

The Journey *and* the Destination Matter: Child-Friendly Cities and Children's Right to the City

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A precipitous decline in the ability of children to walk, cycle, and play outdoors without adult supervision has led to increasing research and policy supporting children's independent mobility (CIM). This article analyses the role of Child-Friendly City initiatives at the local government level in Victoria, Australia, in addressing CIM. Child-Friendly Cities are a promising practice, as they focus on children's right to public space, as opposed to a more limited public health approach that stresses relative risks of traffic and abduction by strangers versus physical inactivity. However, significant barriers are found in the policies and practices of five case studies within Victoria; specifically, the difficulties in moving from the social and health planning perspective informing Child-Friendly City initiatives, towards impacts on land-use planning policies and practices.

Introduction: The Journey and the Destination

One morning in 1895, Albert Parr left his house outside Bergen, a town of 75,000 people on the west coast of Norway, to buy fish for his family's supper. His journey involved:

walking to the station in five to ten minutes; buying ticket; watching train with coal-burning steam locomotive pull in; boarding train; riding across long bridge over shallows separating small-boat harbour (on the right) from ship's harbour (on the left), including small naval base with torpedo boats; continuing through a tunnel; leaving train at terminal, sometimes dawdling to look at railway equipment; walking by and sometimes entering fisheries museum; passing central town park where military band played during mid-day break; strolling by central shopping and business district, or, alternatively, passing fire station with horses at ease under suspended harnesses, ready to go, and continuing past centuries-old town hall and other ancient buildings; exploration of fish market and fishing fleet; selection of fish; haggling about price; purchase and return home. (Parr, 1967, p. 3)

Over 70 years later, Parr still remembered the distinct pleasures and the sense of accomplishment provided by this regular responsibility of buying fish for the family dinner. Parr was four years old at the time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Parr argues, 'the mobility of a child in the first grade was not very different from that of its parents, and its autonomous daily orbit was virtually identical with that of its elders' (*Ibid.*, p. 3). Increasing mobility for adults, according to Parr and many who wrote afterwards, has been bought at the cost of reducing children's mobility, 'largely as a result of the hazards introduced by the new means of adult locomotion', that is, the car (*Ibid.*, p. 4; see also Engwicht, 1992; Tranter and Sharpe, 2008). While one might wonder whether a girl – Albertine Parr – would be granted the same freedom at such an early age, the fact remains that the sort of independent journey that Parr describes would be virtually inconceivable today for

either a four year old boy or girl.

The past 20 years have seen both research and policy responses to the rapidly decreasing abilities of children to explore their urban environments on their own. Following on the foundational work of Mayer Hillman, John Adams and John Whitelegg (1990), the term 'children's independent mobility' (CIM) – defined as the ability of those under 18 to explore public space autonomously, most often through walking, cycling, and using public transport – has been popularized. Decreasing independent mobility and increasing dependence on parental car trips has been measured over time (e.g., Hillman *et al.*, 1990; Martin and Carlson, 2005). The main barriers to children's independent mobility – parental perceptions of traffic safety and stranger danger – have been explored, as have other posited reasons, including a culture of risk aversion and the loss of neighbourhood destinations such as corner shops and local schools (e.g., McMillan, 2005; Prezza *et al.*, 2005; Gill, 2007). The individual and community health and wellbeing impacts, including decreased everyday physical activity and threats to community trust and cohesion, have been chronicled (e.g., Timperio *et al.*, 2004; Fincher and Iveson, 2008). The efficacy of interventions to improve children's everyday walking and cycling and/or independent exploration of their local environments, such as the Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to Schools, have been evaluated (e.g., Timperio *et al.*, 2004; Mackett and Paskins, 2008). A local governance approach to improving children's right to the city, Child-Friendly Cities, has been developed by UNICEF and promulgated in many cities (e.g., Malone, 2006; Freeman and Aiken-Rose, 2005).

The focus of the research described in this article is most related to this last theme of research: how policies and practices at both the local and senior governance levels enable children's autonomous exploration of public space, or act as a barrier to it. Our population focus was on children aged 8–12,

corresponding to the senior years (grades 3 to 6) of primary school in our study area. The geographic focus was the state of Victoria, the second most populous state in the country, whose capital, Melbourne, is the second most populous city in Australia. The policy focus was on Child-Friendly City initiatives amongst a growing number of the seventy-nine local governments in the state. How, we asked, can Child-Friendly City policies and practices support physical and social transformations, not only towards a goal of more walking and cycling by children, but towards the institutionalization of children's right to the city? Can it ever again become a rite of passage, or a right at all, for primary school aged children to be allowed rich and varied autonomous journeys in local environments such as the one described above?

