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## **Children's participation as an architectural component of post-war reconstruction in Ukraine**

**Abstract.** In the context of full-scale war and post-war transformation, Ukrainian architecture faced the challenge of transitioning from the technocratic reconstruction of physical objects to the restoration of the social fabric of cities. The aim of the study was to determine the role of children's participation in the humanisation of the architectural environment and to justify new approaches to the formation of educational and public spaces in the post-war period. The methodological basis of the work was the concepts of dialogical space, co-design and spatial agency, integrated into the architectural analysis of reconstruction processes. The article considered children's participation as a potentially strategic architectural component capable of influencing the rethinking of established approaches to spatial planning. Based on the systematisation of theoretical models and the analysis of international and Ukrainian practical cases, it was shown that the integration of children's experience influenced the morphology and functional organisation of architectural objects. In the spatial plane, the results of the study indicated an increase in attention to alternative design approaches, within which, along with rigid functional zoning, the principles of polyvalence were considered, and the monumental scale in certain contexts was complemented by solutions focused on the commensurability, tactility, and accessibility of the environment. It has been established that taking into account the children's perspective changes the approach to the safety of architectural space – from the logic of isolation to the concept of “active safety” based on transparency, visual connections and social presence. An analysis of priority reconstruction environments – educational, public and transitional – showed that participatory practices help to identify hidden spatial conflicts and design “blind spots” that remain unnoticed in technocratic models. In educational spaces, this has contributed to the formation of environments oriented towards research behaviour; in public spaces, to increased inclusiveness for different age groups; and in temporary and transitional spaces, to rapid adaptation and mastery of space by users in the context of post-traumatic experiences of home loss. The results obtained form the methodological basis for institutionalising child participation in architectural and planning processes, outlining the role of interdisciplinary interaction as a key condition for the humanisation of space and the sustainability of initiatives in the post-war period

**Keywords:** reconstruction architecture; space and place; participatory design; humanisation of architecture; public spaces

### **INTRODUCTION**

The full-scale war in Ukraine since 2022 has radically changed the spatial and social structure of cities, revealing the limitations of the centralised planning system. J. Gil-Mastalerczyk *et al.* (2025) showed that reconstruction

processes often reproduce established technocratic approaches. The authors highlighted the complex humanitarian, demographic and socio-economic consequences of the war, as well as the importance of international cooperation

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and strategies for the sustainable recovery of affected areas. A. Anisimov *et al.* (2024) emphasised the prevalence of normative decisions and the weak integration of the social dimension in contemporary development practices. This orientation often left connections and practices of coexistence out of focus. The destruction of residential areas, educational institutions and public spaces demonstrated not only the scale of material damage, but also the depth of social vulnerability – breaks in the networks of trust, communication and coexistence practices that shaped the resilience of urban communities.

In the context of post-war transformation, there was a need to rethink architecture – not as a technical process, but as a socio-humanistic one aimed at restoring not so much the physical structure as the meaningful unity of urban life. In this context, scientific discourse has focused more attention on approaches to the formation of architecture that centre on the interaction between people and space. It was in this interaction that space acquired meaning and was transformed into a place filled with significance. V.A. Cordero-Vinueza *et al.* (2023) emphasised in their socio-spatial review that a focus on the everyday experience of users was a prerequisite for the formation of sensitive urban environments. The researchers identified a significant gap in knowledge about the governance mechanisms that transform rights into concrete spatial practices and proposed directions for further research to address these gaps. S.A. Ensarioğlu & F.A. Özsoy (2021) considered co-design as an approach, where space was shaped through shared experience. The researchers emphasised the importance of integrating children into decision-making about the built environment as a way to increase urban awareness and develop cooperation skills between the younger generation and architecture and design professionals. H. Badland *et al.* (2023) linked this focus to principles of social justice. In theoretical interpretations, S. Molloy (2025) noted that children's participation was seen as one of the processes of forming spatial agency, which transformed the interaction between users, the professional community and institutions. This transition “from space to place” shifted the focus of design from physical parameters to the experience, perception, and identity of users. The implementation of this approach created new challenges, blurring the boundaries between expert and user positions, which raised the issue of balancing professional responsibility and the distribution of initiative. This was clearly evident in the practices of child participation, where interaction went beyond the professional field and took on pedagogical and ethical content.

