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Designing Restorative City Models for Child Safety and Crime Prevention: Insights from the Global South

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ABSTRACT

This study explores restorative city models as holistic approaches to urban safety and child protection, particularly within the Global South. By integrating restorative justice, inclusive urban design, child rights, and community participation, restorative cities aim to address the root causes of crime and social disintegration. Utilizing a qualitative comparative case study approach, the research analyzes initiatives in cities including Hull, Leuven, Medellín, and Nairobi. Key findings reveal that interventions such as school-based mediation, child-friendly infrastructure, and trauma-informed planning significantly reduce youth violence and foster community trust. While challenges such as institutional resistance and resource limitations persist, case evidence suggests that restorative frameworks are adaptable across diverse socio-economic contexts. The study concludes with a policy-oriented roadmap advocating for participatory planning, inter-sectoral coordination, and capacity-building as key strategies for implementing restorative urban models. In doing so, it positions restorative cities as practical solutions for advancing child welfare, community resilience, and long-term urban peace. Beyond these core findings, the research underscores the versatility of restorative approaches in addressing both crimes committed against children and those committed by them. The comparative analysis reveals that, when tailored to local socio-cultural contexts, restorative city models can generate measurable reductions in violence, enhance institutional trust, and foster inclusive civic participation, making them an essential policy direction for sustainable urban development in both resource-rich and resource-constrained settings.

Keywords: Restorative Cities; Crime Prevention; Child Protection; Restorative Justice; Barnahus Model, Global South

1. Introduction

Urban environments in the 21st century are confronted with an array of escalating social challenges, including deepening inequalities, the marginalization of youth, and diminishing trust in traditional justice systems. In numerous cities, particularly in the Global South, conventional crime prevention strategies that heavily rely on policing and punitive measures have proven inadequate in addressing the underlying causes of urban insecurity. Children, among the most vulnerable urban populations, are disproportionately affected by these systemic failures.

In response, the concept of the restorative city has emerged as a transformative approach that integrates principles of restorative justice into urban governance. This model emphasizes conflict resolution, social healing, and participatory justice rather than punitive enforcement. However, despite its increasing appeal, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding how restorative urban strategies can be adapted to the socio-economic realities of cities in the Global South, where unique challenges such as child protection, informal settlements, and institutional fragility prevail.

This paper aims to bridge that gap by exploring the convergence of restorative justice, child protection, and urban design in practical strategies for city building. It advocates for empowering children not only as beneficiaries of urban systems but also as active participants in shaping safer, more inclusive cities. Drawing on global case studies, the research investigates how restorative approaches can address both structural violence and everyday urban conflict through design, policy, and community engagement.

The paper contributes to an evolving discourse in criminology, child welfare, and urban studies, promoting an interdisciplinary model of urban regeneration that positions child protection as both a moral imperative and a foundational strategy for long-term crime prevention.

2. Research Method

This study utilized a qualitative, comparative case study methodology to explore effective integration of restorative justice principles into urban governance, with a focus on child protection and crime prevention. The research trascend abstract theorization by analyzing the implementation of restorative urban models in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Case selection was based on a criteria including relevance, geographic diversity, and the availability of documented practices. Selected cases featured cities in the Global North (e.g., Hull, Leuven, Wrocław) and Global South (e.g., Medellín, Nairobi, Pécs), each of which has adopted restorative principles through child-centered initiatives, community mediation, or restorative design strategies.

Data sources are comprised with academic literature, policy documents, program reports, and evaluations from NGOs and local governments. Key themes examined in the case studies included:

- The structure and outcomes of school-based mediation programs;
- Community-based support systems for children and families;
- The application of the Barnahus model and child-sensitive justice procedures;
- Integration of restorative justice into urban planning and spatial design (e.g., CPTED principles);
- Strategies for institutional coordination and community participation.

Rather than focusing on quantifying impacts, the qualitative approach facilitated a more nuanced examination of contextual factors, implementation barriers, and the adaptive capacity of restorative models across different environments. Particular attention was given to how these approaches operate in resource-constrained settings in the Global South, where conventional justice mechanisms often struggle to meet the needs of local communities.

3. Restorative Justice in General

Today, the judiciary is facing a risk of increasingly intercepted from the primary stakeholders, the victims and their experiences. This detachment is often facilitated by members of the public authority, along with the defence attorneys, who may turn a specific case into a mere question of law through legal technicalities. This concern is not new, it has long been posited that legal representatives were effectively usurping the conflict from those directly affected in the case [1].Since the beginning of the 20th century, three divergent paradigms of justice have emerged [2]:

a) Retributive Justice: This paradigm emphasizes proportionate punitive measures corresponding to the offense, largely disregarding the victim's role and the harm inflicted upon them during sentencing.

b) Preventive Justice: The primary focus is on influencing the future conduct of the offender, aiming to deter

them from further criminal behavior through punitive measures;

c) Restorative Justice: This approach prioritizes the compensation of victims and seeks to restore the situation to its pre-offense condition. It emphasizes victim rehabilitation and community engagement within the justice process [3].

Restorative justice can be delineated by five principal features [2]:

- It initiates an objective assessment of the offense's circumstances, encompassing both resultant harm and injury.
- The prosecution's intention is directed towards resolving the conflict between the victim and the accused, thereby reinstating disrupted social harmony [4].
- The aim of justice includes rehabilitating the offender and facilitating their reintegration into society [5].
- Sanctions are not solely punitive; they are designed to prevent future offenses while fostering optimal social cooperation.
- Finally, an essential component involves an attempt at socializing justice, manifesting through methods such as social courts, workplace disciplinary procedures, and mediation [6].

Restorative justice can be distinguished in three particular formats [7]:

a) Authoritative,

b) Democratic, and

c) Unilateral restorative justice.

ad a) In some countries, restorative justice has been implemented in a way that allows authorities to retain control over the proceedings, making decisions even when the consent of the victim and the accused is sought. Authoritative restorative justice is fundamentally 'paternalistic' [7], operating on the assumption that those in power know what is best for the majority. It has three essential features:

- Decisions are made by representatives of the authority, and the services facilitating interactions between the victim and the accused are organized by those authorities, with minimal involvement from non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- The interpretation of reparation is very narrow, emphasizing the outcome rather than the procedure it-

self.

- The approach addresses the burden of the offense rather than focusing on the victim and is more punitive in nature, with reparation being a secondary consideration.

In the context of authoritative restorative justice, victims often have little opportunity to give consent and are rarely involved in designing or implementing solutions. While a social worker who reported the case may discuss reparation informally with the victim, this typically occurs before the social worker has had the chance to understand the victim's perspective, thereby influencing their decisions. Another limitation is that this form of restorative justice is often only applied to juveniles [8].

The narrow interpretation of reparation is a key characteristic of authoritative restorative justice. Although mediation between the victim and the offender may be included, it is not typically part of the process for deciding the extent of reparation [9].

