

Child-friendly cities: a place for active citizenship in geographical and environmental education

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This research¹ was designed to investigate innovative practices associated with child-friendly cities² initiatives in the United Kingdom and Italy and how civics and citizenship initiatives are being applied into practical programmes of exploration and learning in geography and environmental education. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) of the United Nations Children's Fund was launched in 1996 at the UN Conference on Human Settlement (Habitat II). At this conference it was declared that the well-being of children is the key indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and good governance committed to children's rights. The CFCI was closely allied to the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which the right of children and young people to participate in the life and decision-making of their communities became a human right. Child-friendly cities initiatives have provided a framework and a myriad of programmes in which to create ways for children and young people to develop and exercise citizenship and participation skills. These projects assist young people to investigate issues relevant to their social and spatial worldviews, to interact with local government and community resources, to develop research skills and to promote the development of spatial competence and confidence.

Keywords: civics and citizenship; child-friendly cities; participation; children and young people; geographical and environmental education

Children are seen and heard in a child-friendly city. Their active participation as citizens and rights-holders is promoted, ensuring the freedom to express their views and making sure that their views are taken seriously. (Mayor of London, 2004, p. 2)

Introduction

Until just under a decade ago, when the “push” to include it began to gain strong political momentum, civics and citizenship education as an explicit element in Australian school curricula was virtually absent. Over this time the Australian Government's “Discovering Democracy” and “Civics and Citizenship Education” programmes have sought to promote and resource curriculum engagement with civics and citizenship.

Civics and citizenship education is regarded as an important area of contemporary education because it assists young people to understand how governments and public institutions “work”, to unravel social and political issues and to identify the values embedded

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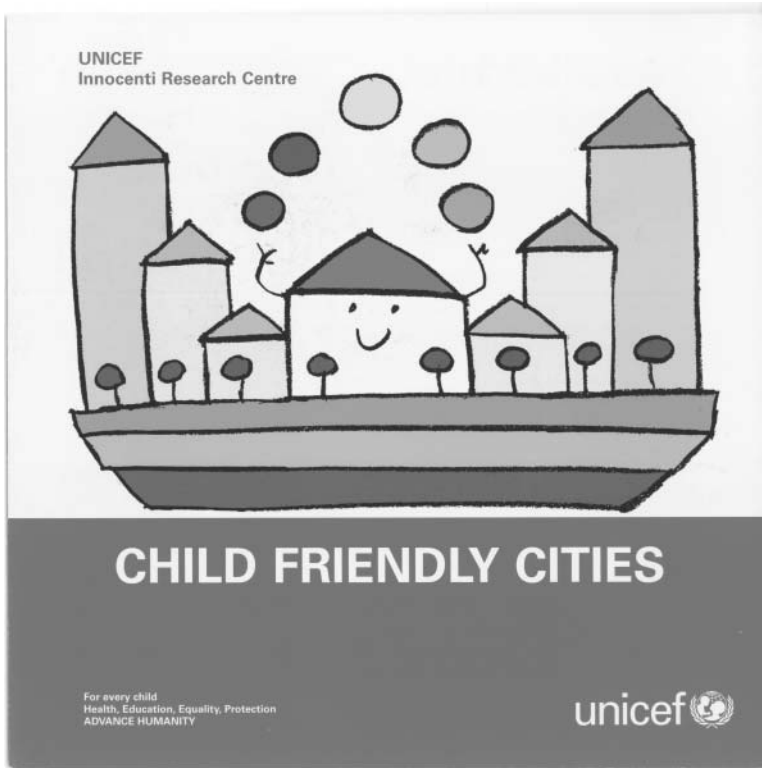


Figure 1. The United Nations' Child Friendly Cities Initiative.

within. It aims to assist young people to use these understandings to participate actively, effectively and meaningfully in the life of their communities.

As a result of an agreement in 2006, all Australian education ministers committed to the implementation of the National Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship. All Australian states and territories have since embedded in their curriculum goals to assist students to acquire civics and citizenship knowledge and skills. Although it is not the intent of this paper to “take the pulse” of contemporary civics and citizenship education in Australia or elsewhere, personal reflections on this issue did provide the impetus for this research.