Planning for Child-Friendly Cities: 'Child Rescue' and Children's Rights

From Hillman *et al.*'s 1990 foundational study on children's independent mobility, research in the fields of public health, geography, urban planning, environmental psychology, and sociology has chronicled the health and wellbeing consequences of children's lessening use of public space. This trend has been particularly noteworthy in wealthy Anglo-American communities. For instance, in Melbourne, the focus of this research, 55.3 per cent of young people walked to school or higher education in 1970, mostly without adult accompaniment; this figure fell to 22.2 per cent in 1994. In the same time period, car travel to school increased from 14.3 per cent to 43.9 per cent (Garrard, 2009, p. 9). From 1994 to 1999, children aged 0–14 years in Melbourne made an average of 23.1 trips per week, 16.3 of which were as a car passenger (71 per cent), 5.0 as a pedestrian (22 per cent), and 0.2 as a cyclist (1 per cent). During this five-year period, Melbourne children spent on average four hours a week as a car passenger and 48 minutes walking

(Ironmonger and Norman, 2007). When Karen Malone (2007) asked 50 children aged 4–8 in the regional Victorian city of Bendigo to take photographs of their typical week, over half included a picture of the back seat of their family car.

Preschool and primary school children are often portrayed as ‘angels’, needing protection from strangers as well as traffic (Malone and Hasluck, 1998). In contrast, teenagers using public space are often portrayed by the media as ‘devils’ outside parental control (Valentine, 1996), denied ‘legitimate user status’ in semi-private shopping centres and recreation complexes (Malone and Hasluck 1998, p. 34). Arising from these ‘concerns about risks to and from young people’, planning responses have been limited: ‘fenced playgrounds which afford adult surveillance’ are provided for younger children, while skate parks are seen as a ‘solution to the problem of boisterous teenagers’ (Fincher and Iveson, 2008, p. 107). These responses create an ‘archipelago of “safe” spaces in a sea of adult-centric space’ (*Ibid.*, p. 109).

Much of the literature has focused on the public health consequences of declining walking and cycling. Mackett and Paskins (2008), along with other studies, have found that children who walk or cycle to school and other destinations, or who informally play outdoors, are more likely to meet the recommended daily minimum level of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity than those who are driven to school, even if the latter children engage in organized sports and recreation programmes. Low levels of physical activity are associated with increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, type two diabetes, and colon cancer, through overweight and obesity, amongst children as young as 12 (Timperio *et al.*, 2004; Martin and Carlson, 2005). Public health researchers have blamed transport and land-use planners for creating ‘obesogenic environments’ (Catford and Caterson, 2003, p. 578), where everyday physical activity is

constrained and discouraged by built form and social rules such as speed limits (see Minster, this issue).

Whether an individual child has low or high levels of physical activity and autonomous exploration of public space is related to a number of factors, including gender, age, and socio-economic status. Prezza *et al.* (2005, p. 438), summarizing research in this area, concludes that independent mobility increases with age, and is differentiated by gender, with boys having more freedom than girls. The influence of socio-economic status (SES) is more equivocal. In general, children from lower SES areas are less likely to be physically active than children from higher SES areas (Timperio *et al.*, 2004, p. 21), even though low SES households are less likely to own vehicles. Morrow (2000), in her interviews with young people, found that youth in low SES areas were deterred by dog muck, broken bottles, and other garbage/filth, as well as harassment by store owners and police. Tranter and Pawson (2001) found that traffic volume and speeds were greater determinants of CIM than SES, in their study of four neighbourhoods in Christchurch, New Zealand.

This public health based case for somehow restoring children’s previously higher rates of walking and cycling provides a sense of urgency, with the argument that the current generation of children may be the first in Australia to have a lower life expectancy than earlier generations (Woolcock and Gleeson, 2007, p. 1012). According to Woolcock and Gleeson, it provides the rationale for a twenty-first century equivalent to the nineteenth century notion of ‘child rescue’ from health and moral risks, which led to policy initiatives like playgrounds and kindergarten programmes (*Ibid.*).