Children's participation in architectural and planning processes has actively developed in a global context, demonstrating the potential for shaping a culture of spatial responsibility. G. Katsavounidou & S. Sousa (2024) emphasised that the lack of a stable institutional model limited children's influence on decisions and reduced their involvement to a symbolic level. A similar problem of formalisation was noted by T. Strachan (2024), who

emphasised the risk of declarativeness in the absence of clear procedures. E.A. Haklidir *et al.* (2023) showed that participation in planning does not have a single meaning and was interpreted differently depending on the implementation framework. This indicated the need for a theoretical understanding of child participation as a component of a humanistic approach and an indicator of sensitivity to the experiences of different user groups. In Ukraine, these practices have largely remained experimental and have not been integrated into official mechanisms. B. McAteer *et al.* (2023) noted that even, when children were recognised as capable of participating in decision-making, the political landscape remained “adult-centric”. The problem of child participation in the context of reconstruction was the fragmentation of existing practices and the lack of a clear concept that would define their place in architectural thinking. Post-war reality has turned this participation into a test for the humanistic paradigm: whether architectural practice was capable of expanding its boundaries to recognise the child as an active subject in shaping the environment and a bearer of unique experience, opening new perspectives in understanding space, trust and community. The aim of the article was to provide a theoretical justification of children's participation as a component of post-war reconstruction and to define its role in the humanistic transformation of the architectural process.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Research into child participation in architecture and urban planning emerged in an interdisciplinary field combining theories of democratic planning, humanistic architecture, children's rights and social geography (Convention..., 1989). Scientific works focused on justifying children's participation as a component of the democratisation of urban development and the expansion of the circle of decision-makers. S. Bartlett (2002) interpreted children's participation as a tool for identifying social inequalities that were invisible in adult-centred models. The author emphasised that children's experiences allowed for a different interpretation of the accessibility, safety and quality of public spaces. The authors M. Francis & R. Lorenzo (2006) developed this thesis, pointing out that the involvement of children transforms the understanding of design – from functional organisation to a focus on everyday experience.

The philosophical dimension was revealed through a rethinking of space. A. Rigolon (2011) introduced the idea of a transition “from space to place”, emphasising that the social value of the environment was formed through bodily experience and the practice of interaction. This approach made it possible to analyse space not as a neutral shell, but as an environment of meanings. J. Birch *et al.* (2016) described design as a dialogical process, where the meaning of a place arose through communication and co-creation between different groups of users. The psychological aspects of this process were analysed by M. Anbari & H. Soltanzadeh (2015), who identified the involvement of children



in design as a factor in the formation of spatial identity. The researchers showed that children's perceptions capture alternative ways of understanding the environment, different from the rationalised approaches of adults, which complemented the understanding of function, safety and comfort. The practical dimension was represented by interaction studies. K. Bishop & L. Corkery (2017) considered designing with children as a process that goes beyond the creation of specialised areas and requires a rethinking of the role of the architect. Here, the specialist became a facilitator of cooperation rather than the sole author of the decision. V. Derr *et al.* (2013), researching the participation of marginalised groups, proved that participation only made sense if it has a real impact on the outcome. V. Derr & E. Tarantini (2016) added that involvement in the planning of public spaces promotes a sense of belonging and responsibility. The methodology of participation was developed at the intersection of architecture, pedagogy, and sociology. A. Clark (2007) emphasised early involvement as a way of capturing unique experiences. The author emphasised that the active participation of children in the design process not only improved the quality of the environment but also opened up important opportunities for understanding their experiences and developing skills that were often ignored by traditional approaches to design. P. Christensen *et al.* (2017) linked this to the principles of sustainable development: children's perspectives revealed the long-term social and environmental consequences of decisions. The researchers also examined how children's needs and voices remained marginalised in the planning and design of sustainable urban spaces and emphasised the need to integrate children's perspectives into sustainable urban development policies and practices.