In the author's home state of New South Wales (NSW) the geography syllabus³ for year 7–10 has embraced the study of civics and citizenship as a learning outcome common to all areas of the geography curriculum. This is stated as follows:

Learning Outcome 4.10/5.10: (Students apply) geographical knowledge, understanding and skills with knowledge of civics to demonstrate *informed* and *active citizenship* [emphasis added]. (NSW Board of Studies, 2003, p. 23)

It was apparent to the author after a number of years in secondary geography teaching that although students were graduating from this course as reasonably well-*informed* citizens, it was doubtful that schools were actually graduating *active* citizens. A “crowded curriculum” and multiple and complex timetabling demands made finding a “window” to

take the students out of the confines of the school and into the local community almost impossible.

Child-friendly cities

In Brisbane in 2004, Australia's first child-friendly cities symposium⁴ was held to promote the concept of a "child-friendly city" in Australia. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched at the UN Habitat II Conference on Human Settlement in 1996, its impetus coming from the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The two articles of the CRC that are of most significance to civics and citizenship education and the participatory elements of the CFCI are as follows:

Article 12

The child who is capable of forming his/her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, and

Article 13

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

At the launch of the CFCI, a framework of nine key elements based on the CRC designed for implementation in a local governance setting, namely a child-friendly city, was declared.

The first of these elements – *children's participation* – sparked the impetus for this research. It is closely allied with Articles 12 and 13 of the CRC. Local municipalities in many countries have responded positively, and moreover practically via their policies and programmes, to the potential of all nine elements.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2004, p. 1), the building of a child-friendly city is a process of implementing the CRC in a context "where it has the greatest direct impact on children's lives", that is through the apparatus of local government. A child-friendly city is one where children are safe and are protected from violence and exploitation, where they have access to all basic services including housing and water, where there are safe and healthy places to play and where children are able to have a voice to participate in the social and cultural life of their community.

The CFCI marked a turning point in terms of how children and young people were perceived. Whilst recognising that they need protection, this does not mean that they should be reified as "objects of protection". Child-friendly cities projects have sought to recognise children and young people as citizens with the right to express needs, potentials and expectations, all of which should be taken into account in decision-making processes affecting local communities and the country as a whole (UNICEF, 2005, p. 6).

In Australia, child-friendly cities initiatives have been taken up by a number of agencies in recent years. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY; www.aracy.org.au) has networked with a number of other agencies, universities and government departments, advocating the need for research, action and attention to children's needs in urban environments and how the built environment shapes children's well-being. In addition, a number of local government areas in Australia have taken up this mantle and have

been declared UNICEF “Child-Friendly Cities” through the demonstrably central place that positive outcomes for children and young people occupy in their policies and plans.

In October 2006, the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People held an *Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment*. This inquiry recommended key initiatives for improving the built environment for young people in recognition of the major impact that the design of the built environment can have on the physical and mental health and well-being of young people.

Ironically, “stranger danger” awareness that many well-meaning parents instil in their children has had the collective impact, as Tranter and Sharpe (2007, p. 186) observe, of making “every child worse off, both in terms of traffic danger and stranger danger”. Play areas and streets are depopulated of children, and many children are not moving around the city, learning the skills necessary to negotiate urban life; rather they are driven virtually everywhere by their parents in order to be “kept safe”. Iveson (2006, p. 52) refers to “circuits of inclusion . . . , an archipelago of safe spaces” through which children move with their parents.

The net result is negative health effects, not only due to decreasing physical exercise and increasing obesity but also as a result of diminishing opportunities for spontaneous play (Tranter & Sharpe, 2008). Many municipalities around the world are working with schools to create ways for children to walk safely to school, accompanied by parents or teenage siblings to counteract this. Such programmes are referred to as “walking” buses or trains.

Malone (2007, p. 9) discusses the formation of “child-environment identities” that develop when children use and move through places and spaces in a city. These identities have physical, social, natural and learning dimensions. The interplay between them, although dynamic, is ideally integrated such that children and young people develop as functional, confident and competent “environmental users” in their present and future lives.

There are thus significant risks to children from being kept out of the public domain – risks that are potentially far more devastating than traffic and stranger danger and which Gleeson (2005) observes are making children “fatter, sicker, and sadder”. Young people are developing a lack of connectivity to their community, a lack of a sense of “place” and “space” and ultimately a lack of social interaction and inclusion in their own localities.

