"If I come back in a few years and nothing has changed, I'll be MAD!": Lessons in co-planning with children from the CATCH/iMATCH 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group

Abstract

Children's 'rights to the city' and ability to participate in urban decision-making are critical to filling the needs and aspirations children have for play, development, exploration, healthy lifestyles and social/physical belonging. Children's engagement (or disengagement) with the city also shapes the relationships and civic responsibilities that children develop towards the city.

CATCH/iMATCH is a three-year research project examining the influence of the built, social and policy environments on children's independent mobility and active travel in Australia. As an extension to the main CATCH/iMATCH project, an intensive 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group (CKPG) was established in Melbourne. The CKPG brought 13 children and 9 adult practitioners together to co-plan two neighbourhood public plazas, aiming to make them better for children and to explore children's active citizenship and social connectedness 'in situ'. The CKPG also sought to understand what practitioners require by way of tools/frameworks, processes, knowledge and skills to feel more confident in facilitating children's involvement in planning processes.

This paper presents the findings of the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group and explores some of the lessons for both research and for planning practice, that have been highlighted in this action research case study. Findings from the broader CATCH/iMATCH research augment the discussion about how children engage with urban planning and how planners can better understand children's 'voice' in planning matters and play a positive role in shaping the next generation of urban citizens.

Introduction

CATCH/iMATCH is a three-year research project funded by the Australian Research Council, which examines the influence of the built, social and policy environments on children's independent mobility, health and active travel in Australia. Approximately 400 children (and their families) from seven neighbourhoods in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Rockhampton were involved in CATCH/iMATCH data[1] gathering between 2010 and 2012.

Children's independent mobility is a critical indicator of a child-friendly environment as it allows children to explore their world through play. Children themselves see CIM as one of the main positive indicators of an urban environment (Chawla, 2002). CIM and active travel has declined significantly in Australia and many other parts of the world over recent decades (Van der Ploeg et al. 2008, McDonald, 2007; Buliung et al. 2009). These declines are not likely to be due to changing preferences of children, who still prefer to walk and cycle to school (O'Brien and Tranter, 2006). The implications of this decline include a loss of connection to nature and the local community, and negative effects on children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Moore, 1986; Kegerreis, 1993; Lubans et al. 2011; Shaw et al, 2013).

As an extension to the main CATCH/iMATCH project, an intensive three-month 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group (CKPG) took place in Melbourne in April 2012. The CKPG brought 13 children (all of whom had been involved in the earlier CATCH/iMATCH research) together with 9 adult practitioners from Moreland City Council and Merri Community Health Services (industry partners in CATCH/iMATCH) to co-plan two neighbourhood public plazas.

The goal of the co-planning exercise was to include child-specific advice in the policy and programming decisions for the two spaces, and to explore children's active citizenship and social connectedness 'in situ'. The CKPG also sought to understand what practitioners require by way of tools/frameworks, processes, knowledge and skills to feel more confident in facilitating children's involvement in planning processes.

[1]This data gathering included a range of methods: Global Positioning System technology and travel diaries to determine where children travelled over a four day period, using which modes, and with whom; child and parent surveys to determine underlying attitudes towards active travel and independent mobility; heart monitors to determine physical health benefits of children's activities; and a 'week with a camera' to capture local environment likes, dislikes, and aspirations.

This paper presents the findings of the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group and explores some of the lessons for both research and for planning practice that have been highlighted in this action research case study. Links to the broader CATCH/iMATCH research and to the wider literature augment the discussion about how children engage with the real world practice -- the 'realpolitik' (Flyvbjerg 1996) -- of local planners and decision makers. What are the real world experiences and outcomes for children and practitioners and what might be needed to strengthen those experiences and outcomes?

The lessons focus on those that aid planners in better understanding children's 'voice' in planning matters (particularly around planning issues associated with children's independent mobility) and in playing a positive role in shaping the next generation of urban citizens.

The Citizen Kid Planning Group

A key goal in the design of this case study process was to enable children to participate in decision-making around a 'live project', one that was undergoing a change process at the time of the research and could thus be influenced by children's viewpoints and advocacy. To identify this 'live project' and negotiate a role for children (and practitioners) was a core part of the preparations for the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group. Four months of negotiation with the local planning authority, Moreland City Council, went into securing two appropriate 'live project' sites. The sites negotiated were Sparta Place in Brunswick and Morgan Court in Glenroy (see Figure 1).

