

REINSTATING KIDS IN PLANNING AND POLICY



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Many of Ireland's communities, North and South, are characterised by divisions caused by ethno-religious segregation, class difference and economic disparities. It is at the neighbourhood level where these divisions are most clearly manifested and felt. This paper argues that a divided community, regardless of that division's underlying cause, expresses itself in poor design and fragmented purpose. These 'design scars' – whether physical or mental in nature – are particularly harmful for children, the population group most sensitive to environmental and social influence.

Children are key users of the built and natural environment and, within these spaces, they have their own particular needs. Yet, the fractured, barrier-heavy environments that we create harm our children by incubating fear, aggression, poor socialisation skills and a failure to accept and appreciate 'difference'. In the quest for social integration and the virtues that flow from it – balanced development, human well-being and peace, this paper argues for the promotion and creation of child friendly communities.

Introduction

The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland provide a lens through which to address the impact of segregation and poor planning and design on children. Both jurisdictions provide powerful instances of cross-border and segregated communities. The legacy of the Troubles, the impact of the border on small communities and a

history of weak planning in the Republic of Ireland have resulted in poorly designed and fractured environments. Recent years have seen a rapidly growing public debate about the welfare of children and its relationship to settlement form and function. These have resonated with wider international discussions that are responding to new professional concerns about the health and well-being of young people. The focus includes the growing challenges of childhood obesity, psychological stress, neglected transport needs and concern about child exposure to abuse and other forms of harm.

Ireland is a young island. Its immediate and longer-term future will be determined by the development, health and welfare of its comparatively large population of young people. Based on the last Censuses carried out in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, there were over 1,235,400 children living on the island of Ireland aged between 0-14 years – representing approximately 21 percent of the total population (CSO, 2006; NISRA, 2001)¹. In addition, Ireland recorded the highest fertility rate in the EU in 2010, with its population rising at a higher rate than in any other EU country (CSO, 2011). The critical importance of today's children in the future of the island of Ireland's economy has been recognised in the appointment of a Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in 2011 and an Ombudsman for Children in 2004 in the Republic of Ireland, and a Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2007 in Northern Ireland. These appointments coincide with a growing research and policy agenda into children's well-being. For example, research published in November 2011 on the health of children over a four-year period noted the rise in obesity and sedentary play practices (Layte and McCrory, 2011).

In response, the Irish government has committed to placing a greater emphasis on sports and recreation, regulating the labelling and marketing of foods aimed at children and restricting the location of fast food outlets in the vicinity of schools. In Northern

Ireland, initiatives such as *Healthy Futures 2010-2015* and *Our Children and Young People - Our Pledge: A ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006-2016* highlight the importance of interdepartmental and cross-sectoral collaboration and the need for early intervention and prevention systems when it comes to 'healthy living' (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2010; OFMDFM, 2006). Internationally, much of this discussion has an urban focus, suggesting increased popular recognition that the health and well-being of children have direct corollaries in dimensions of urban development. For example, a 2004 essay in the *Sydney Morning Herald* made explicit the links between the epidemic of childhood obesity and new forms of urban development. The wealthier areas of Australia's cities were held to contain a 'bubble wrap generation' and 'pampered prisoners' whose opportunities for recreation and self expression were limited by poor residential design and high levels of parental anxiety and control (Cadzow, 2004).

There are two defining qualities to emerging contemporary debates on children's well-being in Western, especially English-speaking, countries. First, they mark a resurgence of concern for children in professional and political quarters after a period of declining apparent interest in the well-being of young people. Arguably, other populations groups have claimed the centre stage of public debate since the 1970s – older citizens of an ageing society, gays and lesbians, and new migrant populations, to name but a few. Second, these debates on children highlight an increasing multidisciplinary in terms of the nature of the stakeholders involved, reflecting new professional and scientific recognition of the interdependencies between the different dimensions of children's health and well-being. Increasingly, the traditionally specialised understandings of children's health are opening up to recognise the broad range of factors in the everyday environment that influence the physical and mental condition of children. This is a key point of implication in the new debates for urban scholars and policy-makers. Public health experts, child psychologists and educators are

increasingly interested in understanding the creation and experience of social space, and the ways in which built environments both reflect and condition the key environmental and behavioural dynamics that shape the well-being of children. But what about those who are responsible for the design of our environments – architects, engineers, urban designers and planners?