Restorative justice is deemed authoritative when it requires the accused to confront the consequences of their actions, which may include elements of shaming. This form of restorative justice is one-sided, as it primarily focuses on the accused while overlooking the victim's perspective. The substance of the reparation decision is determined by the courts, and any mediation that imposes a burden on the victim is merely viewed as a tool for making the accused face the impact of their actions. [10].

ad b) The hallmark of democratic or community-centered restorative justice is its operation by and for the community. This form of restorative justice embraces a comprehensive understanding of reparation, aiming to benefit both the victim and the offender [11].

Democratic restorative justice offers advantages to the community, similar to those provided by authoritarian restorative justice, but it stands out for its emphasis on direct participation from the people. Systems employing democratic restorative justice are inherently community-centered. While they must be ready to resort to coercive measures as a last resort, the preference is to explore voluntary methods first. Unlike authoritarian restorative justice, democratic restorative justice empowers the victim, the accused, and their respective supporters to collaboratively determine reparation (though not punishment). Family members of both the victim and the accused are encouraged to participate in the process and are not viewed as dysfunctional. Moreover, attention must be given to both formal and informal justice mechanisms [12].

Democratic restorative justice values not only the outcomes (such as restitution, apologies, and compensation)

but also the process itself, particularly the communication between the victim and the offender. Although the harm inflicted may be irreparable, it is essential to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. This approach treats all individuals equally while recognizing that victims deserve a nuanced consideration that acknowledges their unique needs. The potential benefits for the victim hold equal significance to the effects on the offender. [13].

The main features of authoritarian and democratic restorative justice are illustrated in **Table 1** [7] :

Table 1. Criteria for Restorative Justice: Authoritarian vs. Democratic.

Authoritative restorative justice	Democratic restorative justice
The authority makes the decision	The stakeholders make the decision (with community participation)
Proportional to the criminal action of the offender	Adapted to the circumstances of the victim and the accused
It is often applied to juvenile offenders only	Used for any kind of commission of the crime
For minor offences	For any offences
Coercion on the debtor	It begins with an offer from the debtor
Speediness is the main purpose	Allows steadiness for discussion and agreement
Supplementary accountability structure	Restorative structure
Punitive public service	Reparatory public contribution

ad c) Unilateral restorative justice encompasses measures that are non-punitive and aimed at benefiting either the victim or the accused. In the 20th century, the emergence of rehabilitation initiatives for convicted individuals was a direct response to the harsh punitive measures of the 19th century, such as solitary confinement and enforced silence. Later on, restorative measures specifically for victims began to develop. In Western Europe, alongside state compensation, a variety of restorative initiatives and projects have surfaced. These include victim support organizations that offer voluntary assistance to those affected by crime, as well as programs that involve offenders performing voluntary work to assist victims. The prosecutor can play a significant role in facilitating unilateral restorative justice [14]. However, the objectives of these programs often appear ambiguous, as they strive to be both rehabilitative and punitive. Furthermore, when physical labor takes on punitive characteristics, it can create the impression that work is something unpleasant to be avoided [10].

4. The Aim of the Restorative City Model

The challenges confronting cities in the 21st century, such as rising social inequalities, rapid urbanization, and diminishing community cohesion, necessitate innovative approaches to urban planning and crime prevention. Traditional repressive methods, including policing and the criminal justice system, are increasingly inadequate in effectively addressing conflicts within urban communities. In response to this issue, the concept of restorative cities has emerged, applying the principles of restorative justice to the broader context of urban community life [15].

A restorative city transcends mere legal or administrative reform and embodies a transformative social approach that regards conflicts as a community responsibility. It seeks to resolve these conflicts through the active engagement of the community [1]. The primary goal of a restorative city is not to punish crime in isolation, but to restore relationships, rebuild trust, and involve all stakeholders in addressing communal issues. From this restorative perspective, crime and other conflicts are viewed not as disputes solely between the state and the offender, but rather as breaches of relationships among individuals and communities that must be mended [16].

The concept of a restorative city encompasses three primary objectives:

- Strengthening Social Cohesion: Urban communities often grapple with isolation, anonymous relationships, and alienation. A restorative city aims to transform these dynamics into relationships rooted in cooperation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility [15]. By enhancing community participation and social ties,

the risk of crime is diminished, and a greater sense of security is fostered over the long term.

- Restorative Conflict Management: In restorative cities, conflict management is guided by the principles of restorative justice. This approach emphasizes dialogue, accountability, reconciliation between victims and offenders, and the restoration of harm rather than punishment [17]. Initiatives such as community mediation programs [18], restorative conferences, and community justice forums exemplify this method.

- Enhancing Community Participation: A key aim of a restorative city is to empower citizens to become active contributors to community life rather than mere passive recipients of public services. This engagement extends beyond political voting to include conflict management, urban planning, and community decision-making [19].

To enhance conceptual clarity, this paper introduces a synthesized framework that visually organizes the key pillars of a restorative city. The model comprises four interconnected domains: restorative justice, child protection, community participation, and inclusive urban design. These components operate synergistically to prevent crime, empower communities, and promote the well-being of children. The interconnection among the components of restorative cities is shown in **Table 2** below:

Table 2. Interconnected components of Restorative Justice.

Pillar	Function	Examples
Restorative Justice	Resolves conflict through accountability, dialogue, and repair	Mediation, restorative conferences
Child Protection	Ensures safety, dignity, and inclusion of children	Barnahus model, child-friendly design
Community Participation	Empowers residents in conflict resolution and decision-making	Youth councils, public forums
Urban Design	Shapes physical environments to prevent harm and promote safety and equity	Crime prevention through environment design, safe routes to school, playground audits.

The concept of the restorative city is not just a theoretical construct, but has already been put into practice in many cities, as the following self-made **figure 1** shows:
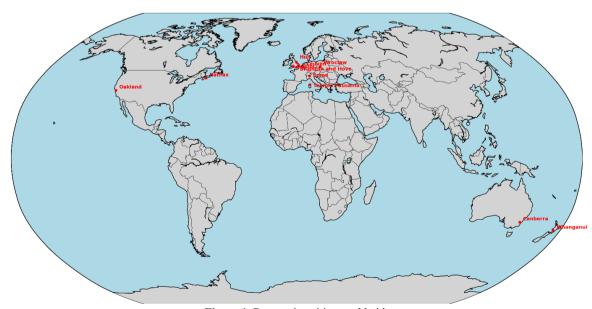

Figure 1. Restorative cities worldwide.

The examples of restorative cities demonstrate how principles of restorative justice can be woven into various facets of urban life:

- Hull (United Kingdom): Hull was the first city to officially identify itself as a restorative city. The initiative began in schools, where the implementation of restorative practices, such as restorative circles and dialogue-based conflict resolution, resulted in a notable decrease in discipline issues and incidents of bullying [20]. This restorative approach was subsequently expanded to encompass child protection services, law enforcement, and social services. Hull's experience illustrates that integrating a restorative framework into urban institutions enhances social cohesion and helps to mend community relations.