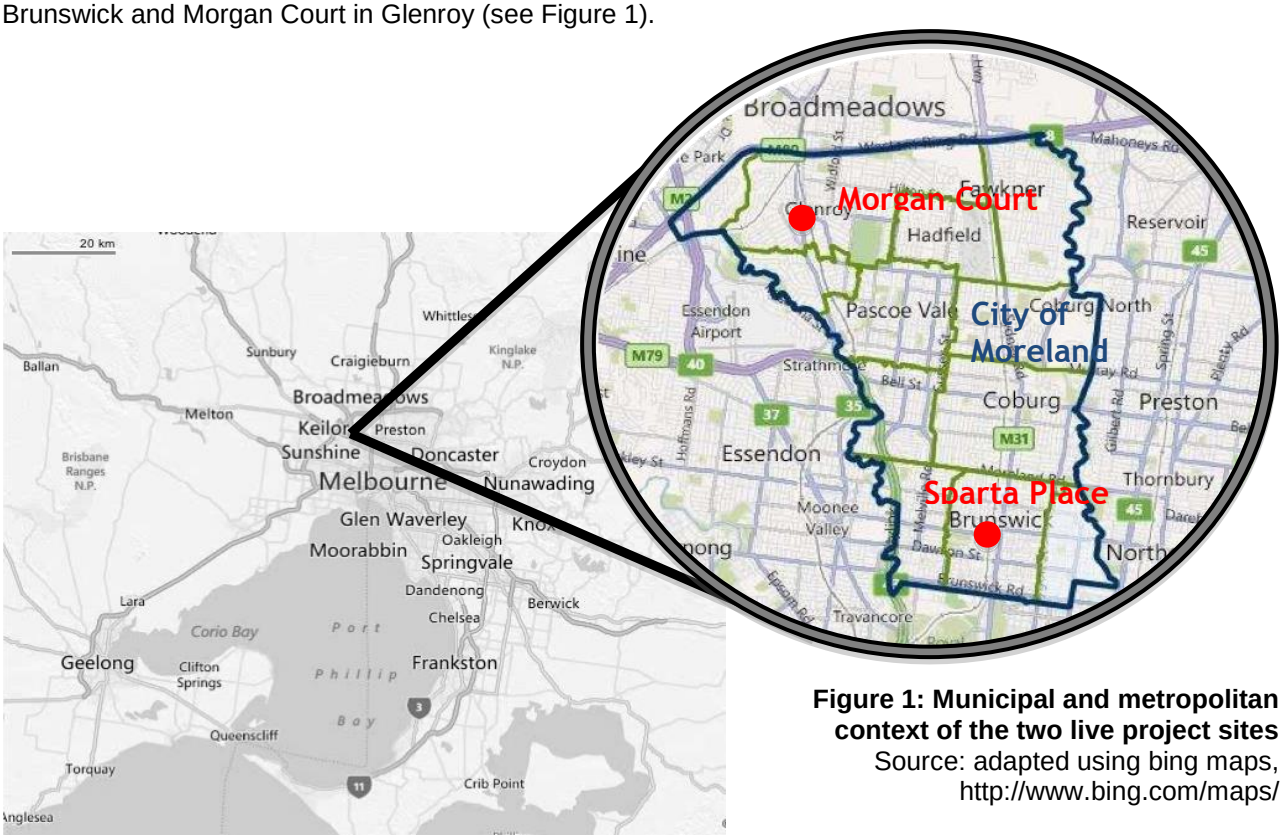

Figure 1: Municipal and metropolitan context of the two live project sites
Source: adapted using bing maps, http://www.bing.com/maps/

Brunswick, where Sparta Place is located, is an inner city neighbourhood at the southern end of the City of Moreland. Glenroy, where Morgan Court is located, is a middle suburban locale at the northern end of the municipality. Brunswick, as a suburb, took shape in the late 1800s, prior to the automobile. The urban form is denser, with narrower roads and smaller lots. Glenroy, in contrast, younger suburb and its development is more influenced by late 1900s car-oriented planning. Roads are much wider and building lots are larger.

These differences aside, the sites themselves have certain similarities. Both sites are small public plazas. Both consist of 'L-shaped' lanes connecting busier streets, each with a small public square where one can find seating, trees and street art, as illustrated in the photos in Figures 2 and 3. Both sites have dominant commercial uses, with shops facing directly onto the space and others backing onto the space, and both adjoin car-parking areas. Each is located in an activity centre within their respective suburbs and is within close walking distance (e.g. less than 200 metres in each case) to public transport. Both adjoin major arterial roads.