Giving children and young people a “voice” in the city

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2006, www.kids.nsw.gov.au) has advocated that as a community we need to find better ways to encourage children and young people to confidently connect with their communities, to take “safe risks” and to exercise their judgement about a range of matters. By not doing so we are missing out on the unique insights that children and young people can bring to a range of issues, but more importantly, young people are missing out on better outcomes around their own health and well-being.

Increased participation by children and young people in local urban and environmental design processes is viewed by many as a means to increasing their level of social and neighbourhood connection, as well as expanding the breadth and standard of their play and recreation activities (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2006). This however has not always been an easy process, and as Bessell (2007, p. 1) argues, adults’ attitudes arising perhaps from a desire for respect or maybe from a concern about protecting children can often be the greatest barrier to participation actually occurring.

Iveson (2006, p. 107) takes this notion further, proposing that a belief system has been constructed around children and young people in terms of their “protection” and “preparation”, portraying them as “citizens in waiting”. Tranter and Sharpe (2007, p. 191) also express concern about this and predict that “if we continue to see children as consumers and trophies, or as vulnerable and incompetent”, then there will continue to be “negative outcomes” for children. They argue that children should be theorised as “competent beings and capable social agents”, capable of making “creative ‘functional’ contributions within environments”. James, Jenks and Prout (1998) also argue for the views of children to be listened to, insisting that they are capable social actors in their own right.

Berti (2007, p. 5) maintains that it is difficult to make cultural progress if we can't move beyond the concept of children and young people as “weak subjects to defend and protect”. He maintains that we must instead give “greater space and visibility” to the idea that children and young people have the right to express their ideas and be actively involved in building their futures. Thus the spaces and places in cities are, in effect, “resources” for children and young people to use in order to understand “who they are and to interact with those around them” (Atencio, 2007, p. 97).

There is much to be done in terms of enabling children and young people to understand and take part in the decision-making processes of the many institutions that affect the quality of their daily lives. Head and Gleeson (2007, p. 1) lament the lack of attention given to children's needs in urban policy and the scarcity of research into “understanding how the built environment shapes children's well-being”.

Malone (2007, p. 15) regards the frequent positioning of children by adults as “invisible” and as “passive recipients” of whatever environments they happen to find themselves in as both ill-conceived and ill-informed. She argues that children are constantly “negotiating and reconstructing spaces in powerful and significant ways”. Similarly, Iveson (2008, p. 109) argues for local planning processes that recognise the things that “children and young people *can* do rather than one which is premised on a series of (adults') assumptions about what they *cannot* do”. If we can't manage to do this, we will continue to see “collisions between adults' and children's worlds, with children coming out the losers more often than not” (Gleeson, Snipe, & Roley, 2006, p. 153).

Morrow (2001, p. 46) concluded that social capital in the form of civic participation was generally lacking for young people and that they moved through “virtual” and geographically fragmented networks and social spaces. She asserts that they are denied a range of participatory rights that limits their sense of self-efficacy and feelings of control over their environment. Morrow calls on government agencies to start viewing children and young people as “stakeholders” in government policy as opposed to “successful or unsuccessful outcomes”.

Thus, what many authors are advocating is a far greater sharing of responsibility for decision-making between young people and adults, and it is clear that local environments are a pertinent setting for such exchanges to take place. However, what is equally acknowledged is that governments “must work towards realising the potential of children to become ‘authentic participants’ in decision-making processes” (Gleeson et al., 2006, p. 152) and that this should be a high priority.

Children and young people require active assistance in order to develop participatory skills. Civics and citizenship education within schools must be complemented by the provision of active, creative, authentic and meaningful programmes by agencies at the local level to give them the opportunity to develop the citizenship skills they “learn about” at school.

Oliver, Collin, Burns and Nicholas (2006, pp. 3–4) have written about the importance of connectedness and meaningful participation in their community in building resilience and fostering good mental health in young people. They note that “youth participation requires recognising capacities and building skills . . . where there is meaning, control and connectedness”. They assert that “connectedness” arises as a result of working with others and through developing positive relationships with adults and other young people of their age. “Meaning” on the other hand develops through control and autonomy and from being involved in activities that possess for young people significance and authenticity.