- Bristol (UK): Bristol has developed its own regeneration strategies in collaboration with local government and NGOs. The city initiated a dedicated program to facilitate community mediation, aimed at resolving minor conflicts within residential areas in a restorative manner [21]. In Bristol, the restorative approach has also been applied to workplaces, courts, and neighborhood councils, laying a broad social foundation for peaceful conflict resolution.

- Leuven (Belgium): Leuven has emerged as a prominent example of a restorative urban model, driven by strong collaboration between academia and local government. As early as the 2010s, the city launched pilot programs to foster restorative conflict management in schools, workplaces, and community centers [22]. In Leuven, particular attention is given to the involvement of young people: restorative student circles are facilitated in schools, and local courts provide restorative options for handling minor offenses.

- Whanganui (New Zealand): Whanganui holds a significant place in the history of restorative justice, rooted in the cultural traditions of its Maori communities. This conspicuous city has skillfully merged its rich indigenous heritage with contemporary urban development strategies. The influence of restorative practices is evident not only in the administration of justice but also permeates various facets of civic life, including local government operations, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The case of Whanganui serves as a compelling example of how revitalizing local cultural traditions can enhance the cohesion and resilience of modern urban communities, fostering a spirit of reconciliation and understanding [23].

- Tempio Pausania (Italy): Nestled in the Italian countryside, Tempio Pausania is a small yet vibrant town that recently faced a significant social conflict over the proposed construction of a prison. Rather than resorting to hostility, the community opted for a dialogue-oriented approach to resolve the tensions, which ultimately transformed into a foundational element of the town's urban policy. This case illustrates that even smaller towns like Tempio Pausania can successfully adopt restorative principles to mend social rifts and address community concerns through open communication and collaboration [24].

- Brighton and Hove (UK): Brighton and Hove are leading the charge in the implementation of restorative justice practices within the United Kingdom. The city's dedicated community safety team has earned the esteemed Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM), a testament to their high standards in restorative services. These approaches are prominently integrated within local schools and in community conflict resolution initiatives, fostering a culture of community cohesion and encouraging peaceful methods for managing disputes. The efforts in Brighton and Hove exemplify how restorative practices can significantly enhance community interactions and relationships [25].

- Como (Italy): The city of Como in Italy is renowned for its proactive initiatives aimed at incorporating restorative practices within its community framework. Focused on fostering social cohesion and community involvement, Como has developed programs that encourage residents to engage with one another constructively, addressing conflicts in a peaceful manner. The city's commitment to weaving restorative concepts into the fabric of daily life illustrates the powerful impact that community participation and cooperative dialogue can have on building stronger, more interconnected neighborhoods [26].

- Oakland, (USA): Oakland, California stands as a trailblazer in the realm of restorative justice. The organi-

zation Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY) plays a pivotal role in nurturing community ties and supporting young people through restorative practices. Additionally, the Restore Oakland Community Center serves as an innovative hub, combining restorative justice with access to legal services and economic opportunities, all aimed at fostering community development and advancing social justice. Oakland's rigorous commitment to restorative justice practices not only seeks to mend community ties but also empowers its youth to thrive [27] .

- Wrocław (Poland): Wrocław is at the forefront of integrating restorative justice principles into urban policy as the pioneering restorative city in Poland and the tenth globally. The city has made notable strides in applying these principles in education, community conflict resolution, and enhancing social cohesion. Wrocław's vision includes promoting a restorative culture that informs social intervention strategies, and it actively seeks to share its successful methodologies and procedures with other municipalities, amplifying the movement towards restorative practices across the nation [28] .

- Canberra (Australia): The capital city of Canberra has taken a bold step by officially declaring its commitment to becoming a restorative city. With a focus on integrating the philosophies and values of restorative justice into community life and urban spaces, Canberra aims to create environments that are conducive to healing and understanding. This declaration signifies a transformative shift in how the city perceives justice and community relationships, emphasizing restorative practices as a foundation for a thriving or prosperous community life [29] .

- Halifax (Canada): In Canada, the city of Halifax is making waves for its implementation of restorative practices through the renowned Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program. This initiative is crafted to provide opportunities for individuals and communities affected by crime to engage in restorative processes, which help to address the harm caused and facilitate forward-looking planning. The program underscores Halifax's commitment to fostering healing and accountability, ultimately strengthening the social fabric of the community by encouraging constructive dialogue and healing [30] .

A thorough examination of previous examples unveils the shared elements that define the essence of restorative cities. Although these cities may differ in their local contexts, cultural nuances, and political frameworks, the core principles of restorative city models reveal striking similarities. At the heart of each restorative city lies a strong commitment to community participation. Residents are not merely passive observers; they actively take part in the processes of conflict management and decision-making [15] . Initiatives such as community forums, restorative circles, and mediation programs empower individuals to assume responsibility for resolving personal and communal conflicts.

While restorative practices have been more comprehensively institutionalized in cities across Europe and Oceania, there is increasing evidence that comparable models are being successfully adapted in cities within the Global South. For instance, in Medellín, Colombia, the implementation of community-based restorative programs—particularly those focused on youth education, arts initiatives, and the transformation of public spaces—has contributed to a remarkable reduction in the city's homicide rate by over 80% between 1991 and 2010 [31] . This significant shift underscores the potential of restorative principles to facilitate long-term peacebuilding, even in contexts that have historically experienced high levels of conflict.

Similarly, informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya, have established grassroots child protection centers and mediation services that, despite lacking formal municipal integration, have proven effective in decreasing domestic and school-related violence [32] . These examples reinforce the idea that restorative cities are not limited to wealthy nations; they can thrive wherever local actors are empowered, communities are engaged, and restorative values are culturally aligned.

In restorative cities, this transformative approach transcends the boundaries of the criminal justice system, permeating various sectors including education, social services, workplace environments, and urban planning [17] . The success of these cities heavily relies on inter-institutional collaboration, where all stakeholders, ranging from local government entities to community organizations, har-

moniously engage in implementing restorative practices. A notable trend among thriving restorative cities is their unwavering focus on education surrounding these restorative methods. For example, in Hull, all educational and social service personnel are provided with comprehensive training in the key principles of restorative practices [20] . This all-encompassing educational strategy ensures that restorative methods are seamlessly woven into the fabric of daily life, fostering a culture of understanding, accountability, and community resilience.

Restorative urban frameworks demonstrate a notable capacity for adapting to local cultural contexts. For instance, Whanganui has integrated restorative practices rooted in Māori traditions, thereby aligning conflict resolution strategies with Indigenous values. Similarly, Leuven has developed a model that reflects the multicultural composition of Belgian society, tailoring its approach to the social and cultural dynamics of its population [22,23] .