The key differences between the sites are: their distance from the school that the participating children attend (1.8 kilometres in the case of Sparta Place versus 0.95 kilometres in the case of Morgan

Court); the commercial profile (a more 'boutique' profile for Sparta Place versus an 'everyday services' profile for Morgan Court); and some dimensions of the demographic profile[2] of the catchment area around the sites. For example, there are smaller household sizes (average 2.22 versus average 2.49) and fewer children under 18 (12.5% versus 22.3% of the local population) in Brunswick, as compared to Glenroy.

Figure 2: Morgan Court site map and photo
Source: Andrea Cook, March 2011 and bing maps

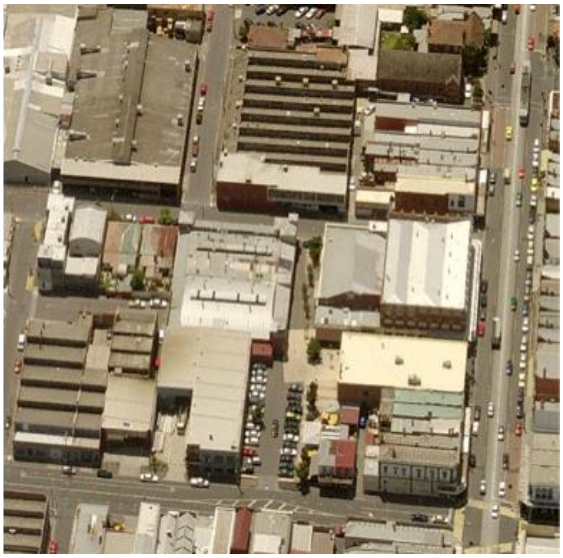

Figure 3: Sparta Place site map and photo
Source: Andrea Cook, March 2011 and Google maps

The two sites negotiated for the CKPG project are unusual in terms places where collaborative planning with children take place. Freeman and Tranter (2011: 216-218) suggest that most child-friendly design, to date, has focused on parks, dedicated play areas or children's institutional spaces (schools, sports facilities, etc.). Nor are these spaces the fourth category that Freeman and Tranter note: spaces informally colonized by children. Indeed, an implicit goal in choosing these two sites (particularly from the perspective of the Council involved in negotiating the sites) was that the process might promote more active use by children.

While both are spatially organized as public plazas, neither site shows much sign of being a destination for people to go, socialize, linger or play. Both sites function more as a thoroughfare and

[2] Source: Moreland City Council Community Profiles based on 2001 and 2006 ABS data, Profile. id (http://profile.id.com.au, accessed 13 February 2012).

as privatized commercial destinations. People generally go there to use a service or visit a shop, or to cut through to get between other destinations. The 'life between buildings' doesn't function well at these sites; people don't gather and linger (Gehl 2010: 25).

In view of this problem, both sites had recently been nominated as place-making project sites within Council's annual plan and some community building and site activation initiatives had begun to occur by the start of the Citizen Kid Planning Group. The CKPG was the first involvement of children in these place-making activities and networks.

Aside from agreeing with Council partners on the sites, the other substantial preparation task was to recruit the children to be involved. Phase one of CATCH/iMATCH had occurred in schools (September to December 2011 in Melbourne) but the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group activities were scheduled outside of school hours, requiring liaison directly with children and their families. This process also took several months, starting in December 2011 and continuing until the week of the first 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group session in early May 2012.

The children who signed up to be involved in the CKPG had all taken part in the broader CATCH/iMATCH research in Melbourne. There were seven children (four boys and three girls) from the middle suburban school and six children from the inner urban school (four boys and two girls). All were in years 5 and 6 at school and were aged 9 to 12 at the time of the research.

In addition to the child participants, six local government officials (two urban designers, three community development officers, and the mayor), representatives from a community health agency and a university student association, and two parents, were also involved in at least one of the sessions. Five facilitators resourced and recorded the process, including a video facilitator who captured the process on film.

The 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group methodology

The 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group was conducted over four sessions and was designed to 'test' a variety of co-planning approaches with the children and adults participants.

Participants started their 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group experience with child-led visits to their neighbourhood sites. This was followed by three further sessions that focused on the core questions and tasks described in Figure 4.

The mix of activities (child led tours/site assessments, mapping, guided visualisations, priority setting, action planning, reflective story telling as well as 'team building' activities like icebreakers) used in the four 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group sessions were integral to the goal of experimenting with a range of methods that could contribute to a framework or tool for practitioners to use with children to more effectively uncover their agency. The mixed activities were also integral to the goal of engaging children by pitching the engagement tools to children's different interests, capacities and learning styles.