Corkery, Grant, Roche and Romero (2006) in their research into the perceptions of young people around the built environment found substantial evidence that they need to be acknowledged as “equal stakeholders in the design and development process”. They found that many students “possessed a limited awareness of public spaces as a designed environment for any activity other than sports” and concluded that

to ignore the voice of young people in the creation of the built environment risks ignorance in pretending to know what is meaningful and relevant to them . . . (thus) we must be conscious of involving and empowering young people in the creation of their world. (p. 8)

The remainder of this paper describes some practical examples of child-friendly cities programmes in Italy and the United Kingdom. These programmes offer a variety of innovative ideas for educators around the promotion of active citizenship. Collectively they have creatively and enthusiastically embraced the concept of “children’s space” as more than just physical space, instead engaging with places and spaces in cities and communities as “cultural, social and discursive spaces through which children and adults can engage with one another” (Iveson, 2008, p. 110).

The programmes described below have also provided many creative channels for children and young people to communicate their own ideas about their environment and the communities they live in and furthermore provide scaffolding to assist them to develop citizenship skills in authentic learning contexts within a framework of geographical and environmental education.

The child-friendly city experience in Italy

Italy was one of the first countries in the world to embrace the CFCI, and many child-friendly city programmes were generated from about 1996 onwards, following some key policy initiatives of the central Italian Government. At both the national and local levels, agencies sought to implement the CRC’s vision relating to the participation of children and young people in civic life. However, it was at the level of the local municipality that child-friendly city initiatives really “took off”, and the following are some examples of these.

Pistoia

In the Comune di Pistoia (Municipality of Pistoia; www.comune.pistoia.it), Donatella Giovaninni (Director, Assessorato all’Educazione & Formazione) has been working with children for over 30 years. The city’s official website proclaims that in Pistoia “the entire city, as a place of life and culture, is at the service of children and constitutes a resource for their education”, and as such, Pistoia has developed an international reputation for excellence in its early childhood services. Pistoia sees itself as a *città educativa* (an educating city).

The Assessorato and the Comune are jointly involved in many city-wide initiatives, special events in the streets and exhibitions and summer projects (Barrs, 2007, p. 27).

The mayor of Pistoia, Renzo Berti, maintains that there are some very concrete things that local governments can do to promote children’s citizenship, including promoting educational pathways that support the democratic participation of boys and girls in the life of their city’s institutions (2007, p. 5). As such Pistoia’s Area Bambini provides enriching experiences and workshop opportunities that young people (and their families) can take part inside and outside the regular school hours. For example, one recent project involves young people gaining knowledge and confidence in moving around Pistoia, where they are taken on urban trails around the town and encouraged to find a “secret place”. They then do some research to find out more about their place and later take their parents there to show them the place and tell them about it.

Cremona

Cremona is a city of approximately 71,000 people. Its *Bambini Laboratoria* (Children’s Workshops) promote young people’s rights in the town or, rather, rights *to* the town. The project began in 1996 and aims to demonstrate that public spaces are where young people could and should play, attempting through its various activities to assist young people to build an active sense of community.

According to its coordinator, one of the philosophies of the project is to “get young people away from television and video games, and out of cars and houses” (Stephania Reali, personal communication, June 2008) and into the public realm. In 1998 a suite of projects concerned with young people’s circulation and mobility in Cremona was developed to assist children to explore their fears and desires about the town.

One of the things arising out of discussions with Cremona’s young people was that they were not scared of the traffic – which they probably should have been – but of strangers, a fear that was in large part unfounded and stemmed from the transference of parents’ fears. With the ever-present fear of strangers, fewer children and families are using Cremona’s public spaces, and this in turn affects civil life, as these spaces become even more unsafe because of fewer people using them. The Laboratoria aim to promote young people’s autonomy in the town to counteract “the dangers of the mind”, that is an overblown sense of stranger danger.



Figure 2. Cremona’s *Bambini Laboratoria*.

In Cremona a number of programmes have been developed to encourage young people to expand their range throughout the city and develop spatial confidence and competence. Workshops in which students map their “experience” of Cremona are run, and they have proven to be very adept at this. The mapping begins with the student’s neighbourhood, and they draw freehand and also photograph the places that are important to them, for example home, school, church and friends’ houses. Teachers working on these projects express the desire to see the young people of Cremona “feel, smell, breathe, taste and touch the city”. They encourage the children to represent their experiences and emotions about their city through murals and large posters, CD-ROMS, exhibitions, games, musicals and plays.

