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Children and Young People's Participation in Planning and Regeneration

A Final Report to the Ecorys Research Programme 2010-11

Laurie Day, Liz Sutton and Sarah Jenkins

March 2011

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1.0
Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the findings from a research study carried out by Ecorys in partnership with Loughborough University, to examine the evidence for children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration. The study was part-sponsored by the Foundation Netherlands Economic Institute (NEI), as one of a series of projects for the ***Ecorys Research Programme 2010-11***[1]. The work was carried out in the period June 2010 to January 2011, and comprised of a scoping review of UK and international literature; an analysis of policy documents, and inputs from expert advisory group with representatives from policy and academia.

The main purpose of this report is to present the detailed findings from the research study. Our intention was to draw together into one place the very diverse range of academic and non-academic studies that have been undertaken in this field, and to reflect upon the lessons for policy and practice at the current point in time; when children and young people's participation is framed by challenging economic circumstances in the UK and internationally. Whilst the report has a particular focus on the UK situation, it also draws upon research literature and practice examples from Europe, South America, North America and Australasia to provide a comparison. The findings are set within the over-arching context of the 1989 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The report is intended as a resource for anyone who has an interest in policies and practices affecting children and young people's participation in society and public space, including policymakers, practitioners, academics and independent bodies, and as such we have opted to maintain relatively broad subject coverage. However, a further series of papers will follow, relating to specific aspects of participation that are examined in this report.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the study was to understand the roles that children and young people have played in planning, design and regeneration in the UK and overseas, and to identify the challenges and benefits of putting children at the centre of decision-making processes. The research sought to identify effective practice in facilitating children's participation, where this exists; to consolidate what is known about the outcomes from children shaping the built environment, and to examine the implications for policy development.

These broad aims were expressed in four key research questions, which are highlighted overleaf.

[1] http://www.ecorys.com/researchprogramme

1.1.1 Key Research Questions

1. **What is the precedent for children and young people's participation in the planning, design and regeneration of the built environment; in the UK and internationally?**
2. **What are the main drivers of participation, and what challenges and barriers have been encountered within policy and practice?**
3. **What are the benefits of children and young people's effective participation in the context of the built environment; whether personal, civic, social or community-related?**
4. **How is good practice defined and measured, and what practical examples exist to support or refute a case for participation?**

1.1.2 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the study are as follows:

- The definition of ***children and young people*** was kept deliberately broad, covering all potential age groups and abilities. In the UK, this usually refers to the 0-19 age range, although descriptions of 'youth' can also extend up to 25, or even 30 years. The report acknowledges that there are important developmental differences between 'children' and 'young people' in terms of how they value and use local places as well as how their participation is best enabled. However, the term 'children' is used as a proxy throughout the report, unless the issue specifically relates to youth.

- The study team opted to focus primarily on children and young people's ***direct influence over decisions about places and spaces***. Children's participation in formalised planning processes is a comparatively under-researched area, although the authors recognise that children's more spontaneous adaptation and use of places and spaces has been covered in greater depth within the literature. The literature search prioritized examples of community and environmental planning, and *physical regeneration.* Examples of *social regeneration* schemes, such as those geared towards community cohesion but without an explicit 'spatial' dimension were afforded a lower priority within the literature search and the analysis for the report.

- The decision was taken to focus on the ***public realm***, which brings children and young people's interests into juxtaposition with planners, community groups and other adult professionals. The study does not examine children' social and economic participation within their families. It does, however, consider the dynamics between private and public interests within planning and regeneration, and some of the practice examples concerned private (commercial) developments such as shopping centres or technology parks.

1.2 Background

The 1990s saw a new commitment to public participation in urban renewal in the UK, with local citizenship at the fore, as reflected in the launch of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). During the same period, the UK Government's ratification of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) raised the profile of children's participation in decision making. The 2004 Children's Act and the ensuing Every Child Matters agenda form a part of the UK Government's expression of the Rights of the Child. These commitments were further extended during the 2000s, with the launch of a ten-year Children's Plan DCSF, 2007), and the Aiming High ten-year strategy for transforming the UK youth sector, underpinned with £900M of investment (DCSF, 2007).The issue of children's play also grew in profile during the same period, with the first national Play Strategy (DCSF, 2008), and major programmes of capital and revenue investment.

Despite these developments, however, children's voices have been notably absent from UK planning and regeneration policies throughout the past two decades. The debate surrounding children's participation arguably remains focused on services that are designed 'for them' rather than 'with them'; such as new leisure, or educational facilities, whilst there has been comparatively little attention to children's roles in shaping a wider regeneration agenda. It would appear that there has been something of a missed opportunity to bring together two important areas of policy.

With a change in UK Government during 2010, a challenging economic and fiscal climate, and potentially far-reaching policy reforms underway at the time of writing, it is timely to reflect on the lessons learned from previous efforts to strengthen children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration. In particular, it is important to understand why it has proven so challenging to achieve a genuine step change for the everyday lives of children and young people in the UK with respect to their level of involvement in spatial planning; some twenty years after the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1.3 Research Methodology

The study commenced with a review of UK and international literature, following the UK Government Social Research (GSR) guidelines for a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)[1]. A protocol was drafted for this purpose, defining the research question, the study scope, data sources and search strategies (refer to Annex Two).

The review took place over four months. An initial eligibility assessment was first undertaken, based on the available abstract or outline. This was followed by a more detailed quality scoring exercise upon reviewing the full reports. The search returned 4,099 results, from which 242 reports were identified as meeting the criteria

[1] View at: http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/my-civil-service/networks/professional/gsr/resources/rea-methods-rapid-evidence-assessment.aspx

within the study brief. After the screening and quality checks were applied, a further 28 reports were excluded on the basis of their low quality rating.

A spreadsheet was maintained with 'practice' examples of UK and international projects or programmes identified through the literature review. Any gaps in information were addressed as far as possible though a combination of supplementary web-searches and email or telephone correspondence. The final set of collated practice examples are presented at Annex One, in a standardized format.

The literature review was supplemented with a smaller-scale desk-based analysis of UK policy and strategy documents in the fields of 'children and young people's services' and 'planning and regeneration', from the past 10 years; and a series of semi-structured consultations to enrich the case study examples.

The study was supported by an Advisory Group with representatives from policy and academia (see 'Acknowledgements' for details). The Group met twice on a face-to-face basis, commenting on the preliminary findings from the literature search, and on the draft and final versions of the research report.

1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

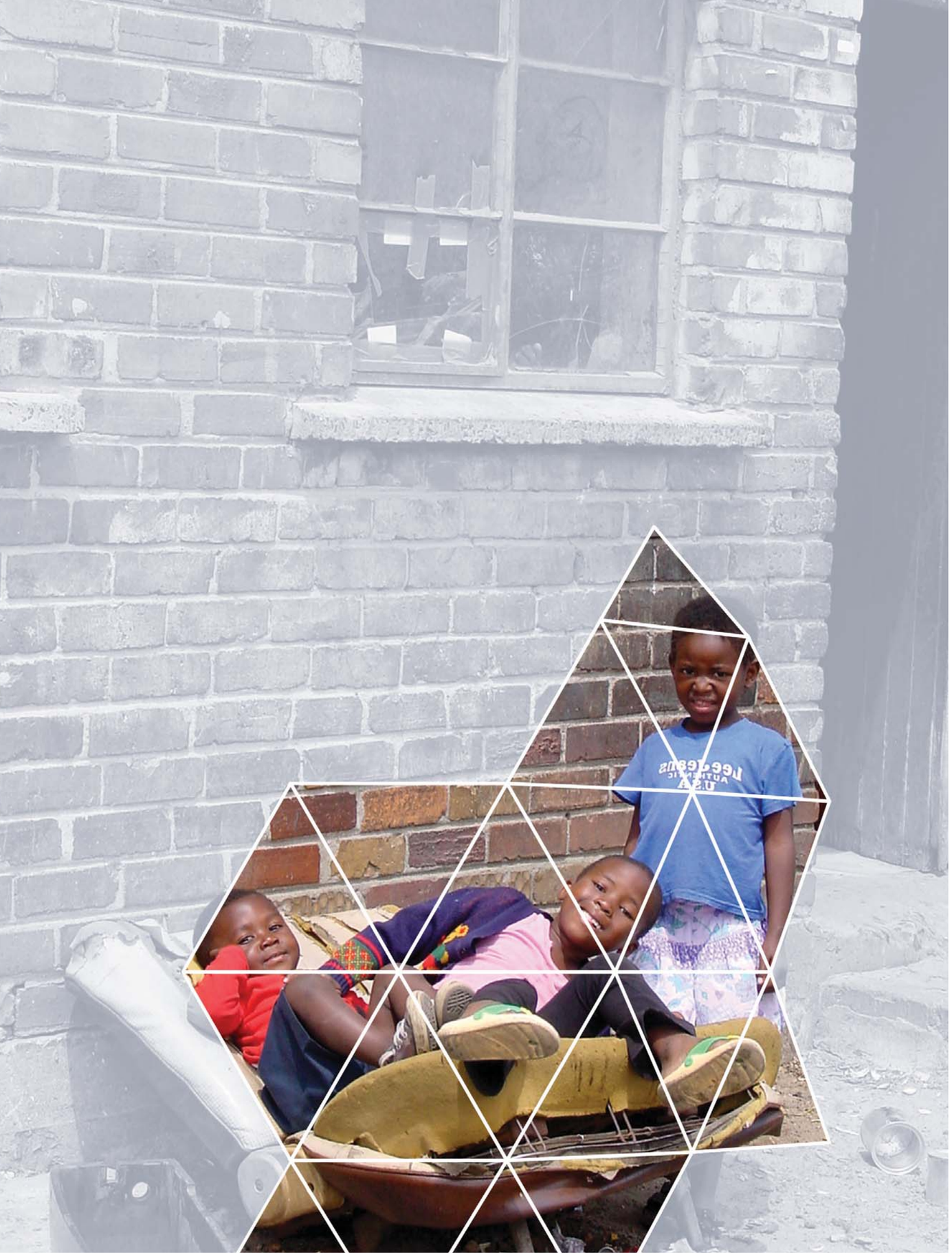
- **Chapter Two** examines the precedent for children and young people's participation in shaping places and spaces. The chapter first considers the international context for children's rights, sustainable development and planning and design, before going on to examine the main UK policy developments.

- **Chapter Three** examines why communities, planners and policymakers should be concerned with children and young people's participation in decisions affecting places and spaces. The various theories of participation are outlined, before considering the benefits and challenges for putting them into practice.

- **Chapter Four** looks at the different contexts in which children and young people have been involved in planning and regeneration, and considers how these have been described and categorised previously within the literature. The chapter goes on to examine the range of practice examples that were mapped through the current study in further detail, and to draw out a number of crosscutting themes.

- **Chapter Five** considers the evidence for impact and outcomes. The chapter looks at the particular challenges for measuring impact in the context of planning and regeneration, where children are seeking to influence actual planning decisions. It goes on to examine the evidence for different types of outcomes, including for participants, communities, services and through the transformation of public space.

- **Chapter Six** draws together and concludes upon the key findings from the report, and returns to address the research questions as originally posed. The chapter draws-out some common success factors for this



2.0

An Overview of UK and International Policy Developments

area of practice, and considers how participation can be sustained. Finally, the chapter sets out a number of recommendations for policy and practice, and highlights some potential areas for further research.

The full set of mapped 'practice' examples from the study are summarised in tabular format at Annex One. The literature review protocol is shown at Annex Two, and the list of study references are provided at Annex Three.

2.0 An Overview of UK and International Policy Developments

This chapter provides an initial overview of the main policy drivers for children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration, to provide background for the chapters that follow. The chapter first considers the main international developments, before turning to examine the situation in the UK. It goes on to examine the significance of how responsibilities for children and young people's service development and planning and regeneration have been organised at a national level, and the challenge this has presented for policymaking.

It should be noted that this chapter was written following a change of political leadership in the UK after the 2010 general election. As the coalition Government's policies are still at an early stage of development at the time of writing, we have opted to focus on the retrospective period up to the change of Government, for which the evidence of children's participation is better documented. We return to look ahead to the potential risks and opportunities for this area of practice under the new Coalition Government in the concluding chapter.

2.1 International Context

A number of key developments have taken place within the international arena over the past 30 to 40 years, with implications for children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration. Three principal 'movements' can be identified within the research literature, which are now considered in turn.

2.1.1 Children's Fundamental Rights

The children's fundamental rights movement has been a major driver of all aspects of children and young people's civic participation. The movement can be traced back as early as the 1920s, when the League of Nations adopted the children's rights statements that were proposed by the International Save the Children Alliance in the Geneva Declaration. This was reinforced by Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated that children were *"entitled to special care and assistance"* (UNICEF, 2010, p.2). The agenda re-emerged in earnest in the late 1980s and 1990s, and has provided the political climate for many of the projects discussed later within this report. The following outlines some of the main developments:

- The 1989 **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) enshrined in international law the right for children to express and have their views heard in all matters that affect them, overseen by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Of the 54 Articles, Article 12 makes an explicit commitment for children and young people's rights to be heard and respected, and has become synonymous with the participation movement. Children's participation is implicated throughout, however, including within Article

2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests), Article 6 (maximum development), Article 17 (right of assembly), and Article 31 (right to play).

- Following-on from CRC, the 1992 **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** (Earth Summit) extended children's participation rights to include decisions affecting their living (and working) environments, and introduced Local Agenda 21 as a mechanism for implementing the terms of the Articles.

- Further momentum was provided by the 1996 Second **United Nations Conference on Human Settlements** (Cities Summit), which aimed to address the poor state of the world's urban settlements and to promote environmental protection. The Habitat Agenda was the main implementation vehicle. Significantly, it provided the first acknowledgement of children and young people as a key stakeholder group for sustainable urban development. This is set out very clearly within the programme guidance.

> *"Special attention needs to be paid to participatory processes dealing with the shaping of cities, towns and neighbourhoods; this is in order to secure the living conditions of children and youth and to make use of their insight, creativity and thoughts on the environment.*
>
> **(UNHCS, 1997)**

2.1.1.1 Implementation Arrangements

The implementation of CRC and Habitat II has been influenced by the trend of decentralization in government, and the rising economic powers of cities (Kilbane and Zomerplaag, 2000, p.4). Whilst national governments assume obligations under CRC, therefore; children's rights have often been championed by mayors or municipal leaders at a local level. This has the benefit of bringing the agenda closer to community organisations and NGOs. Rights-based programming has also played a role in supporting the implementation of CRC (see for example: Theis, 2003). Table 3.1 below provides a summary of two significant rights-based initiatives.

Table 2.1 International Initiatives for Children's Participation in Urban Development

- The **Child Friendly Cities Initiative** (CFCI) was developed following the recommendations from the Habitat II Conference (1996), as a vehicle for implementing CFC at a local level. The initiative aims to support children's rights, through a partnership approach between local government, communities and civil society institutions. CFCI is coordinated by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, and supported by a central website[1], guidance materials and a Framework for Action with nine 'building blocks'[1] for any Child Friendly City.

[1] View at: http://www.childfriendlycities.org/

Table 2.1 International Initiatives for Children's Participation in Urban Development

- The **Growing Up in Cities** (GUIC) project was first conceived and implemented by the urban designer Kevin Lynch in Argentina, Australia, Mexico and Poland, under the UNESCO banner in the 1970s, with the aim of understanding the processes and effects of urbanization from children's perspectives. The project was revived in 1996 by new group of activist researchers with support from the UNESCO Management of Social Transformation (MOST) programme, following the momentum provided by CRC. Eight further countries were engaged in research, exchanges and collaborative planning with children and young people, and the findings have been widely published and disseminated[2].

A number of networks have also been established, to coordinate efforts in relation to children's rights. *Mayors as Defenders of Children* groups operate in some countries, including Croatia, Bangladesh, Senegal and Mexico, for example (Ibid. p.14). Their aim is to provide greater co-ordination between individual municipalities at a national level. On an international scale, the *World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities* (WACLAC) is a collective of local government associations from different countries, which has similar aims around cooperation.

Youth participation is also highlighted as a priority issue in the report of the UN Children's Fund; *The State of the World's Children* (UNICEF, 2009). The report underlines the relative progress that has been made in the 20 years since CRC was first introduced. It draws attention to the fact that children's codes have been incorporated into national legislation by around 70 countries worldwide, although it also acknowledges that participation has proven more difficult to measure using the available data (Ibid. p. ii).

2.1.2 Sustainable Development

The ***sustainable development*** agenda is a second and more recent driver of children and young people's participation in spatial matters. The impetus was established by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), which defined sustainable development as *"the [human] needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* (p.8). The Commission formally acknowledged the inter-linkage between environmental change and social inequality, and called for a large scale programme of institutional reform. The recognition of the importance of children and young people's environments, both present and in the future, has been a key feature of sustainable development.

[1] They are: 1) children's participation; 2) a child-friendly legal framework; 3) a city-wide children's rights strategy; 4) a children's rights unit or coordinating mechanism; 5) child impact assessment and evaluation; 6) a children's budget; 7) a regular 'state of the city's children' report; 8) making children's rights known, and 9) independent advocacy for children.
[2] Viewed at: http://www.unesco.org/most/guic/guicmain.htm

One of the main ways in which children and young people's participation has been mobilised is through large scale international events. The *International Children's Conference on the Environment* (ICCE) provides an example. Held in Victoria (Australia) in 2002, the conference was attended by 400 children aged between 10 and 12 years from 60 different countries. The event was based on the principle of collective decision-making between children, adults and institutions. Although considered successful in many respects, the conference also showed the difficulties of partnership working between children and adults in a *"one-off"* format, without more regular opportunities in other spheres of their lives. The process underlined that adults' and children's capabilities must be built-up over time, to strengthen inter-generational working (Blanchet-Cohen and Rainbow, 2006).

The *World Urban Forum* has adopted a similar large scale and multi-national event format, but with a specific focus on sustainable urbanization. The fifth annual Forum, held in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010 brought young people together with representatives from Government, NGOs and civil society organisations[1]. The Forum resulted in actions to strengthen democratic governance through the greater participation of children and young people and women within decisions affecting urban development.

Whilst the examples illustrate that these kinds of events take place at some distance from the day-to-day planning decisions that affect the participants, they can serve to encapsulate many of the issues that are faced in children's everyday lives when seeking to gain an influence over adults' decision-making.

2.1.3 Children and Design

The ***'children and design'*** movement(s) have provided a further source of practice. The principles of co-design were advanced during the 1970s and 1980s in the UK and USA. The Washington Environmental Yard project in Berkeley, California (USA) was one of the pioneering projects that showcased co-design principles involving both children and adults, and integrated children's perspectives with much success (in: Horelli, 2006). Hart's 1978 doctoral work: 'children's experience of place' was also highly influential.

The UK also provided a rich source of practice examples, developed largely within the state school system, although many of the principles date back much further to the work of the YMCA and the boys' and girls' clubs at the start of the 20th Century, which attended to young people's design needs and preferences (DfE, 2010, p.5). The role of co-design within state schools emerges in the 1970s and 1980s. Hart (2002) identifies that a spirit of independence amongst Head teachers and the tradition of "field study" helped to provide the conditions for these projects to thrive, buoyed by Governmental support for public participation (p.17). The 'Urban Studies Centres' of the 1980s provided an example of school children undertaking research to map their local environments, and engaging in discussion with residents about planning issues. These participatory projects helped to achieve formal recognition of young people as a stakeholder group within the education unit of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), which has helped to validate this work (Frank, 2006).

[1] Viewed at: http://www.childfriendlycities.org/en/news/events/world-urban-forum-5

Participatory school design has provided a more recent area of focus during the 2000s, through the trend of large scale school design 'competitions' in the USA, Australia and UK, aiming to support the achievement of educational goals for pupils whilst giving opportunities to graduates in the fields of architecture and design to share knowledge and gain experience of participatory practice (Parnell, 2010). These principles are manifest in large scale school re-design programmes in the UK such as Building Schools for the Future and School Works. We go on to consider some of the impacts and outcomes from these types of programmes in chapter five.

2.2 UK Policy Context

As highlighted within the introductory chapter, children's participation in local planning and development processes has experienced limited development in mainstream decision-making ***within the UK***,. To some extent, this reflects the situation in many Western European countries, where decision-making power often falls between a highly regulated planning sector on the one hand, and 'official' children's organisations and NGOs on the other (Lauwers and Vanderstede, 2005). As Bartlett (2002) identifies; child-focussed organisations tend to operate with social interventions in mind rather than 'spatial' ones, whilst planning and conservation agencies rarely feature within strategies regarding children. This has served to inhibit a more joined-up approach.

There is also evidence that the UK faces quite specific challenges relating to children and young people's wellbeing and their role within society. The UNICEF 2007 Report Card 7 provides a case in point. The UK was placed bottom of the 21 OECD countries, based on the six dimensions of children and young people's wellbeing and their 40 associated indicators. It is perhaps significant that the Report Card is based on definitions of wellbeing mapped directly to CRC. The UK's scores reflect what has been a comparatively slow legislative response to CRC, despite much progress against other key national indicators for children and young people, such as those relating to child poverty, educational inclusion, and participation in culture and sport. The remainder of this section reflects on some of the main policy developments that have shaped this situation.

2.2.1 UK Regeneration and Renewal

On the regeneration side of policymaking in the UK, children and young people became noticeably more prominent as a stakeholder group during the 1990s. Fitzpatrick and others (1998) identify a *"substantial youth focus"* in many of the area-based initiatives of the time; including within funding streams such as City Challenge, Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), the 'Urban' programme, and other community-led schemes. A number of contributory factors are highlighted within the literature, which help to explain this situation.

- The first of these was the rising ***public anxiety about youth culture***. The rapid social changes of the 90s prompted a widespread fear of youth violence and antisocial behaviour within the media, and a demand for more effective youth diversion (Rogers, 2006, Valentine, 2004). Such concerns are apparent in the educational objectives of many of the regeneration programmes of the time, which aimed to solve social problems through engagement with young people; often under the banner of strengthening youth 'voice'.

- The emergence of a new ***community involvement agenda*** also played a role. Launched in 1998; the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme put communities at the centre, and demanded their involvement in setting priorities and budgets. This theme was reinforced within the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, which pledged to *"empower residents"* in the renewal process (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). According to the final evaluation of NDC, some £248M was spent on *"community-related interventions"* between 1999-00 and 2007-08 (CLG, 2010a). Set in this context; youth participation during the 1990s was part of a much wider policy shift that created the conditions for 'experimentation' in community decision-making structures (Sykes and Hedges, 1998. In: Fitzpatrick, et. al, 2000).