The political and ethical dimension was explored by C. Feinstein *et al.* (2010), who interpreted participation as a right and an ethical challenge. The authors pointed to the asymmetry of power and emphasised that genuine participation implied influence, not symbolic presence. A critical perspective was offered by B. Cooke & U. Kothari (2001), who warned against turning participatory approaches into a tool for legitimising ready-made decisions. The authors emphasised that without an analysis of power and context, the idea of participation in social development projects risks becoming a form of opaque control rather than genuine democratic inclusion. B. Flyvbjerg (2003) elaborated on the idea that rationality in design was often subordinate to power, creating risks of formalisation. Thus, scientific discourse outlined a broad theoretical and methodological field, where children's participation was seen as a complex phenomenon. In the works of researchers, it emerged as an instrument of democratisation, a source of alternative knowledge, a method of co-creation, and an object of critical analysis through the prism of power and ethics.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was qualitative and theoretical-analytical in nature, which was due to the need for a comprehensive

study of the phenomenon of child participation, which was at the intersection of architecture, social sciences and pedagogy. The methodological structure of the work was based on the principles of the humanistic paradigm, within which architectural space was interpreted not as a static physical form or neutral object, but as a dynamic field of social interaction, co-creation and restoration of meaning. This approach became relevant to the context of post-war reconstruction, where physical reconstruction processes were linked to the tasks of social rehabilitation and restoring trust. The material basis of the study was formed by selecting strategic and regulatory documents according to criteria of relevance to the challenges of democratic transformation and the availability of engagement mechanisms. The analysis included recommendations from the public sector and EU regulations, in particular the report "Build Forward: NGO recommendations on Ukraine recovery and reconstruction" (Save the Children, 2023), which was included in the sample as a document reflecting civil society's demand to overcome formalism in the management of reconstruction. The Build Ukraine Back Better (2025) strategy was analysed as a basic state scenario that defined decentralisation and inclusiveness as the main principles of recovery. In contrast, the European Commission (n.d.) regulations were considered a normative imperative that required the adaptation of Ukrainian procedures to European standards of democratic participation. The empirical component of the work consisted of case studies of international programmes (Growing Up Boulder, Junges Wien, Kinderfreundliche Kommune) and Ukrainian pilot initiatives (The City Has Me, School of Young Ambassadors of Participation), which served as the basis for comparing theoretical models with real practice.

The logic of the research was implemented through four interrelated stages. In the first, analytical and research stage, methods of systematisation and critical analysis of literature were used to identify key categories of architectural discourse, such as agency, institutionalism and the right to the city. The second stage involved interpretative analysis aimed at revealing the deep semantic connections between spatial solutions, user experience and the transformation of the professional role of the architect from that of "author" to that of facilitator of interaction. The third, methodological stage defined organisational models of children's participation and communication tools in the interdisciplinary triangle of "architect-educator-community". The final stage was based on comparative analysis and typology methods, which made it possible to compare large-scale international and Ukrainian practices in terms of duration, level of integration, and impact on decision-making. This became the basis for constructing an empirical-evaluative typology of architectural environments. The analytical conclusions were based on a qualitative comparison of approaches and do not claim to be statistically representative, but they do offer a comprehensive model for the humanisation of reconstruction processes.

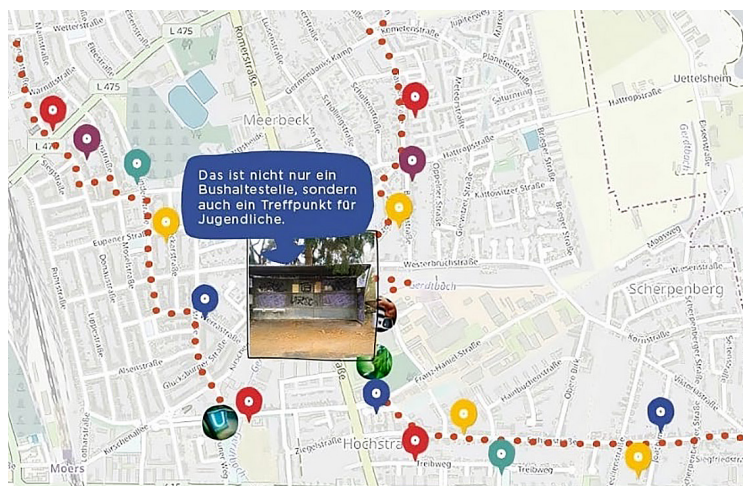


## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Systematisation of approaches and determination of the humanistic potential of children's participation in architecture

