

the development of the **INSIGHT METHOD**:
a participatory approach for primary school children to
reveal their place experiences

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Abstract

This research develops a participatory methodology to gain understanding of the existing and aspirational place experiences of primary school children. It aims to empower children by giving them a voice ordinarily hidden from design and planning processes.

Exploration and testing of methodologies has been ongoing since 1999 in a number of practice based case studies involving primary school children. As a result of refinement through a review of practice and literature a provisional framework of methodological tools was constructed for testing and developing in the participatory phases of the research. This involved the contribution of 68 participant children.

The primary output of the research is the development of a participatory framework called the **INSIGHT METHOD** which consists of a number of components. These are; its approach; the methodological constituents which are the tools of participatory practice; and its evaluative methods. The **INSIGHT METHOD** can be used by researchers and practitioners of the built environment professions that would include Landscape Architects, Urban Designers and Planners and those involved in policy making. The **INSIGHT METHOD** facilitates that the hidden views of children on the environments that they encounter on a daily basis are actively sought in appropriate ways, valued and understood as well as being incorporated in design and planning decisions. This is to ensure that the physical manifestation and experience of these environments which have a significant impact on children's health, well being and development are child friendly, experientially rich, and provide not just settings but places that the children have been involved in creating and that sustain community life. The **INSIGHT METHOD** is characterised by six core principles:

1. An empathic approach.
2. A child/person centric stance recognising the value of the individual.
3. An ethical perspective of inclusive informed consent.
4. It seeks children's empowerment by meaningful direct contact rather than fulfilling an adultist output of consultation or mass data collection.
5. Child centric multi-route facilitation of communication and expression.
6. A longitudinal perspective employing reflective practice responsive to the children and evolving themes.

Keywords: Primary school children, participation, place experience, Insight Method.

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Ian Simkins, November 2008.



“Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvellous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance – not a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations.”
(Jacobs, 1993, pp.65-66).

If we use this metaphor, then how can we ‘join the dance’ or perhaps more importantly how can we understand it and why should we? In developing the **INSIGHT METHOD**, I propose how this contributed to answering these questions.

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“When we left the street and were in the country, Father became instructive: ‘This is a thistle,’ he would cry into the wind pointing a pale finger, and we looked. Then further along ‘There is another thistle’ again pointing. There were a lot of thistles in Scotland. We were soon well acquainted with them. Mother was also informative: ‘Look, a patch of grass!’ And we dutifully twisted our heads.” (Cutler in Bromley, 1990, p. 251)

Preface

The forms of landscape architecture I was encountering during my education as a landscape architect appeared to me to be mechanistic and prescriptive, reminiscent of building Lego, where the arrangement of the pieces was to do more with aesthetic pattern making and engineered robustness. Venting my frustration during a tutorial I was directed to the work of John Ormsbee Simonds, who it was said many years ago had gone through the same frustration and in his epilogue to his published work; *Landscape Architecture*, had written about them as follows:

“Upon graduation..., I seemed to share the tacit feeling of my fellows that, while we had learned the working techniques and terms of our trade, the indefinable essence had somehow escaped us. ... In short, what were we, as landscape architects really trying to do? But even more particularly, I believe, we sought new terms of expression, a new design idiom.” Ormsbee Simonds (pp.221-229, 1961).

Along with his peers they searched for the answer, visiting many iconic places to see exactly what it was that made them special, what made them good, or why did they fail? He continues:

“This consuming search for the central theme of all great planning was like that of the old lama in his search for truth. Always we felt its presence in some degree, but always somehow the essence escaped us... Finally, wiser, humbled, but still unsatisfied, we returned to America to establish our small offices and be about our work.

