outcomes can acquire higher quality and efficiency as well as broad acceptance. One important way to broaden participation and to move to a more generationally inclusive city is the involvement of youths (cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2007, pp. 7 and 78-80; Meinhold-Henschel, 2007b, p. 221; Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 5). "From the perspective of community planning, influential youth participation occurs when:

- actions aim to intervene in existing conditions
- involvement is part of the public dialog and decision making
- engagement is influential and changes are significant" (Mullahey et al., 1999, pp. 3-4).

Characteristic of community participation is that young people act as stakeholder in the political arena and not in a pedagogical environment (cf. Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, pp. 19-20). But looking at current participation processes young people identify problems, they analyse causes and resources in order to solve these problems, mobilise other stakeholders, they formulate goals and design action plans, they implement actions and evaluate their outcomes (cf. Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 5).

A typology of different kinds and levels of participation is provided by Hart's ladder of young people's participation (first published in 1992; see figure 1) which is based on Arnstein's seminal ladder of participation (1969). The ladder distinguishes non-participation and divers degrees of participation. The different degrees describe grades of "agency or participatory engagement by young people" (Hart, 2008, p. 23). In 2008 Hart wrote a paper reflecting on the ladder of youth participation and its

manifold interpretations since its publication. He concludes that the ladder metaphor is unfortunate because it suggests the assumption that the higher rungs of the ladder are necessarily superior to the ones beneath. He stresses that this is not the case. Rather do the rungs describe the different roles adults have in youth participation and the degree of agency by young people (cf. Hart, 2008, pp. 20-24).

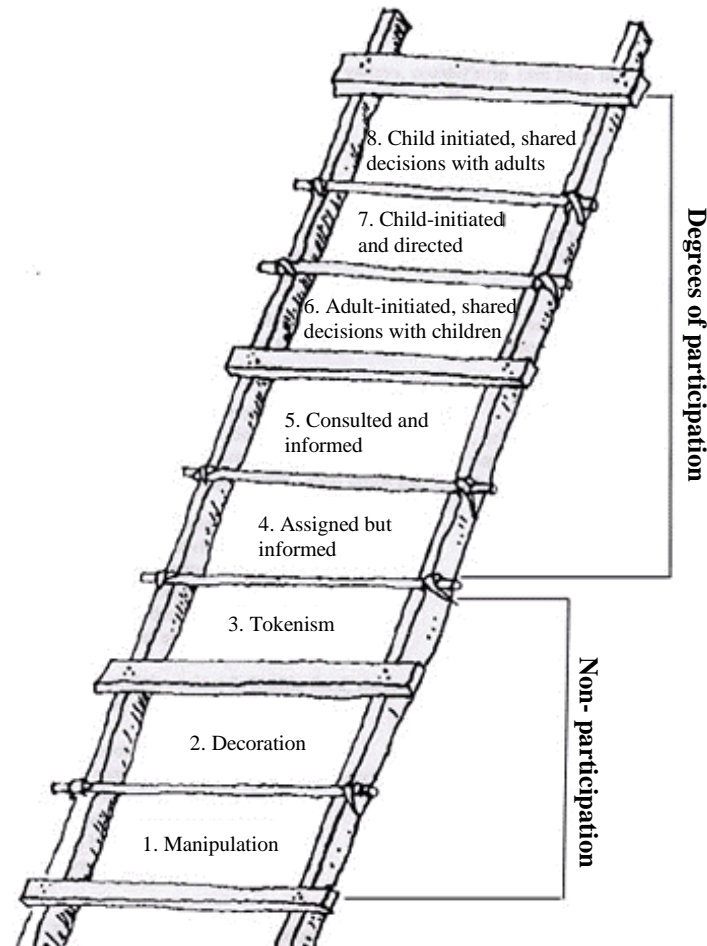


Figure 1. Hart's Ladder of young People's Participation
(source: modified figure based on Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 10)

Within the five degrees of participation different forms of participation can be distinguished. While there is a high diversity of methods Stange (2008) gives an overview summarising different categories of participation methods:

- advocacy representation of youth's interests,
- youth participation in institutions of the adult world,
- selective participation,
- everyday participation,
- representative participation (e. g. children and youth parliaments),
- Open forms and forums, and
- project approaches to participation.