Lost in Space: The Rise and Fall of Kids in Decision-Making

Modern conceptions of childhood and child well-being emerged in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and were crystallised during the class struggles, environmental changes and demographic shifts that were unleashed by modernisation. Children were the first 'poor creatures' that mid- and late-Victorian reform movements sought to rescue from the hellfire cities that emerged in the wake of first wave industrialism. On the question of child well-being, there was a decided unity of understanding and purpose – a corollary of what we might now term 'interdisciplinarity' – among the various sanitation, labour and housing reformers who sought to check the course of a raw capitalism that was careering towards a social and ecological precipice. Town planning emerged as part of a wave of social improvements that sought, amongst other things, to safeguard children. Whether consciously alert to their deeper purpose or not, the Victorian improvers seemed at least instinctively aware that by rescuing the 'vulnerable' (children, then women, then the proletariat) from the jaws of industrial capital, the reform project was in fact rescuing capitalism from an increasingly apparent will for self-destruction. By securing the material welfare of the vulnerable, reform guaranteed a future for capitalism and diverted politics away from the revolutionary cataclysm that some, by the late nineteenth century, believed was inevitable.

Reform, however, was overtaken by the currents of class struggle, a new improvement project that led to the creation of the Welfare State in the twentieth century. Modernisation continued with a political licence that stipulated the need for constant material

improvement, including for the working class and vulnerable groups. Children were submerged into this social compact, but remained at its centre; their sheer demographic significance in a time of rapid population increase, especially after the Second World War, ensured a political and social centrality. In the everyday practice and thinking of the professions that created and recreated cities, children were an assumed central consideration. Indeed, children had become such a central theme in the development of cities that some commentators became concerned that the urban professional practice had become so relentless in this focus that they failed to pay sufficient attention to the translation of their needs from the general to the particular. Children as such became an artefact of modernity – mass produced and mass provided for.

This emerging conflict gave rise to a lively literature that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s in North America and Europe. The ensuing debate attempted to give more explicit thought to the links between urban development and children's welfare. The growing critical focus on children among urban commentators was stimulated by the establishment of a ten-year programme in 1968 called *Growing Up in Cities*, coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Much of this discussion focused on highly particular questions, such as how aspects of child psychology were influenced by environmental conditions, or narrow concerns with the physical design of child play areas. Colin Ward's *The Child in the City* (1978) distilled this complaint with industrial modernism and proposed an urbanism that was much more conscious of children's diverse needs, including their abiding preference for secure local environments (or home worlds) over broad cityscapes. Overall, the ambition of these projects and commentaries was not so much to re-centre children socially as to urge greater institutional awareness of their unique and sensitive qualities (Lynch, 1977). Children were still at the core of the modernisation project, but institutions were behaving 'zombie-like', providing thoughtlessly for their assumed, not considered, needs.

During the 1980s, research into children's issues mostly continued with the themes established during the 1970s; that is, how the physical environment affected the social and mental development of children, including how land-uses influenced children's play patterns and their access to 'playspace' (Sipe et al., 2006). Some attempts were made to understand the environment from a child's perspective and incorporate these ideas into policy; for example, why children seek out 'unplanned playspaces' to explore and invent their own games (Sipe et al., 2006). However, by and large, the research emphasis remained on children's development and how that is shaped by the physical environment. By the 1990s, national and international debates on children and cities had quieted.

Modernisation, Changing Play Patterns, Changing Governance

More recently, the latter half of the 'noughties' have witnessed a renewed interest in public and professional discussions of urban children's issues in English speaking countries. The sense of urgency that seems to characterise new assessments of children's well-being seems charged by the view that children have been downgraded or even swept aside as a political concern and as an institutional priority. There are several potential dimensions to this claim. First, a demographic shift has been underway in developed countries towards smaller households and fewer children. Population ageing has become a key political and institutional concern, arguably to the exclusion of children's issues. Second, the rise of neo-liberalism, especially in English-speaking countries, has been marked by a heightening ascendancy of economic over social priorities in political and institutional realms. In this context, 'econocratic thinking' fixates on the Economic Wo/Man – i.e. the consumer and taxpayer. Children don't make the balance sheet.

Importantly, however, the new debates that attempt to refocus political and institutional attention on children frequently resonate with strident criticism of neo-liberalism and its socio-political consequences,

such as increased social and residential segregation, environmental depletion and injury, and strengthened consumerism and materialism. Specifically, children's physical health has emerged as an area of sharp concern with the recognition that levels of physical fitness among urban children have been declining, most notably in Western countries. Scholarly research is focussing particularly on the incidence of childhood obesity and the associated decrease in children's physical activity.