- A third potential contributory factor was the shift away from a more traditional geographical targeting of regeneration funding, towards a ***thematic approach*** (Ibid. p.494). This trend was particularly noticeable within the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB); one of the principal funding streams of the time. The 1997 revised programme guidance identified 'youth' as one of a number of priority themes; and paved the way for the more widespread involvement of young people on SRB committees and panels (DETR, 1997).

The final report from the evaluation of New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme concludes that NDC funding has made a significant contribution towards the development of educational services for young people. However, it is unclear from the findings to what extent young people were able to exert any real influence over the decision-making processes. Fitzpatrick and others (1998) give this subject more detailed consideration, and highlight individual successful examples of young people exercising decision-making powers and budgetary control (see also Chapter Five). The preference for formal youth panels, boards and committees within the UK regeneration field has clearly presented some real challenges, however; both in terms of their contribution towards achieving regeneration objectives, which remains largely unproven, and in ensuring their suitability as a participatory mechanism (Ibid, 2000, p.502). We return to consider these challenges in Chapter Three.

2.2.2 UK Policies for Children and Young People

As highlighted towards the start of this chapter; UK policies for children and young people have developed somewhat in parallel to those for regeneration, and warrant further consideration to understand the context.

Percy-Smith (2010) argues that there has been a particular tendency towards a 'service development' view of children's participation within UK public policy. This view has placed an emphasis on building the professional expertise of adults in the capacity of experts, rather than taking a wider view of children's everyday social interactions in the areas where they live. The author argues that one of the effects has been to downplay the significance of the *spatial* dimensions of children's wellbeing. An analysis of the main UK children's policy and strategy documents from the past decade largely supports this assessment. We now go on to briefly review some of the main policy developments and to examine them in the study context.

2.2.2.1 Children's Services

Initiated under the previous Government, the Green Paper ***Every Child Matters*** (2003) established a new UK-wide outcomes framework for children and young people's services[1]. The ***Children's Plan*** (DCSF 2007) followed, setting-out a long-term vision to make UK *"…the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up"* (p.3). The Plan called for a partnership approach between Government, local authorities and civil society organisations to secure *"…better physical environments"* for children and young people (p. 28). The types of environments cited within the Plan included 'healthy', 'stable', learning', and 'play' related. Moreover, a priority was identified for planning, transport and other agencies to cooperate in creating and maintaining *"child-friendly places"* (p.30). Overall, however, the Plan was essentially based on a vision of service transformation through multi-agency partnership working. The spatial aspects of children's lives featured less prominently.

The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), a former UK non-departmental public body, responded to the emerging children's services agenda by publishing ***Every Child's Future Matters*** (SDC, 2007). This report posed that a more explicit recognition is needed of children's environments within the policy framework. The authors provided the following assessment of the importance of children's environments:

> *"Our generation is the first to knowingly degrade the environment at the expense of children now and in the future – a fact that challenges much of our rhetoric about the importance of children in society. The evidence presented here suggests that it may not be possible to deliver Every Child Matters at all unless the environment becomes one of its leading considerations."*
>
> **(Sustainable Development Commission, 2007, P.7)**

The report argued that improvements to children's *social* environments could be far more dramatic with a corresponding drive to bring about improvements to their *physical* environments.

These concerns were echoed in the report by Demos and the Green Alliance (2004), from a study of children's attitudes towards their environment. Children around the UK aged 10-11 were interviewed. The report noted the differences in the quality of urban and rural children's natural environments; the 'social' nature of space and how children interact with it, and how children understand their environment by exploring it themselves. The report concluded that new and varied ways are needed to facilitate environmental education; through out of school learning and green school design. It also called for a stronger link between child well-being and environment in national policy, and better consideration of children's needs in the design of public space. These recommendations remain pertinent to the current UK policy context, as we go on to discuss in Chapter Six.

[1] The five Every Child Matters outcomes have underpinned subsequent judgements about effectiveness across the spectrum of children and young people's services, up to the recent change of Government, and include: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic wellbeing.

2.2.2.2 Youth Services

The previous UK Government also initiated a parallel ten-year strategy for youth; ***Aiming High for Young People*** (DCSF, 2007), which followed the ***Youth Matters*** Green Paper (DCSF, 2005). The strategy was backed with £900M in investment, with the aims of improving the quality and access to youth provision, and tackling negative public perceptions of young people.

Aiming High had a much stronger emphasis on young people's influence over local places and spaces than previous strategies, with 'empowerment' being one of the three key themes. As with other programmes initiated under this departmental banner; *Aiming High* was designed predominately to drive forward services and spaces for the exclusive use of young people. The relevant initiatives with a spatial dimension include:

- *myplace*; a programme of capital investment to secure high quality local youth facilities;
- the Youth Capital Fund (YCF), targeting additional funding at the most deprived local communities, and
- the Young Advisors programme, which provides a mechanism to build young people's capabilities to act in an advisory capacity to community and civic leaders (DCSF, 2010, p.13).

The evaluation undertaken to date shows that young people have achieved a greater influence over the design, commissioning and management of new youth spaces in some local areas. The interim evaluation report from *myplace* draws attention to a variety of mechanisms for managing young people's engagement; from working groups, to links with Youth Parliaments and Councils, and peer-led surveys and e-newsletters (DfE, 2010). The report concludes that this activity has often provided quite a tangible opportunity for young people to engage with Architects and to influence design processes. However, the emphasis on *consultative* mechanisms to secure young people's engagement within *myplace* raises some important questions about how young people's participation is often conceived and implemented within pilot programmes. We go on to consider different modes of participation (and non-participation), and their potential consequences, in chapter three.

2.2.2.3 Children's Play and the Public Realm

Children's play is another strand of the UK children and young people's agenda that has expanded considerably in recent years. The first national ***Play Strategy*** (DCSF, 2008) set out a long term vision to realise children's play rights, with reference to Article 31 of CRC. The Strategy followed the 'Fair Play' consultation, which received a response from 9,400 children and young people, and showed a clear demand for children's participation in the design and planning of local play spaces. This combination of a participation-led approach and substantial investment provided the conditions to raise the profile of children's play and to challenge public perceptions of children's uses of their environments. Indeed, one of the core aims was that "*…children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours*" (Op. Cit., p. 5).

Children's access to public spaces has also featured within UK planning and transport strategies in recent years. The 2006 *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* formally acknowledged the need for *"…more play spaces, parks and gardens for children"* (in: Beunderman et al, 2007, p. 109), whilst the Department for Transport emphasised the role of residential streets as social spaces in their 2007 "*Manual for Streets"*. In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families announced a commitment to work with the Department for Communities and Local Government, to use the national planning policy review as a platform for cross-departmental working around childhood obesity and supporting healthy communities (DCSF, 2008, p.53).

Although the sector remains very active, children's play has been significantly affected by the recent public spending cuts, the end of funding for the main national body (Play England), and recent proposals to overhaul the UK planning system. There is unlikely to be an equivalent period of infrastructure investment in the near future. The profile afforded during recent years has arguably raised the profile of children as stakeholders within public space, and created a more conducive environment for local participation in this area. But there remains a more fundamental issue about how children's 'participation' is understood in the narrower context of the specific place needs of children, rather than how their interests are mainstreamed within all local planning issues. This point is explored at greater length within the following chapter of the report.

2.2.2.4 Sector-Led Approaches

Other aspects of UK spatial practice involving children and young people have been led by sector organisations and bodies; either in parallel to national strategy or with Government in an enabling role. The role for schools, professional organisations and associations continues to be an important one in facilitating children and young people's access to public spaces, as illustrated by the following examples (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 UK Examples of Sector-Led Projects

- The Architecture Centre, an independent body operating in the South West of England has developed and piloted the ***Young Design Champions*** initiative. This aims to engage children and young people aged 8-16 to learn about the design process, and become actively involved in decision-making about buildings and spaces which affect them. The initiative has complemented Government funded initiatives such as *myplace* and the Playbuilder programme within the region, with the aim of ensuring a high level of participation for children and young people.

- The Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), in partnership with Beam, The Architecture Centre, Bristol, and Kent Architecture Centre have designed and rolled out the ***Spaceshaper 9-14 toolkit***. Over 150 facilitators have been trained to support children and young people in using the toolkit. An activity-based approach is used, to develop new skills and knowledge, and to challenge the way that children and young people think about public space. A number of case study examples are available.

- In the arts and cultural field, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) have overseen the ***Creative Partnerships*** programme. The programme supports schools to work with creative

3.0

Making the Case for Participation

Table 2.2 UK Examples of Sector-Led Projects

practitioners to promote creativity and creative learning, with an emphasis on pupil participation. It has not been uncommon for these projects to address built environment issues relating to the school and wider community, and to engage architects or designers in the process. Over 8,000 individual projects have been delivered to date.

A more detailed consideration of practice examples is provided in Chapter Four of the report.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has considered some of the key policy drivers for children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration within the UK and internationally. The chapter showed that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Habitat Agenda have generated momentum at an international level; often championed by municipal leaders, and facilitated by rights-inspired programmes such as the Child Friendly Cities (Initiative CFCI) and Growing Up In Cities (GUIC) project and highlighted the role of sustainable development in encouraging children's participation internationally. The co-design movement played a considerable part in bringing about both adult and child participation in the UK and internationally with schools and Urban Studies helping to forge participatory practice. Moreover it underlined the inherent challenge of bringing together 'children's services' with 'planning and regeneration', due to the fact that these agendas are often separated at a policy level. In addition, the chapter highlighted how important social environments are to children, stressing the importance of facilitating environmental education. Thus this chapter reinforces the need to consider spatial dimensions of child well-being alongside other, more often used indicators.

In addition, we have identified some of the youth policies and programmes directing the focus of youth services on space for young people rather than their integration into the wider public realm. We have noted how play has been an important emphasis for policy and practice driving child participation, with the Play strategy emphasising the value of children's play, and planning policy stressing the need for more play parks and wider use of social spaces in neighbourhoods.

It is apparent from reviewing the UK and international situation, however, that children's influence over places and spaces has not always been achieved in a meaningful way, and that this area of practice is somewhat under-acknowledged by planners and policymakers. Given these issues, the following chapter examines whether there is indeed a case for supporting participation in this context, and if so; why this is not more commonly practised.

3.0 Making the Case for Participation

This chapter asks why communities, planners and policymakers should be concerned with children and young people's participation when it comes to decisions affecting the public realm. The chapter first examines the key concepts of children's participation from the research literature, and how these have been applied in the context of planning and the built environment. It then goes on to present some more specific arguments for children's participation. Finally, the chapter examines the reasons why there is such an apparent gap between research and practice, and identifies some of the main barriers to the mainstreaming of practice within this field.

3.1 Theories of Participation

Children and young people's participation has gained in profile following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with Article 12 providing the main focal point. A variety of definitions have been put forward, most of which seek to define the nature and extent of children's decision-making responsibilities, and how they are shared with adults. An over-arching definition of the term is provided thus, in the UNICEF Innocenti series:

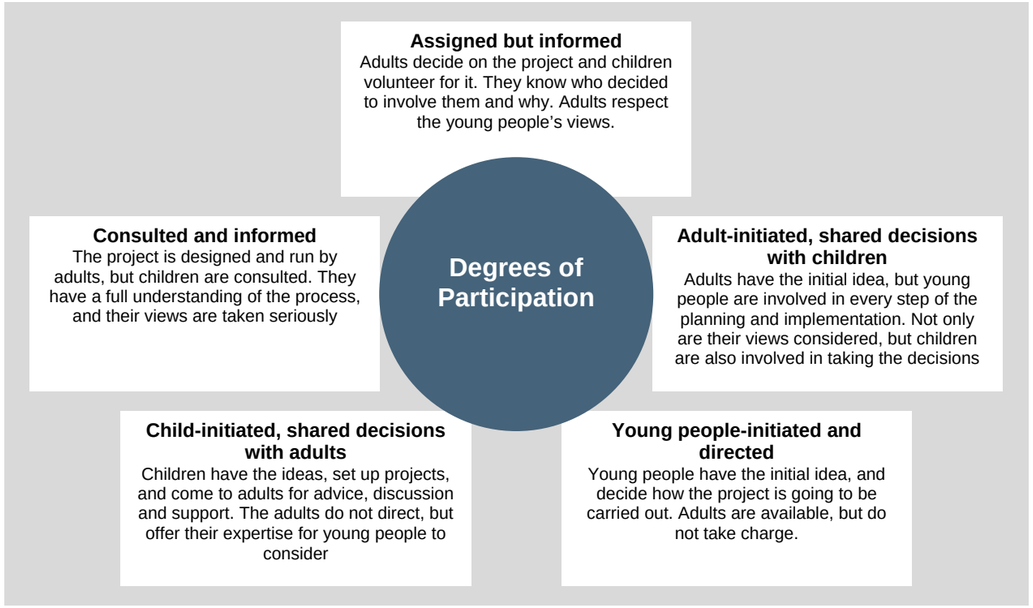
> *"[Participation can be defined as]… the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship".*
>
> **(Hart, 2002, p.5)**

Drawing on Arnstein's original ladder of citizen participation (1969), Hart's **'ladder of children's participation'** (1992, 1997) is perhaps the most widely accepted and applied scale of measurement[1], although other variants have also been adapted (see for example; Shier, 2001, Thornburn, Lewis and Shemmings, 1995; Treseder 1997). Hart presents eight rungs, of which the bottom three are considered non-participation, whereby children's views are co-opted to validate adult decision-making. For Hart; participation begins on the fifth rung, and then escalates according to children's powers of direction and the influence exerted by adults. The top two rungs on the ladder imply a high level of independent decision-making by children, with adults performing more of a role as partners.

Treseder's (1997) model differs in that the forms of non-participation have been stripped-out; effectively leaving five 'degrees' of participation. The model places a greater relative emphasis on *context.* Each of the degrees represents a potentially viable form of participation, with the selected approach depending on the aims of the exercise and the needs of the children who are involved. Figure 3.1 overleaf provides an illustration.

[1] The rungs include, in descending order: 1) Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults, 2) Child-initiated and directed, 3) Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children, 4) Consulted and informed, 5) Assigned but informed, 6) Tokenism, 7) Decoration, and 8) Manipulation

Figure 3.1 Degrees of Participation by Children and Young People



Adapted from: Treseder (1997)

A number of studies have adapted these definitions specifically to the context of children and young people's participation in planning and the built environment. Some of the main ones can be summarised as follows:

- Matthews (2003) proposes *four different levels of community action*, based on children and young people's participation in UK regeneration programmes, ranging from 'dialogue' (listening to young people), through 'development' (adults working on behalf of young people in their interests), 'participation' (young people working within their communities), and 'integration' (young people working with their communities) (p.268). Whilst differing from Hart's model in many respects, the characteristics of higher-level participation remain focussed on shared decision making between children and adults for mutual benefit.

- Chawla (2005) identifies four main levels or 'forms' of participation achieved by projects within the international Growing up in Cities (GUIC) programme during the 1990s. These include: 1) developed and implemented by children; 2) facilitated by adults with children, 3) community events organized by adults with full participation by children, and 4) actions organized by adults drawing on the work of children.

A key message from the literature is that what constitutes 'effective' participation can be highly specific to the setting or context within which the activities take place. Horelli (1994) argues that entirely child-initiated and managed activities at the highest rungs of Hart's ladder are "more or less utopian" (p.375), and are usually only pragmatic on a small scale, such as the redevelopment of a local play area. Chawla and Heft (2002) note that

community or urban planning is nearly always highly politicised, due to the community and commercial interests at stake, and that an active partnership with adults is a prerequisite for achieving any kind of lasting change. In contrast, projects that do not bring children's and adults' interests into potential conflict are unlikely to have so much at stake. This viewpoint is shared by Blanchett-Cohen (2006) who argues that some level of struggle between children and adults is often a necessary stage in the participatory process:

> *"…the partnership between children and adults may at some level be strained. This is not a failed partnership, but may be the nature of a meaningful partnership as children and adults operate within a society and a system that is not child-friendly. They are negotiating a place and situation of understanding for both"*
>
> **(Blanchet-Cohen and Rainbow, 2006, p.126)**

This sentiment is echoed by others (see for example: Horelli, 2010, and Percy-Smith 2006), who argue that the collision of children's views with those of others within the community provides opportunities for 'social learning', as a necessary part of the participatory process.

Iacofano (1990) provides an alternative critique of environmental planning processes, and argues that participation is concerned not only with the degree of 'interactivity' between the different stakeholders, but also the degree of 'influence' over decision-making (in: Chawla and Heft, 2002). So, for example, a participatory exercise might achieve a high degree of interaction between children and adults using Hart's model (processes), but fall short in terms of gaining leverage over those who hold decision-making power (outcomes).

Others have drawn attention to the paradox within the traditional emphasis on securing children's participation through formal political decision-making structures, which has so often overlooked the continuing lack of progress with improving "the everyday" situation of children and young people within their own neighbourhoods (Percy-Smith, 2010). The extent to which participatory methods can engage all children and young people is also highlighted as a key issue within the literature. Hart, for example, highlights the importance of empowering sub-groups who might not traditionally participate (2007). These arguments return to the more fundamental debate about how participatory practice is different from consultation. Often, the desire to ensure that a plurality of children's voices are 'heard' and subsequently represented by adults results in the separation of children's interests and the denial of their status as equal partners in the decision-making process. Essentially, it then becomes a data gathering exercise. Working in an educational context, Fielding (2004) outlines a fourfold typology of student engagement to illustrate how data gathering can be transformed into participatory process.

The typology includes the following:

1. **students as data source (passive respondents);**
2. **students as active respondents;**
3. **students as co-researchers (teacher-led dialogue and inquiry) and**
4. **students as researchers (student-led dialogue and inquiry).**

A number of studies have independently reached the conclusion that participatory structures must have the capacity to evolve, by allowing successive waves of participants to join and leave and to bring their own influences to bear (Matthews, 2003, Percy-Smith, 2010). This implies a more 'organic' form of participation, which ultimately aims *"…to create or strengthen settings that possess ongoing lives of their own"* (Heft and Chawla, 2002, p. 214). The ability for participatory settings to adapt in this way is one of the fundamental issues for ensuring their sustainability, as we go on to consider in further detail within the concluding report chapter.

3.2 Children's Rights – Social and Political Considerations

The literature highlights the importance of ***social and political context***, when seeking to define children's rights, and when determining appropriate structures to reinforce them. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has received particular scrutiny, because is has received a (near) universal ratification worldwide, and *"sets the norms and standards for the protection of children's rights"* (UNICEF, 2010, p.9). Swart-Kruger and others (2002) argue that there is a risk of 'cultural authoritarianism' in the assumptions made within CRC, which are based predominately on Western views of childhood and of children's individual self-expression. These norms have sometimes clashed with traditional or indigenous cultures. For example, Sener (2006) describes how the collectivist and family-centred national culture in Turkey has increasingly come into conflict with NGOs and funding bodies as a result of Turkey's exposure to international programmes and funding. This has required a careful balance between the promotion of children's rights based on individual self-expression, whilst preserving sensitivity to national culture and heritage. In Africa, representatives from Government, academia and civil society organisations worked together to draft an *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (2000). The Carer was conceived to achieve a balance between the definitions of universal children's rights presented in CRC, and the reality of children's responsibilities in a developing world situation.

Hart (1992) concludes that, ultimately, the goal is to ensure that children's fundamental rights are upheld. This can sometimes mean that children's interests collide with the social or cultural norms established by adults. In societies where there is a traditionally authoritarian approach towards children's rights, this means that it is sometimes necessary for children to lead the way in demonstrating the value of their participation to adults.

> *"While the child's freedom of expression and participation in community issues may often be contrary to the child-rearing attitudes of the child's parents or caretakers, it is ultimately in the best interests of all children to have a voice. This is sometimes especially difficult for disadvantaged; low-income parents to understand when they themselves have had no voice… the aim should be to encourage the participation of the whole family""*
>
> **(Hart, 1992a, p.7)**

3.3 The Importance of Children's Environments

The study of children and their environments has been of longstanding interest to academics, educationalists and practitioners alike, and draws upon many different disciplines including environmental and developmental psychology as well as planning. There is a growing acceptance that children and young people should be treated as a distinct stakeholder group in decisions affecting the environment. A number of principal arguments can be put forward, which we consider in turn within this section.

3.3.1 Developmental Benefits

It widely documented that children and young people have ***specific developmental needs*** relating to how they use their environments. These needs are wide-reaching, and encompass children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Bartlett, et. al, 1999, Knowles-Yanez, 2005). The developmental benefits of children's interactions with their environments are consistent with Howard Gardner's theory of 'Multiple Intelligences' (1983). Gardner maintains that a deeper understanding can be achieved by exercising the full range of capacities underpinning cognitive development, which includes children's *spatial* capacities[1].

Much of the literature concerns the role and value of children's 'play' (Moore, 1986; Lester and Russell, 2008). However, there are also developmental benefits associated with children's independent mobility in more general terms. Freeman and Vass's empirical research conducted with school age children in New Zealand; concludes that children's 'everyday' interactions with their environments, the extent of their independent mobility, and parental attitudes are all major factors in nurturing environmental literacy (2010, p. 68). Younger children in particular have been shown to be at greater risk of some hazards than adults, due to their more limited ability to exercise control over their environments (Ibid., 2010). Moreover, adult's residential choices can have a direct impact on children's experience of their local environment, arising from adult judgements about quality of life and residential desirability (Passon, et. al, 2008).

A developmental perspective emphasises children acquiring skills and knowledge with a potential *future* application (as adult citizens). This focus should not, however, detract from the importance of children's opportunities to participate and feel included within their local communities in the *present.* Children's interactions with their environments can also foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen their active citizenship.

3.3.2 Qualities of 'Child Friendly' Spaces

A number of projects have sought to map and classify the ***social and environmental qualities*** that children and young people rate most highly in the places where they live. This has resulted in guidelines for planners and municipal authorities to consider when developing 'child friendly' cities and spaces (UNICEF, 2004).

[1] These are: Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Musical, Bodily-kinaesthetic, Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Naturalist, and Existential.

A review was also conducted of environmental ratings from the Growing up in Cities Project. The researchers identified six quality indicators most valued by children and young people (Driskell, 2002). These included:

1. **social integration**
2. **variety of interesting settings**
3. **safety and freedom of movement**
4. **peer meeting places**
5. **cohesive community identity; and**
6. **green areas**

These priorities give an indication of the potential impacts of youth participation, where young people's aspirations are embedded and acted upon. It remains unclear the extent to which these priorities have been systematically realized in practice, however, due to a lack of follow-up to the examples within the literature (Chawla, 2002b, p.361). The gaps in the evidence are considered in further detail within Chapter Five.