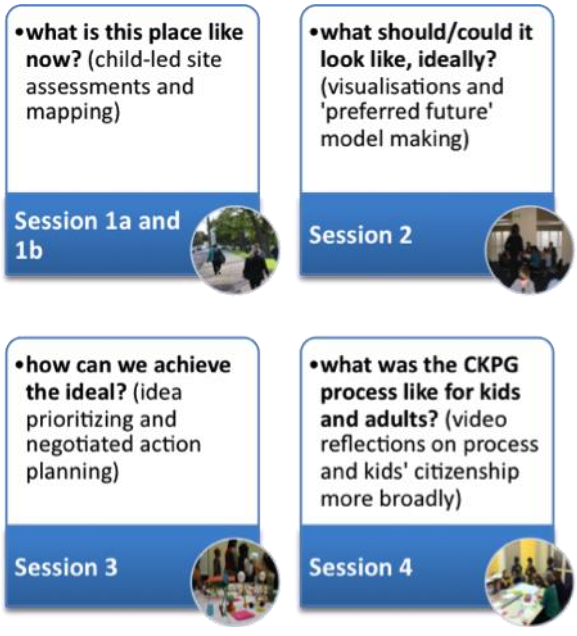

Figure 4: CKPG Sessions and Focus

Methodological challenges

While the involvement of the practice partners offered enormous opportunity for embedding the outcomes in on-going practice, this involvement in the action research was not without its challenges.

An applied case study is dictated by timing: the selection of 'live' project sites was dependent on the timing of existing Council projects and the timing of the CATCH/iMATCH research. The result was constraint in what sites could be selected and in how long the research could operate.

As the practitioners involved in this case study represented diverse disciplines, a second challenge was the development of shared practice goals for the 'CKPG. The goals of land use planners and designers are generally not the same as those of health researchers, for example, and finding a single

goal that would articulate a common expectation for the project was not possible. This led to some difficulties with 'buy in', particularly for those with little experience of child-oriented planning practice.

The 'participant' role that the CKPG offered practitioners was an uneasy one for some. Originally, this role was suggested as a way to free practitioners from the facilitation role and to enable them to participate fully in deliberations with the children about the two sites. In practice, however, this participant role limited the learning that practitioners were able to do about how to facilitate the different methods with children. Practitioners were able to learn-by-observing but not learn-by-doing. The limited scope of the case study made the alternative – a direct facilitation role for practitioners – difficult to realise. The required time to support facilitation training for inexperienced staff wasn't available and most practitioners were unavailable to play a consistent facilitation role at all four CKPG sessions.

The implications of these challenges to the practice expectations are woven into and through the following lessons for practice.

Lessons for practice from 'Citizen Kid'

The 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group process has highlighted many things, including the critical issues regarding what sort of 'lessons' for practice we can take from this (and other) child-oriented processes. Some of the challenges associated with the CKPG highlight potential contradictions between the two overarching goals of this case study. Tensions emerged between the case study as an action learning process for children (related to the child agency goals for the research) and as an action learning process for practitioners (related to the tool development and practice application goals).

How, then, can these lessons respond to the realities of planning practices? The lessons suggested by the findings of the CKPG are not simple, instrumental things. They cross from the practical to the theoretical, from process-driven to outcome-driven and from child-oriented methodology to practice-oriented methodology. This discussion will focus on these methods and applied findings or lessons in and of planning (Hall 1988; Hendler 1995).

Lessons about methods

In terms of what methods worked well across a number of spectrums, the child-led tours of the sites were most successful. These tours were engaging for the children (see Figure 5), largely because the sensory experience of activities such as this is powerfully engaging:

> For the child… it is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow.
>
> Carson 1965/1998: 56