Prevention constitutes a central pillar within restorative urban approaches. The emphasis extends beyond the resolution of existing conflicts to proactive strategies aimed at mitigating potential sources of harm. This is achieved through the creation of inclusive and safe public spaces, the encouragement of active community engagement, and the implementation of child-centred programs that foster resilience and social cohesion [32] .

5. Principles for Urban Regeneration Toward Restorative Cities

The principles of restorative cities in redesigning urban development are inspired by restorative justice philosophy. This spatial organization approach highlights crime prevention while fostering community cohesion, social engagement, and justice. Restorative urban planning seeks to develop environments that promote dialogue, enhance community cooperation, and support peaceful conflict resolution.

According to the theory of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), the physical characteristics of the environment can significantly influence the occurrence of crime [33] . Restorative cities apply this principle by not only focusing on crime prevention but also by enhancing community presence, transparency, and a sense of shared responsibility. The core principles are:

- Natural Surveillance: Designing transparent public spaces should prioritize visibility and be equipped with adequate lighting and active building facades. These can enhance informal monitoring to perceive actual safety and security through community presence.
- Promoting Community Interaction: Creating environments where residents can comfortably interact, engage, and enjoy their urban surroundings.
- Territorial Reinforcement: Fostering residents' attachment to their neighborhood, which enhances their sense of protection and responsibility. This emotional investment in the local environment can reduce anti-social, violent behavior.
- Inclusivity and Openness: A central objective of restorative urban planning is to ensure spaces that are inclusive, equitable, and welcoming to diverse populations. Openness and inclusivity [34] . This involves avoiding exclusive areas that marginalize certain groups and instead promoting shared spaces that cater to diverse ages, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses.
- Child-Friendly Urban Design: The fundamental principles of child-friendly cities include establishing safe and accessible routes to school, allowing children to walk safely to their educational institutions (through initiatives like Safe Routes to School programs), creating and maintaining playgrounds, community parks, and sports fields, and actively involving children in decision-making process (such as forming children's councils) [35] .
- Restorative Urban Design and the Built Environment: The physical configuration of urban spaces plays a critical role in shaping the success of restorative strategies. Built environments that enable natural surveillance, shared public spaces, and pedestrian access foster informal social control and community trust. For example, restorative cities prioritize well-lit, open parks and transparent school zones, creating environments where children can feel safe and visible. Design features such as neighborhood "eyes on the street," community art installations, and youth-friendly transit routes transform static infrastructure into dynamic restorative environments. These interventions

underscore that restorative justice is not confined to legal frameworks but can be embedded in the very architecture of cities.

The **Figures 2,3** below illustrates how a transparent public space is much safer from a crime prevention perspective than a disorderly, unclear space [36]:

Figure 2. Ensure transparency in the area with effective planning and maintenance.

The need for lighting is illustrated in the two images below [36] :

Figure 3. Well-lit and dark underpass.

The concept of restorative cities is gaining increased attention globally; however, numerous challenges and constraints hinder its practical implementation. Integrating restorative principles into urban planning encompasses not only technical and financial obstacles but also deeper social and cultural complexities.

1. Rapid Urbanization Pressures: The rapid pace of urbanization and population growth in urban areas often compromises community spaces. Economic interests frequently overshadow community needs, leading urban planning initiatives to prioritize housing capacity and infrastructure development at the expense of areas that foster community participation

and interaction [32] . Consequently, aspects of restorative urban planning such as safeguarding community spaces, maintaining child-friendly environments, and promoting social cohesion are at risk of being sacrificed for short-term economic gain.

2. Risk of Urban Fragmentation and Marginalization: Poorly designed urban spaces can exacerbate existing social inequalities and segregation. When community spaces are accessible or safe only for certain social groups, it deepens disparities and heightens social tensions [15] . Inclusiveness lies at the core of restorative urban design, which aims to create safe, open, and accessible spaces for all demographics. A failure to achieve this can undermine the fundamental principles

of a restorative urban model.

3. Political and Institutional Challenges: The implementation of restorative urban planning often encounters significant institutional and political barriers. Traditional top-down planning paradigms, which remain prevalent in many urban governance structures, tend to resist the shift toward more community-oriented and participatory models [21] . Moreover, decision-makers and conventional planning institutions may struggle to embrace the transformative methods of restorative approaches, which prioritize grassroots engagement and co-creation over hierarchical decision-making processes. This resistance is often compounded by a lack of adequate training, capacity-building, and awareness among planners, policymakers, and local authorities regarding the principles and benefits of restorative urbanism

4. Enabling Community Participation: Although community participation is a foundational pillar of restorative city development, implementing these principles into practice is often difficult to achieve. Residents may experience fatigue, skepticism, or disillusionment due to previous ineffective engagement efforts, or may be hindered by conflict of interest within diverse communities [34] . Genuine participatory planning extends beyond the deployment of standard consultation tools such as public forums, surveys, or workshops and requires sustained efforts to build trust, foster transparent dialogue, and cultivate long-term, reciprocal relationships between communities and planning institutions.

6. Integrating Restorative Cities to Safeguard Children and Prevent Crime

In Europe, various factors have been considered in the development of mediation rules. A review of the legislation across several European countries highlights a consistent emphasis on the role of mediation in crime prevention [13] . A key objective in crime prevention efforts is to restore social relations among individuals, thereby making issues more visible and increasing our willingness to resolve conflicts with others [1] . When mediation was formally enacted into law in Norway in 1991, the priority placed on crime

prevention surpassed the emphasis on the democratic value of alternative conflict resolution. This focus allowed individuals to engage with one another, acknowledge their responsibilities, and have a say in shaping their own lives. The legislature prominently featured crime prevention among the 11 criteria that guided the creation of the mediation law. Following the law's implementation, a 1996 survey conducted by the Institute of Criminology at the University of Oslo revealed that the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General, and several mediators and coordinators viewed mediation and conciliation services primarily as instruments for crime prevention, rather than as platforms for addressing conflicts in their own right [10] .

In France, the Bureau de la Protection des Victimes et de la Prévention (Bureau for the Protection of Victims and Prevention of Crime) was established in 1982 to oversee victim assistance and facilitate victim-victim mediation. The following year, the Community Councils for the Prevention of Crime (Conseil Communal de Prévention de la Délinquance, CCPD) were created. This council operates on five levels: decision-making, negotiation, implementation, coordination, and action. Notably, the second level focused on negotiation, evaluation, and monitoring which plays a crucial role in mediation processes [10] .

As we move further into the 21st century, urban communities are confronted with increasingly complex challenges, such as growing social inequalities, rapid urbanization, and declining community cohesion. These issues are becoming more difficult to tackle through traditional law enforcement and judicial measures [32] . In response, the concept of restorative cities has emerged, applying principles of restorative justice across all facets of urban life. The goal of restorative cities extends beyond merely punishing crime; it seeks to restore community relations, foster social trust, and resolve conflicts in a peaceful, community-centered manner [15] . From this restorative perspective, conflicts and crimes are viewed not as isolated legal issues, but as breaches of the community's interest that must be addressed to achieve lasting peace [16] .