One of the recent projects schools in Cremona have undertaken is the “Piccolo Guide” (Little Guidebook) whereby students collect historical information about Cremona and develop a tourist guide for children in other towns who may in the future come to Cremona as tourists. However, they are also encouraged to show their parents around the town using the guides they have developed. The Piccolo Guides are now very popular because the children are very creative at making games and seeing things in a city that adults normally don’t notice.

Ten years ago the Laboratoia Cremona endeavoured to expand the scope of its workshops and work with the Comune di Cremona, involving itself in aspects of local planning and development that affected or might affect children and young people. This was difficult to sustain, as it proved to be too challenging for example for young people to design an entire piazza from scratch; they did however have the capacity to input into specific stages and aspects of the design or redesign of a piazza. The Laboratoia still works proactively to bring about changes to urban design and planning in Cremona, for example in the establishment of the *area pedonale* (pedestrian areas).

Milan

The Museo dei Bambini Milano (MUBA) began in 1995, through the promotional efforts of a group of people including teachers, architects and artists who highlighted the lack of art galleries and museums in Italy for children and young people despite the country’s abundant wealth of art, heritage and culture.

According to its director, Marina de Lucca (personal communication, June 2008), one of the challenges confronting children and young people in Italy is, ironically, the long length of their summer holidays (nearly three months). In Milan, the poorer children have to spend their whole summer in the city, whilst children from wealthier families usually go to the coast. To address such disadvantage, the Comune di Milano asked MUBA to organise a “Summer in the City” programme for children. MUBA carried out an extensive survey asking teachers, students and families what they *want* in the city and what they *want to do* in the city. Ten thousand responses were received, giving MUBA tremendous insight into how children, young people and families perceive Milan’s strengths, weaknesses and possibilities.

Out of this feedback grew the “A Me Mi Pace” project (roughly translated as “I Like Milan”) in 2007. The three educational principles underlying are to “know”, “recognise” and “describe” your town. For this project huge enlarged aerial photographs and maps of Milan were constructed and mounted on boards for the students to walk on. The young participants measured things on these maps and drew and constructed things on them (the “know” and “recognise” principles), and for the “describe” principle they designated the spots they liked best and explained why. In 2008 the project introduced a third dimension

whereby an artist helped the children to make huge three-dimensional cardboard models of aspects of the city important to young people.

MUBA's philosophy is to offer an alternative to the high dependency children and young people in Italy have on technology, which has in turn encouraged sedentary and indoor lifestyles. De Luca like many others is concerned about the rising incidence of obesity amongst young people in Italy, their lack of "urban adventures" and what she describes as the "over-protective Italian Mama syndrome", resulting in, amongst other things, "children being driven everywhere". Tranter and Sharpe (2007, pp. 187–192) believe that "cheap oil" for many decades has allowed this situation to come about. They observe that many parents drive their children around the city to "widely dispersed extra curricula activities, which restricts the time that children have to play freely in public spaces", and as a result their free play has "been eroded in favour of tight schedules of supervised activities".

Rome

Over 10 years in the making, the Comune di Roma's impressive 2000 Master Plan is a detailed and painstakingly researched strategic planning apparatus. One of the many innovative aspects of the plan is the mapping of places that are important to young people. The plan's authors created a "Children's Master Plan Office" and worked with hundreds of school students in Rome to develop a layer in the plan that identified things young people value such as play spaces, green spaces, places where they feel safe, bike paths, meeting places, pedestrian routes and neighbourhood resources.

Large-scale maps were developed to describe, locate and identify these aspects that are "dotted" throughout Rome. Thus, these maps have come to be known as the "measles" maps owing to the scattering of dots. Thus, just as approval for new developments must now take aspects such as environment, conservation and heritage into account, so must new development be undertaken with regard to the things that young people value about their city (Wilks, 2008).

The child-friendly city experience in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom there are many child-friendly city projects, where shared decision-making is a reality and where students from local schools have the opportunity to learn about how their local areas are governed and are encouraged to participate in their community. In return, local municipalities gain valuable insights from young people who describe their perspectives on the way their built and natural environments are designed and managed and how their needs are being or not being met.

The UK Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has developed major policies and guidelines on young people in the city. The DCSF came into being as part of the Every Child Matters national government initiative of 2004, which stated that its aim for every child in the United Kingdom, whatever their background or their circumstances, is to have the support they need in order to

- be healthy,
- stay safe,
- enjoy and achieve,
- make a positive contribution,
- achieve economic well-being.

