



Courtesy: Tim Gill (*Rethinking Childhoods*) & Dr Wendy Russell (*University of Gloucestershire*)

Space to Play

02/06/2020

- **Children are missing out. The area they have for independent play has shrunk over recent generations often to a tiny area with the car taking over.** We need to provide invitations to play at every opportunity, using the spaces children pass through, topography and nature, moving the focus beyond 'play equipment surrounded by a fence'. Cars should be kept away and instead space made inviting to people – streets are also for children, for being in as well as moving through.
- **Count what counts – what you measure is what you get so be outcome focussed when gathering evidence before and after change.** Ask the children questions which will reveal if a space is successful. Participation is an end as well as a means and can lead to sustainable management. Bring politicians and professionals with you on the journey - play isn't just for children, it animates and builds communities.
- **Density is less of an issue than distance from the street – families prefer perimeter blocks to high rise homes.** We must also remember space to play inside the home with flexibility built in. 'Doorstep' internal areas outside flats need generosity of space, sound insulation and light with good looking durable materials to make them welcoming for children when they can't go outside. However indoor play should complement, not replace outdoor space.
- **Find where the great spaces are and ensure these can be enjoyed by children – the best located spaces should not be occupied by cars, these spaces are too valuable!** Bring potential for activities which are for all ages into play spaces and ensure children have freedom to run, skate and cycle. Spaces should be healthy and social for a range of groups, but space is only successful when it has the right context – eyes on the space, a range of flexible uses for all ages and connection to wider routes children use. And instead of just identifying hazards, risk must be balanced by the benefits.
- **The importance of children's play within planning documents is patchy, with few mentions in the NPPF but much stronger emphasis in the London plan good growth draft SPG documents.** Local plans are also variable and focus on elements which do not grasp the nettle – playgrounds, schools, parks but what about all the other places? Strategic focus is needed to redress this.
- **Put children at the top of the hierarchy and reverse the agenda when it comes to a development.** Pull out the play strategy and put it at the top. Ask your design team to tell the story of what a child will experience. Make the buffer spaces work for children and make the most of those play incidences.



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Useful Resources:

<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/cities-alive-urban-childhood>

<https://playingout.net/>

https://www.susdrain.org/case-studies/case_studies/bridget_joyce_square_london.html

<https://www.foundation.org.uk/Blog/2020/Is-lockdown-bad-for-children-s-mental-health>

<https://playingout.net/why/impact-overview/>

<http://www.urbanmovement.co.uk/thoughts/francis-road-healthy-street-of-the-year-2018>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1975&v=XITLhMFq8jU&feature=emb_logo

Speakers:

Attendees: 136

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