Another influence on the policy environment is the growth of Child-Friendly Cities initiatives, within Australia and internationally. Traditionally, children have been often conceptualized and treated as ‘undeveloped, lacking even basic capacities for under-

standing, communicating and making choices ... powerless within their families and often voiceless and invisible within society' (MacNaughton *et al.*, 2007, p. 458). This view has been challenged by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, which portrays children as 'social actors who shape their identities, create and communicate valid views about the social world and have a right to participate in it' (*Ibid.*, p. 460). There are three Articles of particular relevance to Child-Friendly Cities. Article 3 establishes that 'In all actions concerning children ... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'. Article 12 argues the right to participation in public discourse: 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own view the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child'. Article 31 argues their right to participate in public space: 'States Parties respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for ... recreational and leisure activities' (UNICEF, 1989).

In the year following adoption of the Convention, UNICEF established a Child-Friendly Cities initiative, which 'promotes the implementation of the Convention ... at the level where it has the greatest impact on children's lives': local government (UNICEF, 2004, p. 1). A local authority must commit to several outcomes to assure its fulfilment of the Convention. These include ensuring 'that policies, resource allocations and governance actions are made in a manner that is in the best interests of children and their constituencies', that 'safe environments ... with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychological development, and cultural expression' are provided, and that 'children have the right to participate in making decisions that affect their lives and are offered opportunities to express their opinions' (Malone, 2006, p. 21).

These policy influences provide a rights perspective that complements, and in some ways challenges, a public health perspective. A public health perspective emphasizes the risks of children's inactivity and entrapment within the private sphere of car and house, balanced against the risks of automobiles and the very minimal risk of assault by strangers. The Child-Friendly Cities perspective, in contrast, emphasizes an *a priori* right for children's participation in public space and discourse, even if children (like adults) sometimes make mistakes and expose themselves to risks from traffic and strangers. Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson (2008) have integrated the tension described by political philosopher Nancy Fraser between 'rights talk' and 'needs talk' into planning for urban diversity. On the one hand, social justice demands a level of redistribution: equal opportunities for basic material conditions, which could include the right to a good school or a safe footpath in one's neighbourhood. On the other hand, equality demands a level of recognition, that 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem' (Fraser, 2004, pp. 127–128). In other words, children not only have a right to a basic level of physical and social infrastructure in their communities, but also have the right to be recognized as an interest group with specific needs that can only be expressed by themselves, not their parents and other caregivers.

Fraser (1989, p. 164) also describes three kinds of political struggles. Legitimation struggles involve making a specific need an issue. Interpretation struggles develop over creating the terms and the contexts in which the issue will be explored. Finally, struggles take place over the resultant policies, which may or may not represent the satisfaction of that need. Fincher and Iveson (2008, p. 13) suggest that the right to parity of participation described by Fraser entails a third 'right to the city' beyond

redistribution and recognition: the 'right to exploratory encounters with the strangers with whom they share the city'. This right to public space can only be achieved through legitimating the right to recognition as a distinct group, developing appropriate mechanisms to interpret the issue, and then developing the policies that will satisfy that need. In this article, we will be using this framework to explore the right and the need to explore public space independently as a basic precondition to healthy and sustainable cities.

The Case Study: Child-Friendly Cities and Independent Mobility

The research described was funded by the Volvo Research and Education Foundation from 2006 to 2009, as part of the larger Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT). This was the sole area of research to have an explicitly social/ health focus within an overall research programme on planning and management for sustainable transport futures, and the only area of research that focused on a subset of the general population.

Our research had two phases. In the first phase (July 2006 to December 2007), our objectives were to review the international evidence base for making CIM a policy priority within the state of Victoria, and to identify key stakeholders, policies and programmes within Australia. Aside from an international literature review on the extent of the programme and policies which appeared to have been successful in addressing the problem, we undertook a content analysis of twenty key Victorian and local government policies and *programmes*, to determine how and to what extent they directly or indirectly address CIM (at the time of the initial research, there was no Australia-wide policy relating to cities). We also interviewed fourteen Victorian decision-makers, researchers, and advocates on their knowledge of CIM. The results of

the first phase of research are summarized in the report *From Battery-Reared to Free Range Children* (Whitzman and Pike, 2007).