The Every Child Matters initiative stressed that children and young people should have far more say about issues that affect them both as individuals and collectively. It called for local authorities to involve children and young people in participatory processes, and to listen to their views. In response, in 2004 the Greater London Authority released *The Mayor's Children and Young People Strategy* that gave strong support to transforming London into a child-friendly city (Mayor of London, 2004, p. 15), particularly in terms of providing a voice for children and young people.

In 2005 the first Children's Commissioner for England was appointed to ensure that children and young people were given a voice in government and in public life. During the *Fair Play* consultations (DCSF, 2008), it was recognised that not only should neighbourhoods be safe and interesting places to play, but play places and spaces should also be safe and accessible and that children, young people and their families can and should take an active role in their design.

Portsmouth

In the south of England, Portsmouth City Council has undertaken bio-mapping projects in which young people wear a "GPS glove" to identify the locations in Portsmouth in which they feel stressed. The device they wear records and measures their levels of stress. This project, apart from other outcomes, has identified and mapped "unsafe" parts of Portsmouth, providing information that is passed on to city planners. From this interaction, a number of specific projects involving young people working with local planners and architects have been generated to address young people's perceptions of personal safety issues associated with certain locations.

Hammersmith and Fulham Urban Studies Centre

The role of the Hammersmith and Fulham Urban Studies Centre (HFUSC) is primarily educational; however, like many other similar programmes in the United Kingdom it is underpinned by the Every Child Matters policy guidelines. Its projects develop in children and young people confidence and active participation skills and assist them to understand and take an active part in the changes happening in their environment.

The HFUSC runs a variety of programmes pitched to different ages; however, all of its programmes have been developed to articulate with geography, history and science syllabi. Half-day sessions are run, where school students and their teachers come into the centre or do fieldwork with the centre's staff.

Each year, funded by London Transport, the HFUSC works with about 12 schools to assist them to develop their own School Travel Plans. These plans have the common objective of increasing the number of students walking and cycling to school and also using public transport. In the process students learn about issues associated with traffic and transport in the locality of their school; they learn how to contribute their views and to develop strategies and solutions to the issues that they identify as impacting their quality of life.

In developing these plans students map their journey to school, compare historical photographs of their neighbourhood with how it looks now, do traffic and noise surveys on local roads, carry out basic environmental assessments and also distribute questionnaires to local people. Armed with their data they meet the relevant council officers, such as transport planners and engineers, and police representatives to talk about safety issues.

In addition to the skills and knowledge that they acquire, the students derive enormous satisfaction from this process. They are always so very pleased to be asked what they think,

and when they realise that they are genuinely being listened to, their enthusiasm soars. The students also produce a range of promotional and information material, for example posters, stickers and postcards with recycling and pro-walking campaigns to distribute to the school's students and parent bodies. There have been significant behavioural shifts in travel patterns to schools in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham as a result of the School Travel Plans. Car trips to school have gone down by 30%; walking is up 3%, and cycling is up by 63%.

A "Children's Parliament" is also run by the HFUSC. Each year, six or seven students from 10 local schools take part. Each school researches a local environmental issue assisted by the HFUSC which conducts workshops to help them learn about how the council functions. Fieldwork involving mapping, collecting samples, surveys and questionnaires is carried out. Students also come into the council to demonstrate and display their research to council staff.

For example, the students of one school did their parliamentary presentation on the state of the subway they used to get to the school under an extremely busy road. After their "parliamentary presentation" to councillors about the unsafe and ugly state of the underpass, they took their findings to the London Transport, where they demanded action.

A recent project of the HFUSC is the Design Matters Summer School in which it partners with the nearby Central St Martins College School of Art and Design. The aim of the project is to encourage teenagers to become involved in consultations on local planning



Figure 3. The Design Matters Summer School project.

designs and development proposals. Over the next 20 years or so, large parts of the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham will be redeveloped, and the philosophy of this project is that it's important to get teenagers' views now – as opposed to waiting until they are adults and the developments are a reality. Another of its aims is to encourage young people to pursue careers in architecture, planning and design.