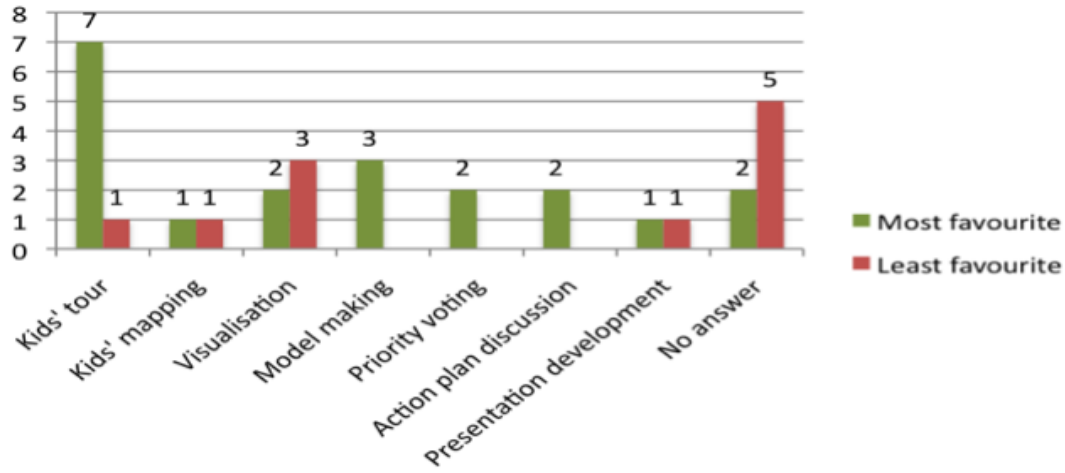

Figure 5: Children's favourite CKPG methods
Source: 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group final participant evaluations, 19 June 2012

The sensory appeal of activity was reflected in the various explorations the children made of each site, as discussed earlier, and in the children's assessment of their favourite methods, as the following comment from the participant evaluation forms illustrates:

> [The guided tour] was great because there were lots of things to do!

The guided tour was instructive for practitioners as well. The chance to be 'ethnographers' and to see how children engaged with and described the sites led to insights that were tested with the children, as the following exchange illustrates:

> Jacqueline (Facilitator)[3]: So what's the best climbing thing in Melbourne?
>
> Chorus of children: Trees!
>
> Jacqueline (Facilitator): So there's like no substitute? You could have the best play equipment and a tree would still be better?
>
> Chorus of children: YUP!
>
> Jana (Melb008): When I went to this play ground, they had all this cool equipment but I still wanted to climb trees…

These sorts of exchanges that the guided tour enabled are learning exchanges that are both practical for the practitioner (e.g. constructing and resourcing elaborate play equipment is not necessary to achieve good play outcomes for children) and more abstract (in terms of exercising ethnographic practices in determining children's geographies).

The model making was also a successful method, and was identified as most favoured by three children. As one child remarked on their evaluation sheet, "the model making was my favourite - because I loved the craft". Sobel (and Hart) suggest why this might be the case:

> Remember that model making precedes map making. In his research with children, Roger Hart (1997) discovered that when children were given three dimensional materials such as blocks, cut paper, small trees, and a toy car, they made far more accurate maps of their neighbourhood than when they drew them two-dimensionally. Especially in the primary grades, and sometimes in the intermediate grades, maps should be built and sculpted as much as drawn.
>
> Sobel 1998: 22

Model making, was certainly a more appealing activity for the children than the child-led mapping was, and it was more engaging for the adult participants as well. While adults rolled up their sleeves and actively participated alongside the children in the model making (Figure 6), they didn't participate in the map making (where they hung back and observed only). As one participant noted about the map-making, "The map is not my kind of thing…"

Figure 6: Model making draws in both Chloe (Melb121), left, and Tahlia (Practitioner), right
Source: Screenshot of the CKPG, 22 May 2012

[3] Aliases for all participants have been used

The products of the model making were useful for application to practice, and illustrated the cautionary point that Sobel (1998) and others, including Freeman & Vass (2010), make about children's mapping capacities and accuracy. The models were more detailed, better annotated and more collaboratively developed than the maps were. The model making process was also more useful than the mapping for informing subsequent stages of the deliberation. The models, for example, directly suggested most of the ideas for action that were worked on in the third CKPG session whereas little detail from the maps fed into later sessions in any concrete manner.

The prioritizing activity was useful for children and practitioners insofar as it was staged in an interactive way (Figure 7), which prompted discussion and exchange and enabled everyone in the group to quickly see and digest the priority outcomes (because more dots clearly equated to higher priority and this needed little explanation). For both children and adults, it was also a practical and democratic way to quickly focus in on the shared and workable ideas that could progress on to the 'design in' action planning phase.

Figure 7: An interactive and 'experiential' structure for prioritizing, using dot voting
Source: screenshot from CKPG video, 5 June 2012

The action planning was a method with mixed results. It was one of the more difficult activities to facilitate because it was the least interactive and kinesthetic, leading some of the children to get restless and fidgety. Facilitation 'interventions' such as using small break outs to separate children from each other were required as restlessness turned to silliness for some of the children.