The generalisation of philosophical, social and pedagogical approaches made it possible to identify common vectors of humanisation of the architectural process. Based on this analysis, a classification of basic terms and concepts was carried out. This systematisation made it possible to organise the field of contemporary participation theories and present a comprehensive conceptual framework. Child agency became a key concept that determined the balance between protection and participation. The traditional approach, where priority was given to protection, paradoxically limited children's ability to influence the processes, in which they were involved. At the same time, in the context of co-design, agency was seen as recognition of the value and expert knowledge of all participants, including children, which formed the basis for equal participation (Stavholm *et al.*, 2024). Experience as a source of meaning consisted in recognising the

uniqueness of children's knowledge. It manifested itself through creative forms (drawings, games) that reflected the symbolic and mental perception of space (Anbari & Soltanzadeh, 2015). Children were able to transform this experience into concrete spatial images, for example by creating "risk maps", which demonstrated their active participation in learning about the environment. Dialogue as the basis for co-creation was interpreted not as a one-sided expression, but as a process of mutual exchange. This created an open social space with transformative potential, in which meaning was born through the interaction of different perspectives (Birch *et al.*, 2016). The game served as a methodological tool for learning about and mastering space, combining experimentation, imagination, and learning. Children's participation was realised through constructive play and drawing (Ensarioglu & Özsoy, 2021), as well as through the integration of digital technologies. An example of such a tool was the #stadtsache mobile app, designed to collect photos, videos and route recordings, turning children and young people into "urban experts" (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Map of urban routes created by children during the study of public spaces

**Note:** an example of visualising the results of children's spatial research using the mobile application #stadtsache. Caption on the map: "This is not only a bus stop, but also a meeting place for teenagers"

**Source:** Stadtsache (n.d.)

Trust served as an ethical condition for interaction, based on empathy and a shared search for meaning, in which architects, "losing control", gained a "sense of community" that formed the ethical basis for cooperation. Institutionality became a fundamental condition for the transition from episodic to systematic participation of children in the design processes. An analysis of strategic documents revealed a significant gap between the current state of affairs and international requirements. While the Build Ukraine Back Better (2025) strategy diagnosed low citizen engagement as a general challenge, in the context of urban planning, this meant a lack of mechanisms for children to influence the formation of their environment. Without separate procedural approaches (Pasyuta *et al.*, 2023), the

"inclusiveness" embedded in the strategy risked remaining a declaration, and the restored spaces risked remaining unfriendly to young people. At the same time, the recommendations of Save the Children (2023) and the requirements of the European Commission (n.d.) regarding the democratisation of processes should be interpreted as a requirement to change the role of the architect. In European practice, this meant a transition from designing "for children" (protection) to designing "with children" (participation). For Ukrainian reconstruction, this opened up the possibility of legitimising child participation not as volunteering, but as a mandatory pre-project stage. This meant the need to adapt the regulatory field, where children were recognised as full-fledged decision-makers at



the community level. An example of overcoming this gap was the School of Young Ambassadors of Participation project, which proved the effectiveness of local partnerships

in the absence of systemic state mechanisms. Table 1 summarised the dimensions of humanistic architecture and presented its main key ideas.

