



SALZBURG  
GLOBAL  
SEMINAR

## PARKS FOR THE PLANET FORUM

# The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play

## Write! Tweet! Post!

If you're interested in writing either an op-ed style article for our website or the session report, or a personal reflection blog post while you're here this week, please let Salzburg Global Editor Louise Hallman know or email your submission directly to [lhallman@salzburgglobal.org](mailto:lhallman@salzburgglobal.org).

If you do intend to write for your own organization either while you're here or after the session, please make sure to observe the Chatham House Rule (information on which is in your Welcome Pack). If you're in any doubt, do not hesitate to contact Louise.

We'll be updating our website with summaries from the panels and interviews with our Fellows, all of which you can find on the session page: [www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/574](http://www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/574)

You can also join in the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag [#SGSparks](https://twitter.com/SGSparks) and see all your fellow Fellows and their organizations on Twitter via the list [www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-574](https://www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-574)

We're updating both our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal](https://www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal) and our Flickr stream [www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal](https://www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal) with photos from the session during this week and also after the session. If you require non-watermarked images for your own publication, please let Louise know.

We will also be posting photos to Instagram [www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal](https://www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal). Use the hashtag [#SGSparks](https://twitter.com/SGSparks) and we might feature your photos in the newsletter!



@JaimeZaplatosch #Running with my new friend @mariadekruif, exploring #Salzburg during the @SalzburgGlobal #SGSParks 8 miles/12.8k



Participants take part in a warm-up exercise at The Child in the City: Health, Parks and Play

## How children benefit from nature

Oscar Tollast

**Around 50 experts from different generations and sectors convened at Salzburg Global Seminar to set a new agenda to promote access to nature for children and communities in growing urban centers. Participants are meeting at Schloss Leopoldskron for the third *Planet for the Parks Forum – The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play*. They will aim to propose strategic recommendations to be shared at the 15th World Congress on Public Health to be held next month in Australia.**

Huge numbers of people have moved to urban areas around the world. Enough decades have gone by that people are beginning to sense they are missing something. Experts are looking at the positive experiences of nature and how that helps physical health. Research undertaken suggests that the more access children have to nature, the better for their health and wellbeing.

Speaking to participants, Richard Louv, author, and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network claimed children who play in natural play spaces tend to be more creative.

The tide is beginning to turn. Louv said, "There's far more interest in thinking about cities as places that connect people

to nature." He referred to research that indicated children in the US who spent a third of their day outdoors performed better regarding academic improvement than pupils in other schools who did not.

Louv said the barriers preventing children from going outdoors were "intense." Electronics are a barrier, he claimed, but more attention needs to be paid to other obstacles, such as fear of strangers. With so much tech entering children's lives, we need to balance that with nature.

Louv suggested the ideal student is the student who has both skills learned from the natural world and the virtual world. Environments are at risk of narrowing children's senses, making them feel less alive. Louv said, "We need to begin seeing this as a human right. Any less than that, it will not be taken seriously."

However, as long as environmental education is only spoken about by environmental educators, children lose out. Louv said, "We need a bigger boat." This conversation requires a bigger constituency.

When wider audiences start talk about a nature-rich future, people can begin to envisage what that might look like. Louv said there needed to be a social movement for balance, bringing conservatives and liberals together. The work without that larger social force "will be impossible," he warned.



#SGSparks @SalzburgGlobal



facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal



instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal

# Martin Spray: “I am totally convinced about the need to invest in the education of younger generations”

Fellow discusses Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and success of “Inspiring Generations” program

Andrea Abellán

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) stands for the protection of wetlands and nature areas with a growing focus on urban environments. Its chief executive, Martin Spray, runs the rule over nine wetland parks which cover some of the UK’s most diverse wilderness. He sat down with Salzburg Global’s Andrea Abellán while attending *The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play*, and discussed how he hopes to connect people to nature.

Martin Spray took over the work of the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust’s founder, Sir Peter Scott, in 1991. He pushed forward Scott’s “visionary ideas” to make them a reality. The painting, representing the founder’s “last great vision,” currently resides in Mr. Spray’s office and continues to inspire his work within the organization.

Before passing away, Scott illustrated his plans to build a wetland park in the heart of London. With more than 250,000 visitors a year, the London Wetland Centre has since become a reality. The Centre attracts visitors from all over the world, and imitations of its design are visible in countries such as China and Dubai.

Spray considers increasing the organization’s reach and influence his biggest success. He says, “I am especially proud of having helped to take the ideas of an incredible founder to a 21st-century context.” Mr. Spray highlights the role played by the big, diverse team working to make the WWT projects function. Professionals from a wide range of sectors – from researchers to marketing specialists – have joined forces to make natural areas attractive for civil society.

London’s Wetland Centre has a playground and educational materials where children can learn about more than 200 bird species visiting the site. It also has a cafe, a shop, and comfortable seating areas with panoramic views. Everything is planned to make a visitor’s experience enjoyable. Spray explains, “It’s all addressed to connect people to nature.”

