



ESD for kids and adults, inhabitants of big cities

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Kids and adults, inhabitants of big cities form a significant part of our planet's population. They spend almost all their lives within their cities' limits. How could one find an efficient approach to environmental education for sustainable development in this highly urbanized environment? The handbook *Environmental Atlas of the City for Children and Adults* is designed for this very purpose.

The idea of such an atlas is based on the principle of bringing the reader (an adult or a child) closer to the city gradually. The city's view from a satellite is enhanced by a bird's eye view or a panorama from a skyscraper. Thus we let a child know her or his city as a whole. On the next stage it is shown that the city's inhabitants share their space and resources with other living things (animals and plants).

That's why the Atlas pays much attention to such questions as "Who lives by our side?" or "What things grow close to us?". As a rule, books of such kind, intended for children, only focus on some well-known mammals, birds, sometimes butterflies. Nothing is said about other insects, spiders, amphibians and reptiles, mollusks, worms and so on. The Atlas equally presents all groups of organisms. In the world of plants the accent is put on trees and bushes that are familiar to children, but other plants, the so called "weeds", are also covered. Domestic animals and house plants are discussed separately.

Children and adults are encouraged to realize that she or he is not the winner in the competition for resources, but only one of many participants. That's why the Atlas has a group of questions "Where does energy come from, and where does it go?", "Where does water come from and where does it go?", "Where does waste come from and where does it go?". It is an important part of ESD, within which, for example, two energy use strategies are presented: wasteful and sparing use of energy.

Finally, in our opinion, the main part of ESD process is to provide a new view on the child's immediate environment and to shape new behavioral attitudes. So the Atlas invites the reader to think about questions such as "What can your house become like?", "How can you lighten your footprint (one's overall impact on environment and resources used)?"

Practical use of the *Environmental Atlas of the City for Children and Adults* as handbook has shown that children of 5-7 years old eagerly study the Atlas both independently, and with the parents. They become motivated for independent research of urban environment in their close vicinity, not far from home or school. Case studies of environmentally friendly behavior, given in the Atlas, are easily understood by preschool and elementary school children. Often these examples trigger changes in the behavioral stereotype for the first time.