In Australia, for example, the influential book *Children of the Lucky Country? How Australian Society has Turned its Back on Children and Why Children Matter* supports the view that children have been suffering from impoverished popular and political attention in recent decades, with deleterious consequences for their well-being. It presents a disturbing account of how children's interests have been sidelined by the rise of neo-liberalism and the consequent growth of

materialism and individualism. The authors implicate urban transformations in the decline of child welfare, arguing that economic change has created a geography of winner and loser neighbourhoods in the cities; arguing that politicians, professions and institutions have over-reacted to major demographic shifts – notably, the growth of smaller households and population ageing – and have assumed that children are no longer central priorities for politics and policy.

Just as challengingly for the neo-liberal model, an accumulation of scientific evidence suggests that growing material wealth poses very real physical and psychological risks for children. Luthar's (2003) survey of evidence points to the heavy psychological costs that American children are paying for 'the culture of affluence' that has been contrived by contemporary neo-liberalism. This criticism, of course, is not confined to neo-liberalism and more



Efforts to make derelict spaces more 'child-friendly', as seen in this Dublin suburb, sometimes fail to consider more deeply the fundamental elements and functions of children's playspaces. Copyright: Caroline Creamer.



Unused and abandoned land, as seen in this new housing development, does not provide welcoming outdoor playspace for children. Copyright: Caroline Creamer.

generally questions the deeply held assumption of modernisation that rising and generalising affluence drives a mass improvement in children's well-being. The criticism was echoed by Eberstadt (2004), who reported skyrocketing rates of depression, anxiety, and behavioural disorders among children and teenagers in middle class and wealthier families. Commentators have taken issue with Eberstadt's causal assessment – especially her critique of day-care and working motherhood – but there is rising agreement amongst childhood experts in the United States that many middle class children are suffering from parental deprivation. The steadily accumulating evidence reviewed and discussed by these works points to a much more complex, even fraught, relationship between household wealth and child well-being.

Responding to concerns about childhood obesity, a growing range of studies have examined the links between children's physical activity patterns and their built environment. Recent research on where and how children play has noted the decreasing interaction between children and the natural environment in most Western countries, including Ireland (Fanning, 2010; Woolcock and Steele, 2008;

Sipe et al., 2006). This trend is largely attributed to the increasing regulation of children's environments; not only at a spatial planning and social policy level, but also by parents as a result of their growing concerns for their children's safety. Over the past decade, there has been a growing tendency for children's playtime to be internalised – centred on the home and, as such, an increasingly indoor activity. Children's play is more and more associated with television and computer games; and where activities are undertaken outside the home, they tend to be in the safety of purpose built, in-door play centres.

The emergence of the *Child Friendly City* debate echoes many of those same issues that lay behind the Victorian reform period. Some may scoff at this comparison. But in so doing they ignore the stridency of concern emanating from child health experts who report an alarming decline in the well-being of children assessed against a variety of mental and physical health indicators. Western children are imperilled by the socio-economic and environmental pressures bearing down on them and by the institutional disregard for their worsening circumstances. In Australia, the child professionals

Stanley et al. state, "The present generation of children may be the first in the history of the world to have lower life expectancy than their parents" (2005: 52). 'Child rescue' appears to be back on the agenda, as in the nineteenth-century; again with a strong emphasis on fundamental health issues and their basis in urban conditions.

The Child Friendly City and Community

Against this background of rising professional alarm, we can identify strong resources for hope. Modernisation has hardly been an unmitigated failure. Our societies possess the wealth, the science and, critically, the self-critical awareness that is needed to create the conditions in which children can flourish. Additionally, the new interdisciplinary alliances and understandings that are emerging in response to the renewed concern for children are surely the bases for the powerful institutional and professional interventions needed to create these conditions. Urban environments are where the vast majority of people in Western countries reside and are the principal context within which we must provide flourishing conditions for children. But they are more than mere context: cities and suburbs are dynamic, fluid, social spaces whose constant transformation acts independently to shape the communities that inhabit them. This recognition is seeping through to the non-urban professions – in health, community development, education, recreation, planning – who look increasingly to urban analysis for enhanced understanding of how complex environments influence the well-being of children. As such, greater analysis is essential to the improved scientific understanding of children's contemporary problems and needs in both urban and non-urban settings.