Within this categorisation the first aspect describes “policies for young people”, the second to fourth point define “policies with young people” and the last three categories outline “policies by young people” (cf. Moser, 2010, p. 212).

The justifications for youth participation are diverse and refer e. g. to civil law, democratic and political theory, educational, ethical and moral theory and service orientation (cf. Betz et al., 2011, p. 3). The most important legal point of reference is The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It discusses children’s and adolescent’s right to participation as one of its main topics. Thereby it contributed to an appreciation of youth participation in many countries (cf. Meinhold-Henschel, 2007a, p. 9). Furthermore, the United Nations action plan for sustainable development, namely Agenda 21, and its Local Agenda 21 processes strengthen the role of major groups in development processes including the role of young people (cf. Hart, 1997, p. 23). In Germany, an important motivation which drives youth participation in communities is the common goal to be family-friendly and thus to attract families and enterprises (cf. Meinhold-Henschel, 2007a, p. 12).

Despite these legal foundations of and motivations for youth participation, adolescents are generally not integrated in traditional planning processes of urban development in Germany (cf. BMVBS, 2010, p. 10). Participation is often part of project work at most. So far, youth participation is neither a cross-cutting issue in urban development nor is it part of planning culture (cf. Moser, 2010, p. 19). Additionally, the quality of participation processes is often poor (cf. Meinhold-Henschel, 2007a, pp. 12-13).

3. Built Environment Education (BEE)

Educational activities related to the built environment incorporate a broad field of activity focuses and approaches to education such as architectural education, design education, (visual) arts education and environmental education. “The common ground of all these various types of learning activities for children and young people is the use of buildings, places and spaces as a context for learning” (cf. Uttke, forthcoming). Built environment education (BEE) is conceptualised as a cross-cutting subject which utilises the built environment as a learning resource taking into consideration cities, towns, villages, buildings, landmarks and public spaces. Common BEE activities are e. g. school visits to certain places, school-projects supervised by design professionals such as architects or urban planners and participatory school design processes. Furthermore, BEE can thematise the relation between people and the built environment or the design of spaces in order to trigger learning processes (cf. Engaging Places network, 2012a).

Built environment education is multifaceted and interdisciplinary. It incorporates aspects of architecture, urban design, city and regional planning and landscape design. Consequently, educators from these different fields cooperate in projects and programmes of BEE. Furthermore, schools and teachers, parents, education

authorities and governments can be partner (cf. Uttke, forthcoming; Engaging Places network, 2012a).

The different approaches to BEE are all forms of cultural education and share common aims (cf. Uttke, forthcoming). Objectives and learning targets of BEE are amongst others:

- to develop awareness and understanding of the local environment and appreciation for architecture and design
- to learn about stakeholders, rights and responsibilities in the design of the environment and possible careers in the built environment
- to support the development of responsibility in view of contributions to society and sustainable development
- to broadens personal, learning and thinking skills such as creativity, confidence, self-management, team-work, critical reflection and judgement, participatory and communicative skills
- to experience analytical and conceptual working methods (cf. Engaging Places network, 2012b; UIA, 2008, p. 5).

The development of concepts and ideas for BEE has increased in the past 20 years and receives growing attention nowadays. International networks, have been installed in the last years to discuss, promote and support BEE. Examples for this are amongst others PLAYCE (www.playce.org), the Engaging Places network (<http://www.engagingplaces.org.uk/home>) and the International Union of Architects (UIA) Built Environment Education Network (<http://uiabee.riai.ie/index-en.html>).

4. Linking Built Environment Education and Youth Participation in Planning Processes

“It is noticed that – at least in Germany – there is a growing importance of linking education and participation” (Uttke, forthcoming). The linkages between built environment education and youth participation in planning processes seem to be particularly evident. On the one hand one of the central motives of community participation is the assumption that participation entails a great variety of educational and socialisation processes (cf. BKJ, 2009, p. 31; Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, p. 3; Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 3). Key qualifications such as self-reliance, communication skills and the development of own viewpoints shall be strengthened (cf. Winklhofer, 2008, p. 72; Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, p. 3). On the other hand, BEE shall “inculcate [...] a desire to participate in the complex and magical process that constructs the house, the town and the region” (UIA, 2008, p. 4). BEE promotes abilities which are relevant for decision making and participation and besides arouses interest in urban development and the built environment. Accordingly, BEE can be a starting point for further participation in the community (cf. Uttke, forthcoming; Räsänen, 2006, p. 14).

