

## The child in development policies and programmes

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This special intends to examine *the construction of the child as a specific subject/object in development policies and programmes*, based on research and field work conducted in developing countries. It aims to analyse the systems of representations, discourses and practices of development projects involving children in various social, cultural and demographic contexts. It seems crucial, at a time when they are mobilised by a number of development projects, to discuss the notion of child—and, by extension, that of childhood.

The first question in this call relates to the *multiplicity of children figures created by development policies and programmes*, particularly in the last two decades. Obvious examples of these figures include children affected by AIDS, malnourished children, working children, children victims of abuse, orphan children... but also to child soldiers, the wizard children, or even the “vulnerable children” of the international organizations. What do these figures have in common and what differentiates them? What and who justifies the existence of these figures? Can or should children be categorised based on the status they have—or are given—in the society they belong to, on a specific development project at a given time, or in reference to the criteria defined by international organisations such as the World Health Organization, the International Labour Office, or United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund? Particular attention will be paid to the adverse effects of this categorisation trend, including the stigmatisation of the concerned children at the local level.

The second question we wish to address is the *segmented nature of development projects* and the lack of a comprehensive vision of the child. The rationale of development projects provided to donors implies “targetting” specific populations. One project, for instance, is interested in the education of children political refugees while another focuses on the vaccination of children under two years in a marginal neighbourhood of a large city. But doesn't this approach generate a multiplicity of unrelated projects? Doesn't the lack of a comprehensive vision of the child as a social agent reduce the impact of the often costly actions implemented “for the child's sake”? And doesn't the establishment of “children's rights” making universal rights mandatory, imply a change in the goals of development projects?

The third question contributors may focus on is that of the *participation of children in development projects*—or rather their lack of participation. While it is difficult to work on children as a research object, it is possibly even more difficult to work with children and for children as social subjects/actors. And there is no escaping the fact that most development projects avoid considering children's participation in their design and implementation. This is the case, for example of the projects seeking social reintegration for street children and child soldiers. Are the leeways of children bounded solely by those laid down by the adults? With the possible exception of children too young to talk, aren't the children the agents of their own lives, in one way or another? Don't children transform, in their own way, the projects of which they are the “beneficiaries”? The aim is here to delineate the contours and limits of the

“participation” of children in development projects, beyond slogans that are more or less ideological.

The discussion has methodological implications, as working for children requires determining how it is possible to work on and with them. It also has theoretical consequences as it raises the issue of the child as an actor, as well as the outlines and limits of the concepts of agency and empowerment applied to childhood. It finally has operational effects on the development projects concerning children. A project is all the more “acceptable” that it is understood and appropriated by the population whose life it is supposed to improve.

Autrepart invites for this issue contributions from the various disciplines of social sciences. The relationship between the outcomes of development projects, the research carried out, the methodology and the concepts used must be analysed in the light of specific cases. This is why the proposed contributions will clearly specify the characteristics and organization of the society to which the child belongs.

**Proposal (title and abstract not exceeding 150 words) must be sent to the journal *Autrepart* before 15<sup>th</sup> september 2013**

**The articles selected have to be submitted by 15<sup>th</sup> november 2013**

**Book reviews on the topic of this issue must be sent to the journal *Autrepart* before 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

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