The first phase of research found no senior government policies that explicitly targeted CIM. Most high-level strategic, social and land-use planning policies did not specifically address the needs of children, although some spoke of the needs of families: these included the metropolitan Melbourne land-use plan (*Melbourne 2030*); a state policy aimed at integrating local government strategic, public health and land-use plans (*Environments for Health*); and the overarching state strategies (*Growing Victoria Together* and *A Fairer Victoria*). There were several programmes that showed potential, including a Ride to School programme developed by Environment Victoria but eventually offered by Bike Victoria, which works to increase children's bicycle riding skills and indirectly promoted CIM. On the other hand, the Walking School Bus programme supported by most local councils, subsidized by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) since 2001, was not showing significant impacts in terms of increasing children's active travel outcomes beyond the initial intervention, and it was also proving difficult to maintain in many councils. This led to VicHealth abandoning support for the programme at the end of 2007, in favour of a pilot programme with the explicit mandate of improving children's active travel and independent mobility outcomes, called Streets Ahead (Whitzman and Perkovic, 2010).

Perhaps the most intriguing initiative identified in the initial research was Child-Friendly Cities. At the time of the initial report, the City of Greater Bendigo, a regional Victorian city with 86,000 inhabitants, had become the first Australian city to apply for formal accreditation as a Child-Friendly City. Several other local governments, including Port Phillip and Melbourne in the inner part of metropolitan Melbourne, and Brimbank in the western suburbs, were also identified by interview participants as pursuing

Child-Friendly City initiatives. Child-Friendly Cities, in our opinion, are a step beyond micro-level questions of particular programmes that might, for instance, reduce car traffic speeds and volume in residential areas, or work with parents to support their decisions to allow children more autonomous exploration of public space. They represented, instead, institutionalized council-wide initiatives that might consult with children about their views on both the physical and social environments, and then enact policies and programmes in response to these views.

In the second phase of the research, we asked the question: can the development of child-friendly cities promote children's independent mobility? We began by focusing on four local governments we knew were pursuing child-friendly cities initiatives, which we sought to match with similar 'control' sites, in order to ascertain whether their initiatives were changing policies and practices.

While it was easy to determine a local government with little interest in child-friendly policies in inner Melbourne and another in the western suburbs of Melbourne, we soon discovered that all of the similarly sized regional cities in Victoria (Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, and Wodonga) were pursuing child-friendly city initiatives. We thus ended up with five intervention sites (Melbourne, Port Phillip, Brimbank, Bendigo, Ballarat), and two control sites.

Based on the literature, we developed a model with six elements of ideal policies and practices that might promote CIM. First, the effectiveness of planning policies is dependent on the explicit recognition of children as an interest group, thus rejecting the 'trickle-down' approach that assumes that what is good for adults or families is good for children (Bartlett, 2005, p. 19). Planning for the 'universal child' is also insufficient, because children are diverse in terms of gender, income, ethnicity and disabilities. Second, planning policies must explicitly recognize children's rights to all public space,

not only those designated as 'child specific' spaces such as playgrounds or schools. Third, policies must provide achievable targets, strategies and implementation mechanisms that name lead departments, and provide a whole of government response. These targets might include: an increased number of children reporting use and comfort in public spaces; whether there are basic services like shops, schools, and recreation areas within easy walking distance; and whether children report that these destinations are accessible and pleasant to use. Fourth, policies must be integrated into other local government policies, such as health and land-use plans. There were two further criteria for model practices. First, social and land-use planners, local councillors and senior managers, must be trained in a rights based approach to planning for children. It is not enough to train one champion, since turnover is high in local government, and departmental silos mean that land-use planners may not be in regular contact with social or health planners. Second, planners must be equipped with the skills that allow them to interact with children, including the ability to transform complex plans into simple diagrams, and complex ideas from children into planning policies (Whitzman *et al.*, 2009).

In each of the seven governments, we used this model to review the three high level plans that all local councils must develop: a Council Plan that outlines overall strategies and priorities, generally on a three year timeline; a Health and Wellbeing Plan that provides a sense of public health priorities; and a Municipal Strategic Statement that provides major directions and strategies for land use planning. We also examined lower-level policies that dealt specifically with young people, such as Municipal Early Years Plans, which cover children's needs from birth to either age five or eight, and any specific Child-Friendly City policies that had been developed (*Ibid.*). We interviewed at least one council officer directly involved

in either a Child-Friendly Cities initiative (in the case of the five intervention sites) or in children's services (in the two control sites), and one land-use planner, to discover their everyday practices related to children's participation.