In practice the linkages between built environment education and youth participation are evident in concepts for both alike. For one thing participation places high

demands on young participants and thus qualification and education are regarded as a necessary component of participation processes (cf. Adams, 2006, p. 9; Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009, pp. 60-61; Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, p. 20). For another thing BEE is supposed to be participatory in order to engage young people in local development processes (cf. Kapanen, Svinhufvud, 2011, p. 9). Despite these linkages practical concepts of BEE and participation rarely focus on mutual references and strategic links between one another.

The described first glimpses on the linkages between built environment education and youth participation in planning processes ask for proof and furthermore raise many questions. What are in detail the interfaces between BEE and community participation? What exactly do young people learn in participation processes? Does experience from BEE indeed influence future commitment? How do BEE and participation complement each other and where do the two approaches aim for contrary goals?

In the following, practical experiences from the authors will be presented in order to shed light on the linkages between participation and education and to give first answers to the posed questions.

4.1 Practical Experience in Linking BEE and Youth Participation

As an approach to a deepened understanding of the linkages between participation and built environment education, the authors practical experiences from projects at the interface of the two fields will be described and analysed in the following.

First, findings from the EU project “Fantasy Design in Community” will be summarised. The project was designed to promote built environment education and focused on participatory design with young people. Therefore, it allows many assumptions on the linkage between participation and built environment education. Basing on a professional evaluation the results can be classified as practical experience from a scientific viewpoint.

The second example of practical experience presents an attempt to incorporate the viewpoint of adolescents. The findings are derived from the youth workshop “Young Cities Now!” which was conducted with young people who participated in diverse planning processes all over Germany in 2009. One result of the workshop was a manifesto drawn up by the participants.

4.1.1 Fantasy Design – Children in Community

In the EU-project “Fantasy Design – Children in Community” innovative ways of design education were explored between 2009 and 2011. “Fantasy Design is a design education initiative [...]. Its core idea is to give children and young people an opportunity to work with designers and to display their own design thinking in an international exhibition” (Kapanen, Svinhufvud, 2011, p. 9). The project focused on participatory design processes involving young people in design projects, solving

problems of their own environment and everyday life and discussing these issues in an international community (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 18). Uttke/Heinrich conducted in 2011 the evaluation of this EU-project.

“Fantasy Design – Children in Community” was realised by partners from four different countries: Design Museum Helsinki (Finland), University College Sealand (Denmark), Design museum Gent (Belgium) and National Museum of Decorative Art Madrid (Spain). The Fantasy Design (FD) project consisted of central activities and components on national and international level. Local design projects of different tasks and scales working with designers and other professionals were conducted in all four countries (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, pp. 17 and 21). In total Fantasy Design consisted of 18 local projects in Finland, Denmark and Belgium and 12 workshops in Spain (cf. Kapanen, Svinhufvud, 2011, pp. 113-116). An international web site (<http://www.fantasydesign.org/fd/>) was used for the documentation of the projects, for compilation of information on design education in general (e. g. learning material for teachers) and communication within projects and amongst different projects. Throughout the process two international conferences were held. An international touring exhibition presenting design processes and products was both highlight and closing event of the project (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 21).



Figure 2: “Fantasy Design in Community” local youth project in Gent (Photograph: A. Uttke)

The project was based on earlier international design educational programs: the first „Fantasi Design“ (engl. Fantasy Design) project (1998–2000) and the second „Fantasy Design – Children and Young People as Designers“ project (2003-2006)

(cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 14). Those first two Fantasy Design (FD) projects mainly focused on product design (cf. Uttke, forthcoming, p. 3). “Fantasy Design – Children in Community” (FD 3) retained key ideas and factors of success of the first two FD projects. Furthermore, deficits of the former projects were compensated and new components were added to the concept (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, pp. 57-58). One of the most important innovations of FD 3 was the explicit focus on community aspects and the built environment, such as

- „looking at design as a tool in building a sustainable and socially inclusive environment,
- working in collaboration with local authorities of planning and environment,
- including trans-sectoral aspects in local work; e.g. collaborating with social and health sectors, culture
- and administration,
- creating an European design community within the project“ (Application Form to the EU Culture Programme / Education and Culture DG application FD 3, p. 8).