Years later, one warm and bright October afternoon I was leaning comfortably in the smooth crotch of a fallen tree, hunting grey and fox squirrel My outpost commanded a lazy sunlight hollow of white oak and hemlock trees. The motionless air was soft and lightly fragrant with hayfern. Close by, ... I could hear the squirrels searching for acorns in the dry, fallen leaves. An old familiar tingling went through me, a sense of supreme well being, and an undefinable something more.” (ibid)

Simonds continues to recall times when the same sensation had swept through him:

“... when I first looked across the city of Peking..... again in Kyoto, when I stood in the Silver Pavilion, overhanging the quiet water of its pine-clouded

pond... The courtyard of the Ryoan-ji, with its beautifully spaced stone composition..." (ibid).

Simonds poses himself a question, wondering what was the common denominator that triggered this sensation with the "woodlot" where he now sat.

"And all at once it came to me!

The soul-stirring secret of Ryoan-ji lay not in its plan, or its forms, or its spaces, but in what one experienced there. The idyllic charm of the Silver Pavilion was sensed without consciousness of planned forms or shapes. The pleasurable impact was solely in the response it evoked in man. The most stirring impacts of magnificent Peking came often in those places where no plan was evident and no studied form existed.

What must count then is not primarily the plan approach, the designed shapes, spaces and forms. What counts is the experience!" (ibid)

Simonds work remains as relevant today as it did when he wrote it, it is the experience of place that is vital. Another influential author contemporary with Simonds work is that of Jane Jacobs, whom I cited earlier. Her words also resonate a similar message and with particular relevance to the place experiences of children:

" 'I know Greenwich Village like my hand,' brags my younger son, taking me to see a 'secret passage' he has discovered under a street, down one subway stair and up another, and a secret hiding place some nine inches wide between two buildings, where he secretes treasures that people have put out for the sanitation truck collections along his morning route to school and that he can thus save and retrieve on his return from school. (I had such a hiding place, for the same purpose, at his age, but mine was a crack in a cliff on my way to school instead of a crack between two buildings, and he finds stranger and richer treasures.)

Why do children so frequently find that roaming the lively city sidewalks is more interesting than back yards or playgrounds? Because the sidewalks are more interesting. It is just as sensible to ask: Why do adults find lively streets more interesting than playgrounds?" (Jacobs, 1993, pp.111-112).

Jane Jacobs' account questioning why children find sidewalks more interesting than playgrounds, and her subsequent answer that they are more interesting is relevant to the research and will be a common theme running through the thesis from both the literature perspective relating to the importance of the local environment for children and not just an adultist view that children's environmental experiences should be limited to or only considered in the form of playgrounds.

Many influential authors recognised for understanding children's perspectives have within their works recollected the detail of their own childhood experiences, which is

significant. Sobel (2002) for example recalls how as a child a fort at someone's house called to him on his way to the bus stop. The fort was "Snuggled into the pine duff underneath the looming trees, the structure grew up out of the soil like a mushroom." (p.3). Sobel explains how access to the fort was closely guarded by its owner whose gang dominated the community. Through various means, Sobel finally was invited in and his account of the embarrassment that ensued is one that has stayed with him. The fort had its own rules, and was private [adult excluded], the thoughts remain into adulthood where the lure of the fort still has a hold on him. Louv (2006) writes about how over dinner his children ask why it was more fun in his day. His stories of his own childhood were rich, in how he used to play with pieces of string and liver to catch "crawdads in a creek." (p.1), so much so that his children wanted to know why theirs were not.

The following is an account of my own childhood experience.....

We got the bag down from the top of the coalhouse in the garage, Chris said "Oh no they've all gone mouldy, that's disgusting." We all peered at the carefully harvested elderberries in the plastic bag, we had gathered them some months ago and expected to see a fantastic vintage wine, instead there was a mouldy mush, that when we opened the bag smelt appalling.

