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FIELD OF IDEAS

## THE CITY AND CHILDREN HEALTH: BETWEEN THE BROOM AND THE HORSE



*Here you are a real horse and a sword.  
Now you can play!*

children plays. One must be a kid to understand it... or, much better, we should behave as kids frequently. "Play with the new sword". Is it an invitation to likeliness (in adult eyes) or is it the death of the play (in the kid's eyes)?

Is the city a good place for our children? This is an important debate; nevertheless it frequently goes unnoticed. Is the city a place to discover, a window to creation, as we would say nowadays? Or is it the place where everything is stipulated and foreseen as a big spider's web? Aren't the questions less important? Do we educate in a sense of responsibility or in a sense of fear?

There is a kid who rides on an old broom raising dust in front of his house. The broom plays the role of a horse and the risen dirtiness particles that will provoke the complaints of the corner kiosk vendor will play the role of mysterious morning mist in an enchanted forest. The kid is the middle of *Eixample* area, but, in his head, he rides on a broom towards a life and death fight against a fierce dragon... or, you never know, against a terrible warlock's powerful army in a country that only exists into the kids' head. The little child has not decided yet who he will fight against with his invisible sword. But we decide on his behalf. And we not always decide the right thing.

The picture enclosed to this article has been drawn by the Italian pedagogue [Francesco Tonucci](#), one of the first ones demanding to look at the world in children's eyes. Frato, his character, shows how often, not all the things carried out with the best intention are working correctly. There is a very special magic in all



From the scope of different institutions such as WHO, they are working on the line of [Healthy Cities](#), or more pleasant cities as we could also say. Sometime ago initiatives have been developed in order to obtain cities that are friendly with children. [The school path movement](#) shows interesting achievements in Barcelona. The city aspires to create more school paths, signed posted routes to lead kids to school. *Poble Nou* area, as it is [explained in La Vanguardia](#) newspaper, has started a school route model in order to improve kids' autonomy.

These are small news. Or perhaps not so small. Healthy cities are made with the sum of many attitudes. Healthy cities are full of fierce dragons and enchanted forests... that kids should have been able to discover and defeat. Alone, by themselves.

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