Children are key users of the built and natural environment – and within these spaces, they have their own particular needs. Among demographic groups, children tend to have the most focused of everyday lives; their life-worlds are deeply enmeshed at the local scale. The local community – the street, the neighbourhood – is the first field of their development. Yet, children's lives are increasingly

structured and regulated, leaving little time for free and spontaneous play that is so crucial to children's developmental abilities. In many cases, children have little opportunity beyond the neighbourhood playground, childcare centre, or school to access open space and the natural environment. Their ability (or not) to range freely and safely through their incubating world is a key indicator of wider community integrity and well-being. In divided, barrier prone communities, children's environmental and social needs are deeply curtailed.

Across the island of Ireland, social and geographical restructuring during the Troubles and post-peace process has created a landscape of social difference at the local scale (Murtagh and Murphy, 2011). Spatial planning and social policies in both jurisdictions on the island have generated an uneven geography of sectarianism and social class that, in turn, has resulted in border communities increasingly characterised by growing social disadvantage and the territorial segregation of places. For children, the segregated nature of the education system – together with other services, such as community halls and leisure facilities – potentially reproduces antagonism and division (Cairns, 1987). Meanwhile, the institutions, communities and built environments created by parents in their working lives increasingly highlight the extent to which children and young people have been neglected in, and betrayed by, the decision-making processes (Gleeson, 2010). In Northern Ireland, it has been shown that the prejudicial contexts of children aged 3-11 years old are shaped by parental beliefs and community contexts, rather than their own real experiences of the 'other' (Connolly and Healy, 2004). Children as young as three years old can develop strong in-group prejudices (Connolly, 2009). This is the result of the inter-generational transfer of stereotypes, prejudices and fears. Moreover, socio-economic status is becoming an increasingly important determinant of childhood territorial experiences (Murtagh and Murphy, 2011), with the segregation of communities resulting in little inter-cultural experience and the absence of a community mindset (Connolly and Healey, 2004).



Starting Small: A play environment for children located next to woodlands in a rural border community. Copyright: Caroline Creamer.

The creation of child friendly communities requires the provision of spaces and play facilities that are open ended: adaptable and capable of meeting children's expanding interests and developmental levels, as opposed to designs based on adults' perceptions of how children play. Such playspaces must begin with sufficient space so that designs and future improvements are not restricted. Simply designing children's playgrounds to fit into left over space or poorly drained areas is not an appropriate way to cater to children's needs. They should also be easily accessible to a variety of users, including the elderly and people with strollers; and by foot from all households in the city. As such, it is imperative that the design of these spaces is based on a thorough understanding of children's play needs; that they provide a variety of play options to maintain the interests of children who frequently alternate between activities. The creation of child friendly communities also necessitates giving children a voice in decision-making processes, nurturing the physical, social and mental well-being of the child and also – critically – supporting their parents and

caregivers. By grounding adults' understanding of place and identity in the reality of children's everyday experiences, child friendly communities not only allow us to explore the different institutional and spatial scales at which cities can be conceived from the perspective of children, but also aids in the reconciliation and enhanced development across ethno-nationalist and ethno-cultural divides.

There are many global initiatives for child friendly cities, such as UNICEF's *Child Friendly Cities*, UNESCO's *Growing Up in Cities project* (Malone, 2006; Sipe et al., 2006; UNICEF 2004) and the European Network of Child Friendly Cities (ENCFC). There is also a global context for the discussion of children's urban well-being in the form of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A basic principle of this Convention is concerned with respecting and acting upon children's views and opinions (Article 12). Through Malone's (2006) review of the UNICEF and UNESCO programmes, two fundamental characteristics of what constitutes a child friendly city are apparent: (a) the level of

governance most suited to the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child is the local level – this is the level of governance that has ultimate responsibility and the most significant impact on children’s well-being, and (b) the welfare of children cannot be perceived by adults acting on behalf of children – instead governments must work towards realising the potential of children to become ‘authentic participants’ in decision-making processes.