The Findings: Child-Friendly Policies and Practices

We found that those local governments committed to child-friendly cities were more likely to recognize children explicitly as a group with rights. For instance, the City of Port Phillip, in its *Creating a Child-Friendly Port Phillip Implementation Plan* (2005, p. 1), committed to developing a Child Impact Assessment tool for policies and services and also committed to including in council report templates a requirement to state the effects of any proposal on children. The City of Melbourne's public health plan (2005, p. 28) said that the council will 'develop policy to legitimize children as stakeholders'. In contrast, the major health and land-use planning documents in the two control sites emphasized 'families', not 'children', as a group with specific needs, and there was no mention of children's rights.

We also found that local governments committed to child-friendly cities had begun to integrate children's right to exploration and play throughout cities. The City of Port Phillip has embarked on a Green Light campaign to lower speed limits and increase traffic stopping times along major roads, particularly those used to travel to schools. It also promised to 'promote sections of "Walks in Port Phillip" ... that are suitable for children and families' (2005, p. 4). The City of Melbourne has recognized, in its recent long-term strategy plan (2009, Connected City section: goal 3 Walking City): 'whether or not children are safe to walk is a real test of a walking city'. The City of Greater Bendigo's *Playspace Strategy* (2009, p. 7) provides an inclusive definition of play spaces as 'the entire site where play

can occur', including elements such as 'landscaping, paths, lighting, fencing, open space ... seating, shade structures, barbecues' as well as natural features such as boulders or logs. The ultimate aim is to 'provide a broad range of high quality play opportunities and experiences which stimulate the imagination and can be enjoyed by the whole community, regardless of age or ability' (*Ibid.*, p. 15). In contrast, the control sites' policies were still focused on the management of child-specific spaces like child care centres and maternal and child health centres. When issues of accessibility for children were raised, they were usually destination focused, such as access to schools or playgrounds. There was no notion that children can and do walk and play everywhere.

We found that both control and intervention sites were weak on specific targets and monitoring systems. The City of Port Phillip's *Child-Friendly City Strategy* (2005, p. 2) did speak of key progress indicators, but they were generic goals such as 'nutrition and weight measures' and 'safe and accessible environments'. In general, the listing of resources, timelines, and lead council business units was under-developed in relation to policies directly affecting children (Whitzman *et al.*, 2009). The City of Greater Bendigo (2009, p. 5) undertook an extensive consultation with over 500 children from 2006 to 2008 to 'find out what it is like for children growing up in Bendigo and identify their needs and aspirations'. However, there were no actions or recommendations linked to the findings of the report. In contrast, the City of Ballarat's consultation with children resulted in a series of recommendations, although they lacked timelines or responsible departments to manage their implementation (2007, pp. 44–48).

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of our policy scan was the extent to which land-use planning policies were integrated with Child-Friendly City initiatives. In all of the five intervention sites, the Child-Friendly City initiatives had arisen from 'Family and Youth

Services', or 'Health Services' Departments. Despite local authority commitments to Child-Friendly City initiatives taking a whole of government approach, there were no cases where the language or concepts of Child-Friendly Cities had percolated to the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS), the high level plan governing land use and development. Several councils stated that one of the aims of their MSS was to create a walking city, with the City of Greater Bendigo aiming for a city 'where streets are safe and a pleasant place to walk ... [and] laneways and arcades provide opportunities to explore and discover' (City of Greater Bendigo, 2010, Clause 21.07-1).

But in no MSS were children mentioned as a specific group with explicit rights and needs, and there were many implicit examples assuming children belonged in specific places, rather than throughout the city. We did a basic content analysis of all seven MSSs and found that there was no difference between intervention and control sites in their limited use of the terms 'child/children' and 'youth' throughout documents that were well over 200 pages: six mentions in the City of Melbourne's MSS, three in the City of Brimbank, and one or zero in all other cases. The three mentions of 'children' in Brimbank were all in the context of childcare centres. The City of Melbourne (2010: Clauses 21.05 and 21.08) did suggest a 'Youth Precinct' around a new city Skate Park on the north bank of the Yarra, to complement a Skate Park on the south bank of the Yarra less than a kilometre away, and this was the only mention of a peer gathering place for children and youth, as opposed to generic recreation centres.

