The role of Place in Children’s Wellbeing: Is the Baby disappearing with the Bathwater?

Child Aware Approaches Conference
Melbourne, April 11, 2013

Adj A/Prof Geoff Woolcock,
Griffith University / Wesley Mission Brisbane
Child Friendly Cities / Communities: A Resurgent Agenda

Themes:

1. How children and young people’s lives are affected by different urban trends and forms
2. How these differentially impact across the age spectrum
3. How increasing use of new ICTs has affected analysis of young people’s sense of place
4. How the urban physical environment can better children’s lives
Child Friendly Cities / Communities: Key Questions

- What are the critical processes for understanding the actual places and communities that most Australian children live, learn and play in and how children and young people's relate to these environments?

- What are the practicalities of attempting to both modify and create urban built and natural environments to be more oriented to children and young people's needs?
Child Friendly Cities / Communities: Key Questions

- What are the most effective mechanisms for fostering inclusion of children and young people in the design and implementation of child-friendly communities?
- How readily can modified and newly developed urban environments incorporate adequate natural spaces and places so vital to children and young people’s development?
- Can new information technologies actually be a catalyst for child and young people to have more direct interaction with nature and outdoor experiences?
Reinstating Children & Young People

• Resurgence of concern for children in professional, political and popular quarters

• Increasing multidisciplinarity, reflecting recognition of interdependencies between dimensions of children’s health and wellbeing
Turning Points

Children of the Lucky Country?
How Australian society has turned its back on children and why children matter

FIONA STANLEY, SUE RICHARDSON and MARGOT PRIOR

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs encourages you to tune in to the extraordinary Life documentary series on ABC1. The life series follows a group of children and their families closely selected to represent the diversity of Australia. Intermixed with the children’s stories are contributions from the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Over two episodes, Life at 12 or 3 apprentices this group of children to light of the future. This series is the first of ABC’s Life series. The first two episodes are also available on the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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Risking our Kids
Exploring the "Modernity Paradox"
Could we be the last generation of humans that live longer than our parents? Have we lost sight of how to care for our kids?

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Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological model
UNICEF Criteria: Global Accreditation for a Child Friendly Community

- Children’s participation
- A child friendly legal framework
- A community-wide Children’s Rights Strategy
- A Children’s Rights Unit
- Child impact assessment and evaluation
- A children’s budget
- A regular State of the Community’s Children Report
- Making children’s rights known
- Independent advocacy for children
Herald-Sun columnist, 11/08/2007

“Gill's off-hand dismissal of schoolyard friction and his easy acceptance that we need to embrace the risks of childhood might be welcome in the happy homes that most of us inhabit... perhaps we do micromanage our children's lives a little too much. But there are kids in every classroom willing to torment the vulnerable. And just a few of them grow up into Robert Arthur Selby Lowes, blokes who spend their days navigating the dead ends of their low lives looking for a Sheree Beasley, or a Daniel Morcombe, or a Madeleine McCann.

Pass me the bubble wrap”.
Free Range Kids?

We believe every child deserves to be free range.
They should be able to go exploring, play outdoors, and make their own way to school. And with a bit of encouragement and occasionally a nudge in the right direction, we can bring back the sound of children playing in our neighbourhoods.

Get some great ideas to help your kids become more free range at www.sustrans.org.uk/freerangekids

Free Range Kids
Child Social Exclusion (CSE)

Spatial distribution of the CSE Index aged 5-15 years

Notes: Brisbane has been aggregated to wards and Canberra to Statistical Sub-Divisions to allow comparison with other Australian SLAs.
Neighbourhood Effects

Disadvantage begins early in life

AEDI developmental scores of 5 year olds: Australia, 2009

- 50-100 %ile
- National mean
- 25-50 %ile
- 10%ile

NSW Indig Non-Indig Vic Indig Non-Indig Qld Indig Non-Indig WA Indig Non-Indig SA Indig Non-Indig Tas Indig Non-Indig ACT Indig Non-Indig NT Indig Non-Indig Aust Indig Non-Indig
Neighbourhood Effects

AEDI matched to SEIFA Index of disadvantage

Source: AEDI Communities Data 2004/2005
Neighbourhood Effects

Janus/off diagonal communities in Australia

![Graph showing the relationship between the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage and the proportion vulnerable in one or more domains.](image)
Density & Children

SPRAWL KILLS
 HOW BLANDBURBS STEAL
YOUR TIME, HEALTH AND MONEY.