What emerges from this is the idea of an activated and externalised community of children, with the explicit confidence and desire to range freely and purposively through neighbourhoods and their components – parks, playspaces, recreational and educational facilities, public spaces and ‘wildspaces’. This invites a mindset amongst all with an interest in children at the local level that seeks to create inviting, stimulating, safe and interactive environments for children. This is to weave a stronger social web, supportive of children, and a culture of wider communal understanding, encounter and support. A child friendly community inevitably strengthens local social ties generally through the common bond of children, and the common purpose of providing for their needs at the community scale. The spaces, places, events and networks that thrive in a child friendly community inevitably invite and stimulate adult participation and satisfaction.

Involving children, therefore, in decision-making processes will not only redress unintentional, but also insidious change in their local environments (Gleeson, 2010). Across the island of Ireland, it will improve the broader quality and accessibility of the built environment, and assist in the healing of deeper, locally-manifested wounds resulting from the Troubles. Within the sphere of spatial planning, there is a need to reignite a role for children in urban design and decision-making – thus not only fostering a new generation of community activists and strategists, but also reawakening within the planning profession a general understanding of city and community formation, with an emphasis on good, joined-up governance. This is not to say that planners are not increasingly aware of children’s and young people’s

social and environmental needs and rights. They are. However, the progress being made towards a more child-focused planning system has been limited and the initiatives ad hoc (Freeman, 2006). Currently, planning decisions are based on what planners believe is in people’s best interests; however, too often the result is collisions between adults’ and children’s worlds, with children coming out the losers more often than not. This can only be addressed effectively at the local level – by councils ‘buying into’ and delivering more thorough engagement with children, specifically around children’s issues.

Lessons from New Zealand: Walking School Buses

Walking School Buses are an increasingly popular response to the dual concerns of traffic congestion and child health and safety in intensifying cities. This volunteer-driven initiative involves groups of children walking to and from school under adult supervision that is usually provided by parents. Along the route, there are specified stops at which children can embark or disembark. The scheme originated in Brisbane in 1992² and since then, the idea has spread to Canada, Great Britain, the United States and New Zealand. While providing no simple panacea for the many problems children face in urban areas, including pedestrian safety and dangers of traffic congestion, they do promote child health.

The Walking School Bus programme in Auckland, New Zealand, for example, has been shown to offer a number of advantages for child participants, as well as providing a safe alternative to car-dominated travel from both an educational and environmental perspective (Kearns and Collins, 2006). First, it provides an opportunity for children to learn in the real-world context, while being guided by an adult. Second, through an ongoing connection with the local environment, children feel connected with their surroundings. Third, the programme offers an opportunity for children to become more involved with other members of the community, thereby improving their physical health and feelings of social cohesion. Lastly, through its ongoing operation, the Walking School Bus has the potential to generate

small, but significant neighbourhood improvements, such as the maintenance of footpaths and the trimming of overhanging trees.

On the other hand, Kearns and Collins (2006) have identified some disadvantages of the Walking School Bus. Most notably, these programmes tend to be located in areas of socio-economic privilege, where child health and road safety issues are less urgent. Their operation also relies on adult supervision and, therefore, constitutes another form of control in children's already structured lives. Despite this, Walking School Buses is a beneficial programme that offers a partial solution to the problems of children's physical inactivity and disconnection from the local community and environment. However, it is important that this – and similar – programmes are accessible to children of all socio-economic backgrounds, especially disadvantaged or segregated communities where need tends to be greatest.

A Framework for Creating Child Friendly Communities

In an urban context, the suburbs offer the greatest potential to provide child friendly environments for the majority of children and young people; the very spaces that are increasingly being associated with boring playspaces for children amid mounting concern about public liability. Their geographical and social polarisation is threatening young lives in low-income households. The suburbs are also witnessing rising incidences of health problems among young people, the most obvious of which is childhood obesity. This is leading to the emergence of 'toxic cities' (Gleeson, 2006) – spaces that fail to nurture the young and increasingly threaten them physically and mentally. By drawing on extensive and growing international research and learning, a framework is emerging around which child friendly cities and communities can be effectively outlined – albeit recognising that local circumstances will necessitate tweaks.

1. Sustainability goals and indicators with children's rights as the foundation must be coupled together in any policy shift towards creating

child friendly cities. The logic behind this is that if sustainability goals are not achieved, then children will be the most profoundly affected. Therefore, the well-being of children can be used as an indicator of sustainability.