Chris, Paul and myself had harvested the berries from our tree, well strictly speaking it was their tree as it was in their back garden, but as most of our childhood was spent playing either in each others back gardens or The Crescent, it felt like it was our tree. It was a special tree, an old elderberry long established before the houses were built in 1960, the back gardens sloped up away from the house, and the elderberry occupied a dominant elevated position. We climbed it every day we could, we sat in it looking out across the distant industrial Midlands landscape on one side and towards Wolverhampton on the other, which you could see through a gap in the roof lines of the houses opposite when you were at the top of the garden. We played many games up the tree, sometimes it was our fort, sometimes it was a place to sit and chat and at other times it was a place to be away from parents and homework. There was one branch that came from the ground and was broken off at about head height, if you climbed up the main trunk you could balance one foot on the broken branch, with the other on the trunk. If you did this you could move the severed one to and fro with your foot and pretend you were skiing or walking in space. Now like the rest of the tree, it was gone, replaced by the brand new cedar wood greenhouse that was Chris and Paul's late dad's pride and joy, we wouldn't get another chance to make wine from that tree, or walk in space.

During the early 1970's as school boys we played a lot outside, we rode our bikes around The Crescent, navigating the tramacadam footpath and paying particular attention to the rises and falls of the camber which formed the access points to driveways. We played cricket, football, tennis, bulldog and many other games on the grass 'island' at the centre of The Crescent, although the ball often strayed towards houses owned by occupants without children who would tell you off if it knocked over a marigold or gnome in their front garden. When we felt more energetic we walked or biked to a local school playing field, and scaled the six foot wire fence to play football with proper goal posts rather than using our jumpers. We were often then chased away by the local residents whose houses backed onto the field and felt they had a minders role in-absentium for the school which was two streets away.

If we were particularly adventurous then we rode to the Beacon. Sedgley Beacon was about 10 minutes ride away, all uphill, and passed houses and streets we didn't really frequent often, over a rubble waste area, pretending to be a car park for the flats and 'woosh' out through a gap between the buildings onto the main road across the estate. You would occasionally see children you knew from school playing out, but when you got across the road you passed more flats, usually occupied by people you didn't know. Up another hill, and finally to the path that was the start of the ascent of the Beacon. The Beacon, according to local history, was a site for a fire as part of the early warning system of a chain of beacons that would have been lit to signal the arrival of the Spanish Armada. There was still a tower on it, but the dominant feature now at the top of its grass slopes was the trappings of the underground reservoir that the water authority had built. For us school boys, none of this mattered, what was more important was that it was some-where to ride our bikes amongst grass and trees, the view from the top, and somewhere to look for dinosaurs. We regularly dug around in the exposed shale of the almost vertical grass banks on the west side, and were convinced we found prehistoric fossils. If we felt particularly adventurous we would go down the west side onto the main Wolverhampton to Sedgley road and ride round past the blind institute before the long climb up the hill back to the estate. If we had less time or energy we picked our way down to the Vicarage that sat on the eastern slope and rode down past our church and descended into the local paper shop for a sweet before returning home.

The Crescent was ours, the gardens of our friends were ours (well some more than others), the playing field was shared with many, although you ran the risk of being told off. The beacon was the boundary to our neighbourhood, the elderberry tree was our place. We didn't mourn its passing, but we missed it when it had gone.

When Chris and I went to secondary school we had two bus journeys, one to Wolverhampton and one from Wolverhampton to Compton where the school was situated. For me the journey to Wolverhampton was marked by looking at the huge advertising boards at Parkfield's traffic lights. Once across these you knew you had left home and there was no going back. At certain times of year, and if you were on the top deck of the bus, the journey from the lights to the outer ring road was considerably enhanced by the cherry trees. When in blossom you felt you were amongst the flowers, at other times the straying branches scraped on the bus windows, the noise making you squirm in your seat. Then there was the old hospital and the Ford dealers, where you could see the latest Capri or XR's featured in the London Weekend television series 'The Professionals' (Wickes, 1977). Finally you got off and walked passed the abattoir, not a pleasant olfactory experience, and headed for Queen Street, passing the Express and Star building and then waited for the bus to school.