Joel S. Hirschhorn, Ph.D.
FOREWORD BY RICHARD E. KILLINGSWORTH

ELIZABETH
FARRELLY

BLUBBERLAND
THE DANGERS OF HAPPINESS
## Children in Outer Suburbia

### Children 3-8 years old

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996 % of Pop</th>
<th>2001 % of Pop</th>
<th>2006 % of Pop</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brisbane City Core</td>
<td>2,107</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2,416</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern - Inner</td>
<td>5,354</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6,011</td>
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<td>Western - Inner</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2,711</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern - Inner</td>
<td>7,014</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7,572</td>
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<td>Southern - Inner</td>
<td>3,542</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3,739</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20,666</td>
<td>22,449</td>
<td>24,341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern - Outer</td>
<td>4,363</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5,108</td>
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<td>Western - Outer</td>
<td>10,371</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>11,166</td>
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<td>Northern - Outer</td>
<td>11,035</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>13,570</td>
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<td>Southern - Outer</td>
<td>9,343</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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<td>35,112</td>
<td>41,425</td>
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<td>Beaudesert</td>
<td>2,488</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2,930</td>
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<td>Caboolture</td>
<td>10,696</td>
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<td>16,987</td>
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<td>Pine Rivers</td>
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<td>8.4</td>
<td>12,159</td>
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<td>Redcliffe City</td>
<td>3,582</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3,544</td>
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<td>Redland Shire</td>
<td>9,726</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>10,146</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>67,629</td>
<td>67,737</td>
<td>72,778</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brisbane SD</td>
<td>123,407</td>
<td>131,611</td>
<td>140,259</td>
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Gender Differences?
Cultural Differences?

We Built This City!
Nature-Deficit Disorder?

Commonly credited with helping to inspire an international movement to reintroduce children to nature;

Describes possible negative consequences to individual health and the social fabric as children move indoors and away from physical contact with the natural world – particularly unstructured, solitary experience.
Nature-Deficit Disorder?

“Today's youth spend just four to seven minutes outside each day in unstructured outdoor play such as climbing trees, building forts, catching bugs or playing tag, studies show. Yet, they spend more than seven hours each day in front of a screen”.
Nature-Deficit Disorder?

- 73% of respondents played outdoors more often than indoors when they were young compared to only 13% of their children.
- 72% of respondents played outside every day as kids compared to only 35% of their children.
- 1 in 10 children today play outside once a week or less.
Is technology ruining children?

Limiting Screen Time

On average, American kids spend about five hours per day using various screen media for entertainment, including television, video games, and the internet. This means that over the course of a year they spend more time in front of a screen than in school. In fact, 43 percent of children under the age of two are daily TV watchers.

These figures stand in stark contrast to the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics and Kaiser Permanente that no child should have more than one or two hours of screen time per day, and children under two should have none at all. This recommendation of no electronic media for children 0-2 even applies to TV shows, DVDs, and computer games that have supposedly been designed for very young children.

Screen Time’s Toll On Our Kids’ Health

Children who watch more than five hours of TV per day are more than four times as likely to be overweight, compared to children who watch less than two hours per day. According to the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overweight children have an increased risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, joint problems, depression.
Is technology ruining children?

Kompan – ‘Rocky’ combines exercise and electronic gaming
Child-Friendly by Design

What Makes a Great Place?
Other things you like/dislike

What would you change?

Adapted from Project for Public Spaces' Plaza Diagram (2003) resource
A PLAY MANIFESTO FROM AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN

What our world would look like without play;
- Lonely, depressed, isolated, super-boring, no imagination, no creativity, no friends, unhealthy, unfit with lots of arguments
- It would be like there were no colours in the world
- Our parents would be depressed because we would be sad and lonely

What play means to us;
- Play is important to us because through play we can find out who we are and who others are
- Play shows our personalities, helps us make friends and feel part of a group
- When we play we can try different things, use our imagination and can relax
- Play is fun, makes us happy and gives us a chance to be unique

Where we want to play;
- In places we know we won’t be judged, where we can be free and independent
- In a community that cares for one another and looks out for each other
- Where people will support us and make us feel safe and we know we could ask anyone for help when we need it

How we want to play;
- We love spontaneous play that uses our imagination, creativity and self-expression
- We also like play that is organised and lets us work as a team
- We want to be able to play with our friends, our family and others in our community

When we want to play;
- EVERYDAY! As much as we can!
- Until we get tired!

Please work with us to help save play for Australian children. Make time for play!
Child-Friendly Schools? (WTF?)
Community Building

Child and Family Plan
Child-Friendly Cities Strategies

ACT Children's Plan 2010 - 2014
Vision and Building Blocks for a Child-Friendly City

The State of Bendigo's Children report

An initiative of the Bendigo Child Friendly City Leadership Group
March 2011
Focusing solely on the most disadvantaged will not reduce health inequalities sufficiently. To reduce the steepness of the social gradient in health, actions must be universal, but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to the level of disadvantage. We call this proportionate universalism.
Child-Friendly by Design

“One should be able to play everywhere, easily, loosely, and not forced into a ‘playground’ or a ‘park’.

“The failure of an urban environment can be measured in direct proportion to the number of playgrounds”

(Quoted in Ward, 1977, 73).
Adjunct Assoc. Prof. Geoffrey Woolcock
School of Human Services & Social Work
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY - LOGAN

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