On the other hand, the process of detailing the strategic plan for an idea, including the rationale, the tasks, the timing, the resourcing and the potential champions, was intellectually challenging for the children and some really enjoyed this challenge. For two children, it was their favourite activity (Figure 5).

This method did offer scope for children to lead the discussion and develop their ideas (versus responding to adult questions), enhancing the validity of the task for them and providing a more legitimate and empowering co-researcher role (Freeman & Mathison 2009; Marr & Malone 2007).

The least favoured method trialed in the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group was the visioning activity and the guided visualisation that started that vision development task in particular. As a 'meditation' on the future, the guided visualisation was far too sedentary and far too abstract for the children and most struggled with the very concept of imaging themselves in the perfect site of the future. The adults at the session were also skeptical of the method and found it difficult to engage with.

> The visualisation was my least favourite - I don't know why
>
> (comment from CKPG process evaluation sheet)

The task gained some traction after the guided visualisation as people paired up and consolidated their visions for the ideal Sparta Place and Morgan Court (e.g. when it became a shared task versus an individual task) but the guided visualisation was not particularly necessary for that discussion and collaboration.

Of all the methods, this was the least applied and practical and a good example of why a method can fail if people (adults and children) fail to comprehend its purpose. It would also appear that children (the CKPG children, at least) preferred having "collaborative learner" rather than "guided participant" roles in research and child-oriented planning (Woodhead & Faulkner 2008: 28-29. See Francis & Lorenzo 2006; Marr & Malone 2007; Cele 2006 as well). The guided visualisation was the least collaborative of the methods.

In looking at the full suite of activities, what were valued most by practitioners and by children alike were the activities and methods that were novel (something new), experiential (hands-on), a chance to learn something new and an opportunity to work collaboratively.

Beyond methods

In addition to the methods advice that the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group generated, the experience highlighted a number of 'planning conditions' that appear fundamental to the question of incorporating children's agency into more robust planning processes. Together they form what we are tentatively calling the 'DELVE framework' (Figure 8).

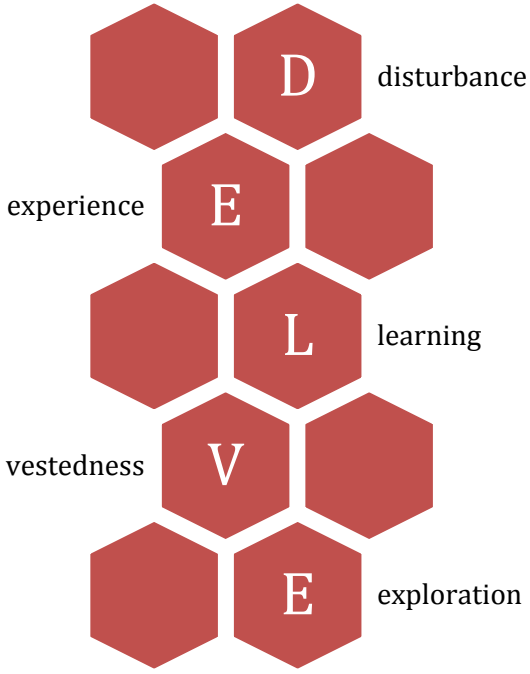

Figure 8: The 'DELVE' framework
Source: Author 2013

To begin, the CKPG suggests that a fundamental pre-condition to any child-oriented planning tool or framework is 'disturbance'. In the same way that independent mobility represents a new venture for children (new negotiations with parents, new situations, new risks and challenges), enabling children's active citizenship is a new venture for children and authorities. Conditions need to exist where people are prepared to be 'disturbed' and work in ways they haven't before, as Capra explains:

> To begin with, there must be a certain openness… a willingness to be disturbed in order to set the process in motion; and there has to be an active network of communication… to amplify the triggering event. The next stage is the point of instability, which may be experienced as tension, chaos or crisis. At this stage, the system may either break down or it may break through to a new state of order, which is characterized by novelty…
>
> Capra, 2002, cited in Hamdi, 2004: 96

Research on planning efficacy (Hoch 1994) has tended to be critical/pessimistic about large and important consequences of plans (in our case, for example, the effects that place-making projects will have on the 'big picture' problems of children's access to and use of public places; physical, social and civic) but more positive/optimistic about the efficacy of planners and their abilities to effect modest and incremental changes (in our case, for example, by illustrating morally engaged, politically astute and/or technically or theoretically sound practice).