The next bus journey, from Queen Street to school was marked firstly by passing the statue of the man on his horse. The fact that it was Prince Albert was irrelevant, what we wanted to see was whether as a result of the Saturday night drinkers he had another traffic cone on his head. You knew you had then arrived at the ring road roundabout even when all the windows were steamed up or you did not occupy a seat next to one. This was because you had to hold onto the bar of the seat in front leaning into your neighbour as the bus navigated the curve of the massive roundabout. Finally you arrived at school, set in its grass savannahs, with rugby and goal posts rising upwards, like something out of 'Gregory's girl' (Forsyth, 1980), a two dimensional setting for an equally characterless building. The school yard was prison like, grey tarmac bounded by what seemed like 10 feet high fences made from rusting angle iron uprights supporting similarly rusty wire mesh. You could go in the yard and get the ball kicked at you repeatedly by the sixth formers who 'owned' it, or stand outside talking as there was nowhere to go at break times, unless the grassy banks that bounded it were dry, or maybe the bike shed.

As a contrast to the mundanity of school, family holidays were taken in Whitby, North Yorkshire. After negotiating the A38 with the interesting aroma of the breweries passed by around Burton-upon Trent, and then the boredom of the M1 where I spy became fairly predictable, the journey from Pickering became a joy and full of excitement as the game in the car changed to see who could spot the sea first. The approach to the sea was anticipated by the journey along the A169 bounded by moor land with its heathers and punctuated by Fylingdales grounded balloons and the rollercoaster ride of the hills and dips, the bridges and the sheep. You knew you were close when you saw the ancient abbey on the cliffs. Finally we disband from the trusty old Morris Oxford on the car park and you could smell the sea and hear the sound of the seagulls. Mum, dad, me and Andrew had arrived. From the car park it was a few minutes walk to the cottage in Sandgate, which had been in my mom's boss's family for generations.

The cottage was right on the harbour front, its balcony over the water, and its neighbour was the swing bridge. I spent many an hour on that balcony, watching the people navigate the narrow footpath of the bridge, or the madding crowd on the opposite side of the harbour milling in and out of Woolworths or walking towards the pier. The view was better in the evening, where the lighting was more subtle and the crowds less, and when the tide was in the lapping water on the moored boats played a sound, accompanied by the cables clinking on the metal masts. When not on the balcony or in the Lucky Duck shop round the corner, a favourite daytime spot for me was the small beach on the old side of town, less frequented by most tourists who gravitated to the amusement arcades and larger beaches on the more commercial west side. This beach was mine, I skimmed stones and watched the seagulls and the dredger, I wondered at the magnificence of the towering cliffs above, another favourite spot after negotiating the 199 steps to the abbey, and maybe buying an ice cream on the way and then having a nose in Fortunes kippers where you could watch them smoke the days catch, as well as experience the interesting smell of fish and wood smoke.

On other days, when my dad had to do the work he had brought with him and we felt adventurous, we went on a bus ride to Robin Hood's bay. This was another highlight and full of the memory of long grass on the moors blowing in the wind, like the movement of ocean waves. Every time I look out of the window now and see barley in the fields opposite swaying in tune to the wind I am immediately transported back to that journey.

So what is the point of writing such a detailed reminiscent of some of my childhood experiences? **The point is the detail of the ordinary.**

Jacobs (1993) wrote the detail of recollection, both of her son's childhood experience and her own. Louv and Sobel did similarly in their accounts, and Robin Moore wrote:

“Think back to your own childhood for a moment and recall what your favourite play places were. I guarantee that street-related spaces will come to the minds of most readers. Self-reflection is a worthwhile source of understanding...” (Moore, 1987, p.45).

The Opies, stated that as we grow older interest changes, we don't haunt places where children play and no longer notice children's games (Opie and Opie, 1969). Colin Ward (1990) proposes that we should return to the places of paradise that are myths of our childhood and see “... how pathetically ordinary it actually is” (p.1) to the eye of the adult. Ward (1990) cites Schachtel (1947) as saying:

“The adult is usually not capable of experiencing what the child experiences; more often than not he is not even capable of imagining what the child experiences.” (Ward, 1990, p.1).