3.3.3 The Role of Design

Various studies have demonstrated that ***design has a central role to play*** in facilitating children's access to, and use of public spaces. Haider (2007) proposes that certain design attributes can facilitate interaction between different generations, and support children's instinct to lay *"territorial claim"* to public spaces; literally by 'making room' for civic participation within the built environment (p.87). The author argues that the extent of children's independent mobility is a good proxy for effective urban design (2007, p.85).

The influence of design over children's use of public spaces is also highlighted in a report by CABE, which presents a series of UK case studies illustrating how children and young people have been involved in the design and care of urban spaces (CABE Space, 2004). A key theme to emerge from the report is the importance of making provision for *"slack space"* within the urban environment that is conducive to spontaneous re-use and re-invention by children and young people (2004, p.12). The report underlines that children's and adult's interests often collide in the process, and that young people have an important role to play in the *subversion* of public spaces through creative expression and play, in addition to *collaborating* within formal planning structures.

> *"Young people will spontaneously select and then appropriate open space. Their use of space… treads a fine line between asserting ownership and behaving anti-socially. It is a challenging issue that needs to be tackled head on, as an understanding of the importance of 'slack space' can have a significant effect on the design and participation process".*
>
> **(CABE Space, 2004, p.12)**

The opportunities for children to undertake this kind of improvised social engagement are severely constrained where planning and commercial interests conspire to 'set aside' formalised leisure spaces for children that are

separate from the adult domain (Simpson, 1997). Oldenburg (1989) draws attention to the often poor quality design attributes of suburban environments in this respect, which can restrict children and young people's opportunities to shape their environments. See also Percy-Smith (2002) in Chawla (2002).

3.4 Children and Young People's Capacity to Participate

Whilst the *effects* of environmental change on children are widely known and accepted; the literature demonstrates that there is far less clarity regarding children and young people's *abilities* to participate in planning processes, the necessary *attributes* for doing so, and what the immediate *benefits* might be. The remainder of this section presents this case in terms of children's competence; their understanding of neighbourhood change processes, and the precedent for children and young people contributing towards more effective and inclusive design processes.

3.4.1 Children's Competence

A main strand of debate about children's roles in planning relates to their 'competence' in shaping the built environment, when compared with adult professionals. The following provides a working definition for the purpose of this section of the report; drawing upon psychological approaches for measuring well-being:

> *"[Competence can be defined as]… the capacity to exercise control over valued spheres of life, and in so doing achieve desired outcomes"*
>
> **(Heft and Chawla, 2002)**

There is much evidence of children's ability to achieve a high level of competence, when viewed in this context. Indeed, research shows that adults often *"grossly under-estimate"* children's capabilities (Hart, 1997).

3.4.1.1 Spatial Skills

Children's ***spatial skills*** have been demonstrated on numerous occasions, although many of the individual projects have been small scale and not linked to actual planning processes. Even very young children have proven competent at map-making and interpretation, with the right level of support. The methods highlighted within the literature include the following:

- the use of computer-assisted models such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) (Wridt, 2010, Berglund, 2008, Horelli and Kaaja, 2002),
- the analysis of aerial photographs (Plester et. al. 2002), and
- inter-generational design 'charettes' - a collaborative workshop format in which professionals, residents and children work together to problem-solve a community design issue (Sutton and Kemp, 2002).

A variety of toolkits have also been developed to facilitate children's participation in this respect, including the Mosaic approach. This involves a two-stage process whereby children and adults first gather information documenting how children live their lives, followed by a period of reflection and interpretation of the evidence, during which stage the adults hear children's accounts in their own words (Clark and Moss, 2001).

The following provides a much 'applied' example of how children's spatial mapping skills were utilised to support community resource planning. The example comes from Delhi in India.

Table 3.1. Case Study - The 'real world' application of children's mapping skills – Delhi (India)

The 'Katha' (meaning 'story') project in India was set up 22 years ago; combining classroom-based education with community activities to empower children through action-based learning. In one example from the project, local children from a slum in Delhi were engaged in activities to map their neighbourhood, where no formal map of the area previously existed. The project leader describes how this was achieved without access to a Geographic Information System (GIS):

> *'Our students went…measuring literally foot by foot, and drawing a detailed map of their entire area, showing houses, temples, open spaces, and water points. They digitized this in their classes to make our own GIS… [The] students did a water availability survey, analyzed the data using Excel, and made an impressive presentation showing which pockets were worst affected'*

These exercises were repeated, with increasing sophistication. One of the tasks was to conduct a water availability survey, which the students analyzed using Excel and made into a presentation. The project leader describes how the results subsequently impressed the municipal authorities:

> *'On the day Delhi's Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, visited our school, they used this to convince her enough to make a call to the CEO of Delhi Water Board, the DJB. When the DJB people came and threw up their hands for the lack of a map of the area, it was the map made by the children which saved the day'*

The data provided by the children was sufficiently reliable to plan the location of 13 new water lines.

Source: (Dharmarajan, 2010)

Research with school children in New Zealand found that children's maps were a particularly useful tool for exploring children's perspectives of the connections between the 'private' space of their homes, and the 'public' neighbourhood spaces surrounding where they live (Freeman and Vass, 2010). The study found that children's technical skills were not always a good indicator of their environmental awareness, however, and that the maps were the most useful when accompanied with other forms of research and discussion with the children who took

part. The practice of children's mapmaking and map-interpretation remains fairly untested in some spheres, with fewer recent practice examples encountered from residential planning (Ibid. p.66). This is perhaps surprising, given the very significant impact that the design of children's residential developments can have on their lives.

The literature also highlights the common risks that are associated with efforts to engage children in spatial planning. The main ones include the misappropriation of children's designs by adults, and the tendency for children to acquiesce towards what adults expect to see. There is some evidence that participatory exercises work best where they break with planning orthodoxy, to avoid introducing clichés or preconceived ideas to the process, and *"…to liberate them [children] from the constraints of their experience with traditional designs"* (Iltus and Hart, 1994 p.364). The following participatory project from Finland illustrates a successful example of this.

Table 3.2. Realizing Children's Ideas for Community Development (Finland)

About the initiative: Kitee is a small rural town in Finland. When it was officially conferred city status, the local council decided *"to do something for the children"*. Children participated in the improvement of a neighbourhood with 2,000 residents around their school. A club, with up to 20 children, was led by teachers twice a week after school and an architect and environmental psychologist were hired to animate the planning. Various participatory techniques were applied in the planning process, including a future workshop, expressive methods and special theme days. The planning of the school grounds involved 146 children, and methods included drawing and modelling.

Outcomes: The children demonstrated an ability to consider wider issues affecting the neighbourhood as a whole. For example, the children's ideas for traffic solutions were made into specific project cards for future implementation. One class took up traffic safety in the area, presenting its findings together with residents at the meeting of the local council. The proposal evolved into an official citizen initiative for which public funds were allocated. As a result of this initiative, there is demand for the planning process to include groups such as children and young people. This has inspired debate around how *"…the school could be transformed not only into a three dimensional textbook but into the town's general learning and development centre".*

(Horelli, 1994)

This type of opportunity to break with conventional design processes has sometimes also been provided through the medium of arts and creative media. Percy-Smith (2010) argues that arts-based approaches break with conventional uses of public space and adult-child power relations, resulting in new 'ways of seeing' (p.5).

3.4.1.2 Ages and Abilities

Other studies emphasize the importance of matching developmental stages with forms of participation (see for example; Bartlett, 1999). From a developmental psychology perspective; the 'middle childhood' stage of 10-12 years is widely considered to be an optimum time for children to develop environmental skills, because this is

when children begin to explore their environments independently of adults (Wridt, 2010, de Vries, et. al, 2007). However, there have been examples where children as young as four successfully participated in spatial planning exercises (Horelli, 1997), whilst Roe's (2006) study children aged 6–10 years old illuminated how they understood their environment and boundaries, and how it contributed to their well being.

A potential drawback of working with much younger children, however, is that they can lack sometimes lack a suitable level of knowledge and experience of planning systems to identify options for change. Indeed, one author concludes the following from a previous literature review on this subject:

> *"As the planning initiatives approached the transition from making recommendations to implementing them… Researchers found that children had a limited understanding of the socio-political context, and did not know how to move forward… And there were ingrained power differentials between youth and adults and between citizens and public officials"*
>
> **(Frank, 2006, p. 366)**

3.4.1.3 Socio-Economic Background

The research suggests that there is a somewhat ambiguous relationship between *children's competence* and their *socio-economic background*. At one level, it is evident that children from poor quality environments often experience fewer immediate opportunities to participate. Phillips (2004) describes the 'double exclusion' of children in disadvantaged local areas on the basis of social class and generation. The author argues that policy initiatives to redress the class dimension to social exclusion are rarely sufficient to meet children's needs.

It is, however, equally important not to underestimate children's agency in even the most difficult of circumstances. Numerous studies have shown that children from poor neighbourhoods often hold substantial local knowledge and are experts in navigating their environments. This is particularly characteristic of situations in the developing world, where children left with no alternative by municipal authorities *"… sometimes take their fate into their own hands"* (Horelli, 1997, p372). Driskell uses the term 'paradoxical poverty' to describe places that are poor in material resources and yet rich in social, cultural or environmental resources (2001, p.85). This concept is particularly relevant when considering children's' opportunities to develop environmental skills.

Moreover, it would be false to assume that adults from disadvantaged communities necessarily hold a significant level of decision-making power and responsibility relative to children, and their own agency must also be considered in the context of the influence that is exerted by the municipal authorities and planners.

3.4.2 Identifying and Responding to Needs

A further rationale for children and young people's participation is to ensure that spaces or services are developed in a way that is appropriate to their need***s***. The research evidence shows that well-managed

participation processes can help to provide a new perspective on how children use their environments; sometimes leading to design improvements. They can also highlight planning issues that adults had not recognised or understood. Table 3.2 below provides two small scale UK examples.

Table 3.2 Learning from Children's Insights to their Environments

- **Example 1**: children aged 4-5 years living in an inner-city neighbourhood were asked to produce a mural as part of a community project, to show how they perceive their local environment, and how they would like it to look in the future (Lansdown, 2001, p.5). The researchers were surprised that the grassed play areas had been removed in the children's drawings. When asked about this, the children reported that the council grassing public spaces made it more difficult to see broken glass and dog excrement. The children's alterative view was a very pragmatic one, contrary to the adults' expectations.
- **Example 2**: a group of children and young people participating in a local community health project identified 'stress' as a main issue. The initial response by the adult professionals was to suggest developing a new youth space, where they could relax and socialise (Percy-Smith *et. al.*, 2003). A more in-depth discussion revealed that student-teacher relationships and exam pressures at school were the main cause of the stress, and the focus shifted to how these might be improved. The exercise therefore avoided what would have been a misguided planning response.

In a review of children's involvement in health care facility design, Hart (1992b) suggests that designers often overlook children's views and argues that there is a pressing need for children to have a say. He gives the example of hospital design and proposes the use of video tours and 3D modelling as a means for children to exercise a greater degree of choice and influence over the hospital environment than the more limited decisions about wall colourings and bedside space.

A core principle of the Growing Up in Cities (GUIC) project is that spatial development must take into account children's views about *community resources*, rather than simply focussing on "problems" to be addressed. The consequences of overlooking children as a stakeholder group are highlighted within the literature. Driskell describes an example from India, where an international aid agency arrived to start work on a community project. One of their first actions was to build a new toilet complex on disused land. Subsequent interviews with local children by the GUIC team revealed that the site had in fact been actively used as a play space. The exclusion of children from the decision-making had therefore resulted in unnecessary damage (2001, p.83).

3.4.3 Children as Community Advocates

A further case for children and young people's participation in planning is drawn from their *capacity to act in the interests of the wider community*. The literature shows that children and young people often demonstrate a high level of empathy with other community members of different ages and social groups, and take their interests into

account when formulating recommendations for neighbourhood change (Sanoff, 2000; Chawla, et. al., 2005; Bartlett, 1999). Knowlez-Yanez concludes from a previous study of practice examples that *"…children can generate complex, idealized visions of neighbourhoods they would prefer"* (1995, p.5). These findings would seem to be relatively universal to participatory projects in different geographical and cultural settings.

Malone reaches the following conclusions on the subject, based on lessons learned from children and young people's participation within the Growing up in Cities project in Australia:

> *"The assumption… that young people, when given the opportunity to participate in planning processes, will ask for 'pie in the sky' is an urban (planning) myth. Rather, given the opportunity, most young people have insightful and practical ideas which take into account the needs of the whole community".*
>
> **(Malone, 1999, p.18, in Cameron and Grant-Smith, 2005, p.32)**

A second example from South America further underlines children's capacities to take ownership of community issues. Cabannes (2006) reports on the following outcomes from a series of large-scale urban consultations with children and young people in Ecuador, which took place as part of a UNDP/UN–Habitat programme:

> *"The children and young people expressed concerns in a range of areas, both with regard to specific provisions for their own age group (recreational facilities, access to information on scholarships, more opportunities for their opinions to be heard) as well as more general community needs (such as the improvement of local roads, water quality, electricity and training for mothers on better nutrition). They pointed to the need for sources of work in order to avoid migration, good maintenance for recreational areas, improvements in the infrastructure for health care, and improved literacy".*
>
> **(Cabannes, 2006, p.198)**

These and other examples call into question some of the common preconceptions held by adults about children and young people's motives. As Percy-Smith identifies (2010), even youth workers and children's services professionals can significantly underestimate children and young people's desire to participate for reasons that are intrinsically motivated, and too often focus instead on the need to validate service or commissioning decisions. Indeed, within several of the practice examples from the literature, the emphasis placed on young people's career development or employment skills was apparently at odds with the desire expressed by young people to become more active within their local community (Lauwers and Vanderstede, 2005).

3.5 Barriers to Effective Participation

The previous section examined the rationale for children and young people's participation, and identified some compelling arguments for children and young people's participation against a number of criteria. Despite these findings, however, the literature shows that the highest levels of participation are very rarely achieved or

sustained; even in situations where children's competences have been clearly demonstrated. As Horelli reflects; the step from evidence to change in behaviour by planners and designers has nearly always been as a result of 'negotiation' and 'struggle' (1997, p.113). Even the early examples from the Growing Up in Cities (GUIC) programme in Australia and South America during the 1970s and 1980s show that children's views were ultimately swept aside by the municipal powers of the day. In the second GUIC project in the 1990s; projects similarly experienced difficulties and challenges in realising change from participatory action research work with children (Chawla et al 2005) The remainder of this section considers the evidence for why this may have been the case, and what the implications might be for practice.

3.5.1 Political and Structural Barriers

The planning and the built environment remains such a challenging arena for children's participation, first and foremost because of the considerable power that is vested in decisions affecting the production of public and private space. Simpson (1997) argues that planning law plays a fundamental role in the distribution of benefits within any given society, which in turn reflects the wider political and socio-economic circumstances of the time (p.912). The author argues that the imperative to secure public participation in planning decisions is inevitably at odds with the role of the law in protecting commercial and private property interests. Considered in this light, children's real level of influence over formal political processes is more problematic to achieve. Simpson charts the historical development of UK planning law, and its influence over children's roles within public space. The nature of this relationship has changed over time, it is argued; keeping apace with children's citizenship status and their role as producers (and consumers) within the labour market.

> *"It is important to stress the pivotal role that the law played [historically] in assisting in the creation of the conditions which led to the exclusion of the young from public places. Without laws requiring school attendance, prohibiting child labour or prescribing minimum wages, such segregation might have been extremely difficult to enforce. Importantly, this segregation was based on a view of the child as a "future citizen" in need of nurturing and protection. On this ideological basis, the exclusion of children as participants in urban planning was secured"*
>
> **(Simpson, 1997, p.909)**

Rogers (2006) distinguishes between the 'implicit' exclusion of children as a result of poorly conceived planning exercises, and 'explicit' exclusion through active dispersal or land use policies, such as those designed to address perceived antisocial behaviour (2006, p. 106). The author considers the example of a regeneration scheme in a northern UK city during the 1990s, where these two influences combined with negative consequences for children and young people. In this example, the original intentions of the municipal authority to create a new youth space were ultimately crowded-out by wider public concerns about the perceived problem behaviour of young people in the city centre, and the influence of commercial developers over the project. The end result was to build a new skate park at an out-of-town location. As the author describes, what was originally intended as a public participation project ended with young people being 'designed out' of the city centre:

> *"The participation… surrounding the skate park appears to be driven not by the desire to provide a youth space, but by the need to remove young people from areas of the city center [Sic.] where their presence might discourage more affluent people from engaging in normal consumption… This emphasis on relocation implicit in managerial policy in effect undermines the intentions of youth participation in the generation of policies for urban redevelopment".*
>
> **(Rogers, 2006, p.118)**

This is not to suggest that the provision of designated spaces for children and young people is necessarily a cynical exercise. And indeed there are numerous examples from youth work and play work practice where the impetus for the 'zoning' of such spaces has come directly from children and young people themselves (see for example young people's participation in the planning of new youth facilities within the *myplace* programme (DfE, 2010), and the playground and streetscape case studies from the CABE Spaceshaper 9-14 programme[1], to name but a few examples). It does, however, illustrate the inherent tensions in how the ownership of public space is negotiated, and the disparities in the decision-making power held by children and adults.

The impact of commercial interests is also evident from some of the project examples in Italy, where children's participation has been more widespread. In one such example in an Italian town, children's proposals for the greater padestrianization of street areas were blocked by local businesses, which feared a loss of revenue from reducing levels of car access. The plans were not realised, therefore; despite widespread support from the local community (Salvadori, 1997). Issues for children and young people arising from the privatization of public space are more widely documented within the research literature. They include, for example, the challenges for negotiating youth access to securitized spaces such as shopping Malls (White, et. al., 1996, Valentine, 2004),

Others note that planning processes tend to be highly regulated, with only time-limited opportunities for children and young people's participation, and that they are driven by adult-led organisations and structures and agendas that lack regular exposure to working with children, or organisations that represent their interests (Knowles-Yanez, 2002; Matthews, 2003). Research shows that children and young people's participation in regeneration schemes has also suffered from similar challenges, including a highly politicized environment; short timescales for decision-making and vulnerability of temporary participatory structures to cuts in funding (Rogers, 2006).

It must be acknowledged that local planners are themselves subject to further tiers of decision-making; meaning that they often have finite influence over children and young people's needs. Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005) argue that that planners are themselves often marginalized within the local decision-making process, because so many issues fall to local community development offices to address.

[1] http://www.caeb.org.uk/public-space/spaceshaper-9-14

3.5.2 Gaps in Professional Knowledge and Awareness

The limited research that has been undertaken with planners to date also indicates a general lack of professional awareness of the purpose, benefits, or skills required for facilitating youth participation. For example, studies in the United States and Australia each showed that planners generally reported a low level of professional knowledge about young people's needs or concerns, and identified that young people were not systematically taken into account as a stakeholder group within planning processes (in: Frank, 2006, p.351). This was also identified as an issue in some projects in the UK (Beunderman et al, 2007 Demos report).

Further, a review of international literature by Frank (2006) showed that examples of youth participation were nearly always initiated by academics, educationalists or NGOs. The low numbers of cases led by planners in a local government setting led the author to conclude that there has as yet been limited endorsement within the mainstream. There are a few notable country exceptions to this, which we consider in Chapter Five.

3.5.3 Restrictive Mechanisms

Other studies draw attention to the mismatch between children's willingness to participate, and the realities of local planning practices. Berglund points to a flaw in many of the educational schemes that have placed children in the role as would-be planners, because they provide such a weak simulation of 'real life' municipal planning situations (2008, p.116). Frank also notes that the literature is dominated by examples of adult-led projects that were initiated by academics or advocates, who can input substantial time and expertise that would not be available within a public planning exercise (2006, p.354). Indeed, it is evident that planners' own contractual and regulatory obligations must also be met within any such an exercise, and that planners themselves are subject to the influence of powerful municipal authorities and private sector interests.

Others argue, however, that these barriers reflect a narrower view of how children's participation should be achieved, which emphasises compliance with institutionalised forms of planning and spatial development. The issue becomes less problematic (in conceptual terms at least), if children and adults are engaged collaboratively as part of a more open-ended exercise. The participatory planning of children's play in New York provides an example of how this kind of "negotiated design process" has been realised in practice (Iltus and Hart, 1994).

3.5.4 Societal Views of Children and Young People

The wider impact of societal attitudes and stereotyping towards children and young people is also discussed in some detail within the research literature (Passon, et. a., 2008). Frank draws-out four commonly held views that that serve to marginalise children from planning decisions (2006, p.353). Table 3.3 provides a summary.

Table 3.3. Societal views towards youth participation, and their effects

- The **developmental view** emphasizes that children and young people are at an earlier stage of social and cognitive development, and do not therefore have the decision-making capabilities of adults. This view fosters a paternalistic attitude towards children and young people, which dictates that adults are better equipped to make decisions on their behalf. *This view implies a shortfall in children's competence to understand and influence change.*
- The **vulnerable view** again fosters a paternalistic attitude – young people are not capable of engaging in a meaningful way, because they are politically marginalized, and their efforts are doomed to be misrepresented. Moreover, they are likely to become disaffected with authority if their ideas are not acted upon. *This view implies that children lack the resilience to challenge adults and see their ideas through in the face of adversity.*
- The **legal view** asserts that children and young people lack the rights and responsibilities of adults, because they are not yet politically enfranchised. They are on the road to citizenship, but are "becoming" rather than "being", and are not yet ready to exercise their agency. *This view implies that children and young people are part-citizens, with limited accountability.*
- The **romantic view** supports the belief that children have an aesthetically privileged view of the world, and that their creativity is unique and different from adults. This view serves to maintain a separation between child and adult values, by 'preserving' children's ideas, rather than promoting debate between adults and children. *This view implies a shortfall in children's abilities to act in a socially useful or utilitarian way.*

The definitions proposed by Frank are echoed in other research. Hart argues that the 'romantic' view of participation has tended to focus on preserving the uniqueness of children's views of the world; often at the expense of acknowledging children as *social* agents (p.363). Francis and Lorenzo (2002) trace the origins back to the pioneer designers and planners in the 1960s and 1970s. They argue that this view has also made an important positive contribution towards the children's rights movement, however, by emphasising the intrinsic value of participation to individual children, over-and-above the benefits for institutions or services (Ibid, p.160).

In addition, a major barrier to children's participation is the misunderstanding around the term itself. Participation is often considered to be *consultation* rather than involvement in every phase of the decision-making process. Local authority planning department's structures and process are often hierarchical. This inevitably creates difficulties in embedding or integrating children's participation. How local authorities themselves make decisions will inevitably affect how they set up and conduct their work with children. At best there are 'community group' for a, such as disability forums, the elderly forum, the young people's council. However, these often have limited power and exist within a 'representative' rather than 'participative' democratic tradition of local governance (See Cornwall & Coelho 2007 for a further discussion).