**Table 1.** Conceptual framework for understanding children’s participation in architecture

Dimensions of humanistic architecture	Key ideas	Core concepts
Institutional	Participation as a right and an indicator of social maturity; participation as a component of reconstruction policies; build back better	Agency, institutionality, trust
Empirical-spatial	Philosophy of space: space as a place of interaction; the architect as a facilitator. Play as a way of cognition and co-creation; Spielraum as a space of freedom	Experience, play
Socio-communicative	Educational/social practice; co-design, digital platforms, cooperative modelling	Dialogue, interdisciplinarity

**Source:** based on C. Feinstein *et al.* (2010), M. Anbari & H. Soltanzadeh (2015), Save the Children (2023), N. Sevinçli & B.E. Şahin (2024), Build Ukraine Back Better (2025), S. Molloy (2025)

Thus, the institutional dimension (socio-political legitimacy) outlined the transition from symbolic participation to sustainable co-creation, in which children were recognised as full-fledged social and political subjects of understanding and interpreting space. Young people were often underrepresented in planning decisions and face a deficit of rights, so sustainability required the “legalisation” of participation as a democratic principle and routine procedure (Save the Children, 2023). A prime example of such integration was the Vienna initiative Junges Wien, which transformed the urban management process by drawing on the opinions of more than 22,000 children (City of Vienna, n.d.). Within the strategic direction “Platz und Raum” (Place and Space), children were given a direct influence on the architectural appearance of the city. This was achieved not only through consultations, but also through the participatory budgeting tool “Children and Youth Million” (Kinder- und Jugendmillion), which financed specific infrastructure projects. Among the cases implemented were the redesign of school grounds (Schulvorplätze) to improve pedestrian safety, the redesign of city parks with zoning for different age groups, and the creation of inclusive public spaces designed with the direct participation of young users. Overcoming adult-centred practices was made possible by ethical partnerships that eliminated marginalisation and made participation part of professional ethics (Cath, 2023).

In the empirical-spatial dimension (knowledge and meanings of the environment), participation was interpreted as a form of learning about architecture through the unique bodily and sensory experience of the child. This experience became an autonomous source of knowledge, distinct from the rational priorities of adults. T. Wilhelmsen *et al.* (2023) noted that children prefer physical challenges and fantasy, while adults prefer safety. In the context of child-oriented environments, architectural approaches that go beyond technocratic thinking allow for a balance of autonomy, mobility, and opportunities for creative play (Ezzatian, 2017). This was consistent with the “child-friendly city” approach, according to which taking into account the child’s perspective made it possible to identify the needs of a wider range of vulnerable groups. In the space of play and experimentation, children transformed the environment into a space of presence, giving meaning to the concept of “humanity” in design. The social-communicative dimension viewed co-design as a transformative practice (Fig. 2) in which communication, learning, and social interaction became integral components of environment creation. The architectural process was transformed into a dialogue arena where knowledge was born in the interaction between specialists and the community. In this model, the architect acted not as a sole author, but as a facilitator of mutual learning (Birch *et al.*, 2016).



**Figure 2.** A socio-communicative practice of interaction between children and professionals in the process of shaping architectural space

**Note:** a – teenagers plan and design playgrounds, Regensburg. Author: Peter Ferstl; b – a “speed-date” session with the mayor, the commissioner for education and the head of the department, Regensburg. Author: Stefan Effenhauser

**Source:** Stadt Regensburg (n.d.)



In humanistic architecture and participatory pedagogy, facilitation was understood not as technical “process management” but as creating conditions for equal interaction, self-expression, and collaborative learning. It acted as a value-based approach that determined the quality of interaction: the facilitator (architect, educator, social moderator) does not impose decisions, but helps participants to reveal their own ideas, managing not the content, but the dynamics of the process – trust and creativity. This transformed the architect from the position of “author” to the position of coordinator of joint decision-making. The transition to a real partnership is only possible if clear principles are implemented, the effectiveness of which is proven by international initiatives such as UNICEF (n.d.) and Growing Up Boulder (ICMA, 2017).

Growing Up Boulder demonstrated a unique example of trilateral cooperation between the municipality, the university and children, where architects acted as a kind of “translato” of children’s visions into professional language. Using adapted methods – from digital mapping to physical modelling – the initiative integrated young people’s proposals into more than 50 real projects, including the reconstruction of the Civic Area central park, proving that children were capable of proposing competent spatial solutions. Such practices combined architectural, pedagogical, and social knowledge to create inclusive and humanistic reconstruction environments. The conceptual dimensions of humanistic participation were embodied in the principles of humanistic facilitation, which were summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Systematisation of the principles of humanistic facilitation