My City Too

My City Too is another London-based project that was created by the architecture organisation Open House. It was established to assist young people to engage with the built environment in London, to learn about how it is created and to develop creative design skills to evaluate, make input and comment. It works with young people across London to inspire and encourage them to take an active role in helping create better spaces and places in London for young people. Its coordinator maintains that the project “places young people at the heart of built environment policy and inspires them to take an active role in London's future development” (Elise LeClerc, personal communication, July 2008).

Each year My City Too in conjunction with volunteer architects runs a programme in both primary and secondary schools to educate students about urban design and architecture. Approximately 1000 students from 15 schools visit some of London's most outstanding buildings. Each tour is led by an architect with great knowledge of that particular building or perhaps even by the architect who designed it.

My City Too has also assembled a panel of about 35 young people known as the Young Ambassadors to comment on planning and design proposals in London. This panel arose out of a survey of 1000 young Londoners about their responses to and interactions with London's built environment. One of the central themes in the feedback of these young Londoners was a desire to see spaces created for them in the middle of rather than always on the edges of their communities.

Many London boroughs seek out members of the Young Ambassadors panel to sit on their own design review panels. As such, part of the work of My City Too involves training and equipping its young ambassadors with the skills to do this, and forums are regularly held to involve and inform these young people about urban design and sustainability principles.

Conclusion

In an urban environment *being* safe and having the freedom to move around safely is one of children and young people's basic rights, and *feeling* safe one of their basic needs. Their sense of safety influences their behaviour, the activities they take part in and the places where they spend their time. These things have a significant and cumulative impact on their health and well-being, their connections to their community and their outlook to the future. Child-friendly city programmes in Italy and the United Kingdom have delivered on these outcomes.

The programmes described here provide creative, practical and moreover active civics and citizenship opportunities within a framework of geographical and environmental education. They have brought about significant interactions between children and young people and agencies such as local government and other community elements. They have assisted them to investigate issues relevant to their social and spatial worldviews and to develop spatial confidence and competence, all of which are core objectives of geographical education.

Child-friendly cities programmes demonstrate that it is possible to involve children and young people in authentic, significant and local ways in determining their own future. Through participating they develop the confidence and skills to engage with the places and spaces, resources and issues, of their localities and their cities. In return, rich and powerful information is obtained by local governments around the perceptions of children and young people.

Notes

1. This research was enabled through a study tour funded by an Energy Australia NSW Premier's Teacher's Scholarship in Environmental Education in 2008.
2. The word "child" in the term "child friendly city" refers to young persons aged 0–18 years.
3. Significantly, Australia is in the process of developing a national curriculum across key learning areas, and eventually all state and territory educational jurisdictions will be delivering the same curriculum in primary and secondary education. It has also been flagged that civics and citizenship skills, knowledge, understandings and capacities will be specified in certain subjects of relevance, including geography and history.
4. In 2004, the "Year of the Built Environment", a two-day "Creating Child Friendly Cities" symposium was held in Brisbane, Australia. This symposium was jointly organised by Griffith University's Urban Research Programme and the Delfin Lend Lease Group.

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Appendix. Organisations Visited

United Kingdom

- DCSF, Westminster, London (Ms Alison Venner-Jones, Team Leader, Child Wellbeing Team).
- Institute of Education, University of London (Dr Virginia Morrow, Course Coordinator).
- Greater London Council, Mayor's Office (Ms Rebecca Palmer, Strategic Development Officer for Children and Young People's Participation, Children and Young People's Unit).
- Portsmouth City Council (Mr Mark Scarborough, Extended Services Manager; Ms Jo Derham, CIP Coordinator; Mr Julian Wright, CIP Coordinator).
- Hammersmith and Fulham Urban Studies Centre (Ms Josie Fowler, Education Officer).
- My City Too, Open House, London (Elise Le Clerc, Coordinator).

Italy

- Urbanistica, Comune di Roma (Mr Paolo Cesari and Mr Romano Vallasciam).
- Sindaci difensori dei Bambini, UNICEF, Rome (Mr Christoph Baker).
- International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence (Ms Francesca Moneti).
- MUDI Nuovo Museo, Botteiga Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence (Mr Stefano Filipponi).
- Assessorato all'Educazione & Formazione, Comune di Pistoia (Ms Donatella Giovaninni).
- Le città sostenibili delle Bambine e dei Bambini, Comune di Cremona (Ms Stephania Riali and Ms Paola Fieschi).
- MUBA, Museo dei Bambini, Milan (Ms Marina de Lucca, Coordinator).

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