3.6 Summary

This chapter has considered some of the main theories underpinning children's participation and has highlighted the growth of the children's rights agenda and the social and political context that can affect it. The chapter has provided a brief illustration of the importance of physical and social environments for children's development and wellbeing, whilst recognising that more detailed accounts are provided elsewhere, and that it is beyond the scope of this review to fully do justice to them. We also highlighted some of the attributes of 'child friendly' spaces that have been mapped through previous research, whilst noting that those qualities most valued by children rarely seem to have been realised in practice. The role of design in enabling children's access to spaces was also considered. However, the collision of interests around the process of designing space often means the segregation of children's space - separate to adult domains.

The issue of children's competency and ability to participate has been discussed and we conclude that there is much that can be learnt from children's insights into their environments provided they are given the support to do so. This support means identifying and responding to children and young people's needs and encouraging children to act as community advocates, trusting children to bring about change for the wider community. However, it is apparent that numerous and often multi-faceted barriers exist to mobilising children and young people's participation, even where the evidence from research and practice suggests that it is beneficial to do so. In summary, these barriers include the following:

1. **power dynamics and competing public and commercial interests**
2. **short-termism in funding and policy cycles for participatory projects**
3. **social constructions of childhood that limit children's roles in the public domain**
4. **low levels of professional awareness of the nature of children and young people's spatial needs**
5. **underestimation of children and young people's desires and abilities to participate**
6. **competing agendas and criteria for what constitutes effective participation; and,**
7. **poor quality participatory mechanisms**

In Chapter Four, we turn to examine the individual examples from the literature in greater detail, and examine some crosscutting themes.

4.0

Participation in Action – Models, Approaches and their Effectiveness

4.0 Participation in Action – Models, Approaches and their Effectiveness

This chapter examines the range of models and approaches for facilitating children and young people's participation. The chapter first reviews the typologies from the planning and design literature, with regard to how participation has been described and categorised. It goes on to compare and contrast the UK and international practice examples that were identified through the current research study, and draws-out a number of crosscutting themes.

4.1 Participatory Models in Action

4.1.1 Descriptions of participation in planning and environment literature

There have been few previous attempts to categorise the range of approaches for supporting children and young people's participation in planning and design. Studies by Francis and Lorenzo (2002), Frank (2006), and Knowles-Yanez (2005), provide some notable examples where this was attempted across a range of different practice areas, rather than comparing and contrasting individual projects from within a single programme or from different disciplines (See Malone & Hartung 2010).

Francis and Lorenzo (2002) argue that there are six discernible 'realms' of participation in evidence within the literature: advocacy, romantic, needs, learning, rights, and institutionalization. The development of these realms is presented as a 'chronology' of sorts, although they are also understood to overlap and continue (p.161). A seventh realm is also proposed ('proactive'), which represents a synthesis of the other six approaches, and entails a combination of *"research, participation and action"*(p.161).

Kathryn Frank's (2006) review of the literature about young people's participation in planning divides the literature into those projects involving young people that affect young people themselves, and projects that have an impact on the wider communities. She highlights projects that have increased the knowledge, skills, confidence and enthusiasm of young people, along with those that generated information and awareness of youth and community issues and which presented and implemented recommendations as a result. In addition she identifies those projects that encourage youth capacity in participation. In summary she highlights five key lessons for effective practice. These are projects that:

- **address power imbalances and give children and young people a voice**
- **build youth capacity**
- **encourage youthful styles of working**
- **involve adults throughout process; and**

- **adapt the socio-political context**

In this way, young people are 'recognised as community resources, learners and collaborators' (p 369), and as competent community builders (Checkoway et al, 2005). However, Frank notes that local government approaches to planning operate with a different framework, with narrower objectives. These may be less collective and more outcome orientated, which could result in fewer benefits to the young participants themselves.

Knowles-Yanez (2005) identifies four approaches to children and young people's participation in the planning and land use literature. These include **scholarly, practice, education and rights based** approaches:

- *Scholarly approaches*, unsurprisingly, tend to be conducted by academics or researchers to enhance knowledge and understanding of an issue, without always linking their findings to planning practice.
- *Practice approaches* have typically brought organisations such as public agencies, local councils and children together to improve aspects of their neighbourhoods, communities or cities.
- *Educational approaches* to participation, like scholarly approaches, do not always link outcomes to practice and instead concentrate on 'appropriate ways to educate children about planning' (p 7). They often include hypothetical exercises, with hypothetical outcomes in order to enhance the learning experience.
- *Rights-based* approaches invoke the United Nations General Assembly on the Rights of Children (CRC) for children to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Knowles-Yanez argues that whilst all four approaches have proven worthwhile in their own right; the link between them, and to actual land use planning processes, has been "piecemeal" within the USA, and that only a rights-based approach ensures a moral imperative for participation (Ibid., p.12). The author acknowledges that even with children's rights in mind, there are numerous competing interests that influence planners and developers. The article concludes that measures to "institutionalize" children and young people's participation in policy and practice are likely to be necessary, to achieve the necessary scaling-up of the practice examples.

Drawing upon a review of a selection of UN-Habitat child and youth orientated environmental initiatives, the authors define best practice as follows:

> *"'Successful initiatives that have a demonstrable and tangible impact on improving people's quality of life; are the result of effective partnerships between the public, private and civic sectors of society; and are socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable"*
>
> **(Varney and van Vliet, 2005, p.42)**

They note that in order for projects to be successful there is a need to:

- **be child-friendly – involving children directly in any environmental improvement activities**
- **be part of a broader approach that include other groups, policy or programme areas**

- **follow community based approaches**
- **include a variety of stakeholders and**
- **build up capacity to scale up to other areas, cities or countries**

In sum, the participation in planning and environmental literature has highlighted that projects involving children and young people should improve the education, competencies and/or circumstances of young people and their wider communities and professionals in an ongoing and sustainable way.

We now map out the range and type of participation identified in this review of practice examples and compare and contrast the different modes of participation used in them. We then go on to identify a sub section of projects that provide evidence of the type of effectiveness that has been highlighted above.

4.1.2 UK and international practice examples

A wide range of participation practice examples were identified (see Annex 1). They varied from the small scale (local area with a small number of young people) and one-off projects, through to those that involved thousands of children in numerous cities in a region, or countrywide and / or were ongoing programmes. The majority of children that participated in these projects tended to be teenagers but ages were reported as ranging from as young as 2 years through to graduates of degree courses. The projects are developed from, but not confined to, Frank's (2006) aforementioned typologies. Our study drew on a wider range of literature that concerned children's involvement in planning, design and regeneration and environmental initiatives. As such our categories have expanded to include the following:

- **Educational/learning based.** These ranged from one-off projects with an educational focus to sustainable programmes embedded within curricula and across geographical areas. They focused on helping students learn about planning and design issues very often by working with 'real world' partners such as planning officers and community residents. Small scale projects included a pilot project in Australia – The Untouched World that involved 12 children from 6 secondary schools. It explored sustainability within the local area. Large scale projects could include over 3,000 children spread across a city or areas and involve identifying numerous sub-projects such as improving aspects of young people's own environments (See Y Plan in USA case study example below, the Children and architecture programme in Turkey and the Our town project in Pennsylvania – which was slightly different in that it was a collaborative outreach project whose findings are of benefit to the wider planning community. It is discussed further under section 4.1.3 below.

  Educational projects aim to raise pupil's awareness of environmental issues and offer hands-on approaches to learning. The benefits can extend beyond increasing students own knowledge and skills and when conducted with the involvement of the wider community can bring about lasting changes to community and environmental management. For example the New Schools initiative in Columbia began life as part of a school led educational project to improve rural communities and was later rolled out as a national programme. This had a knock-on effect on local communities and their environments as children's initiatives took root. Initiatives included gardens as a source of food and income, recycling projects, a successful fish farming programme, and raised tree seedlings for mountain reforestation. There are links here to the burgeoning range of Education for Sustainable Development projects children are now doing in schools.

- **Citizenship based**. These projects encouraged children's participation through democratic principles and often involved the election of delegates to children's offices or councils in order to make decisions about environmental or planning issues. The process of young people electing other young people year on year to councils ensured children's ongoing involvement in issues that directly affected them. These projects were generally based in South America or Italy and were often large scale in scope. In one notable example children had control of a participatory budget used to directly shape urban development in the city. However, despite the large scale nature of these programmes, the focus of environmental improvements were local and were directly related to young people's own concerns (see the case study example Barra Mansa highlighted in section 4.1.3, the Rosario project in Argentina ,and the Children's City project in Italy).

- **Research led**. A small number of practice examples were predominantly instigated by research teams wanting to explore how children and young people perceive their environments and develop their ideas for (re)designing local spaces. They sometimes involve communities and other local government agencies but are predominantly concerned with the *process* of involving children rather than the outcomes. As such their findings may be, in general, more for the benefit of academics than the wider planning community). Examples here include: the play participation project in New York, Children and Open Spaces project in Stockholm, the SPUD Placemaking and Urban design project and the Our town project in Pennsylvania. This last project is slightly different to the other projects because it is a collaborative outreach project, whose findings are of benefit to the wider planning community. It is discussed further under section 4.1.3 below.

- **Child-rights based.** These projects were predominantly situated in developing countries and backed by UN organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF. Emphasis was firmly placed on bringing about change for those children often living in poor environments and projects were often action research based. Organisations involved included advocacy charities such as Save the Children and could often encompass programmes of work within different cities – see for example the Growing Up in Cities project in Johannesburg and Child Friendly Cities programme in Munich. A number of smaller scale rights-based projects have been developed in the UK, including the Community Partners Programme, which was managed by Save the Children, and explored the role of community participation in tackling children's social exclusion. The projects ranged from making environmental improvements, to celebrating local history, but with a core focus on raising awareness of CRC, alongside work to improve relationships between the generations.

- **Community development.** These projects could be initiated by local government or local communities and young people themselves. They include projects that develop land within communities such as a new science park or redesign old areas within a neighbourhood. These projects tend to be smaller in scope and scale and

focused on ‘problem’ areas within a neighbourhood**.** Projects in this category include both international and national projects such as the Youth Power project in Massachusetts, the Kitakyushu Science and Research park in Japan, the Kitee project in Finland, the Leichardt in Australia, the six ways project in Birmingham, Urban renewal in Newcastle and the regeneration of the Blaenau steelworks in Gwent, Wales. Projects that are youth initiated were rare but one particular example of this is detailed further in section 4.1.3 - the Youth power project.

- **Community arts based.** These examples tend to involve children and young people in regeneration issues through public arts events and could include planners and architects working with children and artists. These examples were confined to the UK and again tend to be small scale and local. However, most projects in this category appeared to be exercises in public engagement as they discuss how they engaged children in the design process, rather than providing any examples of outcomes of children and young people’s involvement on the wider environment. Examples of projects within this category are h set within the UK. They are Toy Stories (as part of the Kings Crossing Boundaries project in London), the Playshaper project also in London and the Thinkspace participatory arts project in Corby (Percy-Smith and Carney 2011).

- **Co-design of buildings.** These practice examples were predominantly found within the UK and included the involvement of young people in designing such buildings as schools, hospitals, libraries, a secure care centre and youth facilities. The scale of these projects varied from national programmes such as Building Schools for the Future, or Myplace programmes through to local hospital, youth centres, library and care home design with local children. The scale of young people’s involvement varied dramatically from being consultants through to the integration of their ideas in the final building. In most cases, participation tended to reside within the former category particularly in relation to the design of school buildings where final decision-making often resided within the wider local education authority. Projects in this category include: Building Schools for the Future, Myplace programme, Preston road youth facility, Lakewood secure care centre, Engaging places libraries by design project.

All the projects used a range of techniques to engage children and young people and to capture their ideas. In many cases these resulted in developing design briefs with architects or planners or developing change proposals with academics or other professionals. Methods could include setting up children’s councils, workshops with drawing and modelling, and other creative arts, surveying local community residents, and mapping and touring neighbourhoods. Most practice examples included a combination of some of the above methods. In addition, some projects were more collaborative with local community members than others. For example some projects fed their design plans back to local residents in order to make a collective decision about which issue or place to focus on (See “Our Town”, Pittsburgh). Some projects also used additional techniques such as GIS maps and community informatics which involved using specialist ICT tools (see Roiuvuori Finland). These enabled children and young people to develop new skills but did not necessarily improve the impact of their design/development ideas.

In addition a number of examples were found that were primarily concerned with developing support mechanisms to enable other organisations or communities to conduct participatory work with children in this area. These included such projects that designed toolkits, websites, consortia and training. Examples here included: The Glasshouse Young Spacemakers project, the Spaceshaper toolkit, and the Kids consortium which provides service learning training for organisations looking to explore community issues in New England.

We now illustrate these types of planning and development practice with children further using a selection of projects drawn from the categories mentioned above.

4.1.3 Case study examples

One example of an **educational led programme** is the **Y Plan project** run from the University of California Berkeley. The programme partners graduate mentors with high school students, government agencies, private business and communities to work together to solve planning issues. Local agencies can put forward suggestions for planning projects for students/graduates to be involved in, but all suggested projects must pose youth friendly questions. Young people have been involved in a range of projects including the redevelopment of public housing, miniparks, retail space, and train stations. When the programme began, young people were *consulted* on design and development issues. However, as the programme has evolved young people have become more embedded into the whole participation process, with students most recently being involved in the entire redevelopment process – from design through to implementation. This suggests that it takes time to build up relationships and expertise in this field in order to bring about the desired changes.

An example of a **citizenship approach** to involving children and young people is the **Barra Mansa project** in Brazil. This project began in 1998 and was concerned with setting up a children’s participatory council. As Cabannes (2006: 200) notes, the main objectives of the project were to “raise awareness among children and young people about their civic duties and feelings of ownership for their community, to provide opportunities for discussion and decision-making and through the children’s council to apply part of the town’s budget to conducting projects and services based on the priorities set by the children who participated in neighbourhood and district meetings”. Over 6,000 children have been involved in discussions about how to improve their city. The children meet and elect district delegates who then elect 36 children all aged 9-15 to be child councillors. The council managed a budget of $125,000 and meet regularly and decides which projects should be prioritised, allocates the required funds and deals with local bureaucracy. Projects have included: “repairs to schools and school equipment, tree-planting, repairs to drains and sewers and better security in low-income areas. In one neighbourhood lighting was installed in a tunnel that children played in (in Guerra 2002: 71-84). This improved their safety, security and play time experience.

An example of the **rights based** approach to environmental planning with children and young people is the **Growing up in Cities project** in Johannesburg. This project was part of a wider programme which worked with 10-15 year old children and young people in low income areas around the world. The aim of the programme is to bring about improvements in children's environments by exploring children's perspectives and developing their ideas for future recommendations. The programme draws on advocates such as Save the Children in Johannesburg. Children aged 10-14 living in four different neighbourhoods – each with their own issues and problems took part. Underpinning the work within Johannesburg was the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child that used an action research approach emphasising the need to bring about change for these children.

A number of activities were used – they included walking tours, mapping, and stickers were used to prioritise area improvements. The children fed back their ideas for improving their environment to community organisations, parents and representatives of the city offices. They identified key areas to be targeted for improvements such as: increase safe play space, reduce risk for child pedestrian accidents, improve public transport, reduce harassment and improve safety, better waste management and the need to control and regulate drinking establishments. They then presented a report to the metropolitan council and the mayor's office, which was to have been submitted through the Child Friendly Cities Initiative manager there. The children got a lot out of being involved, particularly enjoying the sessions and the feeling of being taken seriously.

The study was revisited 3 years later and the researcher found that the report had not been submitted to the relevant agencies. As such, little had changed as a result. There were numerous lessons learnt from this study. However, the researcher notes one issue may be the need for more follow-up studies. This led her to comment that:

> *"Explicitly building in an independent and widely distributed published follow up study as a condition of funding them [the projects], could both facilitate ongoing interaction with the children as well as providing an incentive for overburdened municipal structures to keep children's issues prioritised"*
>
> (Clements, 2007, p.114)

One example of a **community development** approach is the **YouthPower Project** in Holyoke Massachusetts. This project is interesting because it was not adult led and defined but was initiated by young people themselves, within a community development organisation. The project worked with young people aged 9-19 within a predominantly Latino ethnic neighbourhood. The young people spent time assessing their community for possible development sites. Ideas were developed for potential redevelopments with an emphasis on what was fun and feasible. Eventually they decided to focus on one half-acre area for a playground and plot. The project worked with the local forests and parks department to obtain materials for the refurbishment and secure more money for playground equipment, which they painted and also designed a mural for. According to McKeggie (2000), it is still unspoilt after three years. This success encouraged the young people to branch out into leading community service workshops and they have also contributed to youth conferences. Following this, the YouthPower programme has also encouraged out other young people's involvement in feeding into the city's master plan concerning education, parks and recreation. YouthPower have subsequently published a guide to be used by other young people looking to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods.

The "Our Town" project in Pittsburgh is an interesting example of a **research-led** project. It was an 18 month collaborative project conducted by the Department of Architecture in Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. It was very small scale with twenty children aged 8 and 9 taking part. These children attended a local inner city school set within a low income area. To begin, the children were asked to design an imaginary city and to compare it with where they lived. This helped them to identify the community's needs and formulate an appropriate intervention to address them. They then along with architects, planners, educational representatives and community residents formed a design group which met twice weekly where the children presented their designs to the wider community. Rather than the children designing an area solely for their own use, as expected, the children surprised the adults by suggesting a design for a park to be used by the whole community (see also section 3.4 for a discussion on children's competences). The design process took time, and consisted of many "community conversations" (Gallagher, 2004) in order to revise and firm up the design. After it was approved by other community members the children had to realise the design within a given budget. This became difficult but one aspect was solved by the children asking people to donate money to receive an inscribed tile to be used as part of the paving area. The community came together in order to help the children clear and build the site. Since it has been built the park has been used regularly by local people to hold "small concerts, flower sales and other events" (op cit:257).

The Lakewood secure care centre in Northern Ireland is an example of the **co-design of buildings** category. It is very small scale – with the focus being on one building in one area for a specific purpose. There was already an existing Lakewood centre but it was considered no longer suitable. The project began with establishing a management board and a design team. It involved the VOYPIC organisation a charity based in Northern Ireland that advocates on behalf of young people in care. The project began by looking at past problems in the centre and visiting other Centres in Scotland and Wales in order to photograph the building to use in the consultation. It began in 2003. The design team worked with 7 young people who were current resident and past residents were also involved. VOYPIC helped to design the interview schedule with a view to finding out more about the young people's daily routines whilst in care, what their experience was like, what they disliked and what they would like to change. The young people requested that their bedrooms were further away from the classrooms so that it was more like real school. They also reported not having enough open space and a need for more activities/facilities in the evenings. They were then shown photographs of other facilities and asked to make choices from these.

The young people's feedback was considered good by the management board and 3 young people were trained in interview skills by VOYPIC to assist in the tendering process. However, the Health Estates stakeholders were wary of young people's involvement in this and in the event only one young person sat on the interview panel. Young people's views were taken into account as the building was changed to include a Health and

Beauty Salon for educational/recreational purposes, an extra room for young people to use on family visits/activities and after some debate the young people got their request for a built wall.

There were fewer examples of child rights or citizenship projects in the UK than overseas. Models of participation that offer young people control over who is involved and how money is spent may explain why children and young people's participation is more deeply embedded within policy-making structures overseas – particularly in South America and Italy. By contrast, apart from programmes such as the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) that we reviewed in Chapter Two, many of the examples within the UK offer children and young people no such power or control and are often instigated by local government in response to a perceived problem or issue. As such, they fail to impact on wider policy-making.

Ongoing programmes that involved young people were often those that were educational or civic/rights based and, again, were often overseas examples. This may relate to the amount of funding available and the ability to secure the engagement of a range of other stakeholders to ensure that the funding continues. The way these programmes were structured also meant that there were continuous streams of new students that needed to acquire relevant expertise. Embedding participation in planning within the curriculum as a means of educating young people appears to work in a more sustained way when a steady stream of organisations that need to know young people's views, are involved. Very often the practice examples included projects that were a mixture of those categories highlighted above, so projects could be both educational or research led and community development orientated, but this of course depended on the nature of the identified issue. Very few projects were targeted at specific groups of young people. In general they seemed to be for those children and young people from low income backgrounds. This and other issues that have arisen from the literature are discussed further in the following section.

4.2 Some Crosscutting Themes from Research and Practice

Some key themes have arisen from research and practice concerning the effectiveness of projects involving children and young people. The first issue that arises from the practice examples is the dearth of explanation about how children and young people's views actually get fed into the design or development of space - be that land or building. This makes it very difficult for those seeking to set up and deliver children's participation projects to know how, and at what stage, this needs to be done and the most appropriate steps to take next.

Another key theme arising from the literature is the often **short-term nature of project funding**. This in itself makes it difficult to create and maintain change. Notable exceptions are the programmes that promote children's involvement in education and citizenship more widely within countries. They help to form a springboard for children and young people's issues to get taken seriously. This short-termism is compounded by the lack of longitudinal evidence about young people's involvement, as we go on to examine further in the next chapter. As such, participation is often seen as an 'add on', rather than as an integral part of an organisation or system.

Most of the literature focuses on the *process* of involving children and young people by highlighting how barriers are overcome. It also focuses on the impact that participation has on young people themselves – on their skills, knowledge and confidence (Lawson & McNally 1995; Griesel et al, 2002; Knowles-Yanez, 2005), rather than on the changes to the environment or community as a result of their involvement. One issue here appears to be ensuring the engagement of planners and local policy-makers in the project from the outset to ensure commitment to taking children's contributions seriously and working with them to take ideas forward. The consequence being that the project has less of an impact when this does not happen.

A core barrier to the success of participation projects in bringing about change for young people is **wider societal and cultural attitudes to young people**, particularly in relation to young people's decision-making. For example, Sener (2006) shows how the strong traditional values concerning the role of children in Turkish society can affect the extent and nature of participation work there. Linked to the way that children and young people are perceived in the UK is the adult led nature of much of the participation work here. Adults appear to define the question and focus of the practice and then involve children and young people rather than the other way round. In the UK for example, children and young people's visibility and use of public space can often be perceived as a problem, which if not 'managed' or 'controlled' can result in anti-social behaviour (Valentine, 2004; Cloke and Jones, 2005). As a result many young people's spaces are designed to address this. For example Rogers, (2006) shows how a skate park was perceived by adults to be the best solution to keeping young people off the city streets. This need was effectively identified for young people, rather than with them. In the USA, Lawson & McNally (1995) cites the example of a project that offered young people employment opportunities by working in and developing neighbourhood parks mainly as a route away from crime. Spicer and Evans (2005) suggest that one of the reasons that young people have often been called upon for their views about public services is because it is a way of governing those most at risk of exclusion.