The concept of restorative cities presents a progressive approach to urban safety and crime prevention. Unlike traditional criminal justice systems that often react to crime after it occurs, a restorative approach prioritizes the prevention of conflict and crime by fostering stronger com-

munity relations [17] .

Restorative justice posits that state sanctions alone are insufficient to address the consequences of crime; meaningful healing and reconciliation necessitate the involvement of all parties affected including victims, perpetrators, and the community [16] . Restorative cities adopt this philosophy on a broad scale: various stakeholders, including schools, police, community centers, and municipalities, work collectively to cultivate a restorative culture. In such cities, crime prevention is not solely the responsibility of law enforcement; managing conflicts peacefully, promoting social justice, and encouraging community engagement all play vital roles in creating a safer urban environment [15] .

Enhancing community participation is a fundamental principle of restorative cities. The active engagement of residents in conflict resolution not only fosters trust but also yields a tangible effect on crime prevention. Community-led restorative initiatives, such as neighborhood mediations, school-based restorative circles, and community conferences, are instrumental in identifying and addressing conflicts early, thereby preventing their escalation [21] . For instance, Brighton and Hove serves as an exemplary case of how a restorative approach can be effectively applied in the realm of community safety, with its RSQM-certified programs rooted in community involvement where local residents serve as mediators in their environment [25] .

In summary, restorative cities perceive crime prevention as a complex community strategy rather than a singular duty of the police. The overarching goal is not only to reduce crime but also to enhance the quality of urban life and reinforce community responsibility.

Child protection is a fundamental objective of restorative cities. As the most vulnerable group in society, children are particularly susceptible to violence, social exclusion, and the repercussions of crime. The restorative approach posits that child protection transcends mere legal obligation; it is essential for fostering community safety, promoting social justice, and advancing sustainable urban development [15] .

The development of children is intricately linked to the quality of the community environment surrounding them. In urban areas where children's rights and needs are insufficiently addressed, issues such as violence, juvenile delin-quency, poverty, and marginalization tend to escalate [35] . In restorative cities, ensuring children's safety and promoting their participation are top priorities, closely intertwined with enhancing community relationships and conflict prevention.

Principles of restorative justice mandate that children not only receive protection from abuse but are also active participants in community life, with opportunities to be heard, make choices, and responsibly contribute to shaping their environment [37] .

In restorative cities, approaches to child protection are thoughtfully designed to ensure the safety and well-being of children. These strategies encompass various methods that prioritize a child's emotional and psychological needs:

- Developing Child-Friendly Interviewing Protocols: Children are interviewed in environments that are both safe and empathetic, significantly reducing the potential for further trauma. This approach emphasized that children feel secure and supported during what can be a daunting process [38] .
- Child-Inclusive Community Mediation: When conflicts arise, whether a child finds themselves as a victim or a perpetrator, they are allowed to engage in meaningful dialogue. Restorative conferences allow for open communication and the chance for reparation, facilitating healing and understanding among all parties involved.
- Establishing Centers for Child Safety and Wellbeing: These dedicated community spaces are crafted to provide safety for children, offering access to essential support services, counseling, and legal assistance. Such environments foster trust and empower children to seek help when needed.

A notable example of these principles in action can be seen in Wrocław. The city's Restorative Cities Program places special emphasis on rejuvenating child protection protocols through restorative practices. Initiatives like restorative circles within school communities and community-based forums serve as vital platforms for addressing child protection concerns collaboratively [28] .

In essence, child protection within restorative cities transcends being merely a set of isolated initiatives; it is intricately woven into the very fabric of urban life. This

holistic approach contributes to the development of safer, more equitable communities, shaping a brighter future for all children in these urban landscapes.

In the realm of child protection and restorative urban environments, two primary issues need consideration:

a) Addressing offenses against children;
b) Addressing offenses committed by children.

ad a) Regarding the first issue, crimes against children such as physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and emotional neglect have a profoundly detrimental impact not only on the individual victims but also on the broader community. In restorative cities, the safeguarding of children extends beyond the confines of the criminal justice system which is fundamentally a matter of community responsibility [15].

A foundational principle of restorative urban models is their focus on the rights and needs of child victims. To facilitate this aim, these models establish procedures that minimize secondary trauma for children, ensuring prompt and sensitive intervention while supporting their recovery journey.

Key elements employed to protect child victims within restorative cities include:

- Integrated Child Protection Frameworks: Various services, including police, social work, healthcare, and psychological support, collaborate closely to benefit children [39].
- Restorative Interviewing Practice: Rather than facing multiple interviews, children are interviewed once in a child-friendly setting with the presence of qualified experts, using simultaneous video and audio recording for future evidence [38].
- Fostering Protective Community Networks: The rehabilitation of children is bolstered by community support through initiatives such as mentoring programs, community events, and school assistance schemes.
- Definition and Conceptualization of Barnahus Model: The Barnahus model originated in Iceland which brings together child protection, criminal justice, and health services under one roof to minimize trauma for children involved in abuse or crime cases. It emphasizes a child-centered approach by reducing repeated interviews, prioritizing therapeutic care, and ensuring children are heard in judicial processes. While

the model is institutionalized across several European nations, its principles are finding relevance in the Global South. In contexts such as Nairobi's informal settlements or Medellín's community centers, similar frameworks are emerging, though more informally, to ensure that child victims receive coordinated, trauma-sensitive support.

The Icelandic Barnahus model represents a progressive and restorative approach to child protection [40]. This innovative model emphasizes the importance of collaboration among justice, health, and social services, bringing them together in a unified setting that prioritizes the needs and well-being of children. It aims to create a supportive environment during criminal proceedings involving minors, ensuring that every aspect of their journey is handled with a child-centered focus [39].

Throughout Europe, the Barnahus model has been adapted and successfully applied in various cities, each tailoring the framework to meet the unique needs of their local contexts [41]. In these cities, spaces dedicated to child victims are thoughtfully designed to offer safety and comfort. There, children benefit from coordinated services that encompass their hearings, emotional support, and legal representation, all under one roof.

Furthermore, the restorative approach to addressing crimes against children extends well beyond institutional boundaries. Restorative cities actively engage in community programs aimed at supporting victims and preventing violence, fostering an overall environment of safety and healing. These initiatives may include educational programs in schools, sensitization training for parents to recognize and address these issues, and efforts to strengthen the fabric of neighborhoods, creating a greater sense of community cohesion [35].