As adults we forget the importance of the detail particularly of the ordinary every day experience, which to a child is overwhelmingly significant. As well as the detail in the story of my childhood being important there is also significance in the commonality of experiences and place preferences with the literature research and with the experiences of children I have worked with in the study. Mucking about, anticipation, dens, trees as places to climb, places to own, places to hide are still important. Being away from adults, having your own space as well as opportunities for socialisation, free range extents and the ability to explore and make things are all present. Playing often informal, learning by doing as well as by observing and preferences or attachment to natural environments continues. Our sensory experiences are also significant, whether it be the unpleasant abattoir when you got off the bus giving a sense of arrival, or the sound of the seagulls in Whitby, which still in adult life takes me there irrespective of my actual geographic location, as do the sights of moving grass. The leaning into a fellow passenger because of the camber of the road when negotiating a traffic roundabout, was analogous with one boy I worked with who knew he had arrived at school because of a similar experience that dictated the movement of the computer game in his hand.

There are many commonalities of elements and significance within my own childhood experiences with those of the children I worked with. As adults, if we ignore the detail in children’s accounts of their experiences when we listen to them, then we lose the point of the detail being important and we are also oblivious to the messages contained and often woven within it.

Our place attachment is not only to the grand landscape, but more importantly to the everyday local places we encounter on a routine basis, the scruffy, the superficially meaningless, and yet the significantly meaningful. At a recent seminar workshop in Edinburgh (Ward Thompson, 2006) we were asked to contemplate for a moment our favourite childhood place, and explain to each other where it was, and why it was significant. I have opened my thesis here with my own thoughts from my childhood place experiences. As Rivkin (1995) asked; perhaps you as a reader may take a moment to contemplate your own before continuing. In so doing reflect upon how

powerful this is on the shaping of the adult and how, as Simonds highlights, the way we experience seems to have become detached from the way we now shape our outdoor surroundings.

SECTION 1

Background and project context

Introduction to the study

Literature Review

Reflections on Practice

“... parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child...” Children’s participation as recognized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Hart, 1997, p.11).

In the presentation of this thesis a deliberate decision has been taken to write the participatory stages of the research in the first person. The reason for this is a recognition and understanding of the individual as important and follows the example of Carl Rogers the influential Psychologist whose stance on communication was at a feeling level of connection whether it was for his clients, students, conference delegates from practice or academia, the standpoint was the same; to be real and his own written work is conducted in the same way, in which I follow.

All children’s names stated in this thesis are assumed for illustrative purposes, but the words and comments are factually recorded from the participative sessions.

1. Introduction to the Study

The everyday local environment or incidental spaces routinely encountered by children is increasingly highlighted as an important contributor to their social development and general health and well-being (Thomas and Thompson, 2004; DTLR, 2002). Evidence suggests, however, that there remains a significant loss of connection between children and outdoor settings, and that this may have long-term implications (Worpole 2003). Ken Worpole, author and commentator on open space and social issues, highlights this by synthesizing current government and community initiatives in this field, placing the importance of providing for, and giving voice to, children in policy, planning, design and management of public open space within the urban renaissance agenda. His report, *No Particular Place to Go* states that:

“... planning for play, and the need to create safe street networks and spaces for young people and children, is a precondition of a healthy community life and ‘liveability’” (Worpole, 2003, p4).

Issues that appear to emerge from this aspiration especially include the notion that it is the environment routinely encountered by children which should receive particular attention, because this is the realm of a vision of the walkable community where there is encouragement for “more people to be out and about on the streets, especially children” (ibid) advocated by, for example, the DTLR (2002).