A further issue is the ***universal nature of many projects*** that tend to involve young people in general rather than specific groups of young people. Of importance here is gender and its relationship with the participation and planning process. Simpson (1997) points out that women and children have traditionally been associated with 'domestic' private space, whereas the world of planning is male dominated. Ignoring gender in the participation process has implications for what views are represented in any project (Iltus and Hart, 1994), while Cameron and Grant-Smith (2005) note that, despite including girls in the participation process, boys still tend to dominate discussions. There is, therefore a need to find different ways of enabling girls to participate effectively In addition, boys use space differently to girls with girls preferring quieter, more social activities and boys liking more movement and games (Horelli, 1997). Cameron and Grant-Smith (2005) cite a design exercise (Mitchell, 2001) that explored young women's use of public space for recreational activities. The young women involved produced creative ideas including climbing walls, reading spaces, a maze and a human chessboard for public parks. This led the authors to comment that "the exercise demonstrated that there is a distinct gap between the facilities currently provided in public parks and the activities that these young women are interested in (2005:15). It is therefore vitally important that different groups with different experiences and views are

included in both the process and the planning of spaces or buildings. This representation and inclusion of diversity can, however, result in clashes between different interests and lead to tension for those implementing a participatory planning project. This is discussed further below.

Finally, a major theme is the difficulty of ***reconciling competing agendas*** involved in driving and completing planning and environmental projects. This was the case in local government, and more widely the differences in power between the stakeholders involved in projects. For example, Freeman & Aitken-Rose (2005) show how planners are marginalised within New Zealand local authorities as most youth issues are addressed through local community development offices. Competing agendas were also in evidence in many communities. Frank (2006) points to the example of young people who wanted to change their street layout to decrease the number of cars in their area. However, local business people who were afraid that the new layout would mean a loss of revenue, held sway over the final decision. As one author notes:

> *"What happens if local officers don't agree with young people's views about improvements they would like to see happen in their neighbourhood, and what happens if young people's priorities collide with those of other groups or the Local Authority?"*
>
> (Chawla, et al, 2005, P.17)

Percy-Smith (2006) argues for the centrality of community '*social learning*' in participatory initiatives as a way of working with competing agenda when children participate. Competing agendas are also an issue in children's participation in school building design and redesign. The sheer number of different stakeholders involved in designing and redesigning schools such as local authorities, architects, designers, head teachers, governors and other users can threaten to drown out children's voices. Indeed as Parnell et al (2008:10) note 'Students involved in design discussions were seen to be frustrated because it would later transpire that most of the design decisions had already been made'. Despite evidence of the impacts of children and young people's involvement in design (see section 5.2.2), there is a lack of consensus about the benefits of that involvement. This has led to some to comment that children and young people's participation in school design in the UK is disappointing and conceptual in nature rather than practical in outcome (den Besten et al, 2008).

Participation and how it works is very much, then, a product of both the local and the societal/cultural context in which it is operating. Where environmental improvements are linked to the child rights movement, or concerned with forming future educated citizens, child led planning and environmental changes can be achieved. In the UK and some other nations there is need to situate children and young people's views more firmly within decision and policy-making before real environmental changes occur. This is discussed further in the following chapter.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the types of design, planning and regeneration participation practice evidenced in the literature. We have shown that there is a wide variation in the types of planning and regeneration projects, and have categorised them according to how they are led, managed, and organised. These projects typically fall under the following categories – educational, citizenship, research, child rights, community development, community arts and co –design of buildings projects, All of them have their own focus but some categories can overlap.

A number of key themes have emerged in the literature and practice examples that can impact on the effectiveness of participatory planning, regeneration and design projects, whatever their particular approach. These include: a lack of detail about the way that children and young people's views and experiences get fed into the planning and design process. Without this, those seeking to implement participatory planning projects may struggle to know how best to incorporate a potentially wide range of children's views into final designs and builds. Very few projects appear to secure long-term funding. This makes evaluation difficult to do and results in a dearth of longitudinal evidence about the success of these projects. Notable exceptions are projects that which adopt a child-rights focus with strong citizenship or educational elements at their core. The way that children are perceived in wider society affects the way that participation in these projects is conducted and often how their ideas may be received. Again, societies that promote a wider child-friendly culture may ultimately have more success in implementing participatory projects and finding a more receptive audience, willing to change spaces as a result. Despite concern about which children's views end up getting heard in a participatory project, it appears vitally important to include children who have been traditionally excluded from the planning and regeneration domain. Ultimately, planning and regeneration is dominated by adult concerns, resulting in clashing interests and agendas. In the next chapter we explore in more detail the impacts and outcomes from the projects highlighted above and highlights what is needed to improve the evidence base.

5.0

Impact and Outcomes

5.0 Impact and Outcomes

This chapter considers the impact and outcomes of children's participation in planning and regeneration. It first describes the challenges associated with measuring impact, and examines the reasons for the overall lack of evaluated practice within the field. It then goes on to consider the evidence for different types of outcomes, splitting them threefold into: participants, communities, and physical change to places and spaces. The chapter concludes by suggesting a number of priorities for strengthening the evidence base.

5.1 The Challenge of Measuring Impact and Outcomes

The question of impact and outcomes has been a challenging one, where children's participation in planning and regeneration is concerned. Numerous studies have alluded to potential outcomes, but these claims have rarely been validated within the literature. As Chawla and Heft discuss (2002); assumptions are often made about the value of participation to children's personal and social wellbeing, because these benefits are *implicit* in the main policy and legal frameworks that underpin children's rights (for example, the UNCRC is based on notions of 'dignity' and 'self-worth'). These assumptions are also quite strongly influenced by particular disciplinary viewpoints (such as: education, psychology, or ethnography). However, there remains an overall lack of evaluated practice, and a tendency to describe participatory 'processes' rather than to measure actual changes to children's lives or the effects on communities. Frank concludes the following on this subject:

> *"The direct observation of youth participation in planning reported in the literature primarily consists of isolated case studies... The closest that the literature has come to reaching conclusions based upon a wide range of experiences are guides to the processes of youth participation. The guides and their short case studies are informative, but they lack the scientific formality of a systematic analysis of the peer-reviewed, research-based literature".*
>
> **(Frank, 2006, p.354)**

A number of more specific challenges can be identified from the literature which help to explain the apparent lack of evaluated practice in this area, although they are by no means exclusive to the issues of 'planning' and 'design' and also touch on some of the wider challenges for effective evaluation. They include the following:

- **Defining success**: the literature suggests that there has often been a lack of consensus around what constitutes a 'successful' outcome, and that children's participation is too often a tick box exercise. By their very nature, planning processes typically bring children's interests into direct conflict with officials and commercial developers. The success criteria of different stakeholders can even be diametrically opposed, as was the case in the examples from the literature where children took action to challenge slum clearance by municipal authorities. Elsewhere, rights-based programmes have tended to focus on specific high-level objectives for children, and have not always included a more reflective element. For example, the Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) endorses a set of 'Building Blocks' for achieving a child-friendly city as defined within the programme. Many of the city reports within the CFCI database chart in detail the progress towards establishing these building blocks, but rarely do they include an assessment of the impact on children and young people or local communities.

- **Attributing impact**: the question of *causality* is also a significant one for any kind of participatory activities that aim to bring about a physical change to spaces and places. One of the main challenges in this respect is the considerable time lag that is often involved between children's participation in planning or design, and any resulting social or community benefits. Such timescales are beyond the scope of most projects to capture. Moreover, many of the larger programmes are multi-faceted and aim to support children's participation in numerous different ways. Chawla, for example, describes the Growing up in Cities project, as *"…complex and layered"* (2005), whilst the Child Friendly Cities Initiative includes nine 'building blocks'; at a whole city level; ranging from the establishment of a legal framework and children's rights unit through to impact assessment and advocacy. The disentanglement of impact can be problematic in these examples, precisely because of their scale and complexity, and the range of external factors that must be considered.

- **Evaluation methods and resources**: finally, the literature shows that evaluation has often been hindered by the short-term nature of project funding, and the lack of capacity to undertake any kind of follow-up or longitudinal research (Horelli, 1997; Percy-Smith and Malone, 2001). Indeed, in examining the methods used within previous studies of youth participation in planning, Frank (2006) concludes that few of these studies measured the outcomes directly through primary research. Many used hypothesis and estimation.

The following international example highlights some of the challenges of evaluation, within this area of practice.

Table 5.1 Challenges for Measuring Impact – An Example from Johannesburg (South Africa)

Background: A post-study evaluation was conducted of two participatory projects in Johannesburg (South Africa). The children and young people were aged 10-14 years and lived in squatter camps. The activities included drawings, interviews, walking tours, role playing, and group work. Following the activities, young people from both sites presented the results of their work to the mayor, junior councils and councillors.

Approach: The evaluation methods included qualitative survey research with children and adults, alongside psychometric testing, to measure the outcomes from participation. The researchers attempted to incorporate standardized scales for self-esteem, locus of control and self-efficacy, and to identify a suitable control group.

Outcomes: The evaluation returned mixed results - the child interviews showed improvements to children's communication skills; practical skills (environmental care); confidence and civic engagement. This was largely

Table 5.1 Challenges for Measuring Impact – An Example from Johannesburg (South Africa)

reinforced by parental evidence. However, the small sample sizes meant the quantitative tests were less conclusive, and the standardized scales did not adequately reflect the living conditions of the young people in the camps. A number of the original group of young people left the site during the time the evaluation took place, and one of the groups was forcibly evicted and resettled.

The main conclusion was that it can be hugely challenging to capture the benefits of this kind of project, given the cultural and language barriers encountered, local political instability, and turnover of young people. The authors concluded that a larger scale exercise with a pre / post-assessment is needed in the future.

(Griesel, Swart-Kruger and Chawla, 2002)

5.1.1 Categorizing Impact and Outcomes

To explore these issues further, we have structured the following sections within this chapter around three main areas of impact, which we go on to justify and describe in greater detail. These are as follows:

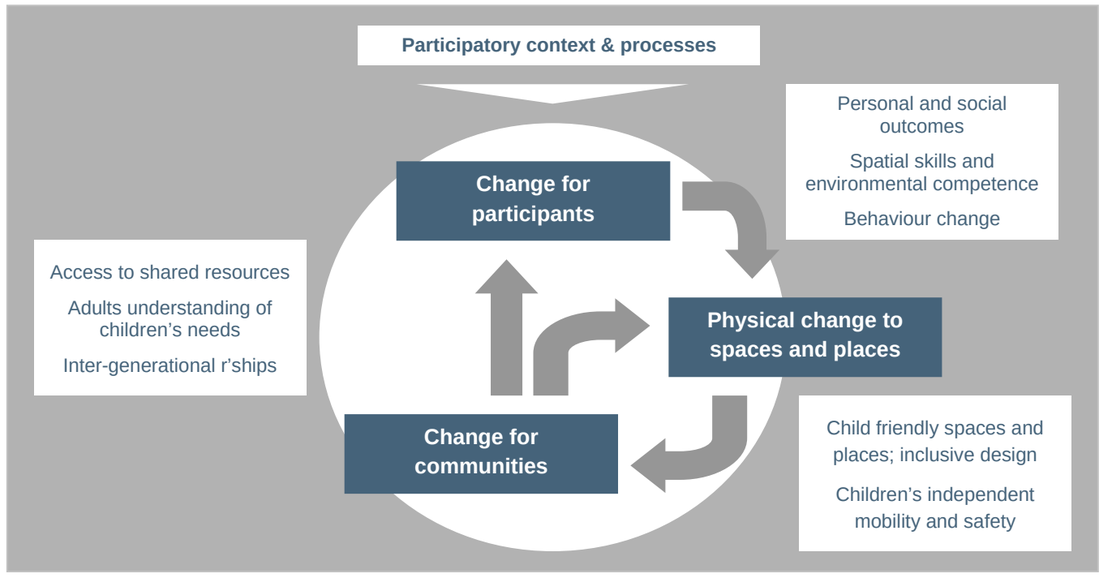
a. **participant outcomes** – the direct personal, social and educational benefits from participation in planning and decision-making; for the children and young people who are involved, and others directly working with them, who might include planners, designers, educationalists, or academics;

b. **impacts on spaces and places** – the actual physical changes that can be directly linked to the participatory example – whether in terms of the adaptation of buildings or premises; planning decisions regarding how or where new infrastructure is developed, or travel and transport arrangements benefiting children's mobility.

c. **impacts on communities** – the wider effects of participation for others living within a given community or neighbourhood, in terms of collective knowledge, awareness, attitudes and relationships between children and adults, and the availability of community resources to children and young people;

It is important to note that the relationships between these types of outcomes can be complex and inter-related, and it is not always possible to trace a simple causal chain. The model at Figure 5.1 (overleaf) provides an illustration. As the model shows; children's participation in a planning and design exercise might result in actual changes to the environment where they live. However, there are further potential benefits to be accrued from any subsequent improvements to the design of places or spaces. In turn, adults' recognition of children's competences potentially stands to create further opportunities for children to engage in decision-making in the future. This is also likely to be influenced by the type of intervention (whether this is a co-design project, community regeneration initiative, and so on). We go on to consider these issues in greater detail within the remainder of the chapter.

Figure 5.1 Conceptualizing impact and outcomes: dimensions of change



Ecorys and Loughborough University (2011)

5.2 Participant Outcomes

There are a large number of references within the literature to the personal and social benefits of participation. In weighting the evidence, it must be noted that the outcomes were not always captured *directly*, through primary research. A number of authors took the approach of extrapolating from the findings of general studies about youth participation, citizenship education, and applying them to the context of youth planning (for example Checkoway, Pothukuchi, and Finn, 1995). The findings must therefore be approached with caution.

As might be expected, the generic outcomes reported within the literature were very similar to other youth participation studies, such as those relating to citizenship or volunteering. They included benefits to young people's confidence and self-esteem (Lansdown, 2001; Griesel et al, 2002; Passon et al, 2008); their assertiveness in dealing with adults (Percy-Smith, 2010);and their expectations of future opportunities to participate (Heft and Chawla, 2002). A good number of reports also mentioned the development of practical 'life skills', such as communication and problem-solving (Lansdown and McNally, 1995), and enhancements to civic responsibility (Checkoway et. al,. 1995, Schwab, 1997, Lorenzo, 1997, Corsi, 2002, Sutton and Kemp, 2002).

Many of these outcomes have a strong ***'developmental' focus***; relating to children's emerging competences as adult citizens of the future, rather than examining their living conditions, experiences or general wellbeing in the present. This developmental skew might be partly explained by the fact that any efforts to measure outcomes have usually been fixed by the aims of the wider funding programme within which the participatory example was

situated. As the programmes studied were often concerned with strengthening participation in municipal processes (for example within the UNESCO Habitat agenda), or developing citizenship skills, the outcomes tend to have a more 'purposive' feel. This lies in contrast to examining the more intrinsic benefits of participation such as children's improved access to play opportunities or socialization with their peers.

Moreover, the methodology for the current study was based mainly on a review of published research literature, and it might therefore be expected that the evidence is weighted towards areas of interest within particular academic disciplines (such as: environmental and developmental psychology). A primary research exercise with built environment practitioners and grassroots organisations could feasibly have produced different results.

Finally, although the research has understandably focussed mainly on the direct benefits of participation for children, it is also of note that the ***changes in adults' attitudes towards children*** can also be a powerful indicator of success – whether these are members of the community, practitioners working with children, or both. We did not find a substantial amount of evidence on this topic within the literature, but this is a possible area for further research.

With these caveats in mind, we have grouped the main outcomes reported within the literature into sub-sets, which are now considered in turn.

5.2.1 Knowledge and Understanding of Community Processes

A good number of the studies within the review were also able to highlight instances where children improved their specific knowledge of community processes. In these instances, young people often reported a better understanding of the mechanics of decision-making (Schwab 1997; Sutton and Kemp 2002). Indeed as Hart (2007) argues, this type of exercise is beneficial in terms of *building capacity* for civic participation.

Cabannes' (2006) study of the Urban Management Programme (UN Habitat) in Brazil illustrated how young people's experiences of participatory budgeting improved their local knowledge and led to the mutual development of child and adult skills for participation; although these outcomes were observed rather than captured scientifically. The 'applied' basis of the activities was found to be a success factor in this respect – the young people had real control over municipal budgets, and needed to assume responsibilities reflecting this.

> *"The children have been encouraged to think of the city [Ceará, Brazil] as a whole, and not to look solely at their own neighbourhood or community. They gain an understanding of the municipal machinery (budgetary limitations, collection systems; the constitution of the municipal budget) and learn about reaching consensus. Prioritizing demands in the course of voting, and attempting to minimize discrepancies among districts, has meant a greater understanding of the principles of democracy".*
>
> **(Cabannes, 2006, p. 207)**

In the UK, a survey for the national evaluation of the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) found that 99% of local managers were confident that young people involved in decision-making around youth expenditure acquired new skills and better understood the service context as a result (DCSF, 2010, p. 12). Moreover, the national evaluation of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme was positive about the personal benefits for participants who were involved in community panels within the UK. These participants routinely improved their knowledge of the local area and its facilities, and developed new contacts or social networks. They also commonly reported having improved their confidence and work-related skills.

As we have highlighted throughout this report, however, the UK regeneration context has suffered from the *small scale* of youth participation within a formal decision-making capacity when compared with the larger scale mobilisation of young people in the UN Habitat examples overseas. This is reflected in the conclusions from the NDC national evaluation, which was less positive regarding the longer-term and more systemic benefits for young people at a population level. The authors commented that *"…these individual outcomes have not translated into improved social capital for NDC communities"* (CLG, 2010a).

5.2.2 Environmental Skills and Competence

As identified in Chapter Three, children and young people who participated in the project examples were often highly competent at undertaking technical planning or design tasks, with the right level of support. The experience of working with planners or architects invariably strengthened these competences. The examples include where children acquired design skills, including the use of computer-assisted models (Wridt, 2010, Sanoff, 2002; Sutton and Kemp, 2002, Horelli and Kaaja, 2001); gained experience of participatory planning (Horelli, 2006, Schwab 1997, Iltus and Hart, 2004), or learned how to interpret maps or aerial photographs (Driskell, 2002). The numbers of young people were not always high, and these types of technical exercises were often short-lived, but they certainly attest to the potential value of these activities if scaled-up.

Several articles rated the approach of using inter-generational "charrettes" particularly highly, as a medium for developing children's competences for planning and design. The following provides an example.

Table 5.2. Outcomes from Children's Participation in Design Charrettes (USA)

Background: Charrettes have been described as *"sessions to stimulate creative thinking by directing attention toward a single issue within a foreshortened time frame"*. Two intergenerational design charrettes were held at the University of Washington. The charrettes were designed as means for connecting classroom learning to community-based research and practice with children undertaken by the Centre for Environment, Education and Design Studies (CEEDS). The charrettes involved professionals, children, community members and university students. Charrette 1 focussed on three elementary school sites and their surrounding suburban neighbourhoods. It involved a number of professionals, 109 children, 60 university students and eight team leaders.

Table 5.2. Outcomes from Children's Participation in Design Charrettes (USA)

Outcomes: Ten weeks after the charrette, questionnaires were administered to 132 children. When asked what they learned, the questionnaire responses were divided across three primary components: ecological awareness (32%), design awareness (58%) and career exposure (13%). Only 2% did not learn anything. CEEDS secured state funding, but unfortunately, they were unable to secure support from the teachers to take the project forward.

(Sutton and Kemp, 2002)

The practice examples from the literature demonstrate the value of children gaining experience of participating in the co-design of buildings and environments. The evidence is particularly strong in this field, because there have been a greater number of large-scale projects incorporating some level of evaluation or pupil feedback. For example, the Change Project in the UK involved the participation of 700 children in architecture education. The post-course evaluation showed that pupils had consistently gained a technical knowledge of architectural principles and tools, including *"materials, structure, construction and sustainability"*, whilst developing their creative skills through the process of imagining how buildings might look or be experienced (Parnell, 2010, p. 8).

Similarly, other built environment programmes have underlined the importance of practical co-design experience in consolidating educational and personal development outcomes (Kendall, et. al. 2007). Indeed, as Parnell discusses in a review of the co-design literature (Ibid., p. 7); projects starting with co-design experience as a the main objective have regularly contributed towards educational benefits for the children who were involved, whilst (conversely) purely 'educational' programmes in this field have sometimes empowered children to make effective decisions about school design. This inter-relationship between outcomes seems to be a particular characteristic of children's participation in decisions affecting the built environment, as we discuss in further detail at Section 5.5.

Various studies also draw attention to the link between the development of environmental competence and children's wellbeing. This was achieved as a result of children's improved abilities to exercise control over their environments, and to derive health and educational benefits. The authors of one study conclude as follows:

> *"Literature suggests that children's neighbourhood place-making activities can enhance social and cognitive skills, whilst increasing participants' sense of connection to other people and to nature. By learning to influence their surroundings, children can develop greater environmental competence and – through activities that promote a sense of control – they may experience enhanced well-being"*
>
> **(Sutton and Kemp, 2002, p.174)**

The development of environmental competence was sometimes assisted by combining more formal educational activities with practical experience of working with built environment professionals in the local community. This

helped to make a connection between 'principles' of environmental care, and a sense of place identity. The following provides an example from the UK, where this was achieved through a road safety awareness project.

Table 5.3 Case Study - Developing Environmental Skills and Competence (UK)

Background: The Streets Ahead on Safety safer accessibility project for young people was based on a partnership between School Travel Plan Officers, engineers, road safety officers and the heads and teachers of four primary schools and 405 young people aged 9-11 years old in Birmingham (UK). The project delivered participatory activities based around: the promotion of road safety knowledge, an environmental audit, citizenship training and active user-engagement with proposed engineering plans.

Outcomes: After the activity, evaluation sheets were left with the young people and the questionnaires were sent to 13 teachers who were involved and other members of the team. One of the key benefits for young people was improved road safety awareness: *"I learnt that road safety is very important. I also know how to look after the environment. I can keep myself safe".* Following the activities, the young people also expressed an interest in maintaining the environmental quality of the area. For example, they committed to *"make my street a better place"*, *"sweep and tidy litter"* and *"tell shopkeepers to keep places safe".*

The role of the School Council in addressing local, environmental and transport issues was also reportedly enhanced. For example, one school lobbied Councillors to fine parents for parking on *School Keep Clear* areas, and another mobilised pupils to vote on the options proposed for the road adjacent to their school.