Principle	Level of facilitation action	Facilitative function	Type of interaction
Co-design	Structural/process and structure of action	Structure organiser: creates the framework for a process in which participants jointly formulate tasks and seek solutions	Equality in joint action; partnership
Dialogical space	Communicative/communicative form and culture of interaction	Meaning moderator: practises active listening, empathy and non-dominance, and supports reflection	Practice of mutual understanding and exchange of experience
Play as a cognitive practice	Cognitive-emotional/methodological	Scenario designer: develops play-based methods (model-making, quests) that enable children to enter the process naturally	Experimentation, a safe and motivating environment
Interdisciplinary cooperation	Institutional-team-based/organisational	Expertise coordinator: brings together efforts with educators and social workers to support the process	A system of comprehensive support

**Source:** based on J. Birch *et al.* (2016), S.A. Ensarioğlu & F.A. Özsoy (2021), T. Wilhelmsen *et al.* (2023), E. Stavholm *et al.* (2024), N. Sevinçli & B.E. Şahin (2024)

Thus, co-design emerged as a form of collective design, in which the process took on the significance of social and educational practice. Participants jointly identify problems and overcome tensions between children’s and adults’ perspectives. Such facilitation was based on recognising children’s agency, transforming the space into a platform for social programming, where the environment was created through the transformation of social relations and practices. The dialogical space implements the principle of dialogue as a format for co-creation, where knowledge was born through interaction rather than through the hierarchical transfer of information. Facilitation here was based on empathy and a willingness to lose control for the sake of meaning. In such an environment, dialogue does not seek consensus but recognises differences in positions as a source of new meanings. Materiality, gestures and non-verbal communication became important tools, allowing individual ways of perceiving space to be recorded and translated into joint discussion. Play as a cognitive practice became a natural mechanism of engagement, where the concept of Spielraum (“play space”) defined the environment as a zone of experimentation. The participation of children became a source of creative solutions that went beyond the imagination of adults, whose focus is usually limited by safety standards. Thus, facilitation in this dimension had to be based not on formal procedures,

but on creating conditions for direct experience and free self-expression. Interdisciplinary cooperation involved the synthesis of the competencies of architects, educators, and social facilitators to take into account the emotional, educational, and communicative experiences of children. This approach was implemented on the basis of ecological psychology and considered social participation as a tool for urban planning.

**Typology of environments and analysis of the effect of facilitated participation**

The implementation of specific facilitative principles in different types of environments has a varying impact on social integrity. The experience of participatory design showed that the humanistic effect was characteristic of spaces associated with everyday life (learning, play, communication, leisure), which form a sense of security, comfort and belonging in children. In post-war reconstruction, such environments became priority objects of reconstruction. In educational environments, children’s participation implements the principle of a child-centred environment (Ensarioğlu & Özsoy, 2021). For younger participants, short participation cycles were effective – redesigning schoolyards, play areas or indoor installations that produced quick, visible results (Rigolon, 2011). Such interventions created an atmosphere of trust, where children feel like

co-authors of change. In urban and public spaces, child participation contributed to the restoration of the social fabric and intergenerational interaction. Examples of such approaches were demonstrated by international initiatives that made participation a systematic element of planning. In particular, the Growing Up Boulder initiative (USA) used mental mapping and photo documentation tools to integrate young people’s decisions into the redevelopment of the Alpine-Balsam neighbourhood, prioritising pedestrian

connections and areas of contact with nature. In Germany, as part of the Kinderfreundliche Kommune programme (e.g. in Regensburg), there was a mechanism of “children’s inspections” and direct consultations with the mayor, which allowed children to verify public space projects before construction begins. Another striking example of technological facilitation was the development of Mauerpark in Berlin, where children used the #stadtsache app to participate in the renovation of the historic part of the park (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Children explore Mauerpark: urban space through the eyes of primary school pupils

Source: Stadtsache (n.d.)