This 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group research reinforces these reflections on planning efficacy. Researchers cannot claim that this process has changed the business of planning with, for and by children, even locally. However, the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group process demonstrated willingness on the part of the actors to 'be disturbed' and to contemplate new ways of doing things. It demonstrated, as well, an 'active network of communication' in which children and adults sat together in a two-month deliberation about two neighbourhood spaces. It involved crisis and chaos and tension, both for the researchers and the researched. We leave the case study at a point where the new network and the tools they experimented with, the ideas they generated and the relationships they formed, are all now

poised to either break down or break through. Regardless, though, the situation where the break though is possible is a key condition necessary for robust child-oriented planning for independent mobility.

A second pre-condition for co-planning with children is 'experience'. There was a preference, in the Kid's Focus Group, for the activities and methods that enabled children to touch, view, hear, taste and see – to experience – the space. This preference was manifest in the children's clear preference for the kids' tour (Figure 5) as a method (because they were able to physically interact with the Euclidian space) but also manifest in relation to the abstract, idealized or discursive space (Lefebvre 1974). For example, in dreaming up the ideal future of her site in the guided visualisation exercise, Chloe (Melb121) experienced (in her mind's eye), "the smell of happy people" (Figure 9).

Experience is also necessary, according to the CKPG practitioner reflections, for moving towards a new status quo with child-friendly planning. As Mary and Michelle (Practitioners) mused during the follow-up reflection session, a fundamental requirement for an effective tool is that it needs to provide an inspiring experience for planners that can be the 'epiphany' and the catalyst for change.

So a tool for robustly responding to children's planning need, especially concerning independent mobility, must be both practically and imaginatively experiential.

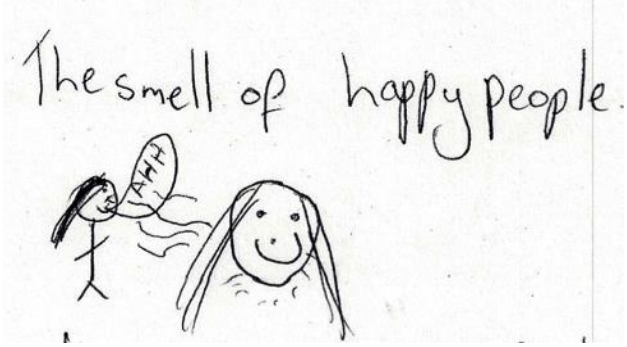

Figure 9: Children's experience of abstract space
Source: 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group guided visualisation exercise (Chloe), 22 May 2012

'Learning' is the third condition required for a robust 'tool' and this condition is a complex one. It can require a complete epistemological shift for many practitioners as well as some deep reflection on what 'learning' really is. In his seminal work on cognition, Dewey remarks:

> In a few people, intellectual curiosity is so insatiable that nothing will discourage it but in most its edge is easily dulled and blunted. Bacon's saying that we must become as little children in order to enter into the kingdom of science is at once a reminder of the open minded and flexible wonder of childhood and of the ease in which this endowment is lost.
>
> Dewey 1910: 33

His reflection draws a link for us between the adult world of practice and the child's way of knowing and triggers us to think about why learning from children might be valuable to planners as a key to the 'kingdom of [planning] science'.

'Learning' about one's place (spatial and social) is a key aspect of childhood development associated with independent mobility (Louv 2008; Derr 2006; Cele 2006; Beunderman et al 2007) and facilitating learning (for proponents and for themselves) is a key task for the 21st century planner (Forester 2009; Landry 2000). It is a task not well executed by planners, as a rule:

> In cities, formulaic responses thoughtlessly repeat what has gone before. Issues are approached from narrow perspectives and fail to capture reality.
>
> Landry 2000: 41

Forester exhorts planners to learn "about detail, not doctrine" (Forester 2009: 107) to shift their practice away from the formulaic and from the traps that "public propaganda" can lay for plan and policy making.

This is where the challenges of learning emerge. 'Child friendly cities', as a focus for planning advocacy, is not immune from its own propaganda. It is not enough to say 'cities for children are good'. It must be learned through deliberation with children and through intellectual and practical experimentation with approaches that uncover unseen problems, aspirations, surprises and negotiated ideas for solving urban problems, as understood by different people with different perspectives.