2. Children's ability to move freely and independently in their environments is one of the key characteristics of a child-friendly environment. Overcoming 'social traps' can best be achieved by creating an opportunity for communication between individuals. This in turn can develop into a forum for collective decision-making about children's travel. In order to influence parental chauffeuring behaviour, for example, it is first necessary to raise awareness of the negative consequences of car-dominated travel on children's health, and then devise an agreement on ways in which travel behaviour can be changed to the benefit of all.
3. Planners in particular play an important role in the creation of child friendly cities; it is planners who have the ability to determine the form and structure of urban environments through policies, developmental trends and decisions, all of which impact on the quality of children's environments and, in turn, children's well-being. As a first step, planners – and their associated councils – must accept that children's interests should be acknowledged and represented in the planning process. This includes the fields of transport, housing, retail, recreation and education – and the interaction between these different spheres. Planners must therefore develop a better understanding of children's interactions with their environments in the variety of contexts in which they occur.
4. Children's autonomy must be increased through shared decision-making between adults and children, depending on factors such as societal context, age and competency.
5. When it comes to children's planning, there is a need for more inter-departmental collaboration

and networking (over the compartmentalisation of children's interests). Efforts towards creating child friendly environments must be based on a multidisciplinary framework.

6. For a city to become a space that is friendly to its young people, it has to be acknowledged that there are many interpretations of what makes a 'good city'. Rather than speaking of exclusion or inclusion, we must start to speak of engagement; the goal of any such policies based on engagement is to develop shared projects where young people can express, in their own terms, the problems that need to be addressed in the city and how these might be overcome.
7. Increased and ongoing efforts into researching issues that affect children's lives is required before the issues can be properly understood.

Conclusion

Planning and health share a common heritage and are both guided by their strong commitment to human improvement. In the twenty-first century, these professions are increasingly finding new grounds for collaboration, partly driven by a recent recognition that the declining health of many, if not most, Western children is closely associated with planning practice and environmental design. A society that places children's needs at its centre must of necessity always look to and provide for the future. Children remind us of the meaning and the urgency of the imperative for inter-generational equity, which goes to the core of sustainability. A sustainable society, as the *Lucky Country* points out, places children at its centre.

Children's needs can be identified and addressed at a variety of policy and conceptual scales and across a range of professional interests, all of them linked by the framework provided by urban environments. Children are immensely sensitive to environmental influence – harmful and beneficial – especially in the early stages of childhood development. There is a compelling case for their views and interests

to be taken into account when planning for spaces in which they are both the primary, and occasional, users; remembering that it is through play that children learn many important life skills.

Throughout the island of Ireland, there is much to be done towards creating child friendly cities – and communities, spanning from the national down to the local scale, and involving spatial planners in the public and private sectors, parents, teachers, community members, developers and policy-makers. Too often, it is forgotten or ignored that it is children and young people who are most profoundly affected by decisions made on their behalf – decisions that are made based on misunderstandings about children's experiences, or without consideration of the consequences for children at all. In order to gain a better understanding, children themselves must be given a voice in planning processes and decisions. After all, it is children who have an accurate understanding of how decisions affect their lives and an intimate knowledge of their local environments. If child friendly cities can be achieved, it is not only children who will benefit, but society as a whole and perhaps most importantly, the future of our society.

In the pursuit of child friendly communities, there are still numerous issues that need to be debated and addressed; for the Child Friendly City is but one element (albeit a significant one) in the broader project of reinstating children at the centre of community interests and institutional priorities. While child friendly interventions are not an instant solution for complex, historically layered problems, it is a powerful call to organise flourishing communities around the most undeniably and commonly held value: the well-being of children. When all other shared values are exhausted, it is the welfare of children that still stands as a cause of unity and shared empathy. Much can be built and rebuilt from this shared ground. It is, therefore, a powerful antidote to hardened processes – policy failure, cultural antipathy and economic division – that so often defeat more specialist interventions. It is a sober project for these 'post Celtic Tiger' times.

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Endnotes

¹ In April 2011, a Census of Population was carried out in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This is the first time that a census has occurred in both jurisdictions at the same time in over a decade. To date, only preliminary population results are available from Census 2011, and does not yet include a breakdown of population across various age cohorts.

² The Walking School Bus was started in 1992 by David Engwicht in Brisbane, Australia. Mr. Engwicht saw the Walking School Bus as a way to accomplish three things: (a) get kids walking to school, (b) reduce traffic levels and (c) give kids a sense of “independent mobility” (see <http://www.bridgingthegap.org/egap.php?id=256>).

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