In short, addressing crimes against children in restorative cities transcends mere criminal sanctions. It embodies a holistic process of healing, restoration, and the rebuilding of trust within communities, ultimately working towards a safer and more supportive environment for all children.

ad b) Addressing youth crime presents one of the most delicate challenges for urban communities. Historically, the juvenile justice system has often adopted a punitive or sanctioning approach, which has not always facilitated the rehabilitation or social reintegration of young offenders. In

contrast, the restorative cities model emphasizes child empowerment, reparation, and community rebuilding [17].

In restorative cities, the objective in addressing offenses committed by children is not merely to administer punishment but to restore relationships and foster successful reintegration into the community. Approaches within this framework include:

- Restorative Conferencing: This process, particularly family decision-making group conferencing or community conferencing, involves victims, offenders, family members, and community participants coming together in a guided discussion. Here, the offender takes responsibility for their actions, offers an apology, and agrees to restorative measures [42].
- Mediation Programs: These create an opportunity for direct dialogue between the victim and the offender, allowing them to discuss the nature of the harm, explore possibilities for reparation, and prevent future conflicts.
- Community Service: Involves reparative work performed by children directly for the benefit of the community, promoting a sense of social responsibility and encouraging community reintegration.

The restorative treatment of offenses committed by children offers a range of significant advantages that can positively transform both the individuals involved and the broader community. Such as:

- Reduces Recurring Offences: One of the key benefits of restorative practices is the significant reduction in reoffending rates among young individuals. Research shows that those involved in restorative programs have lower recidivism compared to those in conventional justice systems, indicating these methods effectively address the root causes of delinquent behavior.
- Enhancing Rights and Voices of Victims: Restorative approaches also empower victims, allowing them to actively engage in the process, voice their feelings, and articulate their needs, which facilitates healing and restores their sense of agency.
- Promoting Child Development: These practices focus on the development of young offenders by promoting responsibility and learning rather than punishment. This supportive environment helps avoid stigmatiza-

tion and fosters positive growth.

Overall, adopting restorative practices, especially in restorative cities, enhances social inclusion, strengthens community ties, and contributes to urban safety, leading to a more cohesive society.

Long-term sustainability, cultural adaptation, and the cultivation of social support are essential elements in the pursuit of restorative urban development. While the restorative cities model boasts numerous success stories, it also encounters significant obstacles and challenges in its implementation:

- Institutional Resistance: In many cities, traditional judicial and administrative frameworks struggle to embrace restorative approaches. Authoritarian and hierarchical decision-making structures can hinder the enhancement of community participation and dialogue-based conflict resolution [15].
- Limited Resources: Effective restorative programs require trained facilitators, adequate infrastructure (such as community centers), and sustainable funding. Many cities, especially in the Global South, face constraints that impede the long-term viability of such initiatives [32].
- Cultural Barriers: Acceptance of restorative approaches varies among communities. Differences in social norms, power dynamics, and legal traditions can obstruct the integration of restorative practices [21].
- Special Protection for Children: In case of offenses involving children, it is crucial to ensure that restorative procedures do not compromise children's rights. Restorative processes should prioritize a child-centered and trauma-sensitive approach. [39].

7. The Promises and Complexities of Restorative Cities in the Global South

Urban communities in the 21st century encounter intricate social, economic, and environmental challenges. Urbanization is rapidly increasing globally, especially in the Global South, where the growth of urban populations often outpaces the development of necessary infrastructure and social services. Conventional methods of crime

prevention and policing frequently fall short in sustainably addressing escalating social tensions and diminishing community trust. In response to these issues, the idea of restorative cities has arisen, emphasizing conflict resolution, community involvement, and the enhancement of social justice [16] .

The core principle of restorative cities asserts that security can be upheld not solely through punishing offenders but also by fostering community bonding, peacefully resolving conflicts, and encouraging social engagement. Central to this approach is the protection of children, as their development, safety, and rights are vital for the long-term viability of urban communities [35] .

Programs facilitating child-friendly environments, secure routes to schools, and child involvement are essential for both preventing crime and promoting social inclusion. Nevertheless, successfully implementing these models encounters significant hurdles, particularly in Global South countries, where limited resources, institutional fragilities, and social inequalities present substantial complexities.

The restorative city framework fundamentally acknowledges that the safety of urban communities relies not just on effective law enforcement but also on communities' abilities to peacefully and collaboratively resolve their own conflicts. Unlike conventional strategies, which focus only on punishment, deterrence, and controlling criminal behaviors, restorative cities prioritize principles of restorative justice, community engagement, and social accountability [17] .

In these frameworks, crimes are perceived not merely as violations but as disturbances to community relationships that require restoration through collaboration. Conflicts and offences are addressed not only through legal proceedings but also via direct community engagement, mediation, restitution, and collective resolution. The restorative perspective is also reflected in urban environments, where community spaces, parks, schools, and cultural institutions serve as venues for social inclusion rather than merely functional infrastructures.

Numerous international examples illustrate that initiatives launched in restorative cities such as school mediation programs, community justice forums, and neighborhood conflict resolution centers can significantly decrease crime rates and develop community trust. A restorative city perceives its citizens not merely as subjects of law or regulations but as proactive contributors to sustaining community life coexistence.

Restorative urban child protection extends beyond developed nations. For example, restorative city practice in Kenya illustrates that well-suited local models can be very effective. In certain slum regions of Nairobi, such as Kibera, NGOs have established child-friendly community centers that provide education, healthcare, and legal assistance to the slum-kids. These centers frequently serve as venues for community mediation, utilizing restorative processes to address child-related issues like domestic violence and school-related abuses like bullying and maltreatment in educational settings [32] . Although these initiatives lack formal institutional support like Barnahus model, they have a considerable impact at the local level.

While much of the global literature on restorative cities highlights initiatives in the Global North, emerging models in cities such as Lagos (Nigeria), Mumbai (India), and Manila (Philippines) illustrate the adaptability of restorative principles in complex and under-resourced environments. In Lagos, community-based organizations have implemented youth-focused conflict resolution workshops in neighborhoods with high gang activity. Mumbai's participatory slum redevelopment projects have included child protection officers and safe play areas. Meanwhile, Manila has piloted school-based restorative justice programs to reduce youth violence and improve teacher-student relationships. These localized innovations emphasize that even without formal institutional backing, restorative principles can thrive where there is strong grassroots engagement and community leadership.

In cities across Colombia, especially in Medellín, there is an increasing focus on a restorative model for child protection. Following a significant wave of crime in the last decades, the city has aimed to involve children directly in community development efforts. Through restorative programs in schools and community centers, children are taught to resolve their conflicts peacefully by articulating their feelings non-violently and engaging in community activities [31] .

Thus, child protection encompasses not only protecting individual rights but also serves as an essential mechanism for enhancing the safety and cohesion of urban communities. In restorative cities, child protection is integrated into the broader framework of community crime prevention rather than treated as a separate task.

The regeneration of urban design is vital not just for aesthetic or transportation purposes, but it also plays a crucial role in shaping community relationships, feelings of safety, and social unity. Consequently, an important feature of restorative cities is intentional local planning that helps avert conflicts, promote harmonious community living, and ensure the protection of children.