Figure 3: Testing and prototyping in the Fantasy Design project “Outdoor Artwork” (Photograph: E. Vasu, available at <http://www.fantasydesign.org/fd/content/building-recycled-artwork>, accessed 7 May 2012)

The spectrum of realised projects under the umbrella theme “Fantasy Design in Community” was very broad. Projects included re-designing of central spaces in communities, such as school yards, parks, youth houses and spaces for the youth,

community centres and neighbourhood spaces. Other projects focused on a communicative and collaborative process in product design discussing the needs of participants and clients in a community. Within the local design processes designers and educators with different professional background as well as local actors were partners. They assisted the children and adolescents acting as designers (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 8).

Within the various projects different methods and principals were applied: young people worked as designers in teams, collaborations with local partners were built up and open design processes were created. As a design education project, supporting learning with design and promoting design methods in education was one of the main principles. All projects should trigger learning processes through personal experience and should allow exploring creativity and innovation through “real” design projects (cf. Application Form to the EU Culture Programme / Education and Culture DG application FD 3, p. 8).

An evaluation of the EU-project “Fantasy Design – Children in Community” was conducted by the two authors of this paper. Aim of the evaluation was to reflect on outcomes of the project. The methodology of the evaluation included a workshop with the four national coordinators of the project, face-to-face and e-mail interviews with several participants such as educators and designers, desktop studies of the Fantasy Design web site and documents as well as self-evaluations of the national coordinators and finally a visit to the international Fantasy Design touring exhibition in Gent (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 12).



Figure 4: “Fantasy Design in Community” touring exhibition in Gent
(Photographs: A. Uttke)

Benchmarks for the evaluation were the project’s objectives as described in the project application:

- a) “to deepen and to extend the collaboration with central organizations in design education,
- b) to promote contents and activities of innovative design education in Europe,
- c) to create for children and young people a framework for informal learning and networking in local communities through real design tasks,

- d) to use the possibilities of digital media (interactive web site) for collaboration and cross-cultural dialogue between children, young people, designers, educators and other stakeholders” (Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 11).

As a participatory design project Fantasy Design and its local projects operated at the interface of (built environment) education and youth participation. Particularly important for the examination of linkages between the two issues is the third goal which addresses the framework for informal learning and networking in local communities. The evaluation stresses how closely related the aspects of BEE and participation are. Often education and participation are hardly separable within a project for both are fundamental for a successful process and high quality products.

Each local project of FD 3 proceeded from a “real” design task such as the (re-)development or (re-)design of a certain place within the community or existing needs from local stakeholders. This relation to young people’s own environment and daily problems and needs gave the projects high authenticity. FD was originally conceptualised as an educational project. The task to engage in community design was used to give the young people the opportunity to directly participate in urban design processes involving local politicians, architects and urban planners. Instead of “just” learning something about design in community in theory or exercising design projects completely detached from the current local development, the young participants were able to actually implement own ideas and thus to influence and change their local environment. This practical and participatory component gave the young people a high motivation to learn about design because they were eager to realise own high quality projects. Accordingly, project components such as visits of local design museums were appreciated by the young participants. The young people obviously interpreted educational components as necessary prerequisite for their own design processes (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 40-45).

Furthermore, being empowered to actually change the own environment gave the young people a strong feeling of appreciation and acknowledgement. They experienced how they can influence their surrounding and implement own ideas. The approach of learning-by-doing triggered their creativity and allowed them learning about design by playful means. This created not only feelings of success but was for many participants overall a formative experience (cf. Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 44). This could be important for future participation and commitment in community development because the participants were very positive and motivated at the end of the project and inhibitions for participation processes were overcome through the projects. Statements from youth workers from Finland support this assumption. They report that since the involvement in Fantasy Design young people as well as youth workers are for example no longer “interested in just buying new furniture for the yard when they can make it in a more special way by building and recycling” (Kapanen quoted from Uttke, Heinrich, 2012, p. 44).

4.1.2 Young Cities Now!

An important aspect of the discussion on youth participation is the viewpoint of young people themselves. They are experts for their needs and should thus be allowed and encouraged to discuss and formulate their claims in view of youth participation. This is not least the case because young people's perspective on participation is highly relevant for a realisation of successful youth participation (cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, young people's ideas and criticism in view of community participation will be considered in the following. As will be seen, young people do strongly link the issues of participation and education.