Apart from work in its wetlands centre, the WWT takes an active role in training projects, restoring wetlands, and



water management-related initiatives. These efforts include working with sustainable drainage systems and natural water-treatment systems. It also runs the “Inspiring Generations” project, which enables around 60,000 students – most of whom from deprived areas – to visit Wetland Centres each year.

The program, funded by the bank, HSBC, educates both teachers and children by enhancing their environmental awareness. Spray confesses the project is something very close to his heart. He says, “I am totally convinced about the need to invest in the education of younger generations. They are who are going to take decisions in the future and who will take the world forward. This [idea] is the main focus of the Inspiring Generations program and also the main reason why I’m in this seminar.”

Spray became interested in nature at a very young age. Supporting his passion, his parents quickly became used to seeing him running after lizards, butterflies, and any other animal which crossed his path. After spending almost the first half of his career in the government sector, where he learned “a lot about management skills,” Spray spent several years working as a volunteer for the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). From this volunteer work, he was offered a full-time position, which opened the doors to a career in the environmental sector. In 2013,

his work regarding nature conservation was recognized by Queen Elizabeth II, who awarded Spray a C.B.E, “Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.”

In 2015, Mr. Spray took part in the inaugural session of the *Parks for the Planet Forum*, titled *Nature, Health, and New Urban Generation*. Spray says this program has had a lasting impact on his thinking.

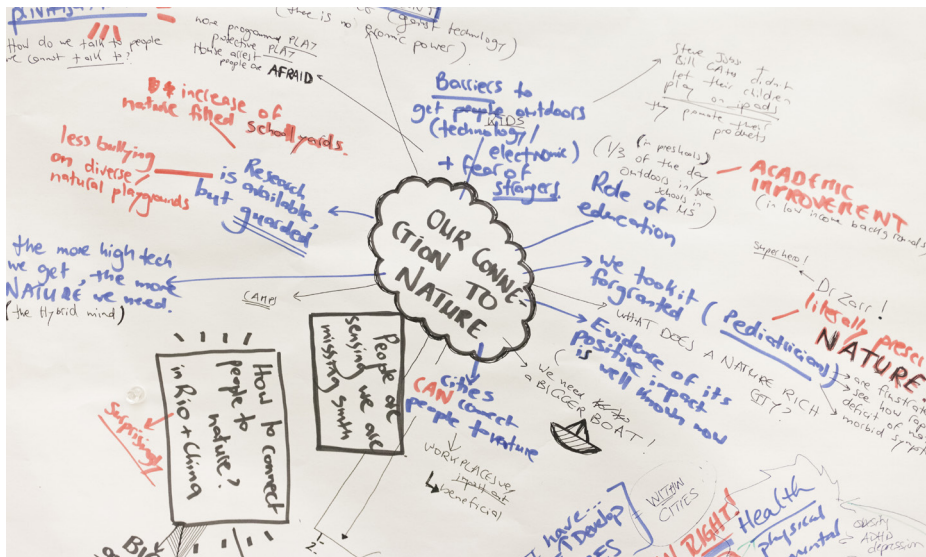
He says, “Meeting other Fellows made me realize that there were people all over the world facing similar issues and using the same language to talk about them.”

This session became a source of inspiration that led to a switch in his organization from a pure conservation perspective to a more people-centered one. He hopes this year’s session will help him go back home with renewed energy once again.

Spray defines himself as a positive thinker and believes citizens can be persuaded to develop more conscious and sustainable attitudes. He believes the focus should be on finding the best ways to inspire them. He has observed a growth in environmental awareness among people over the last decades, but he recognizes the “battle has not been won yet.”

Spray says there is a lot of work to do to create healthier environments and provide better access to public spaces. While Scott’s “last great vision” may have been achieved, Spray’s work has only just begun.





## Designing differently: What can we change and what is the demand?

There are several ways as to how parks and protected areas can better meet the needs of children. However, to begin with, there is perhaps a greater need to identify how these areas can become more accessible, and what changes are required to ensure children can spend more time in nature.

Participants at *The Child in the City: Health, Parks, and Play* have been asked to consider what individuals and organizations can do to develop more child-friendly parks and protected areas. They have also asked themselves what the children involved actually wanted.

Regarding the latter, the ideas which came forward varied in detail, from short responses such as fun, freedom, and risk-taking, to detailed responses outlining concepts such as “The Right to Play.” In the eyes of participants, they believed children wanted safe public spaces which were decriminalized and provided opportunities to express their interests and desires.

Some participants suggested through their ideas that greater focus should be paid to children’s creativity. One participant said children’s play should be observed to capture what they want, while another participant said they should see children as active agents who can bring about change themselves.

Adults were viewed as an obstacle by one participant, who called for them to behave more like children to allow fun and learning to continue.

To ensure these changes are possible, participants considered what steps could

be made. Their ideas covered areas from accessibility and education.

Children could become more familiar with nature and green spaces by including them in their day-to-day lives more often. They could spend their lunch break on green schoolyards, bring nature into classrooms with plants, and finish at an earlier time in the afternoon to allow more time to be outside. Nature can play a stronger part in the school experience, right from Kindergarten. These ideas require the support of parents, schools, and city officials.

