



To: Place Directorate

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Subject: Essential Evidence on a page: No. 127 Child-Friendly Cities

Top line: Child-Friendly Cities can lead to more children in better public spaces, enjoying themselves more. Children's right to walk, cycle, roll, use public transport, sit, linger, play and socialize throughout the city needs to be clearly articulated.

One morning in 1895, Albert Parr left his house outside Bergen, a town of 75,000 people in Norway, to buy fish for his family's supper. His journey involved: walking to the station in five to ten minutes; buying a ticket; watching a train with a coal-burning steam locomotive pull in; boarding a train; riding across a long bridge over shallows separating a small boat harbour from a ship's harbour, including a small naval base with torpedo boats; continuing through a tunnel; leaving the train at a terminal, sometimes dawdling to look at railway equipment; walking by and sometimes entering a fisheries museum; passing the central town park where a military band played; strolling by a central shopping and business district, or, alternatively, passing a fire station with horses at ease under suspended harnesses, ready to go, and continuing past a 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.

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. Parr argued, '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'.¹ 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.

Researchers have explored six elements of ideal policies and practices that might promote child independent mobility:² 1) 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; 2) planning policies must explicitly recognize children's rights to all public space; 3) policies must provide achievable targets, strategies and implementation mechanisms that name lead departments, and provide a whole of government response; 4) policies that consult with and support children must be integrated into other local government policies, such as health and land-use plans; 5) social and land-use planners, local councillors and senior managers, must be trained in a rights based approach to planning for children; 6) 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.

Considering the above as applied to 5 Australian cities, researchers concluded that 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.

¹ Parr, A. 1967 The child in the city: urbanity and the urban scene. *Landscape*: 17(1): 3-5.

² Whitzman, C., Worthington, M., Mizrahi, D. 2010 The journey and the destination matter: Child-Friendly Cities and children's right to the city, *Built Environment*, 36(4): 474-486.