1.1. The approach

This research aspired to give voice to children by means of developing a range of participatory methods to facilitate exploration and analysis of the spatial experiences of primary school age children, with particular reference to their notions of place perception. The research emphasizes that it is the children's experience of place that matters most, rather than what it looks like, for example, and for this reason significance is given to specific experiences that are central to the development of a person's awareness of where they are in relation to their surroundings and what this means to them. Fundamental to the research is the approach adopted, which considers the empowerment of the children in terms of their contribution to the methodological development. The approach is empathic, responsive and reflective recognising the children as both individuals and co-authors of the research which develops in a longitudinal qualitative paradigm.

Embedded in this child centric view is the perspective of the studies ethical stance, which seeks to promote the children's contribution as central and significant, and to seek ways to facilitate the children's recognition of the value of their contribution as a golden thread running throughout the study from first introducing it to them and throughout each of the stages of working together to its participative conclusion.

1.2. The participative phases of the research

Three primary schools agreed to be involved in the research in order to facilitate access to potential participants which were children from year three (seven and eight years old) and year six (ten and eleven years old). The children were engaged in a range of planned activities that over three phases collectively aimed to reveal in detail how they used, understood and felt about places they came into routine contact with in their local neighbourhood. The schools were in the Yorkshire and north-eastern England regions of the UK and situated in rural, suburban and urban locations. Following scrutiny of ethical considerations, an informed-consent process took place and a total of 68 children engaged in the longitudinal study which adopted a multi-method approach employing various participative techniques.

The overall research paradigm was highly qualitative, reflecting the subjective nature of place experience, and having a grounded theory perspective – identifying the

components in a structured way to develop new concepts and theory from the sequential coding of data derived from direct observation (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In this respect the longitudinal nature of the study was important to allow research methodology to evolve and be informed by previous phases in the study following reflection on developing emergent themes as well as the children's response to the particular methodology employed.

1.2.1. First phase: semi-structured interviews

Since 1999 I have been involved in working with children to discern their environmental views and perceptions. These early case studies relied on the use of semi-structured interviews, organized around themes categorized into three areas of interest: physical objects and features, human experience, and place making (place preference, attachment and associated meanings). These studies were conducted as part of a number of school grounds improvement projects. A later study involved in a public consultation planning project the focus of which was to reveal and understand the place perception of the inhabitants of a village in North Yorkshire, UK. This provided an opportunity to develop themes relevant to a wider neighbourhood context, rather than being limited to the agenda of school grounds. In this case study, the semi-structured interview model previously used at schools was adapted and developed. These children were initially engaged in a game to find their home on a base plan of their neighbourhood and then mark it with a model house. This was deliberately conceived partly as an attempt to put them at their ease, and as a technique to also help to give the subsequent interview a sense of orientation focused on a known and familiar place, being their home.

This method was further developed as a result of this case study, and used in the first phase of the doctoral research by extending the game so that, in addition to identifying their home, children also marked their school and indicated their typical mode of transport between the two places, and whether they were alone or with others, for example. This extension to the original case study was made to recognize the likelihood that social issues as well as method of travel might play a significant part in the children's perceptions and experiences of the places they encountered. The interviews for this first phase were conducted on a one-to-one basis in the company or proximity of an adult known to the children.

Predetermined themes led to discussions centred on routine activity and an 'imagine and remember' game to establish what was noticed on emerging from their home and along the route to school. Other discussion took place to establish at what point the children felt they were near to school and then had arrived, as well as establishing patterns of spatial experience and place preference in the wider neighbourhood. The sessions were all digitally voice recorded for the purpose of subsequent evaluation. An important characteristic of the approach adopted in engaging with the children was that it should be empathic. This is variously described in the context of student centred approaches to teaching as "a mode of human contact" (Egan, 1990, p.123), "putting yourself in their shoes" (Wheeler and Birtle, 1993, p.34) and being understood from their own viewpoint rather than being evaluated (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990). This was fundamental to building trust between me and the children who were involved as active participants. The first phase was generally successful in establishing the experiences of place, using the school run as a focus. Following reflection upon notes made during and after the workshops with the children, together with listening to the recordings of the first phase, I decided that the second phase should take place with pairs or small groups of children rather than to continue the one-to-one model of the first phase. This decision was taken in order to provide an element of familiarity and mutual support for the more reticent of the children, some of whom seemed ill at ease with the first workshop.