When it came to practices, we found that in all the intervention sites, land-use planners have a more comprehensive understanding of children's rights and the importance of consultation. However, most land-use planners reported that children are rarely consulted in relation to neighbourhood land-use strategies or to the MSS. Usually,

consulting with parents is considered an effective substitute (Whitzman *et al.*, 2009, pp. 30–31). Bendigo and Brimbank were involved in Streets Ahead initiatives funded by VicHealth, although as of the interviews in March and April 2009, none had yet consulted with children on active travel or independent mobility (*Ibid.*, pp. 21–32).

The local governments we examined varied widely in terms of the training they had undertaken. The Cities of Port Phillip and Greater Bendigo were furthest ahead in terms of training local politicians and senior staff, as well as social and health planners. There was the sense amongst all local government staff we interviewed that training for land-use planners, as well as local politicians and senior staff, was essential for a whole of government approach, and that the child-friendly cities were still in their infancy in terms of a comprehensive approach to inclusive and deliberative practice.

Table 1 is a summary of progress towards Child-Friendly City policies and practices that can promote children's right to the city. While there are clear differences between the five intervention sites and the two control sites in terms of policies and practices to promote children's right to the city, the policies and practices are emergent, and it is too early to evaluate impacts on rates of CIM. There has been an increase in both the number of local councils pursuing Child-Friendly City initiatives, and the work accomplished in the intervention sites, since the research took place in March–April 2009.

Conclusion: The Journey and the Destination Matter

The findings of this research echo earlier studies by Clare Freeman and her colleagues in New Zealand (Freeman and Aitken-Rose, 2005; Freeman *et al.*, 2003), as well as the model of children's participation developed by Harry Shier (2001) in the UK. In 2003, Freeman and Aitken-Rose sent a survey to all of New Zealand's city and district authorities'

Table 1. Summary of policy and practice evaluation in Child-Friendly Cities for CIM (based on Whitzman *et al.*, 2009).

	<i>Socio-spatial characteristics</i>	<i>Explicit recognition of children as group to be consulted</i>	<i>Recognition of children's right to CIM/ exploration of public space</i>	<i>Clear targets and leads, clear monitoring plan</i>	<i>Integrated health and land-use plans</i>	<i>Planners trained in children's rights and CIM</i>	<i>Planners and councillors trained in consultation with children</i>
Melbourne	Inner city; low % children; average SES	Yes	Yes (is the city walkable for children?)	Fair action plan, with limited monitoring	Partial (promotion of 'youth precinct' in land-use plan)	Health planners active, land-use planners less so	Proposed training for health and land-use planners
Port Phillip	Inner city; low % children; high SES	Yes	Yes (children's traffic safety concerns, access to play spaces and services)	Fair action plan, with weak targets and leads	Nothing in land-use plan, but Child Impact Assessment tool being developed	Emergent (in employment criteria for both health and land use planners)	Considerable training for all planners and councillors
Brimbank	Middle suburb; high % children; low SES	Partial (youth, not children)	No	Fair action plan, with limited monitoring	Nothing in land-use plan	Emergent (through Streets Ahead)	Training for social and health planners
Bendigo	Regional city; high % children; low SES	Yes	Partial (children's right to play spaces, not other spaces)	Fair action plan, with unclear targets and leads	Nothing in land-use plan, although walkability a priority	Emergent (though Streets Ahead)	Considerable training for both health and land-use planners
Ballarat	Regional city; average % children; low SES	Partial (youth, not children)	No	Fair action plan, with unclear targets and leads	Nothing in land-use plan	Health planners active, land-use planners less so	One training session, with broad uptake
<i>Control site: inner city</i>	Inner city; low % children; high SES	Partial (youth, not children)	No	No action plan	Youth strategy not integrated into Council Plan	No training	No training
<i>Control site: middle suburb</i>	Middle suburb; average % children; average SES	No	No	No action plan	No explicit policies	No training	No training

planning policy and control offices. The majority of the fifty councils who responded said that they consulted with teenagers, but far fewer council officers said they regularly consulted with primary school children. Most councils consulted children and youth over school and recreation centre projects, predominantly skate parks and playgrounds. There was no mention of consultation with children around retail, entertainment and housing projects. Issues included in the consultations included safety, design and access, but not cost, location or avoiding conflict. A little over half the respondents said they were comfortable working with children