(Source: Kimberlee, 2007)

5.2.3 Civic and Social Responsibility

A further, and closely related, outcome was sometimes to strengthen young people's sense of civic and social responsibility. By gaining a better understanding of community issues, young people were often reported to have adjusted their outlook or behaviour. This sometimes generated enthusiasm for future participation (Adams and Ingham, 1998; Schwab, 1997; Watson, 2009). There is a real sense of distance travelled from some of the practice examples within the literature. The *Banners for the Street* public art project in Massachusetts (USA) in the 1990s provides an example. As Breitbart (1995) describes; what started as an arts showcase for young people quickly took on a more political dimension when the participants discovered the poor quality of living conditions within the neighbourhood (in: Frank, 2006, p.360). Chawla and others (2005) argue that these less tangible and 'everyday' changes to attitudes and behaviour are at the heart of effective participation. This is illustrated by the following quote, from a discussion between academics about the Growing Up In Cities project.

> *"Children who have taken part in Growing Up In Cities projects speak of intrinsic, vital and long-term gains, such as enhanced personal capacity and a heightened awareness of the environment and their*

neighbourhoods. This is reflected in behaviour change: they might no longer litter, might stand up for those who are harassed at shops…things they would not have done before".

(Chawla, et. al., 2005, p8)

A number of the practice examples suggest that a positive experience has sometimes resulted in the recruitment of peers, and that informal networking between young people has a role to play in *"scaling-up"* the impact (see for example: Schwab, 1997, Lorenzo, 1997, Corsi, 2002, Sutton and Kemp, 2002). There is also some examples where Internet played a role in raising knowledge and awareness. In Scampia, Italy; young people mobilized online in response to the attempts by the municipal authority to disband a proposed youth space. This helped to gain wider community support for the young people's designs (De Muro, et. al, 2007).

5.2.4 Wider Educational Benefits

A raft of wider educational benefits are also claimed within the literature. For example, a few studies have positively correlated pupils' participation in the co-design of school buildings with improvements to their academic achievement, attendance and behaviour (see for example: Sanoff, 2002), although others dispute this claim (Sutton and Kemp, 2002). Various practice examples have also shown that place-making activities can support the development of pupils' creative thinking skills (Davis at al, 1997), and that they nurture a sense of community identity and place attachment (Adams and Ingham, 1998). Several of them draw attention to the role of museums in bringing the built environment to life, and 'sensitizing' children to design and architecture principles (Bridgman, 2004, and Sener, 2006). Elsewhere, Sutton and Kemp (2002) argue that these types of participatory projects give young people exposure to potential careers in planning and public services.

Notwithstanding the outcomes discussed in this section, some authors (Griesel et al, 2002; Heft and Chawla, 2002; Percy-Smith and Malone, 2001) maintain that little has been done to assess the extent to which initiatives have resulted in sustainable outcomes for children beyond the lifetime of the projects. The need for more systematic and robust evaluation is very clear, despite the apparent success experienced by many projects.

5.3 Impacts on Places and Spaces

A fair number of examples are included within the literature, where children and young people directly influenced the physical shape of public spaces and places. This practice was generally the most evident within the *co-design* literature, where children's participation was focussed on specific buildings such as school or youth centre premises; youth spaces, or play spaces. Other examples from the literature include children's participation in co-designing a study centre in Sathyanagar (India); (Chawla et al, 2005); creating an outdoor nature laboratory (Lorenzo, 1997); improving a vacant lot (Baldassari, Lehman and Wolfe, 1987); constructing innovative playground equipment (Francis, 1988), and advising on a road layout (Salvadori, 1997), although there has often been a tendency to describe the participatory processes rather than to examine the impact.

In the UK, some of these examples were also found within much larger regeneration programmes, such as New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme. For example, a young people's panel in Moss Side exercised influence over the detailed plans for new youth centre provision, funded by the Millennium Commission. The locations of the sports hall and library within the youth centre were changed in the light of young people's comments, and a greater emphasis was placed on disabled access (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000, p.499).

The issue of ***how children's design inputs are translated into an end result*** is a complex one that warrants further consideration at this point. There is a temptation to seek to measure impact by tracing children's initial designs throughout the different stages of the process, and by assessing the extent to which they have been effectively "represented" by adult professionals in the final designed space or building. Taking this standpoint, the authenticity of the design is measurable primarily through the preservation of the child's ideas or drawings.

This approach is problematic in a number of ways, as follows:

- First, it assumes that the realization of children's designs is always a feasible or desirable outcome. In many instances this is simply not the case – poorly conceived participation exercises run the risk of children making frivolous requests (a new swimming pool, a giant football pitch, and so on) . Moreover, there is a risk of erring towards a 'romantic' view of childhood, where a special significance is attached to children's designs that must somehow be preserved in their original form. It would be naive to expect meaningful insights from children who have no prior experience of participatory exercises, or who lack access to the necessary information to make informed decisions. This is why so many of the schemes include some kind of participatory mapping or data gathering exercise as a starting point.

- Second, it assumes that there is always a common interest and shared objectives within the participating group of children. Yet this is rarely a fair assumption to make, given the risk of excluding some children's voices at almost every stage of the process – from the selection and recruitment of the group, through the mode of decision making and the implementation of the designs. For example, Cameron and Grant-Smith discuss how planning and design exercises have often failed to adequately reflect the needs of young women with regard to their access and use of public spaces, and they illustrate the difference that effective participation can have on the design choices, with reference to a participatory project in New Zealand (2005). Where design impact has been traced, therefore, it can often be a superficial interpretation based on the ideas of one of more of the most vocal children within the group, or with the arbitrary selection of some of the children's designs by adults at the exclusion of others.

- Third, it assumes linearity in the participatory process that is not always present. Indeed, it could be argued that a two-stage process of children first expressing ideas that are subsequently interpreted by adults is an example of "consultation" rather than genuine participation. As we have discussed in previous chapters, the stronger examples of participatory practice commonly entail a process of negotiation between children and adults, through which both sets of ideas are transformed. In this case, a successful outcome in design

terms could look very different to the children's initial ideas; yet provide a pragmatic solution to the issues that were raised during the participatory exercise. There is also scope at this stage for the whole process to be subverted, if planners and decision-makers were not involved in the negotiation process.

Although the most commonplace examples relate to spaces that are intended for children's designated use, these projects have sometimes grown to *benefit the wider community*; especially where residents were drawn-in to the initial project. The following provides such an example from New York (USA) during the 1990s.

Table 5.4. Case Study - Children Transforming the Urban Landscape (USA)

Background: the West Farms area of the Bronx in New York (USA) during the 1980s. High levels of crime and drug dealing in the area had resulted in numerous failed attempts to create more traditional play spaces for children, many of which were vandalised. The Children's Environments Research Group led on a participatory project with children and young people and their parents, to map-out locations within the neighbourhood that would be accessible and safe. Children used their local knowledge to annotate a large scale plan of the neighbourhood and to mark-out dangerous places. The approach highlighted the potential for community gardens to be developed as safe play sites where parents could still maintain a reasonable level of supervision over younger children. The idea was widely taken up by the local community.

Outcomes: in addition to securing more safe places to play, the project had a tangible impact on the built environment within the West Farms area. This was described as follows by the researchers:

"By providing play houses, sandboxes, water tables, planting beds and a wide range of tools in one of the only types of safe places where adults are gathered outdoors, a new kind of play environment has been created in New York which greatly extends the narrow repertoire of play behaviours found on public city playgrounds".

(Iltus and Hart, 1994)

In these more direct examples, the link between children's participation in the design process and the improved *usability* of the space was sometimes clearly demonstrated. Bartlett (1999) gives the example of a participatory mapping exercise that was undertaken by children from a low income and high density residential area. The children expressed a need for a well-lit communal space, to enable them to catch-up with schoolwork (p.18). This was a relatively straightforward planning solution that had been overlooked by the developers, who had been unaware of the issue. Although no follow-up research was undertaken, it would be fair to infer from the example that there were benefits for the children's education. This is typical of examples within the literature, particularly within the developing world, where small design ideas have helped to improve living conditions.

The linkage between children's participation and actual physical changes to the environment generally becomes weaker at the level of community or city-wide *planning* exercises, which tend to be larger in scale and involve a wider range of different stakeholders. In examples where the children's participation involves design inputs,

these larger exercises also sometimes only allow for a more selective incorporation of children's ideas as part of a much larger process. This stands in contrast to the more direct influence that is evident from some of the co-design examples involving buildings or play spaces.

Some stronger examples were found where there the municipal authorities were committed to children's participation from the outset, and where they explicitly sought-out children's views. These examples were typical of Italy and Brazil, where there has been a particular history of children's participation on a large scale. The following provides a case study of one example from an Italian city.

Table 5.5. Case Study – Children's Influence over a City Master Plan (Italy)

Background: City officials in Empoli (Italy) engaged children and young people in updating the City Plan. Citywide surveys were carried out in High Schools, and planning workshops were undertaken with children in two target neighbourhoods, involving pupils from four elementary and four middle school classes.

Outcomes: The children's ideas and citywide consultations process prompted a number of amendments to the original general plan. These changes included the following:

- development proposals were scaled back in some areas, to allow greater room for green spaces and padestrianized streets, and a number of child friendly 'woonerf' type streets were incorporated
- an historic farmhouse was saved, with plans to transform this into an children's urban farm and an environmental education centre
- two new piazzas were created, with mixed use developments surrounding them

The children's participation also served as a catalyst for the greater interest and involvement of *adults* in the city plan. Their enthusiasm and lobbying for change raised awareness of important shared issues.

(Francis and Lorenzo, 2002, p.166)

A further aspect of physical change relates to *environmental quality*. Children's environmental concerns feature prominently within the literature, and activities to clear vacant land, introduce additional green space, or introduce recycling schemes are often included within children's designs; in the context of more formal planning or educational tasks. The qualities of children's environments also emerge as being important in the context of children's free play (see also Section 3.3.3 for a discussion regarding the importance of children's more creative and open-ended re-invention of public spaces for their own use). However, very few of the projects have sought to actually measure improvements in quality. The six quality indicators developed through the GUIC programme[1] have been tested in different locations and were found to be widely applicable, but with some differences in the relative importance attached to each indicator (Passon, et al, 2008, p.84). There would seem

[1] social integration, variety of interesting settings, safety and freedom of movement, peer meeting places, cohesive community identity, and green areas

to be good potential to use these indicators as part of an exercise to measure the impact of children's participation in planning, as part of a pre / post comparison. No such examples were found within the literature.

5.3.1 The Significance of Participatory Mechanisms

There is quite clear evidence that the participatory mechanisms have had a strong influence over the impact achieved by participatory projects. The literature underlines that there are a number of key differences between 'community development' projects overseas, where there has been a more bottom-up approach to participation with multiple and varied ways for children to engage, and more traditional 'regeneration' projects, where participatory mechanisms have tended to focus on small numbers of children sitting on formalized adult-led boards. The latter have been particularly evident in the UK, although as we discussed in Chapter two: there is also a strong tradition of more bottom-up participation, albeit not always effectively disseminated.

The use of ***participatory budgeting*** has sometimes proven to be an effective way for children and young people to effect neighbourhood change. In the UK, the Sandwell Youth Forum was given substantial delegated power, by controlling the Pilot Projects Development Fund; a challenge fund for local youth groups which had a total budget of £350,000 over seven years. The young people succeeded in modifying a project intended to tackle under-achievement in schools (Fitzpatrick et al, 2000). In Barra Mansa (Brazil), children voted on a series of priorities for expenditure, at each of neighbourhood, district, and city scale. A budget of US $150,000 was made available for this purpose by the municipal authorities. Despite representing a small amount of funding relative to the needs within the city, children were able to make small but significant decisions about change.

> *"Projects that cost little often had great social importance, as in the case of the sports areas in the Roberto Silveira school, which, besides changing the life of the school, validated and strengthened the leadership of the local child councillors… one of the projects children were proudest of was the refurbishment of the neighbourhood health centre in Mangueira, where a dental clinic was installed with modern equipment".*
>
> **(Cabannes, 2006, p.203)**

It was sometimes found to be necessary to ***adapt planning structures or processes*** before longer term changes could be realised; by securing a more permanent basis for participation where it did not previously exist. This has been achieved in various ways. In Icapuí municipality (Brazil); the authorities agreed to create a set of municipal indicators reflecting children's living conditions. This decision was based on the success of a pilot project in eight schools within the municipality, which was used to identify priorities for urban development. The step was reported to have strengthened policy-making for children, and ensured that their interests were reflected in municipal decision-making (Cabannes, 2006, p. 206). In a rare example, one Italian municipal authority even opted to change local planning regulations to shorten the consultation period. This made the process more child-friendly, and enabled to children to see action being taken.

5.4 Impacts on Communities

The evidence for community impact is more dispersed within the literature, compared with the individual outcomes described above. One of the main factors appears to be the challenge of actually putting children's recommendations into practice. Frank (2006) found that young people's recommendations were acted upon by planners in only around half of the references considered within her review, despite the fact that planners were often convinced by the feasibility of the young people's ideas. In the few larger scale examples where some kind of follow-up was conducted at a later date, the level of impact was found to be relatively disappointing (Alparone and Rissotto, 2001, Corsi, 2002 in Frank, 2006 and Fitzpatrick et al, 2000)[1].

These issues are compounded by the fact that, for many projects, there is simply a lack of any information about what happened next. This means that we simply don't know what proportion of the projects had an impact on children's lives and those of the wider community. This is a weak link in the evidence base, which arguably must be addressed if municipal authorities are to be persuaded to dedicate time and resources to this area of work.

5.4.1 Shared Knowledge, Information and Resources

The recorded examples where young people were able to benefit the wider community largely mirror the structure of many of the larger rights-based programmes such as GUIC and CFCI which involved a mix of evidence-gathering, making recommendations and (in some cases) children acting as partners in improving community services or spaces. The community level outcomes therefore broadly fell into one of three areas:

- **providing information**
- **problem-solving; and,**
- **improving access to resources**

These elements were sometimes present within individual projects, many of which were multi-faceted. For example, the Children's Participation Project in Columbia involves children in state-funded rural schools undertaking action research as part of their studies, to survey local residents and conduct walking tours to establish priority issues to improve local conditions. This has been developed as a national programme, and has commonly resulted in lasting changes to community and environmental management, by first identifying and then addressing community issues. The scheme has been rolled out nationally with Government support.

Elsewhere, a project in Frankston (Australia) engaged a group of 8-18 year olds from eight neighbourhoods to gather information about safety and freedom of movement in the city. The information informed the city-wide

[1] For example, the main reported benefits of the Children's City Initiative in Italy were to improve young people's access to public areas; to widen bicycle access, and to introduce neighbourhood watch schemes. These seem like fairly modest achievements for a project that operated across 40 Italian cities over a decade (Alparone and Rissotto, 2001).

Community Safety Plan and the success of this initiative resulted in the establishment of a permanent Youth Safety Management Team, which acts in an advisory capacity to the city council (Chawla and Malone 2003).

The California Wellness Foundation pilot projects (USA) supported the participation of minority ethnic young people from poor urban neighbourhoods in two cities. Despite essentially being summer schemes, the projects achieved a city-wide commitment to fund new youth programmes, successfully campaigned to extend library opening hours, and secured youth participation on city task groups (Schwab 2007, in: Frank, 2006, p. 363).

5.4.2 Inter-Generational Relationships

Finally, a number of studies assert that children's participatory planning can help to strengthen relationships between different generations and social groups. For example, Haider (2007) concludes that certain design attributes are more conducive to encouraging children and adults to move freely and interact within public spaces, and should therefore be supported. These conclusions are largely hypothesized, however, and the author does not present any empirical data to show *actual* occurrences of interaction in real spaces and places. Similarly, the showcasing of positive examples of child-adult community planning often relate to individual small scale projects that have been supported at a neighbourhood level (Percy-Smith and Malone, 2001).

Research undertaken as part of the Growing Up in Cities project in India provides evidence on a larger scale (Chawla, 2005). The study showed that project staff from the municipal authorities and NGOs gained new respect for young people, whom they had sometimes previously viewed as 'dirty' or 'lazy', or as 'victims'. The exit interviews illustrated how the project experience had transformed their understanding of slums and the people who live there; with an acknowledgement of young people as partners in the development process.

Caraveo et al (2010) cite the example of a town in Mexico where there are a number of community projects involving children and young people. They highlight the stereotypical way that adults viewed young people as 'apathetic, and moody' (p 144), while young people themselves believed that adults locally were not making enough spaces, programmes and support available for them. They found that by taking part in collective activities both young people and adults each realised the extent of each other's knowledge and skills, providing renewed strength in the group as a whole and helping to overcome differences between generations.

The Community Partners Programme in the UK provides a much smaller scale example of a project that helped to improve relationships between children and residents. This was achieved by working closely with local organisations, and adopting a rights-based approach (Save the Children, 2005). Ultimately, however, the programme did not run for long enough to fully embed these changes, and some of the benefits were lost.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has considered the evidence for the impact and outcomes of children's participation in planning and regeneration. It found that; despite numerous references to different types of outcomes within the literature,

there has been a tendency to rely quite heavily on 'theoretical' studies, which have hypothesized the potential impacts from the wider academic literature. These hypotheses have not always been borne out in practice. As we have illustrated within this chapter; the circumstances surrounding individual examples of participation are highly variable, and even the better funded and supported examples of practice have sometimes proven vulnerable to political change (such as municipal reform, changes in local leadership or funding regimes). The chapter also found that there are relatively few examples of robustly evaluated projects or programmes. ,

The research evidence suggests that the different types of outcomes are often very closely inter-linked, and that individual projects have achieved them in varying ways. For example, children's participation in a planning or design project might result in a physical change to a public space to make it more accessible, benefiting the wider community. In turn, community awareness of children's abilities has sometimes been shown to provide new opportunities to participate in the future. Figure 5.1 provides an illustration of these inter-relationships.

5.5.1 Examining the Case for an Impact Study

One of the issues that is apparent from the literature is that the strength of the evidence diminishes upon moving away from the immediate benefits for participants. The 'gold standard' would arguably be to demonstrate a measurable impact on the quality of life for children, residents and the environment as a result of children and young people's participation in planning and design, over-and-above what would have been achieved in the absence of this type of activity. Based on the reports that we have reviewed for the study, however, this level of impact has yet to be proven empirically. This evidence gap has arguably been a hindrance to those who have advocated the wider rollout of participatory programmes, as it removes a key plank of evidence that would provide a justification to planners and to potential funders for supporting this area of work.

A key question to ask, therefore, is whether a large-scale impact study is warranted, or whether the costs of the exercise would outweigh the benefits. As a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) would almost certainly be impossible to design in this context, the most robust option would be to use a Quasi-Experimental Design (QED). Were such a study to be taken forward, it would be necessary to identify a location where participatory activities can be delivered at a sufficient scale and level of intensity to register an impact at a whole 'population' level for the community or neighbourhood, and to identify a suitable control location for the purpose of comparison. The characteristics would need to be very carefully matched using relevant indicators (relating to socio-demographic profile, quality of environment, community participation, and the like), with data collected over a sufficient period of time to capture outcomes at the required scale, using surveys and neighbourhood statistics. The Child Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative would possibly offer the most suitable examples for the purpose of the exercise; given that it is a well tested programme combining a series of different actions.

Based on the evidence reviewed in this report, the authors' view is that this type of impact study would be high risk and costly to undertake at the present time, without further supporting evidence for the indicators that should be used and the criteria for designing the pilot. The Johannesburg example, whilst not following a true

QED methodology, illustrated just how difficult and unpredictable any use of control groups is likely to be, and how permeable the boundaries of participatory activities can be when they are considered in a given local context alongside the range of other influences affecting children and young people's outcomes.

5.5.2 Possible Further Research Activities

Although there is not an immediate case for a more ambitious impact study using a QED model, the evidence suggests that some kind of scoping or feasibility work would be valuable to extend this line of enquiry. Moreover, there is good potential to strengthen other forms of monitoring and evaluation; to link theory more directly to *practice* and to strengthen the evidence base. These might include a combination of the following:

- **Building on the Child Friendly Cities (CFC) indicators** - A common protocol and set of indicators are being piloted through the CFC Research Initiative at the time of writing, to support community organisations and local government to measure their progress towards 'child friendliness'. These indicators will adopt a rights-based approach, and are intended to help ensure greater consistency in the judgements that are made[1]. The tools will be supplemented with data about the different monitoring and evaluation methods used at a local level, and conditions for children in CFC cities. There would seem to be good potential, therefore, to examine the significance of different participatory models in relation to the CFC indicators. This is one potential way to make a more direct link between children's participation in decision-making, and any improvements to the social and environmental qualities / attributes of places and spaces.

- **Participant tracking and longitudinal research** – whilst a QED methodology appears some way out of reach at the present time, there are still a variety of other primary data collection methods that might be deployed. This chapter has underlined the problem that is posed by a lack of systematic follow-up in many of the practice examples, and the resulting inability to verify the outcomes that were achieved. This could be tackled through the use of pre / post comparison surveys or interviews; the longitudinal tracking of a sample of participants over a wider timeframe (18 months and beyond), or the use of research diaries or similar for young people or practitioners. These methods would likely require the availability of a designated *budget* for evaluation as part of the given project or programme, but they have the advantage of being more straightforward to design and implement if the appropriate research expertise is available.

- **Social impact assessment and social auditing** - The recent growth in currency of social auditing tools is also of potential interest, given that many of the outcomes of children's participation have been shown to relate to 'softer' indicators that are difficult to quantify (such as social and emotional wellbeing, place identity, or relationships with adults). Frameworks such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) (Cabinet Office, 2009)[2] could provide an option for valuing the benefits of participation in proxy of a more traditional Impact Assessment. A particular benefit of SROI and similar techniques is that they incorporate an assessment of *monetary value*. This is likely to be important in the current fiscal climate, where cost effectiveness is a key determining factor for any kind of support or intervention with children and young people. Very few of the practice examples within the literature included any usable information about the costs that were associated with the model, and this is clearly an area where further data is needed.

- **Extending the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) techniques** - The chapter has also underlined the need to build capacity for evaluation at a grassroots level, so that there is a wider pool of evidence to be gathered from local projects and practice. A PAR approach has proven to be consistently successful, and there would be benefits from ensuring that the approach is used more widely. This is one area where academics have played an important role in many of the projects that were considered for the study, and where their continued involvement would be beneficial. More widespread access to practical guidance on PAR approaches would be a useful start point – particularly so in relation to the Growing Up in Cities Programme, where these methods have been deployed extensively in the field.