1.2.2. Second phase: cognitive mapping and drawing

Cognitive mapping and drawing techniques had previously been used in the case study field trials and proved a useful and effective way of finding out how the children experienced and used places. The significance of people being able to understand their environment and able to map it mentally is a prominent component in the development of place perception (Downs and Stea, 1973). These maps can be particularly effective where there are cultural or communication problems, which can be the case when employing conventional methodologies due to the age and limitations of understanding of the study group (Wates, 2000). It was also evident from the first phase that, because of the diversity of the group, account should be taken not only of the ability to communicate thoughts but also of children's preferences for expressing them. This draws from work examining preference of

learning styles, and in particular the work on experiential learning by Kolb (1984) and Honey and Mumford's (1992) version of the learning cycle, both of which identify individual preferences in engaging with learning experiences.

During this second phase the children were asked to complete two activities in the form of either cognitive maps or for those who did not feel comfortable about the literal sense of the word, they were asked to do drawings. The first activity was to map their existing neighbourhood experiences in response to 'this is what it is like outside, where I live, on the way to school and at my school'. By way of personalizing the work, the children were also asked to draw themselves in the picture doing what they liked doing best outside at a preferred location. While the children drew they were engaged in conversation to discern what they were drawing and why. Once completed the children were asked to draw the second picture which would be their aspiration for their neighbourhood. This involved a technique referred to in this study as a 'wish picture', a development from a synthesis of two methodologies. The first of these is known as a 'word picture' (Alexander *et al.*, 1995), a technique used as a means of revealing experiential dimensions of place by describing something of the quality of sensations and experience that places would deliver in advance of thinking about the physical structure and spatial arrangement in detail. Because of the word picture's limitations in its application with the children, due to the potential variation in the development of their written communication skills (highlighted by some parents' responses to the initial participation invitation information), an adaptation was developed to combine this methodology with a 'wish poem', a visual variation of the semi-structured interview (Sanoff 2000a, 2000b). Perhaps inevitably the outcomes were biased towards drawings of objects and features, but with the use of semi-structured interview techniques a richer picture was able to be revealed about the experiential qualities of the places they had visually created.

1.2.3. Concluding phase: adaptive photo-elicitation

As part of the grounded approach that informed the study's development, information discerned from the formative phases was evaluated and a set of provisional themes began to emerge as potentially significant and were categorised into: Place or object specific experiences; feelings and emotional significance; social networks; imagination and temporal aspects.

Further scrutiny of the initial model of emergent themes was conducted by partially transcribing the conversations from phases one and two together with an examination of the children's drawings in a memorandum format. This allowed a subsequent tabulation of the themes into a Leitmotif Code. A Leitmotif Code is a derivation from music studies as a means of identifying dominant and recurring themes within a composition, and the same principles have been used to identify a set of recurring themes in this study. As a consequence it was possible to identify broad categories within which the emergent place perceptions of the children involved in the study could be grouped, giving a structure to the final phase of the work. The developed model identified five generic themes which were: **place or object-specific** experiences; **feelings and emotional** significance; **imagination and recollection** aspects and **interactions**. These emerging themes appeared consistent with those cited by Aitken and Wingate (1993), who define a code from a self-directed photography study to include the built environment; natural environment; dynamic/action; and social relations.

Each of this study's five generic themes had a number of typologies, and each typology was composed of a number of categories of elements. The themes that evolved from phases one and two to form the Leitmotif code were tested in the context of using the code to inform the development and design of an adaptive photo-elicitation method. This was used to ascertain the children's place preferences and the conceptual relationship between preferred images and the code as well as perceptual experiences of images against the code. Image sets were compiled from the information derived from the Leitmotif Code which informed the choice of a number of images of places to test. The photographs were taken by me from a child's height in order that the places would appear from a child's perspective, as much as an image can represent such.