The workshop "Young Cities Now! Jugend.Stadt.Labor" (Young Cities Now! Youth.City.Laboratory; www.youngcitiesnow.de) was conducted in Berlin, Germany by the non-profit organisation JAS Jugend Architektur Stadt e.V. (Youth Architecture City) in November 2009 (Heinrich, 2010, p. 15). One of the authors was herself one of the project managers who conceptualised and conducted the workshop. The other author accomplished a scientific analysis of all material concerning youth participation which was produced during the workshop (Heinrich, 2010).

"Young Cities Now!" was a project within the research field "Adolescents in Urban Neighbourhoods" of the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development. This is one of the research fields within the research programme "Experimental Housing and Urban Development" of the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. Aim of the research field is to develop methods and strategies for youth participation on different levels of urban and neighbourhood development. In the long term the projects within this research field shall support the establishment of a youth participation culture and thus contribute to the creation of youth-friendly cities (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 15-16; BBSR, 2009b, pp. 21-22; BBSR, 2010a).

In May 2009 a call for projects for the research field "Adolescents in Urban Neighbourhoods" was launched. 25 projects all over Germany were chosen from 220 applications. The range of applied methods and conducted projects was very broad – the adolescents used new media, made films and composed songs, they created art initiatives and festivals. Additionally, "Young Cities Now!" was selected as an add-on project inviting two representatives of each of the 25 pilot projects to a common workshop. Aim of this workshop was to give the youth ambassadors the opportunity to reflect, discuss and communicate their different experiences. As a result a manifesto should be written in order to set an impulse for the qualification of youth participation in planning processes (cf. BBSR, 2012; BBSR, 2010b; Heinrich, 2010, p. 16; BBSR, 2009a, p. 29).

In total 42 adolescents age 12 to 22 joined the three-day workshop in Berlin. The major topics they discussed were

- participation,
- communal life and neighbourhood,

- sport and action,
- chill out,
- art,
- music, and
- mobility (cf. BBSR, 2010b).

First a world café allowed all youngsters to share experiences, ideas and criticism on all of the seven main issues. In the further course of the workshop small groups focused on one topic each. After deepened discussions they formulated paragraphs and catchy slogans for the manifesto and created illustrations to underline their statements (cf. BBSR, 2010b; Heinrich, 2010, pp. 16-18; JAS, 2009).



Figure 5: Group discussion at the “Young Cities Now!” workshop
(Photograph: A. Meichsner)

In total the manifesto consists of eleven statements under the title “Live your city – bringing forward something new together. A manifesto for youth-friendly and liveable cities” (<http://youngcitiesnow.de/manifest/>). The first statement is entitled „Future is Youth – Trust us!” and addresses youth participation. The adolescents criticise the lack of confidence in the abilities of young people which reduces their opportunities for action and participation. As one solution to this lack of confidence and the consequential lack of participation the adolescents consider empowerment and education. The young people suggest projects, seminars and workshops as possible formats of education. The value they see in an aimed empowerment is

- a strengthening of interest in and motivation for youth participation and voluntary commitment amongst adolescents,
- a growth of confidence of adults in adolescents,
- an improvement of the quality of living in cities, and
- an acquisition of soft skills and key competences (cf. JAS, 2009).

The working material of the small group which explicitly concentrated on the issue of youth participation stresses this again and goes further into detail. The analysis of the working material was focused on four main issues:

- conditions of youth participation,
- formats of youth participation,
- motivations for youth participation, and
- topics and choice of topic for youth participation (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 27-28).

All written documents (posters, index cards, text blocks) from the small group working on participation throughout the workshop were analysed via content analysis. Additionally, an expert interview was conducted with the supervisor of the working group (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 21-22 and 24-25). The mass and diversity of points of discussion which could be identified from the working material shows how complex and intensive the adolescents discussed the issue of participation (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 32-35). Furthermore, the analysis stresses that the young participants linked the subjects of education and participation in all four dimensions of the analysis although education was not a topic brought up by the supervisors.