and young people, but some of those council officers appeared a bit complacent in their responses, saying that as parents themselves, they knew about children, or that consulting with children was only a small and relatively unimportant aspect of their jobs. A little under half of the respondents said they were concerned about their training in consultation with children, and that there was a lack of time and other resources. It was also difficult to find children and young people with whom they could consult (Freeman and Aitken-Rose, 2005). While on the one hand, this is a fairly high level of local authority participation with children and young people, children

are still seen as belonging in specific spaces and competent only on specific issues.

A more detailed study of youth participation in one New Zealand council (Freeman *et al.*, 2003) suggested that planners were still working with children and young people in traditional ways such as youth councils, public meetings and surveys. The funding for these consultations came from family services rather than land-use or corporate planning. There are few mechanisms in place at councils to identify the outcomes or impacts of participation with children in terms of local environments. Again, this echoes the concerns expressed in our research. Even in councils committed to engaging with youth as citizens, there are still both organizational and perceptual barriers to overcome before children's right to the city is institutionalized.

Shier (2001) says that there are four stages to effective children's participation in local government planning. First, local authorities must be ready to listen: there must be an *opening*. Then children must be supported in expressing their views – which could be through mechanisms such as 'weeks with a camera', focus groups in schools, and design charettes (intensive one to three day workshops that involve non-professionals in designing an area) as well as more traditional formats (see Pooley *et al.*, this issue for use of, for example, ethnographies). Then children must be involved in *opportunities* for change: actual deliberative decision-making processes that might involve both strategic planning and development approvals. Finally, if children's views are solicited, the impact of these views must be demonstrated, both in terms of changes to the development but also in terms of changes in the use of the resultant spaces. Shier calls this an *obligation* to share power and responsibility in decision-making.

Albert Parr, who later became the director of several natural history and science museums, described, in vivid detail, the journey he undertook as a four year old.

But it should not be forgotten that the journey had a purpose: Parr had to choose the fish, haggle over its price, and return the purchase to his family before the fish spoiled. Conversely, Jan Gehl, the noted Danish urban designer and advocate for public space, once told David Engwicht, an equally noted Australian urbanist, that it used to take Gehl eight minutes to walk to school and two hours to walk home:

Gehl's mother would say, 'Jan, why does it only take you eight minutes to get to school but two hours to get home?' Jan said, 'The eight minutes was a trip. But what happened in the two hours was the stuff of life'. (Engwicht, 2003, unpaginated)

Both portions of Gehl's journey had a destination. But in his words, the journey was the stuff of life.

It is the contention of this article that both the journey *and* the destination matter. All five local governments who are undertaking Child-Friendly City initiatives are embarked on a policy-related journey. Shier's model has strong resemblances to Nancy Fraser's discussion of the journey: from legitimation, which is the initial opening that allows (in this case) children to be seen as citizens with rights; through interpretation of views; to a struggle over the resultant policies and built and social environment outcomes. We would argue that Child-Friendly City initiatives in Victoria are still at the initial stage of legitimation. The creation of a network of Child-Friendly Cities in Victoria in October 2009, after the end of the research described in this article, marks a significant opening to share good practices and move towards institutionalization of land-use policies that can support children's autonomous use of public space. But there is still a long way to go in terms of interpretation of those needs and rights, and over the resultant policies and landscapes, even in local authorities that have begun the journey.

The destination matters as well. This article describes one possible aim of Child-Friendly City initiatives: more children in

better public spaces, enjoying themselves more. The actual 'look' of those Child-Friendly Cities – the aspects of the built, social and natural environments that support children's independent exploration – might vary according to local contexts, but the principles of listening to children's views and then responding through policies and programmes, would be key. At the moment, the monitoring and evaluation of Child-Friendly City initiatives in Victoria (as well as Streets Ahead, the pilot programme funded by VicHealth) are at initial stages. There has simply not been enough in the way of policies – whether focused on traffic calming, better play spaces, and more child-friendly public spaces and neighbourhoods – to evaluate in terms of the impacts on CIM. The destination – children's right to walk, cycle, roll, use public transport, sit, linger, play and socialize throughout the city – needs to be clearly articulated, for the journey to commence properly.

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