Creating a safe community environment is especially a core necessity for children, who face a high risk of violence, accidents, and social alienation. Restorative design strategies aim to guarantee that all components of urban spaces, ranging from school neighborhoods to community parks, enhance children's freedom of movement, community engagement, and rights [34]. In more secluded areas, for instance, the installation of phone booths and emergency call boxes(**Figure 4**) can provide a sense of security along with practical advantages [36]:

One of the most effective strategies for promoting safe and sustainable school commutes is the development of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) networks. This initiative, successfully implemented in numerous cities across North America and Europe, aims to ensure that children can travel to school safely by walking or cycling [43]. Key components of the program include traffic calming measures, enhanced pedestrian crossings, improved street lighting, and the coordination of 'walking buses' and 'bicycle buses' group commutes accompanied by parents or community volunteers.

Figure 4. Emergency call device in a remote area.

In the city of Pécs, Hungary, a notable adaptation of this model was introduced in autumn 2022 with the launch of the "Bicibus"(**Figure 5**). This bicycle convoy initiative not only provides a safe and structured means for children to cycle to school, but also promotes active transportation, environmental awareness, and healthy lifestyle habits. Starting from the outskirts of the city, the convoy led by adult supervisors allows children to join along the route, ultimately escorting them to key inner-city schools. The Bicibus exemplifies how community-based efforts can align mobility, safety, and education to enhance children's daily experiences and foster a culture of sustainability [44]:

Figure 5. Adult-supervised children's cycle convoy.

The initiative has since become an integral part of the Global Bike Bus Movement [45] . Such networks not only diminish the risk of accidents for children but also enhance community awareness and presence on the streets, which contributes to a crime-prevention effect.

In Sweden, particularly in the city of Malmö, urban planners have implemented a 'child impact assessment.' This mandates that any new public space or urban development project must be evaluated for its effects on children's rights and well-being [46] . This proactive approach allows for the identification and mitigation of risks that could marginalize or endanger young people during the planning phase.

Additionally, the creation of community spaces serves as a vital restorative tool. Well-designed areas such as parks, playgrounds, and community centers not only fulfill recreational purposes but also function as venues for fostering community cohesion(**Figure 6**). It is essential for children to have accessible, safe spaces where they can play freely, make friendly relationships, and learn the principles of communal living. For instance, playgrounds situated in residential neighborhoods should be designed to enable natural surveillance from the surrounding homes [36] :

Figure 6. Central playground designed to be visible from the surrounding houses.

A particularly fascinating case study emerges from Colombia, specifically within the vibrant city of Medellín, where an innovative initiative known as "Bibliotecas Parque" or Library Parks was established as a key element of urban rehabilitation efforts. These Library Parks are much more than traditional libraries; they function as multifaceted community hubs designed to foster social integration among children and young people. Through a diverse array of cultural programs, educational opportunities, and safe spaces for community engagement, these establishments play a vital role in helping youth to connect with society [31] . The underlying philosophy of the Library Parks initiative posits that urban environments should serve not just as recreational areas but as vital venues for learning, personal development, and social networking.

In addition, another crucial aspect of local design within restorative cities involves the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) theory. This approach emphasizes the creation of environment that promotes safety not through reliance on passive security measures like fences and grids, but by fostering a sense of community presence, ensuring visibility, and encouraging natural surveillance [33] . In restorative urban development, local design often integrates CPTED principles, blending them with strategies that prioritize community involvement, inclusivity, and features that cater to child-friendly spaces.

The importance of natural control and surveillance is illustrated by the following two **Figures 7**[36] :

Figure 7. Natural surveillance is essential for effective crime prevention.

The suspended corridors depicted in the left image demonstrate high visibility, while the concealed elevator lobby depicted in the right image lacks visibility, thereby presents a higher risk for criminal activity. It is important to note that regenerating urban development should not be viewed as solely a technical or isolated process; in restorative cities, the design and utilization of spaces are always accompanied by community dialogue and participatory planning. Engaging children in urban planning through initiatives such as youth councils and child-friendly city projects not only enhances the quality of public spaces but also fosters a sense of rights and community among children, ultimately contributing to a more robust democratic culture [37].

The implementation of the restorative urban model in the Global South, encompassing regions such as Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, faces particularly intricate challenges. Even though the foundational principles of community participation, restorative justice, and child protection are universally valued, their local execution contends with numerous obstacles.

Cities in the Global South often grapple with severe social and economic issues, including high poverty rates, limited access to public services, political instability, and the rapid, unregulated expansion of urban population, all of which complicate the practical implementation of restorative approaches [32].

In Latin America, urban life has been heavily impacted by waves of violence and organized crime in the last few decades, particularly in Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico. However, Medellín stands out as a positive example, demonstrating that community-based restorative programs can effectively reduce urban violence. The city's Cultura Ciudadana (Citizen Culture) initiative has launched community arts projects, safe spaces, and youth restorative initiatives, focusing particularly on children and young people [31]. These community-centered urban planning programs have proven successful in decreasing crime rates and enhancing the sense of belonging within the community.

Community-based restorative initiatives are flourishing accross various African cities, particularly in Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa. In Nairobi, NGOs like Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) provide educational,

health, and social services in child-friendly centers, along with mediation programs to combat domestic violence and child abuse [35]. The effectiveness of these practices is linked to the internal resilience of communities and integration of cultural norms.

In Southeast Asia, rapid urbanization has left many children in vulnerable situations, such as living on the streets or in informal settlements. Although restorative urban programs are still emerging, initiatives like child protection centers and community mediation projects reflect as promising in crime prevention through community involvement [47].

The success of restorative models in the Global South relies heavily on adaptability, incorporating local specificities and involving community leaders, NGOs, religious groups, and youth. Successful programs do not merely replicate Western approaches; rather, the key factors for sustainability include cultural sensitivity, local resource reliance, and a strong sense of community ownership (**Figure 8**) [36]:

Figure 8. The presence and lack of community ownership.

The restorative urban model presents considerable promise for adaptation in the Global South; however, its successful implementation depends on the formulation of innovative strategies that are firmly grounded in community engagement and culturally relevant practices. This approach requires a nuanced understanding of local contexts and the active participation of residents to guarantee that solutions are aligned with their specific needs and aspirations.

8. Results

The findings of this study decisively demonstrate that integrating child protection into the framework of restorative cities significantly elevates both community safety and social cohesion. The analysis of international case studies such as Hull, Leuven, Wrocław, and Medellín clearly shows that restorative practices focused on the safety and inclusivity of children, including school mediation, community-based support, and child-friendly urban design are effectively contributing to the prevention of crime by addressing its fundamental social roots.