In the Ukrainian context, similar participatory practices were being implemented by the educational and urban platforms The City Has Me (Urban Rukh, n.d.) and School of Young Ambassadors of Participation (Vinnytsia City Council, n.d.). The first initiative functioned as a comprehensive ecosystem that used illustrated guides and interactive programmes to help children understand how a city works, teaching them to identify barriers and propose inclusive solutions. The second, implemented by the Vinnytsia City Council, focused on a youth audience (high school and university students), creating institutional platforms for dialogue with the authorities and teaching young people tools for advocating change in local recovery strategies.

Even local urban interventions had a distinct therapeutic effect here, transforming reconstruction into a process of collective rethinking of the city as a space of trust. Flexible and transitional spaces (temporary hubs, children’s centres, mobile educational spaces) embodied the principle of everyday placemaking. Here, architects, social workers, psychologists, volunteers and educators jointly shaped a space, in which children could regain a sense of stability, autonomy and control after traumatic events. The flexibility of the environment became a symbol of restored freedom and partnership. The identified types of architectural environments reflected different ways of children’s participation and expected social effects, which were systematised in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Empirical-evaluative typology of children’s participation

Type of environment	Examples of implementation	Dominant form of participation	Social effect
Educational	Schools, kindergartens, playground installations	Joint planning, children-initiated decisions	Development of competencies, restoration of trust, local identity
Urban/public	Parks, residential courtyards, mobility routes	Co-design, civic activism, mapping	Social cohesion, spatial safety, responsibility
Flexible/transitional	Hubs, laboratories, youth centres, mobile spaces	Everyday placemaking, tactical urbanism	Psychological stabilisation, sense of control, adaptability to change

Source: developed by the author

The presented typology was not rigid: the principles of co-design, dialogue, play and interdisciplinary cooperation were interrelated and implemented in each of the types listed, depending on the goal, age group and context. A comparative analysis of the types of environments showed that the most pronounced humanistic effect was observed, when children’s participation was integrated into the actual design processes. In educational spaces, it was a factor in building trust; in public spaces, it was a factor in social

responsibility; and in flexible spaces, it was a factor in mutual support. The study proved the thesis that children’s participation goes beyond specialised children’s spaces, as children were full users of the entire urban landscape. In the practices analysed, the focus on children’s experience was linked to the application of project logic, which made it possible to identify areas of excessive control, social isolation or alienation that often remained invisible to adults. Children’s participation was identified as a factor



in the humanisation of architecture and the democratisation of reconstruction processes. Within the context of the problem of the dominance of power over rationality, examples of institutionalised child participation (Growing Up Boulder, Junges Wien, Kinderfreundliche Kommune) have become important architectural and political tools. It demonstrated that consistent and ethically oriented interaction can transform the “weak power of reason” (Flyvbjerg, 2003) into a sustainable mechanism capable of counteracting structural inequality of interests for the sake of balanced spatial development.

In post-war Ukraine, this potential will take on special significance. The participation of children in planning and reconstruction had a clear political dimension, as it reflected the degree of openness of the system to dialogue. In this context, the study by U. Banakh & R. Lozynskyy (2024) was indicative, demonstrating the possibilities of institutionally supported involvement of schoolchildren in spatial analysis of the city within the concept of Child-Friendly Cities. Although such participation was mainly implemented in the form of research activities, the very fact of including the children's perspective demonstrated a gradual expansion of the democratic framework in design. While strategic documents outlined the value framework, the methodological recommendations of D. Pasyuta *et al.* (2023) provided the necessary operational tools. The urban planning protocols proposed by the authors made it possible to avoid declarativeness and transform community involvement into a clear technological process. This approach minimised the threat of structural inequality, as pointed out by civil sector analysts (Datchenko, 2019). Thus, the integration of child participation in the reconstruction process became not only an indicator of democratic maturity, but also a professional prerequisite for the creation of sustainable and inclusive spaces. Ukrainian pilot projects demonstrated the formation of a new culture of interaction, in which architecture was understood as a social process and a space of trust. Institutional facilitation became important – the creation of interdisciplinary teams, where children were recognised as equal co-creators of the environment. It was this approach that improved the quality of architectural solutions, viewing reconstruction as a process of restoring social cohesion and post-war sustainability.