Figure 6: Visualising their demands for the “Young Cities Now!” manifesto
(Photograph: A. Meichsner)

The young participants interpret education as a necessary prerequisite and condition of participation. Within processes of participation the adolescents expect support from adults, especially from politicians and the administration. They summarise the expected with three key words: guidance, competence and learning. They describe

that they want to be supported developing certain skills. On the one hand they want to adopt those skills through participation and on the other hand they feel they need to be trained for participation. They link this qualification closely to the matter of trust. „Trust us” is the most prominent claim of the youth’s manifesto. Obviously the adolescents gain self-confidence from the empowerment and they hope to be able to enrich planning processes in a way which builds up a certain trust in youth in general (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 36-39; JAS, 2009).

In view of the forms of participation and education the adolescents discussed two major issues: Firstly, they claim the application of participatory methods which guarantee an individual support of all youngsters. Secondly, they address youngsters and ask them to support each other within participation processes. They do not necessarily link the issue of education to adults and supervisors. They see a high potential in learning from one another (cf. Heinrich, 2010, p. 39; JAS, 2009).



Figure 7: Final presentation of the “Young Cities Now!” manifesto to representatives from the Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development
(Photograph: A. Meichsner)

The third dimension of the analysis was the motivation for youth participation from different viewpoints. As an overall societal reason for participation the adolescents see a possible strengthening of society through participation because of the many educational effects participation incorporates. From their own perspective they also value participation because of its educational effects but again stress that participation necessarily needs educational elements as precondition for a high quality (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 40-41; JAS, 2009).

In view of topics and choice of topic for youth participation the youngsters state that generally they want to be allowed to participate in all contexts and discussions, not only those directly relevant for themselves. Issues they name specifically are amongst others competencies they would like to strengthen such as media usage and to learn to do interviews (cf. Heinrich, 2010, pp. 41-42; JAS, 2009).

In line with these findings the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development draws the following conclusion from the pilot projects of the research field “Adolescents in Urban Neighbourhoods”: “Teenagers must be empowered in order to tap their potentials. Therefore, foundations must be laid to enable them to formulate their interests. For this purpose, knowledge must be conveyed and technical languages translated or learned. Based on this, teenagers are given the possibility of becoming independent players in the quarters themselves” (BBSR, 2012).

4.2 Lessons Learnt from the Practical Experience

The EU-project “Fantasy Design in Community” started as built environment and design education project. “Young Cities Now!” however was conceptualized as a participation project. Both projects nevertheless emphasise a close connection between BEE and participation.

The evaluation of “Fantasy Design – Children in Community” shows that projects on the interface between built environment education and participation attain very high quality. The young participants had a strong motivation to learn about their environment and design because they realised that the gained knowledge and skills could help them to realise projects of high quality. The youths considered it appropriate and purposeful to integrate learning processes in their projects and accordingly had a high level of motivation and willingness to learn. The young people enjoyed learning because it was meaningful and the educational components of the projects made the youths knowledgeable participants with increased self-confidence. The participatory component in turn increased the authenticity of the project, as projects were involved in real community development processes. The opportunity to implement own ideas in their local environment made the projects beneficial for the young people and at the same time expressed appreciation of the young people’s commitment. The expression of appreciation is again a crucial factor within participation processes as the example of “Young Cities Now!” shows. Altogether, the evaluation clearly shows that one factor of success of Fantasy Design was indeed the linkage between built environment education and participation.

The analysis of the workshop „Young Cities Now!“ and the resulting manifesto reveals adolescent’s viewpoint on participation and education. All participants were representatives of youth participation projects that focused on urban development. Based on their experience with community participation the adolescents clearly expressed that participation and built environment education are inseparable. Youth participation should be designed as an educational process which allows the

participants to learn from adults and from each other alike. For one thing the youths interpret BEE as necessary prerequisite and condition of participation because of the high demands placed on participants. For another thing they see BEE as a means to support individuals throughout participation processes and thus to strengthen the society as a whole.

4.3 Theoretical Discussion on Linkages between BEE and Participation

The theoretical discussions on built environment education on the one side and youth participation in community on the other are poorly linked. So far, there seems to be general agreement that participation automatically implies educational processes (cf. Düx, Sass, 2005, p. 397; Winklhofer, Zinser, 2005, p. 72). "Through first-hand experience [in participation processes], young people are building self-reliance, connecting with others, and learning about their inner resources and their own creative potential to forge a new sense of what is possible. They are transforming ideas into pragmatic proposals for action and advocating solutions to the urgent problems confronting their communities, their country, and their world" (Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 1). Nonetheless, the assumption on this connection between participation and education lacks empirical evidence (cf. Prein et al., 2009, pp. 530-531; Düx, 2005, p. 397).