[1] http://www.childfriendlycities.org/en/research
[2] http://www.thesroinetwork.org/

6.0

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has drawn upon a wide range of literature, to consider the role and benefits of children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration. In the previous chapters, we examined the history of this type of activity in the UK and in an international context, examining the drivers for participation from the 1970s onwards, and with a particular focus on developments in the past ten years. We then set out the theoretical basis for children and young people's participation, and considered some of the evidence from the literature demonstrating children and young people's significance as a stakeholder group with regard to environments. The following chapters went on to examine a cross-section of practice examples in greater detail, illustrating the range of different contexts for children's participation, before going on to examine how impact can be measured.

This final chapter draws together and concludes upon the evidence from the report and considers the implications for policy and practice. First, we revisit the original research questions and reflect on what the evidence tells us, before suggesting a number of success factors / "effective practice" criteria to emerge from the study. Finally, we present a series of recommendations for developing this area of work in the future.

6.1 An Overview of the UK and International Evidence

The study has shown that there are numerous and diverse examples of children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration, from the UK and overseas; ranging from the co-design of buildings and spaces, to educational programmes, environmental planning, and community regeneration. Based on the available evidence, however, it would seem that this area of practice has been under-reported and under-evaluated. The individual examples are often considered in some depth within the relevant academic disciplines, such as geography, psychology, and within the planning literature, but with little crossover between them, and (perhaps most importantly); often at arms length from actual planning process and policymaking.

Large scale coordinated programmes such as the Child Friendly Cities Initiative have provided an invaluable central resource for gathering examples in an international context, linked to the CRC agenda. Beyond these programmes, however, most of the schemes identified during the study have generally lacked the resources for dissemination. The lack of a more systematic means of gathering and reflecting on evidence from practice arguably poses a risk of repeating many of the same mistakes that have occurred in previous projects over the past 20 to 30 years. At the very least, there is a clear priority to make more widely available the research that has already been collated by centres such as Children's Environment's Research Group and the Innocenti Research Centre, with a particular focus on sharing examples of good practice.

The study underlines that the spatial aspects of children and young people's participation have been particularly underplayed within the UK, as is the case to a varying extent within other Western European countries. There are a number of possible explanatory factors for this, which we propose fall into three main areas as follows:

- First, the ***momentum for children's rights over the past thirty years has been global, but the response has arguably been slow in the UK***. There has been a tendency towards a view of child rights programming organised around national and local government service boundaries. Larger multi-national initiatives such as Child Friendly Cities have received a more limited uptake than in some parts of the world, where rights-based programming is now embedded on a large scale. This situation has contributed towards lower awareness of agendas such as Habitat and CRC within the UK.

- Second, the ***responsibilities for children's services and planning / regeneration have remained largely separate at a UK Government level***, despite a tendency towards greater integration witnessed in recent years through the public participation 'turn' within urban renewal in the 1990s, and cross-departmental initiatives for children's play and child poverty in the 2000's. Whilst by no means unique to the UK, therefore, the subject of children's participation in planning falls between areas of policy responsibility. Furthermore, it has not traditionally been high on the agenda of charities and NGOs.

- Third, the report has highlighted the ***particular challenges arising from a strongly 'service-led' agenda for children and young people's participation*** in the policies of the previous Government. This agenda, whilst delivering successful outcomes in many areas of children's lives, has arguably underplayed the spatial dimensions of children's wellbeing; both in the opportunities for children to have a meaningful influence over the design and planning of the public realm, and in the prominence given to environmental issues within the main children's services frameworks such as Every Child Matters (ECM).

This is not to detract from the numerous achievements of projects and programmes that were initiated under the previous Government, and indeed extending back much further than this. Notably:

- individual programmes such as the Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) have empowered children to decide how budgets are spent and what youth spaces should look like;
- there has been an unprecedented level of investment in children's play following the 2008 Play Strategy, with programmes such as Play Pathfinders and Playbuilder improving the number and range of opportunities at a local level, and progress in raising cross-professional awareness of the benefits of play;
- children and young people's participation has been galvanised through the creation of forums such as the UK Youth Parliament, further structures within the devolved administrations, and support for professionals to develop and extend their practice through Participation Workers Networks; and,
- there is widespread evidence of children's participation, often on a large scale, in school design and built environment education programmes.

The report has also highlighted the active role of professional bodies and grassroots organisations in championing children and young people's participation, dating back to the co-design movement of the 1970s and 1980s and continued in recent times through the work of organisations such as CABE, Play England, the Participation Workers Network, and a raft of independent networks of architects, youth practitioners and NGOs.

It is evident that far greater potential exists to 'mainstream' the good practice that exists, however, and to ensure that this evidence is effectively gathered and disseminated. The study also demonstrates that there is scope to further extend the traditional focus of policymaking on youth, leisure and play spaces, and to mainstream children's participation within the wider public realm. It is arguably here that there are greater opportunities to engage with adults and to achieve a meaningful influence over the development of places and spaces. We consider what this might mean for the current UK Government looking ahead, towards the end of this chapter.

6.2 The Rationale and Mechanisms for Participation

The literature shows that children's environments are hugely important for their wellbeing, enjoyment and social and cognitive development; and that planning and design has a fundamental role to play in creating opportunities for children to interact with public space; influencing their degree of independent mobility, their access to community resources, and their opportunities to interact with adults. Equally, there is a growing body of evidence from research and practice demonstrating the potential for even young children to meaningfully participate in decisions relating to community or environmental planning. Children from different social and cultural backgrounds have proven entirely competent in grasping concepts relating to neighbourhood change; in demonstrating a good grasp of spatial skills such as map-making and interpretation, and actively contributing towards planning decisions affecting the whole community, where they were effectively supported to do so.

A further key message is that children's interaction with adults is a key element of effective participation. The examples in the literature highlighted the tensions that often exist in this respect, and the need to create room for reciprocal learning – between children, adult community members, and adult officials or planners in a position of authority. This type of learning was almost always achieved through direct experience. Examples of entirely child-led and child-initiated participatory models were very rare in contrast[1]; arising at one extreme in situations where formal planning structures had dissipated, such as children's responses to emergency slum clearance, and at the other where the scheme did not intrude significantly into the adult realm – in the case of pre-designated play areas. The latter scenario rarely did much to extend or deepen children's participation in public space or to transform adults' perceptions of them. Indeed, the tendency to separate children and adults' spaces has been one of the key barriers to mainstreaming participation – whether intentional or not.

6.3 Barriers and Challenges

The literature highlights the particular challenges that are encountered for children's participation, where public space is at stake. Decisions relating to community and environmental planning bring children's interests into direct juxtaposition with adult community members, planners, officials, and commercial developers. This area of practice is restricted not only by the wider societal views about children and young people, therefore, but also by the raft of more specific technocratic barriers. Viewed in this context, it is easy to understand why a fundamental rights-based approach is so important to underpin participatory practice, and to prevent children from being sidelined. It is clear that ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child has not always translated effectively into policy and legislative decision-making in Government, however, and that other forms of advocacy and regulation have a role to play in strengthening children's participation rights with regard to the built environment. The use of Child Impact Assessment is one such option that has proven effective in some countries, where it has been systematically deployed (see for example: Sylwander, 2001, for the Swedish context). Children's rights have sometimes been addressed as an 'age' dimension of wider Equality Impact Assessments, although children were exempt as a stakeholder group from the recent Equality Act in the UK (2010), despite active lobbying from a consortia of child's rights organisations (CRAE, 2009).

The lack of evidence for impact and outcomes has emerged as a particular area for attention. As we discussed in the previous chapter, much of the evaluation to date has been concerned with *processes* or with the immediate benefits for participants. Far fewer studies have followed-up to establish how or whether the participatory activities influenced actual planning decisions, or to measure the longer-term impact of successful participation on the wider community. This reflects the often time and resource-limited nature of the evaluation that has taken place, and the difficulty of attributing impact to children's participation. However, this is arguably an issue that must be addressed if this area of practice is to be further expanded and supported in the future. The previous chapters have underlined the considerable time and resource that is required to engage planners and officials to support children's participation, and the case for doing so appears much weaker of the benefits are similar to more general citizenship or volunteering activities and could therefore be achieved at much lower cost. We argue that stronger evaluation methods are needed to demonstrate the potential impact on communities, and to differentiate between the available participatory mechanisms, and that a greater commitment is required on the part of funders and commissioners to build evaluation in from the outset.

6.4 Towards 'Effective Practice' – Some Common Success Factors

The study set out to identify some potential definitions of 'good' or 'effective' practice. As we discussed in the previous chapters; it would be difficult to reach a definitive set of criteria, due to the wide variation in the scope, purpose, scale, ages and numbers of children and young people within the practice examples. The report has also shown that young people's definitions of success can sometimes be directly at odds with those of planners or developers. Moreover, the term 'effective' practice suggests a judgement that is based on measurable results or outcomes. As comparatively few projects have been able to achieve this, it would be difficult to apply such criteria to practice examples within the field. Taking these issues into account, we have identified a number of more general 'success factors' that have assisted with children's participation, and offer a more pragmatic approach for others seeking to develop practice in this area. These are presented in Table 6.1, overleaf.

[1] The Youth Power project in the USA is perhaps a notable exception, as was considered further at section 4.1.3.

Table 6.1. Success factors for children's effective participation in planning and regeneration

1. **Official recognition of children's fundamental rights** – there was often greater evidence of success where children's rights were made explicit from the outset, and were fully acknowledged by the municipal authorities. Where this was not the case, the activities were at a greater risk of being swept away by changing policy or funding priorities, or blocked by objections from residents or commercial agencies. Advocacy has often played an important part in this – having individuals or organisations in place who will take a more pro-active role in putting children on the agenda, and advocating when they do input.

2. **Broad-based and inclusive partnership working** – projects were often more influential where they drew upon a cross-section of expertise from planners, local government, academics, NGOs, community organisations and residents. Engaging planning authorities and municipal authorities from the outset was also important. In contrast, the purely academic schemes very rarely resulted in actual planning changes.

3. **Political and cultural sensitivity** – the study showed the importance of working with community representatives to ensure that the modes of participation were appropriate to the cultural context. It was important to have knowledge of local stakeholders and an awareness of where the tensions lie. Local knowledge was also important for identifying and understanding the significance of community resources.

4. **Adapting to more 'child friendly' planning processes and structures** – more orthodox planning processes often proved off-putting for children and young people, and often other community members as well, due to adult-dominated structures and technocratic language . A few projects were able to adapt the context to better meet children's needs. One Italian municipality took the step of adjusting its regulations, to reduce the necessary consultation period for planning decisions. This rare example enabled the children's designs to be put into action more quickly, and showed the potential of this type of approach.

5. **Support from skilled intermediaries** – the involvement of adults with knowledge and experience of children and young people's participation proved invaluable when supporting children to engage with planners and officials. This role was performed by academics within the Growing up in Cities project, who adopted an 'action research' approach and empowered children to collect and analyse their own data. Having the right expertise was particularly important to counter scepticism about children and young people's competence to participate. Bad experiences could simply reinforce negative stereotypes.

6. **Diverse participatory mechanisms** – the examples within the literature demonstrated that children and young people have different needs, which must be reflected in the available participatory mechanisms. A mix of formal mechanisms such as youth councils, child-led surveys and data collection, and informal ones such as photography, computer-aided mapping, model building and role-play provided the maximum opportunities for children to engage. A few UK and international projects gave children decision-making responsibility for a devolved budget. This provided additional leverage over actual planning decisions.

7. **Understanding participation as a 'whole' process of learning and change** - the study has underlined the importance of children and young people being involved at all phases of the planning and decision making cycle not just in being 'consulted' once plans have been drawn up. The literature illustrates that

Table 6.1. Success factors for children's effective participation in planning and regeneration

children have the abilities to contribute to researching problems, finding solutions, modifying and developing plans and saying whether they worked or not.

8. **Openness and reciprocal learning between children and adults** – as highlighted previously in this chapter, the inter-generational aspect of children's participation has been a common success factor in many practice examples. There needs to be a willingness to accept that learning from children and young people can help to enhance adults' understanding of what constitutes effective and sustainable planning and design of public spaces. This was rarely found to be the case in advance of the activities taking place. Progress was usually greater, where children and adults worked together over a period of time.

9. **An incremental and realistic approach** – the literature highlighted the importance of setting realistic and measurable goals, and building the trust and confidence of planners and officials to work with children over time. Examples included the progression from an initial information-gathering exercise, towards the formation of more permanent structures. This was the case in the Johannesburg project, where an initial resource-mapping exercise with children evolved into a larger project to co-design a children's centre.

10. **Visibility in the results** – it was important for projects to demonstrate causality between children's ideas, and action being taken within their local community. Projects experienced a fall-off in interest amongst children and young people, if their contributions were perceived to have been set aside.

11. **Embedding at different levels and spatial scales** – practice examples were generally more sustainable where they set in place a mechanism to refresh the membership of children and young people, and where the learning was embedded within local organisations and structures. One-off and time-limited projects with a smaller number of participants generally struggled to achieve any degree of lasting change.

Beyond the criteria in Table 6.1, it is notable that children and young people's participation in planning and regeneration seems to have flourished in certain individual countries. Although there does not seem to be a simple explanation for why this might be so, the literature alludes to the importance of the following factors:

- a strong ***culture of municipal leadership and innovation***, with the willingness to adapt existing planning frameworks or governance structures to manage participation in a systematic and coordinated way;

- the ***active and widespread political mobilization of young people***, with a willingness from local authorities to engage in advocacy work alongside NGOs and other grassroots organisations; and,

- the ***widespread acceptance by adults of young people's contribution as economic agents in their own right***; whether in the literal sense of paid employment (as is a necessity in many parts of the world), or through wider forms of civic participation that serve to accrue a value to society. The National Citizenship Service currently being piloted in the UK is an example of how a more utilitarian view of young people's roles in society has been accompanied by a willingness to create spaces for their participation.

The examples of larger scale sustained participation have tended to flourish where a combination of these conditions are present. For example, the Children's City project in Italy was developed in direct response to interest from city leaders, who wanted to find a way of capturing children's ideas about urban development. This official backing paved the way for the subsequent rollout of the project in 40 Italian cities over a ten year period (Alparone and Risotto, 2001). Similarly in Brazil, the UNDP/UN–Habitat programme gave voice to what was quite a genuine spirit of 'grassroots' interest in children and young people's participation amongst municipal leaders. As with the Italian case, this proved to be a major factor in the scale of activity that was achieved, with result that over 100 municipal authorities participated during the programme lifetime (Cabannes, 2006).

It is noticeable that the role of national Governments with in the practice examples has generally been one of 'enablement', through legislation and policy, rather than developing or championing actual programmes. Indeed, much of the momentum for children's fundamental rights arising from CRC has been sustained through transnational networks of academics and city leaders, as we discussed in chapter two. The study indicates that the further development of this kind of facilitative role would be beneficial for future programmes.

6.5 Final Comments

Looking ahead; the emerging policies of the UK coalition Government would seem to present both opportunities and challenges for children's participation. The current programme of public sector funding cuts, coupled with the dismantlement of the national planning framework, arguably runs the risk of leaving children more vulnerable to exclusion from local planning decisions that affect the places where they live. Furthermore, the Equality Act (2010) stopped short of giving children legal protection on the grounds of age discrimination, and at the time of writing it remains to be seen how public service providers will address children's interests when the new Equality Duty comes into effect in April 2011. As discussed throughout this report, the case for participation is weakened without an imperative for children's rights to be addressed, and the current economic climate is not conducive to organisations taking action if they have no legal obligation to do so.

The possibility of a more grassroots approach to participation can be found within some of the literature surrounding the Big Society agenda, and within some of the *principles* of the Localism Bill (CLG, 2010b), which has a stated aim of transferring decision-making powers back to local communities. It will be necessary for local authorities and civil society organisations to take a clearer role in setting direction and determining how budgets are spent; albeit partly by default, as a result of reduced support from national Government. This shift towards stronger municipal leadership, where applied to children's rights, has been a key success factor within many of the programmes described within the literature. A key question is whether there is a sufficient groundswell of knowledge and awareness about the benefits of effective participation for this to happen in the UK, and whether there will be the capacity or will to support participation at a time of widespread cuts.

Finally, the measures to promote 'citizenship' warrant further consideration here. With regard to children and young people, this is perhaps most strongly reflected in the coalition Government's plans for a National Citizen Service (NCS) - a flagship programme aimed at 16 year olds to be piloted at a local level in 2011 and 2012 prior to a potential national rollout. The NCS is described in policy literature as *"…a programme of activity designed to support young people to develop the skills and attitudes they need to engage with their communities and become active and responsible citizens".* The Service, if fully implemented, arguably stands to guarantee that more young people will experience citizenship education involving practical community-based experience of some kind. However, it is too early to gauge exactly how the quality of this experience will be assured, and what forms of participatory practice will evolve from the model.

An immediate observation is that this kind of adult-initiated and adult-led practice is very different from the more spontaneous forms of child-initiated participation that we have illustrated in this report (see for example the Latin American project examples described in chapters four and five). The latter were quite often characterized by *collective* action amongst young people and adults, which proved necessary when negotiating with adults to affect community change. In contrast, the NCS approach aims to strengthen individual young people's citizenship skills by directing them to participate in structured activities within their local community. There is undoubtedly a need to build young people's capacity for participation within the UK, and an argument could be made that this type of formal engagement is a necessary first step to 'scale-up' citizenship activities. However, it remains to be seen whether a culture of youth citizenship can be directly stimulated by policy in this way.

A fundamental issue for NCS is arguably to ensure that adults are also willing and able to develop the skills required for engaging with young people. This is likely to require considerable awareness-raising to tackle the widespread negative perceptions of young people that were discussed in this report, alongside opportunities for meaningful dialogue and collaboration between children and adults (part of a 'social learning' process; see also chapter three). At this stage, therefore, the outcome is hard to predict with any degree of accuracy.

6.5.1 Issues for Attention – Policy and Research

In conclusion, we wish to highlight a number of possible areas for further development, which build upon the findings presented in this report. Table 6.2, below provides a summary.

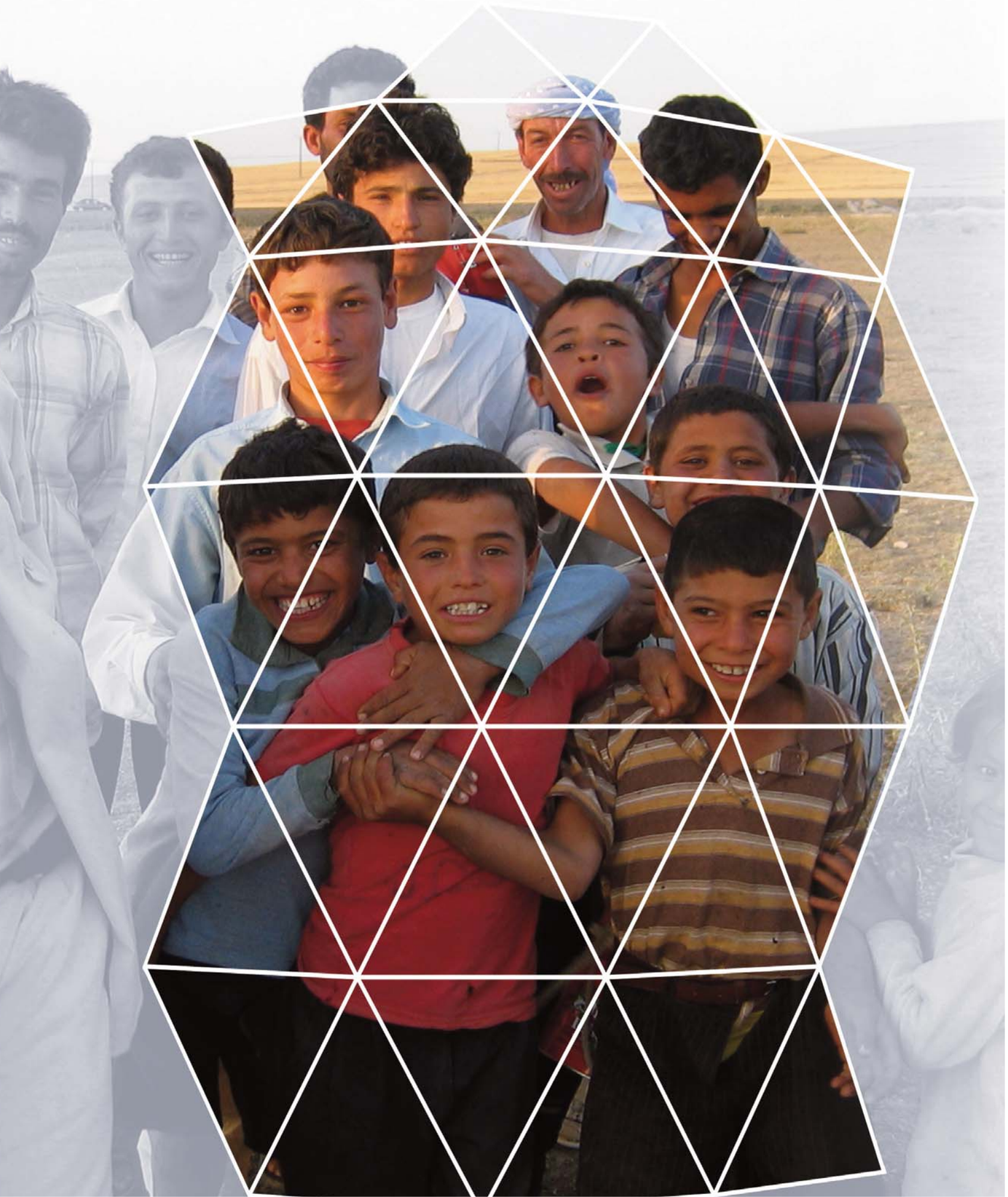
Table 6.2. Issues for Attention – Policy and Research

Policy and practice

- Strengthening and updating the role of children's rights within UK policy and practice, through a renewed focus on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, but with a realistic approach that takes into account the current economic and political climate.

  To include consideration of the following:

  - how best to support local authorities and civil society organisations to champion a rights-based approach within the Localism agenda, including better access to



Annexes

Table 6.2. Issues for Attention – Policy and Research

international good practice materials, examples and networks.

- the options for protecting children's rights within local development and planning decisions, at a time of deregulation and funding cuts.

- Giving greater prominence to the spatial dimensions of children and young people's wellbeing within established participation toolkits and quality frameworks. This might include the more widespread use of quality indicators such as those developed through CFC and GUIC as a tool for assessing the extent to which children's spatial needs are being met, and to provide a more consistent and comparable approach.

