Streets for People

# Details

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## Sample

54 children aged 9 and 10 years attending two primary (elementary) schools in the UK

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

In this paper, we present a socio-technical process designed to engage children in an ongoing urban design project—Streets for People—in Newcastle, UK. We translated urban design proposals developed by residents and the local authority to enable children to contribute ideas to the project. Our process comprised three stages: situated explorations and evidence gathering through digitally supported neighbourhood walks; issue mapping and peer-to-peer discussions using an online engagement platform; and face-to-face dialogue between children, residents, and the local authority through a ‘Town Hall’ event. We report insights gained through our engagement and show how our activities facilitated issue advocacy and the development of children’s capacities, but also surfaced tensions around the agency of children in political processes. We reflect on the challenges of working in this space, and discuss wider implications for technology design and ethical questions that ‘scaling up’ such work might pose.

# Outcome

"it gave the children free rein to explore the issues in the neighbourhood they found interesting and relevant. In doing so, we created a “thickly authentic” experience for the children that speaks to several dimensions of authentic learning identified by Shaffer and Resnick [58]. By engaging the children in a process that tackled “real-world” problems and went beyond simply appreciating them, we demonstrated that there is room for children to participate meaningfully in political processes like Streets for People. In line with project-based learning approaches, our process also challenged traditional and passive styles of civic education and generated, as one of the teachers put it, “real” civic outcomes [6]. Consequently, we wish for our work to serve as a call to HCI researchers to design processes that support the involvement of children in similar ‘everyday’ political contexts [8]. Yet, what all of this might mean for children to be “competent citizens” in political processes [10,62] still remains up for debate... our findings also speak of the value of combining digital and non-digital elements within our process. The former facilitated data gathering and sense making to advocate for change, whilst the latter facilitated engagement in political processes ‘at the coalface’ and ensuring that the reference groups and local authority took their contributions seriously. The tools we designed for the walk facilitated the gradual discovery of the streets and unpicking its constituent parts in granular detail, whilst Make Place created spaces for peer-to-peer reflection and extended discussion. In this sense, the socio-technical process played a role in ‘slowing down’ the data collection and reflection about their neighbourhood, contrasting with the typical goal of technology design aiming to deliver efficiency or a ‘speeding up’ of physical interactions [40]. We think future work can explore how ‘slow’ technologies can play a significant role in supporting children’s engagement with placemaking." (Peacock et al., 2018: 9-10).