A strong focus in research regarding these educational processes so far is on participation as an experience and training ground for democracy and civic education (cf. Hafener, 2005, p. 27; Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, p. 11). In this sense, empirical studies proof a strong connection between education and participation in the way that an increasing level of education increases the general political interest, trust in social institutions and participation in organisations (cf. Winklhofer, 2008, pp. 77-78). "Young people need the experience of genuine participation and knowledge of the responsibilities of real citizenship to become effective decision makers. [...] A community planning process can serve as a springboard to actualize democratic citizenship" (Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 6).

First findings on educational effects of participation in general are presented in the investigation by Düx and Sass (2005). They analyse informal learning in the youth age in settings of voluntary commitment. Their results base on 72 face-to-face interviews with adolescents and young adults who are or have been voluntarily active. Furthermore, the data basis includes standardised telephone interviews with 1,500 persons who were engaged in voluntary activities as adolescents and 500 persons who did not engage in community commitment in their youth. The interpretation of the empirical material suggests that young people's commitment in the community leads to a development of skills which meet the conflicting demands of modern society. Skills such as personal, social and technical skills, responsibility, democratic participation and moral values are promoted (Düx, Sass, 2005, p. 398 and 408). On top of this, a recent review of international research on issues of acquisition of competencies and learning through commitment and participation can be found in Lerner et al. (2007) (cf. Prein et al., 2009, p. 532).

Starting from the discussion on education in general and built environment education in specific there seems to be general agreement on the insistence that meaningful education needs to be participative (cf. Kapanen, Svinhufvud, 2011, p. 9; Winklhofer, Zinser, 2005, p. 73). Despite the debate on educational effects of participation and participatory approaches to education there is little discussion on a purposeful integration of education and participation. Scientific research so far lacks investigations and discussions on the high demands on youths within participation processes and the questions what kind of education participation thus requires.

5. Conclusion

The theoretical discussion on linkages between built environment education and youth participation in community shows that it is generally assumed and partially proved that meaningful education needs to be participative and that participation automatically implies educational processes especially in view of civic education. The two practical examples introduced in this paper – “Fantasy Design in Community” and “Young Cities Now!” – added a further aspect to the current scientific debate on participation and education. While youth participation and built environment education are mostly considered apart in theoretical and empirical studies so far, the practical experience emphasises that an integrated consideration is productive.

Based on the findings from “Fantasy Design” and “Young Cities Now!” the authors strongly recommend expanding the occasional educational processes within participation processes through a deliberate integration of built environment education. BEE should be an integral part of participation processes. Gained skills could improve process and product quality of youth participation. This would make participation a positive and formative experience and young people more knowledgeable participants. Furthermore, having participated in a successful project once, the young people would more likely participate in future projects.

Hart’s ladder of youth participation introduced different degrees of participation. Hart stresses that a higher rung of the ladder of participation is not necessarily the better one but that the degree of participation simply needs to suit the respective project. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that the higher the rung and thus the higher the degree of agency by young people, the more demanding and challenging youth participation becomes for young people. The authors conclude that a debate on the inclusion of BEE in participation processes is necessary to enable young people to participate on the higher rungs of the ladder of participation. The discussion on linkages between the two fields of education and participation should definitely take into consideration the different degrees of participation and the arising need for support and education in projects of a higher degree of participation. This enriches the on-going discussion on whether children and youths are able and capable to truly participate in community planning (cf. Christensen, O’Brien, 2003, p. 10).

Despite the presented recommendation to link built environment education and youth participation in planning processes the authors are aware of the risks and problems this might incorporate. “Young people’s work that focuses on individual learning and development, rather than on changing their surroundings, is not real participation” (Mullahey et al., 1999, p. 4). In this sense, Knauer and Sturzenhecker (2005) come to the conclusion that by definition youth participation is not pedagogical because here youths act as political actors and policy-maker. But because this seems hardly manageable without certain knowledge and skills, coaching and training should be integrated in participation processes (cf. Knauer, Sturzenhecker, 2005, pp. 19-20). Participation processes must not be instrumentalised as pure educational processes but it seems necessary and productive to integrate educators and built environment education in youth participation.

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