



ENG

EDITORIAL

Childhoods with their own voices

Let us never forget nor fail to assert that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is first and foremost a text of indignation and rebellion.

Philippe Meirieu

In 1896, the author and women's rights activist Frida Stéenhoff ventured that the 20th century would be the century of the child. This was not a rhetorical statement, but a political vindication: women's struggle was improving society, an advance that would be amplified when children were granted all rights as full human beings. Until then, childhood had been regarded as an earlier, precarious and inferior stage prior to adulthood. A new perspective was needed to sustain a commitment to the dignity of the youngest children, which was made possible by the impetus of those who demonstrated, especially in pedagogy and psychology, that children are not small, incomplete adults. They possess characteristics that require special protection, but they have the capacity to create and produce thought and culture individually and collectively. In short, they are not future projects at the service of other people's interests, but people who carry their full condition as human beings throughout their entire lives. In the words of the doctor and teacher Janus Korczak, "children are not the people of tomorrow but are people of today".

At kult-ur we are aware of the extraordinary implications that this evolution of the concept of childhood has had for the development of cities in terms of urban planning, architecture, culture and community outreach. Unquestionably, the fundamental principles underpinning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) – the right to life, survival and development, child participation and non-discrimination – have had a significant impact on public policies over the last 35 years and, although not without difficulties and resistance, constitute a framework for action necessary for the survival of society as a whole. The USA is the only state that has not ratified the Convention, which is the most widely supported international treaty to date. All other UN countries are therefore legally accountable for their compliance to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

This vast landscape encompasses legislative developments, bodies and action programmes created to ensure the protection of children. In this context, protection means not only caring for children, but also guaranteeing that they can exercise rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of association as well as protection of their private life and the right to information. In sum, it covers everything that facilitates their own personal development in society and that, through an education committed to democratic values and social justice, can enable them to participate in responsible citizenship.

In the present issue of kult-ur we examine experiences that demonstrate the importance of recognising these rights. The monograph focuses attention on the situation following the pandemic. A series of articles on the impact of the crisis generated by Covid-19 allow us to listen to children's voices and reflect on the exercise of these fundamental rights in a situation of widespread vulnerability. These are life experiences which reveal a subjectivity that is not reduced to mere individualism, which is linked to shared life projects and which always develops in continuous negotiation with the environment. In sum, it is a subjectivity that, as the pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi stated, is typical of the culture of a childhood capable of creating multiple possibilities based on freedom and that is also aware of the participatory and community dimension.

Much remains to be done, however. The annual figures on violence against children around the world are devastating: cultural violence that denies them a voice and turns them into consumer goods; structural violence that makes them the most vulnerable of all vulnerable groups; institutional violence that prevents them from exercising their civil and political rights; economic violence that exploits them as cheap labour; physical violence that violates their bodies and their mental health. An unbearable litany which demands that states,



organisations and society critically analyse each situation, continuously review strategies for improvement and commit to cooperation at all levels.

As we go to press, several media outlets report the death of a child at the hands of his father, the number of children killed in Gaza rises to 26,000, and a senator from Milei's party proposes that in Argentina families who sell their children 'out of necessity' should not be penalised. The 21st century is undoubtedly still the century of children's struggle for their rights. Following Meirieu, we must be indignant and rebel with them until justice is done, because each of their wounds challenges us, compromises the present and jeopardises the future of all humanity.