As deliberative and learning practice is a large and complex commitment, being 'vested' (the fourth criterion in the DELVE framework) in the issue is a critical encouragement to people to embark on a new learning process. It is easier to learn the "detail" that Forester speaks about when the scope of the learning is local and where people have some sort of stake in the outcome. In the CKPG, the application of different learning techniques to the 'live' project sites illustrates the importance of vested interest. The children were certainly excited to learn about planning as it might apply to a real place that several of them used regularly (particularly in the case of the Glenroy children in Morgan Court).

The excitement was concrete and in the 'now' (insofar as they could and did visit the sites and have a sense of what they looked like, smelled like, sounded like, etc.) but it was also – and perhaps more profoundly – abstract and in the 'future' or 'ideal'. Their imaginations, then, were invested in the changes they might possibly influence at the sites and in the power of their own citizenship and 'voice'.

For practitioners, the investment came in the form of working on a planning problem that was already on their work plans. This was not hypothetical or additional intellectual work to their core business; it was adding value to a project to which Council had committed time and money. For the time-poor planner in a busy practice or Council, this is a substantial condition to satisfy.

Even with vested interest in the site, the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group did illustrate the difficulties in garnering intellectual investment amongst practitioners in working with child citizens. We had, for example, remarkably consistent participation from the child participants but more erratic participation from the adult practitioners: a source of concern and process reflection when the research team was 'reflecting-in-action' (Forester 1999; Schön 1983).

The final type of investment, however, is the sort of social investments described by recent theorizing on social capital. In particular, the CKPG saw investment in local 'linking capital' (the social capital that creates 'vertical shift' connections between informal social networks and formal institutions and between those who differ in terms of authority/status/power - see Weller & Bruegel 2009).

In many respects, this is the 'vested' interest that has emerged most strongly through this case study. The postscript to the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group sessions has been a series of communications from land use and social planning practitioners regarding the need to maintain contact with the children involved and specific upcoming activities that involved these 'local expert' children. The children themselves are now being viewed as a professional asset and this is, in large part, because of the social (e.g. learning, collaborative, caring, etc.) investments that all the actors made in the process. People are now vested in one others' outcomes in a way they weren't prior to the CKPG; participants have become members of a new 'negotiating family' (Back-Wicklund, cited in Fotel 2007: 6).

The final element of the DELVE framework, 'exploration' is a critical condition necessary for a 'tool' and this points to all the things about the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group (and virtually all planning processes) that were fluid, flexible, unexpected and surprising. A robust tool for engaging with children's agency on questions of independent mobility must rest on curiosity about the physical, social and civic dimensions of planning for (and with) children. A curiosity about what might be is, arguably, the central mandate of strategic planning… and of the human experience:

> The most vital and significant factor in supplying the primary material whence suggestion may issue is, without doubt, curiosity… The curious mind is constantly alert and exploring, seeking material for thought, as a vigorous and healthy body is on the qui vive for nutriment.
>
> Dewey 1910: 30-31.

Dewey speaks of physical, social and intellectual curiosity and this aligns with this case study and its focus on the spatial, social and civic (or intellectual/ethical) explorations that have been made, by both children and adults, via CATCH/iMATCH and the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group. Exploration is simply a response to curiosity and a fundamental precondition to social learning (Healey 2006). Exploration (and planning) is always unfinished and awareness of this "unfinishedness" is a precondition to learning and changing (Freire 1998: 58). If a 'tool' for planners is to be effective, it must be exploratory in tone and must allow for "unfinishedness".

Conclusions

Processes such as the 'Citizen Kid' Planning Group can unlock new strengths in the citizenry that can be reinforced and reasserted over people's lifetimes. In the metaphor of initiation, these types of

opportunities to co-plan offer children “the secrets of the village” (Nabhan & Trimble 1994: 46). Our child participants, in process evaluation material, valued this dimension of their involvement enormously:

> Working together is more relaxing because I don’t have to think of everything myself – you can join ideas to make something better
>
> We can do things and work well in a team
>
> (‘Citizen Kid’ Planning Group child participants, from process evaluation sheets)

The ‘secrets of the village’ are the fundamental stuff of citizenship. Illuminating some of that process of initiation was a goal of this case study. Children in the CATCH/iMATCH phase one research valued autonomy and this finding reflects other similar research findings (Hillman et al 1990; Valentine 2004; Kyttä 2004; Fotel 2007). We can confidently claim that children want independence to experience the city with relative freedom from adult supervision. From the stage two ‘Citizen Kid’ Planning Group action research, however, we can add that they also value having a role in civic life and in *joining* adult discussions about how the city ought to be, look and function.

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