Key findings include:

1. Improved Crime Prevention with Child-Centered Approaches: Cities that implemented restorative programs focusing on youth, such as restorative circles in educational settings and Safe Routes to School initiatives, observed a notable reduction in juvenile conflict, school-based violence, and youth recidivism. These outcomes ultimately draw a clear picture of the meaningful contribution of child-focused restorative practice to the broader crime prevention strategies.

2. Strengthened Community Engagement and Social Cohesion: Restorative urban models that actively involve local stakeholders, including schools, social workers, families, and community leaders, have facilitated inclusive decision-making and fostered a shared sense of responsibility for the safety and protection of children. This collaborative framework turned into a reasonable instrument in building trust and social bonds within urban neighborhoods.

3. Restorative Urban Design as a Mechanism for Safe-

ty and Inclusion: The integration of restorative urban planning principles, particularly those aligned with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), contributed to enhancing social accessibility and inclusion. Such interventions focused on transparency, visibility, and child-friendly infrastructure of public spaces for developing a safer urban environment.

4. Global Adaptability of the Restorative City Model: Case studies from the Global South, specifically initiatives in Kibera (Nairobi) and Medellín (Colombia), illustrate the restorative urban frameworks as an effective adaptation in limited-resourced environments, provided there is strong community engagement and cultural sensitivity with socio-political dynamics.

5. Quantitative Impacts of Restorative Approaches: While qualitative evidence affirms the success of restorative approaches, quantitative data further underscores their effectiveness. For instance, Hull reported a 40% reduction in school suspensions after introducing restorative circles. In Medellín, community-based youth programs coincided with a dramatic drop in homicide rates from 381 per 100,000 in 1991 to under 30 by 2010. Similarly, Nairobi's grassroots mediation services reduced child-reported domestic violence by 35% in targeted informal settlements. These outcomes suggest that restorative interventions can yield measurable improvements in safety and cohesion when implemented with local buy-in.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that adopting a child-centered restorative approach is not merely a normative commitment to social justice, but also a practical strategy for preventing urban crime. The results bolster the central hypothesis that cities can enhance resilience and reduce harm by promoting restorative practices into both policy frameworks and urban planning. This reaffirms the initial objective of the study which is to illustrate child protection as a vital and effective component of restorative urban development.

9. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of restorative city frameworks when child protection is central to urban safety strategies. A significant insight is that child-focused restorative practices function not only as protective mechanisms but also as proactive tools for fostering social cohesion and preventing violence.

Restorative approaches such as school mediation, community forums, and trauma-informed urban design are consistently linked to improved trust in public institutions, reduced youth conflict, and strengthened community bonds. This aligns with broader criminological theories that emphasize the social roots of crime and the need for community-based responses.

Importantly, the analysis reveals that the restorative city model can be adapted across various urban contexts. In cities like Medellín and Nairobi, grassroots-led restorative practices, despite often lacking formal institutional support, have shown tangible benefits, particularly in areas of child safety, conflict mediation, and youth inclusion. These findings challenge the notion that restorative urbanism is only feasible in well-resourced environments.

For example, restorative city models are particularly relevant in contexts marked by poverty and inequality. These conditions often expose children to systemic violence and diminish their access to justice or safe environments. By decentralizing power and integrating child-focused services into local governance, restorative cities offer a platform for marginalized communities to assert agency. Initiatives such as participatory budgeting, neighborhood mediation centers, and inclusive urban redevelopment actively address the structural conditions that perpetuate violence and exclusion. Thus, restorative practices are not merely conflict-resolution tools but mechanisms for social transformation in low-income settings.

However, significant implementation challenges remain. Common obstacles include:

- Institutional resistance from traditional justice and planning systems
- Insufficient training and funding for restorative programs
- Sociocultural barriers to participation and restorative dialogue
- Fragmentation among service providers

These challenges underscore the need for systemic reforms and long-term investments in building restorative

capacity, especially in the Global South. Political will, inter-agency coordination, and inclusive planning processes are essential to sustain these efforts.

Finally, the study advocates for integrating restorative principles into the professional education of urban planners, social workers, and community developers. This integration can help embed restorative thinking in the daily practices of those shaping urban environments, ensuring that future cities are not only functional but also just and healing.

For future research, conducting a comparative evaluation of restorative city models using mixed methods approaches would provide more substantial insights into their quantifiable impacts on crime rates, social cohesion, and child development outcomes. Additionally, further exploration of digital tools and the participatory role of technologies could enhance child engagement and support restorative planning processes. Long-term impact assessments in Global South cities would also be beneficial in determining the sustainability and adaptability of these approaches beyond their initial phases.

In summary, the discussion affirms that restorative urbanism, when centered on the needs, rights, and participation of children, is not merely a normative aspiration but a strategic approach to creating safer, more inclusive, and resilient urban environments.

10.   Conclusions

The research examines the link between the idea of restorative cities and child protection, indicating that a restorative method is crucial not just for preventing crime but also for enhancing community harmony. A restorative city consists of a group of municipalities that prioritizes non-violent, community-oriented conflict resolution and aims to mend social ties through the active involvement of all parties: victims, offenders, and local communities.

Protecting children is a key focus within this framework: prevention begins in schools, with programs for mediation, conflict management training, and initiatives designed to inform children about their rights. Additionally, a child-friendly restorative methodology is being integrated into the justice system, which aims to avoid criminalizing children and instead engages them in healing and supportive processes, exemplified by the Barnahus model.

Strategies for crime prevention in restorative cities extend beyond the conventional criminal justice system, emphasizing community involvement, social unity, and fostering a practice of dialogue. The principles of urban design, such as transparent community spaces and neighborhoods that are welcoming to children, aim to enhance feelings of safety and minimize conflict.

The research emphasizes that adopting a restorative approach should not be regarded as a privilege reserved for the developed world. In Global South nations, where issues of social inequality, urban conflict, and child protection are especially severe, the urgency to adopt restorative urban models becomes even greater. The tenets of restorative justice, community involvement, empowerment, and the restoration of relationships embody universal principles that can help promote sustainable peace, security, and equitable opportunities for children in urban areas of the Global South.

Inclusive urban planning, community mediation, and crime prevention programs centered on children hold particular promise in regions where conventional justice mechanisms frequently fall short in resolving social disputes. In short, the research highlights that creating restorative cities is not solely the prerogative of developed nations but a global imperative where prioritizing child protection is vital for ensuring long-term social stability and justice.

Author Contributions

H.C. and H.-F.B.K. are co-first authors, having equally contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study. H.C. developed the theoretical framework regarding restorative justice and urban crime prevention, as well as drafted the legal and criminological analyses. H.-F.B.K. conducted the comparative case study analysis, compiled the international examples of restorative cities, and contributed significantly to the structure the manuscript.

J.B. focused on the Global South context, collecting and interpreting data on urban child protection initiatives in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. She offered critical insights and implementation challenges in resource-constrained environments.

All authors participated in writing, editing, and finaliz-

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