Outside of school, there could be intergenerational design sessions involving parents and children, allowing people of all ages to have community ownership of a public space. Children and adults can be encouraged to become “citizen scientists,” monitoring the nature that exists around them.

Another actionable step is to maximize the use of existing assets in the city, such as temporarily using land which remains unused for creative and fun purposes.

Individuals and organizations need to work together to ensure children feel safe in these open spaces. This could be achieved by asking children what frightens them and valuing their opinions. Parents’ and guardians’ fears should also be noted and listened to.

These ideas and others will continue to be worked on as participants look for equitable, practicable, and cost-effective solutions which involve children.



## #FacesOfLeadership

“When I was little, I was a bit deprived of playing outside, because the house where I grew up was in front of an avenue. So our parents would not allow us to go outside, because it was dangerous, since there were cars passing by. We were lucky; we had a backyard, so we would create different scenarios... it was just about creating different worlds. Sometimes we would just put a tent in the backyard, and stay there, and my mom would let us sleep outside. So she made everything possible for us to be able to play in the house...

Building and making stuff, creating worlds, has always been part of me, which led me to study architecture. But when I finished, I knew I didn’t want to build houses or buildings, so I started to work in theater. After that I did a Master’s in Narrative Environments, which really opened my eyes, because it was really transdisciplinary work... During that time, I was very lucky to be part of a grant that was an initiative of the EU to develop urban installations that would solve problems. We got to travel to different cities, and create artistic, engaging, playful experiences for people to activate spaces... I realized this is what I want to do, I want to tackle the future in a playful way with public space... I guess the defining moment was when my mom let me play.”

Leticia Lozano is head of Playful City at Lab for the City in Mexico City. Lozano is passionate about designing innovative and immersive experiences and is interested in exploring the dialogue between people and space within different cultures.

## Hot Topic: “Why is it important that we integrate nature into future urban development?”

Denise Macalino

“I really think that [nature] is essential to who we are, and how we’re built. I think our bodies, our minds, our spirits are reflections of creation. We’re made of water, we’re made of earth, we’re made of the same minerals. We need sunlight. It’s what our bodies need, what our spirits need, what our souls need. I think that urban development and urban spaces are toxic without clean water, and without green leaves, and plants. I just think it’s essential; it’s who we are. We are nature. How can we live without nature? I think parts and natural spaces are really crucial for new ideas to be introduced, and for people who are wounded to heal, and for cultures to connect, for reconciliation to happen.”

Jacob Virden

Hope Community’s Parks & Power Campaign, USA

“Cities provide the everyday habitat of currently more than 50% of the world’s population. They will be even more relevant in the future, meaning they will be the everyday human habitat for most of the world’s population – up to 75%. The way in which cities are designed is the ways in which we will live our everyday lives. How we get to work, where we buy our food, how we interact with our neighbors, how we decide to interact, or not interact with strangers. Importantly, for sustainability science, is the way in which we design nature into the cities. Are we going to provide nature experiences in everyday life for the people, for the vast majority of the world’s population, or not? If so, what kind of nature experiences? Nature experiences are of extreme importance for children to develop that psychological trait called “connection to nature.” This is one of the major drivers for pro-environmental behavior.”

Matteo Giusti

Phd Student at Stockholm University, researching Sustainability Science, Sweden

“I was thinking about whole systems today, because there was a lot of that conversation today. I think that it’s super

important. If 75% of the world’s population by 2050 will live in cities, I think there’s a great opportunity [there]. We can assume a lot of these people are going to move from the countryside to cities, right?

We know that. We know that economic prospects are probably moving people from the countryside to cities. I really would like to start thinking and pushing groups like this to start thinking about not only implementation of parks and green spaces, but more importantly mitigation or prevention. We know people that are moving from the countryside to the city most likely have been living in nature for thousands of years. There has to be talk on the reasons why people need to move... The implementation of green spaces, to be able to be effective, will have to be done with input from communities they’re serving. I think that conversations like this sometimes oversee that... You have to have a cultural perspective of who’s moving where, to be able to understand what the needs are. If you design from top to bottom, that may not necessarily work.”

Neftali Duran

Project Leader of Nuestra Comida Project, USA

“It’s super important. We see a lot of implications for the type of development that’s happened over the last 50 years. We have really focused our planning and development on a car-centric model, and [we’re] not really thinking about the health and happiness of people. We’ve kind of engineered a healthy lifestyle out of our cities. It has become more difficult for people to be physically active and have a sense of belonging and have a public life. There has been a real deterioration of public life in our cities. This has a lot of implications for health and wellbeing. We see increases in depression and anxiety, and a lack of a sense of belonging in our communities. I think the way that we plan our cities, design our cities, has to be carefully considered from the perspective of the child... but it’s for all people – with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.”

Amanda O’Rourke

Director of Strategic Planning, 8 80 Cities, Canada

## Weekend Highlights

A selection of photos from the weekend’s activities, taken by Ela Grieshaber. These and more will be made available on Facebook and Flickr.