## CONCLUSIONS

The article substantiated a comprehensive conceptual framework for humanistic facilitation of child participation, which was defined as a strategic tool for overcoming technocratic models in the architectural processes of post-war reconstruction in Ukraine. The study allowed

to interpret children's participation not as a local pedagogical practice, but as an indicator of the level of social sensitivity of architectural and planning processes. The systematisation of legal, empirical-spatial and methodological dimensions laid the theoretical foundation for the transition to a co-creation model, in which the child was recognised as an active social actor capable of influencing the formation of fair and safe environments, and the architect transforms their professional role from a sole author to a facilitator of dialogue. The key result of the work was the identification and justification of four principles of humanistic facilitation: co-design, dialogical space, play as a cognitive practice, and interdisciplinary cooperation. It has been established that their comprehensive implementation ensured a transition from formal participation to real interaction, which helped to overcome adult-centredness in urban planning. Particular attention was focused on the need to involve interdisciplinary teams, bringing together architects, educators and social workers, to provide emotional and communicative support to participants in the process. The developed assessment and methodological typology confirmed that priority reconstruction environments – educational institutions, urban public spaces and flexible transition zones that function as laboratories of humanistic architecture – have significant potential for restoring a culture of trust and social cohesion. The analysis showed that achieving a sustainable social effect was impossible without institutionalising participatory practices and replacing episodic initiatives with systematic municipal policy. The results confirmed that the integration of humanistic facilitation principles into national reconstruction strategies has become an important component for taking into account the experience of vulnerable population groups and democratising spatial decisions. Prospects for further scientific research should be directed towards developing criteria for assessing the socio-spatial effectiveness of child participation, adapting international institutional models to the Ukrainian legislative field, and researching digital facilitation tools that ensure the inclusiveness, scalability and transparency of decision-making processes at the community level.

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## Участь дітей як архітектурна складова післявоєнної відбудови України

**Анотація.** В умовах повномасштабної війни та повоєнної трансформації архітектура України постала перед викликом переходу від технократичної відбудови фізичних об'єктів до відновлення соціальної тканини міст. Метою дослідження стало визначення ролі дитячої участі в гуманізації архітектурного середовища та обґрунтування нових підходів до формування освітніх і громадських просторів у післявоєнний період. Методологічну основу роботи становили концепції діалогічного простору, со-дизайну та просторової агентності, інтегровані в архітектурний аналіз процесів відбудови. У статті розглянуто дитячу партисипацію як потенційно стратегічну архітектурну компоненту, здатну впливати на переосмислення усталених підходів до просторового планування. На основі систематизації теоретичних моделей і аналізу міжнародних та українських практичних кейсів показано, що інтеграція дитячого досвіду впливає на морфологію та функціональну організацію архітектурних об'єктів. У просторовій площині результати дослідження вказали на зростання уваги до альтернативних проектних підходів, у межах яких поряд із жорстким функціональним зонуванням було розглянуто принципи полівалентності, а монументальний масштаб у певних контекстах доповнився рішеннями, орієнтованими на співмірність, тактильність і доступність середовища. Встановлено, що врахування дитячої перспективи змінює підхід до безпеки архітектурного простору – від логіки ізоляції до концепції «активної безпеки», заснованої на прозорості, візуальних зв'язках і соціальній присутності. Аналіз пріоритетних середовищ відбудови – освітніх, громадських і перехідних – показав, що партисипативні практики сприяють виявленню прихованих просторових конфліктів та «сліпих зон» проектування, які залишаються непоміченими в технократичних моделях. В освітніх просторах це сприяло формуванню середовищ, орієнтованих на дослідницьку поведінку; у громадських – підвищенню інклюзивності для різних вікових груп; у тимчасових і транзитних – швидкій адаптації та освоєнню простору користувачами в умовах посттравматичного досвіду втрати дому. Отримані результати формують методологічне підґрунтя для інституціоналізації дитячої партисипації в архітектурних і планувальних процесах, окреслюючи роль міждисциплінарної взаємодії як ключової умови гуманізації простору та стійкості ініціатив у післявоєнний період.

**Ключові слова:** архітектура відбудови; простір і місце; партисипативне проектування; гуманізація архітектури; громадські простори