Research and Evaluation

- Disseminating the research and evidence from the Child Friendly Cities and Growing up in Cities programmes, and making this information accessible to a wider range of audiences.
- Considering how impacts can be measured more satisfactorily, including through the more systematic use of data that has already been collected within rights-based programmes, and exploring the role of social impact assessment and social auditing methods such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) as an alternative approach to measuring impact
- Building capacity for the more widespread use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods by practitioners in their everyday work with children; supported by academics, and engaging children and young people in collecting and analysing the data
- Giving greater weight to practitioner's evidence, including self-reporting on the extent to which their experiences of participatory activities with children have resulted in changes to their own professional skills, attitudes and practices

Annex One: Collated Practice Examples

A1.1. UK Practice Examples

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
Blaenau Gwent youth forum - regeneration of Blaenau Gwent Steelworks	Young people from Blaenau Gwent youth forum have been heavily involved in the regeneration of the local steelworks. The youth forum wanted to get involved in this project as the steelworks was a major site in Blaenau Gwent and played a big role in the area as it used to employ 13,000 people,	Youth forum, an elected body, participated throughout the design phase and the early stages of development about what they would like to see on the site. The young people were shown around the site and they made a film following progress of development. A hospital has now been built in the area and there are plans for a Leisure Centre and Education centre to be built next.	Locality	Not known	20 - 30 young people involved in the forum. Participating numbers varied at different points of the consultation	Mix of male and female participants aged 11 - 24.
Derby Children's Hospital (UK)	Children and young people's participation in the design and running of a new children's hospital	Children and young people working with planners and architects at design stage. Consultation exercise in local schools to identify their impressions of a hospital and what they'd like to see. These ideas were incorporated into the design. Community Artists undertook the consultation exercise involving young people producing art visuals, re-enactments and role plays which were produced in a video which informed the design of the hospital.	Locality	3 half day workshops to young people	20 - 40 per workshop	2 primary schools, 1 secondary school.
Design of Lakewood: a Secure Care Centre, with Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC)	Example of involving children and young people in the design of a care centre (Northern Ireland). 12 young people were involved in the centre design, around the routine of their day and their needs.	The VOYPIC member of staff met with the young people a number of times. She drew up an individual interview schedule to bring them through their daily routine. They were shown photographs of other facilities and were able to make choices based on these Young people Were then trained in interview skills to enable them to participate in the tendering process for contractors to carry out the work. One was involved in the procurement interview process The Contractor built a 'mock-up' of a bedroom and the young people were able to test out the durability of the materials and to show young	Locality	Initial design 6 months. The building took around two years to construct.	12 young people in the initial design team. An ad hoc number of young people were involved in the interior design	12-16 years old all in care.

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
		people the overall plan. Once building had started, young people were involved in the design of interiors.				
Eco-Schools initiative	An international programme founded by the Foundation for Environmental Education, a US based organisation committed to the development of environmental literacy. Led in the UK by ENCAMS, the programme is based in schools, and acts as a means of embedding environmental sustainability teaching into the curriculum and as a system for self-audit and for schools to form links with the wider community.	Established an eco-committee of staff and students. This committee lead subsequent work in: 1. Conducting an environmental review 2. Creating an action plan 3. Monitoring action and evaluating progress 4. Linking to the curriculum 5. Involving the whole school and the wider community 6. Establishing an “Eco-code” for the school	International: over 36,000 schools. In UK 15,000 schools are Eco-schools: 65% of schools in England are participating	Takes 2 years for individual schools to achieve the Green Flag and this is valid for 2 years.	8-12 on average form the committee in most schools	Varied depending on project
Engaging Places network case studies 2008/09	Year 12 and local primary school students redesigned a local library.	Students redesigned their local library researching public buildings, making sketches, taking photographs and talking to experts and community members. Children from the school council visited the building and gathered ideas through talking to architects, an interior designer and a furniture designer. They then used questionnaires to collect the views of community members and families. The two sets of students presented their design ideas to the local community.	Locality	Weekly meetings between participants	Not known	Primary school aged 7-11, and secondary school aged 16-18
MyPlace programme	A targeted scheme of youth centre development aimed to encourage young people to participate in positive activities was introduced in 2008 by DCSF.	Young consultants were trained by YMCA to deliver support to individual projects. The individual projects developed youth-focused spaces in different areas.	National	Dependant on project	18 young consultants advising various projects. Total number involved unknown dependant on	Varies dependant on the project

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
					individual projects	
Rootscape participatory urban design project, Oxford (England)	Children and young people's participation in community and environmental planning	Educational scheme and experience of planning activities alongside built environment professionals, teachers and youth workers School children took part in team building exercises, redesigned their school's wildlife garden, took part in an urban design workshop and presented their own pieces of urban planning at a presentation event.	Locality	9 months	Varied with activity. Roughly 50 overall.	12 – 17 year olds
Six Ways Public Realm and Community Cohesion Project, Birmingham (England)	Children and young people's participation in the re-design of public spaces around a transport interchange, as part of a wider regeneration initiative (Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder) This project was initiated and funded by Urban Living, the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, to test new ways of bringing closer together design quality, community cohesion, and capacity building agendas.	The pilot project targeted 14-18 year olds living and learning around the Aston Six Ways Island to jointly design a new shared public space. The young people conducted two study visits; planned together and conducted consultations with local community; Co-design, The young people learnt to use industry software called SketchUp to create 3D computer visualisations of their design proposals of Aston Six Ways, ultimately developing 4 proposals for regeneration.	Locality	14 weeks on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings	Numbers fluctuated, but 11 completed the programme	14-18 year olds, predominantly male. With high BME representation
Spaceshaper 9-14 Toolkit	The Spaceshaper 9-14 activity-based toolkit is designed to help young people get actively involved in shaping the public spaces where they live and play, exploring what young people think about how local places are used and how they can be improved. More than 150 facilitators have been trained since Spaceshaper 9-14 was launched in December 2009.	Young people involved in a workshop with a range off activities including group discussion and role-play to discuss their ideas on their public spaces. Covers 8 main themes including Access, Use, Other People, environmental, maintenance among others They vote on each area which provides detail for a report presented to the architects/local authorities planning to regenerate that area	Locality	3-4 hours sessions	Around 30 young people each session	Mainly aged 9 -14, however tool has been adapted and used with younger as well as older age group (up to 18)
SPUD- Space, Placemaking and	A new network of architectural youth groups. Each group has a specific	The SPUD groups to give young people the opportunity to influence change in their local	Solent area	12 months - monthly	35 young people	14-19. @ 2/3 male.

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
Urban Design.	design project and will develop concept designs for their chosen areas. The Solent Centre for Architecture + Design has set up three youth groups across Eastleigh, Southampton and Portsmouth for young people with a focus on the designed and built environment.	area. All the young people involved work alongside architects and planners on live design briefs. Young people developed design briefs with architects through workshops. The workshops involved various stages of planning: investigation; questionnaire development; consultations with local people and the local authority; presentations from architects; idea development involving creation, testing and reworking; and finally a presentation to the local authority and the design centres.		meetings with a few half days intensive sessions	across the 3 areas	Some BME Mixture of abilities.
The Architecture Centre: Young Design Champions	Teaches young people about the design process and helps them get involved in decision-making that related to buildings and spaces they use. This project aims to include support work for the Playbuilder and My Place programmes - national projects to redevelop play spaces and youth centres	Local primary school children take part in week long summer schools on the built environment, and the Engaging Places project works with pupils from a Pupil Referral Unit.	South West	Varies. Some are week long summer schools, other dependent on the regeneration	Smaller groups around 10-12 per project	8-16 in school / community settings, mainly 12-16. a few in areas of deprivation, but a wide mix.
The Glass-House: Young Spacemakers Project	Glass-House is a charity that works to help local people and regeneration professionals create better community buildings.	Glass-House Young SpaceMakers practical design course for groups of young people who are involved in the early stages of regenerating a street, park, square, or play area in their neighbourhood. This course provides a practical exploration of the design process of an open space, and enables participants to apply design skills to the space they are working on.	National	2 day free course	3-5 young people per course	14 - 17 year olds
Thinkspace participatory arts project, Corby (UK)	Children and young people's participation in regeneration debates through a participatory public art	Children working with an artist to create a public installation, with the aim of engaging the local community in dialogue about the regeneration of the town centre	City / metropolitan	12 months	Usually around 30 children per project	4-10 year olds (local schools), some pre-schoolers

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
	project	Workshops usually in a primary school or pre-school environment to visualise regeneration projects. Mainly because the regeneration is area focussed and primary school children generally are resident in the area. Secondary schools pupils tend to travel greater distances.				under 4, and some aged 14-18
Urban Vision North Staffordshire	Urban Vision North Staffordshire evaluation (ECOTEC) - delivers a Built Environment Education Programme to encourage children and young people to be involved in the decision making processes.	Sustainable Schools project Identified 3 High Schools who are involved with the Building Schools for the Future Programme. Usually a class is involved, to come up with ideas for how their schools can be redeveloped. An architect and an urban designer both deliver workshops exploring building design and grounds, looking at history and relation to community. The follow up sessions involve an animated filmmaker who works with the young people to make an animation to illustrate their ideas, which is sent to the developers.	North Staffordshire - Stoke-on Trent	1 full day workshop, 2 half day days for animation.	30 young people	Year 8
Young Advisors	Young Advisors are young people aged between 15 and 21 who show community leaders and decision makers how to engage young people in community life, regeneration and renewal.	The young people undertake a training programme for 4-5 days, including research methodologies, peer review, community mapping, training delivery, service appraisal and inspection so that they can actively guide adults on how to manage more effective services. Form a Young Adviser Team (on a social enterprise model) in their area and sell their consultation services and deliver training. Money is redistributed back in to the community.	National	Training is 4-5 days, consultations for the length of project. Social enterprise model no time limit	40 young adviser teams, with around 6-12 young people in each. 600 young people involved overall (young people can leave and return if they need)	15-21 years old. Slightly more male members. 42% BME background. All are from the top 10% of deprived communities
Young People's Safer Accessibility Project: "Streets Ahead on Safety", Birmingham (UK)	Young people's participation in decision making to address the European road injury epidemic	Children were involved in workshops to identify what was needed to improve the area. Four elements: 1) promotion of road safety knowledge, 2) environmental audit, 3) citizenship training, and 4) active user-engagement with proposed engineering plans.	Allan Rock and Green Lane Small Heath	12 months - various workshops	405	9-11 year olds

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
		Identifying the street furniture needed. Included how they could potentially use a budget for the areas. They then voted on potential options provided by the developers				

A1.2. International Examples

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
Barra Mansa (Brazil)	Children and young people's participation in city-wide municipal planning processes	Formation of a children's participatory council, with members (18 boys and 18 girls) recruited via elected assemblies; annual participatory budget of 125,000 dollars	City / metropolitan	Annual	over 6000 children	9 to 15 year olds
Caera (Brazil)	Promotion of child friendly urban centres, through an awards scheme for municipal authorities	Nationally coordinated civic awards scheme: Municipal Seal of Approval for child friendly cities (implemented by over 100 municipal authorities). Award is jusged and awarded with input of young people.	Locality	Certification is valid for two years	Very large scale	Whole population
Case studies from the Munich 'City for Children' project (Germany)	Various projects developed within broader framework, adopting Unicef principles of Child Friendly Cities.	Mini-project examples provided: 1) city-wide framework for children's play rights, 2) portable guide / toolkit for planners and developers, and 3) child-friendliness awards scheme (see column F for details). A children's jury, adults' jury and jury with test families are used to judge candidates	City / metropolitan	Since 1999	13 (each year)	8-14 years

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
		for award scheme				
Children and Architecture Project, Ankara (Turkey)	Children's participation in a city-wide educational project with a focus on heritage, culture and civic participation	Mixed method approach: workshops, events and creative activities: managed in partnership between Chamber of Architects and the city's main University With the Chamber, children work to solve problems that they face in their daily environments	City / metropolitan	Since 2002	3,600 children (and ongoing)	Varying ages, from 120 schools to date
Children and Open Spaces in the City: Stockholm (Sweden)	Children and young people's participation in spatial planning, through participatory mapping	Participatory approach to producing children's GIS maps, involving children, teachers and academics working together	City / metropolitan	1 year	87 in pilots, 82 in follow-ups	10-12 year olds
Children's City project (Italy)	Nationally coordinated project to grow participation in youth councils in over 40 cities in Italy; building children's capacity to make recommendations for planning	Academics working in partnership with YP to strengthen capacity of children's councils Children's council, made up of children from each elementary school in the area, to discuss issues affecting them	Multi-centre (nationally coordinated across many different cities)	Started in 1991 Re-elected each year, meets each month	Large number Council: 20-30	Adolescents Council: 9-11'
Children's Design Project: Kitakyushu Science and Research Park (Japan)	Children's participation in a town planning exercise, to create new technology park alongside a residential development	Participatory planning workshops with children, as part of wider consultative exercise to ensure the sustainability of the new development	Locality / Neighbourhood	Three-day workshops initially	42 (representing nearly half of the child population in the local area)	2-13 year olds from the local community
Empoli (Italy)	Children's participation in the preparation of a city plan, with a focus on two outlying neighbourhoods	Citywide surveys carried out by high school children, neighbourhood workshops The children's input led to the conversion of several child friendly streets,	City / metropolitan	Not known	8 classes	Elementary and middle school

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
Frankston Youth Safety Management Team, Melbourne (Australia)	Children and young people's participation in municipal processes (needs assessments, identifying priorities, lobbying for change)	Youth Needs Assessment and development of a Youth Safety Management Team within council structures Children and young people from eight neighbourhoods were engaged in a project to gather information about safety and freedom of movement in the city, which informed the city-wide Community Safety Plan.	Neighbourhood	Not known	10	8-18 year olds
Growing up in Cities Project, Johannesburg (South Africa)	Children and young people's participation in GUIC project model: community mapping, needs identification, and implementing the findings alongside adults	Drawing, neighbourhood tours and mapping, problem solving (gender aspect: boys and girls separately and then shared findings); recommendations to authorities	City / metropolitan	Not known	122	10-14 year olds from four low-income neighbourhoods
Kitee (Finland)	Children and young people's participation in the design and planning of a school yard and surrounding neighbourhood	Participatory planning workshops with local children and young people, with inputs from teachers, architect, and an environmental psychologist	Neighbourhood	Not known (Autumn 2002 to Spring 2003)	350	7-12 year olds from local schools
Leichardt, New South Wales (Australia)	Children and young people's participation in the design and management of a shopping mall	Young people's committee + appointment of Youth Services Coordinator	Area	Not known	Not known	Not known
New Schools Initiative (Columbia)	Children's participation in a school-led educational project to improve rural communities	Action research: involves children in state-funded rural schools undertaking surveys of local residents as part of their core studies, and conducting walking tours to establish priority issues, and taking action to improve local conditions.	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Our Town: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	urban children participated in designing and building a park in their neighbourhood	formed a community design group with architects and planners and community members who were only facilitators. Workshop based with collaborative	neighbourhood	18 months	20	8 and 9 yr olds. Inner city public school (blue

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
		community events and bi-weekly forums.				collar)
Roihuvuori (Finland)	Community Informatics (CI) assisted participatory planning and co-design of a shared neighbourhood yard, adjacent to a local youth centre	Community Informatics approach to co-design: support for young people to use Urban Mediator and other ICT tools (e.g. Wiki design)	Neighbourhood	Two months (weekly group sessions of 2.5 to 3 hours)	7	13-17 year olds recruited from local school (two boys and five girls); plus a separate pre-school group
Rosario: The New Citizenship Landscape (Argentina)	The goals of The City of Children project are to enable children and youth to participate in the design of public spaces, to develop strategies by which to reclaim public spaces for leisure and recreation, and to create campaigns that transform the environment based on a concept of social ecology.	Young people are elected to the Children Advisory Councils (CAC) by their peers in their home district. The project has resulted in the creation of several child-led community campaigns and events.	City / metropolitan	Not known	180 children elected to sit on weekly district councils	9 or 10 yr olds
Staden, Flanders (Belgium)	Consultation with children and young people as part of the process of formulating a Spatial Structure Plan for the municipality	Consultation with local youth organisations by planning authority; parallel academic research project	Locality	Not known (time-limited with a 'consultative' emphasis)	Not known	Not known
The Untouched World Sustainable Cities youth pilot project, Auckland (Australia)	Children's participation in an educational pilot project, to examine issues about sustainability within their region	Focussed week of activities: future workshops, visits, drafting of change proposals, alongside sustainable development professionals and academics.	Area	1 week	12	Secondary school pupils (6 participating schools)
The Y-PLAN Project (Youth—Plan, Learn, Act, Now!)	Youth engagement in city planning, using urban space slated for redevelopment.	Operated by the University of California, Berkeley, the project uses urban redevelopment as a platform for young people's civic engagement. Selected youth projects are guided by university graduates through a 10-12 week community planning process to produce proposals for changing their school	City / metropolitan	Covers time frame of 2000-2005	6 projects with 30-40 in each each group	High school students

Location	Type of Practice	Participation Structure(s)	Geographical Scale	Duration	Numbers of Young People Participating	Demographic of Participants
		neighbourhood.				
Village Homes, Davis, California (USA)	Children's participation in the design, planning and maintenance of a sustainable community (early example from the 1970's)	Children were involved in the design of the neighbourhood, mapping their favourite outdoor places. They presented these plans for discussion with adults at design workshops	Neighbourhood	Not known	Not known	Not known
Youth Power Project, Holyoke, Massachusetts (USA)	Children and young people's participation in community and environmental planning. After completion of neighbourhood projects, young people have become leaders of community service workshops at El Arco Iris and at youth conferences in Massachusetts. Initiated other young people's involvement of the city's redevelopment and fed into city master plan. Also being involved in plans for canal walk in Holyoke.	Community mapping and environmental improvements identified a number of sites for possible development decided finally on a local playground and park, alongside professionals (parks and forestry department)	Neighbourhood and city	Not known	Not known	9-19 year olds

Annex Two: Literature Review Protocol

Literature Review Protocol

A. The Research Question

The research question was defined as follows:

> ***"What are the benefits of children and young people's effective participation in the planning, design and regeneration of public spaces, and how can good / best / effective practice be defined and measured (both in a UK and international context)?"***

An iterative approach was taken, given the breadth of the subject area. The initial search was used to further refine the key research questions, and to determine the most suitable methods of data synthesis. This was managed through regular communication between the team members.

B. Study Scope

1. **Nature of what is being studied:** only literature that is directly relevant to the key research question.
2. **Setting and population:** UK and international; all children and young people aged 0-25.
3. **Date of research:** since 1980, to provide a 30 year retrospective period for examining changes in policy and research paradigms relating to the study topics.
4. **Research methods:** policy studies, academic research and project or programme evaluations. The quality scoring framework informed judgements about methodological robustness.
5. **Language of report:** English language, with the exception of those non-English language studies providing a very close match with the other inclusion criteria.

C. Data Sources

The following data sources were used.

CATEGORY	Sources
CATEGORY 1: High priority	Dedicated project and programme websites: UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative online database; UNESCO 'Growing Up in Cities' publications online; New Deal for Communities research website, Children's Environments Research Group Searchable abstracts databases: Children, Youth and Environments database, Web of Science (Social Sciences Citation Index), International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Education Resources Information Center, and geobase IDOX catalogue
CATEGORY 2:	UK public body websites: Department for Education research portal; Communities and

CATEGORY	Sources
Medium priority	Local Government; Culture, Media and Sport; Welsh Assembly Government; Scottish Executive; Northern Ireland Executive; Homes and Communities Agency; Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Websites of independent and third sector organisations: Save the Children, 4Children, Barnardos, National Children's Bureau, Children England, National Youth Agency, Planning Aid, Royal Town Planning Institute and Planning Resource, Town and Country Planning Association, Joseph Rowntree Foundation Websites of international organisations and public bodies: European Commission, OECD and affiliated websites Hand-search: Children's Geographies; Children Youth and Environments; Planning, Practice and Research; Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal, Urban Studies
CATEGORY 3: Supplementary searches only	Broader search engines such as Google, Google scholar, and DirectGov

D. Search Terms and Strategies

The search terms for extracting from abstracts and full reports included the following: child, youth, young pe*, participat*, plan*, design*, design*, buil*, regenerat*, engag*, involv*.

These terms were used in combination, forming search chains. A full record was maintained of the time / date of each search, the chains that were used, and the number of results.

E. Full Description of the Literature Search

Task chronology	Person responsible	Task description
A. First phase of searching and screening	Research Assistant	The data sources for the literature review were searched in order of their priority, Starting with Categories 1 and 2. The search chains were recorded in full. A screening tool was used to assess each piece of literature for its quality and relevance. Where an abstract was available, this was read and compared against the inclusion criteria. Where no abstract was available, or where it was not possible to assess the document against all of the criteria, the reviewer made a judgement whether or not to include the document based on the available information.
B. Summary data	Research Assistant	A data extraction template was used to summarise each included study, documenting the format, title, authors, publication date, journal reference (if applicable), written language, type of study,

Task chronology	Person responsible	Task description
extraction		search source, and key issues raised / summary. The full report or article was located wherever possible for all included studies and saved on file, using a Unique Reference Number (ERP1, 2)
C. Initial map of evidence and adjustment of search terms	Lead researchers	After the Category 1 data sources were exhausted, the data extraction template was reviewed by the lead researchers, to develop an initial descriptive map of the evidence. The map was used to guide the second phase of the searching and screening.
D. Completion of quality scoring; full data extraction	Lead researchers	The lead researchers used the full reports to complete the quality scoring for each included document. Each document was assigned a final rating (H/M/L). Documents falling into the Lower category were excluded from the synthesis stage.
E. Synthesis and reporting	Lead researchers	The final stage was to undertake a synthesis of the research findings to answer the original review question in full. The main outputs included narrative report, including a clear statement of the findings of the review, and a set of recommendations. These outputs are presented within this report.

F. Quality Scoring

Each document was assigned a quality rating, based on an assessment of the methodological relevance, quality and research question applicability. The ratings were derived using the following subjective appraisal criteria:

Included in the synthesis stage:
High: direct focus on children's participation in planning and (physical regeneration); detailed and robust theoretical treatment of the topic - or - detailed and robust account of a practice example / potential case study relating to the topic.
Medium: direct focus on children's participation in planning and (physical regeneration), but less detailed theoretical treatment of the topic - or - brief account of a practice example relating to the study topic.

Excluded from the synthesis stage:
Low: indirect focus on core study topic, but nonetheless useful for

Excluded from the synthesis stage:
background (for example; relating to social regeneration, qualities of young people's environments, or young people's uses and perceptions of public space, but less directly concerned with participation).
Automatic exclusion: no direct topic relevance, or weak / insufficiently evidenced arguments.
Unavailable: not possible to source the document.

Annex Three: References

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