The final phase consisted of a number of activities for the children to complete. The first activity was conducted in two parts. The aim of the first part was to present an image set to explore issues of the social aspects typology of the **interactions** theme. The children were asked to stick a silhouette on to an image of preference to represent where they would most like to be in three different social situations. The first scenario

was – with their family, the second was if they were with a friend and the third was if they were alone. In each case a different silhouette was chosen to represent each scenario. The second part used a technique designed to explore the second typology of the **interactions theme**: dynamic actions, and also the **imagination and recollection theme**, and to do this a second image set was added to the first. The children were then asked to choose a place they would most like to go to, in order to engage in a range of scenarios that had emerged from these themes within the code. In each case they stuck a silhouette representing themselves onto a picture of their choice from either the first or second image sets and wrote a reference number next to the image relating to the scenario. The children were also requested to consider not only which image they preferred for the scenario, but also to consider the positioning of the silhouette in the preferred image.

The second activity tested aspects of the generic theme **feelings and emotions**. From the second-phase cognitive mapping/drawing work it was apparent that when the children drew themselves in their cognitive map, some expressed how they felt about places by including an expression on their face in the picture. From this construct a Likert scale of expressive faces was developed to represent a range of eleven emotions which ranged from scared to very excited with a median of normal. An image set was then selected to test scenarios of feelings and emotions that the children had variously described in the previous sessions as having some emotional effect upon them, either positive or negative. The children were asked to tick a face or faces that showed how they would feel if they were in the picture, and if there was not a face that represented how they felt then they could draw one.

The final activity was again conceived from the previous phases where some children had talked about or drawn their characteristics of constructing objects from everyday artefacts in acts of improvisation by engaging the virtual or physical worlds of building places. This was adapted into a technique for the children to design a neighbourhood using a number of place images. The children were asked to select images of places they would like in their neighbourhood and stick them on to a blank A3 piece of paper, considering the inclusion in this neighbourhood of houses, streets, places to play, different types of boundaries, alleyways, pathways, places to rest and places to go to. A range of 62 images were offered, developed from the Leitmotif

Code. The children were asked to arrange as many or as few of the images as they desired on the paper and stick them down relative to how they wanted their neighbourhood to be. They were also asked to include home, represented by a picture with the text 'home', and their school, and then arrange their selected images in relation to these. To complete their picture they were given a silhouette representing them, and were asked to stick it where they would most like to be in the neighbourhood that they had built. They were then encouraged to explain the choices of images they had made and the composition of what had now become a poster of their constructed neighbourhood, as well as why they had chosen a particular preferred place to be within their design.

The children were also asked to partake in a methodological evaluation of the whole study, by completing a form which asked them which parts of the participative workshops they enjoyed or disliked the most, if they noticed anything different about their neighbourhood as a consequence of taking part and if they had discussed taking part with anybody else. They were also asked if they would take part again if asked to do so now they knew what was involved.

1.3. Summary

The research employed a number of qualitative participative methods. The value of the longitudinal study and grounded approach enabled reflection and refinement following each phase of the study whilst maintaining a consistency across the study groups at each phase. The reflective process of evaluating the methods allowed for development and refinement to test assertions from the previous phases. The multi-method approach is important in research of this kind to respond to the intrinsic subjectivity involved in place perception. Using only a single method to obtain information about children's experience of places they use will produce information related only to that specific method of enquiry. The variety of methods also recognised the children as individuals with preferences and individual needs rather than as a collective whole, this was part of the ethical stance that saw and valued the children as co-authors and not recipients or a means to an end.

The evolving place experience themes demonstrated a complexity and fine grain of place perception that is often experienced by adults subliminally but would appear more significant to children's daily encounters with their local environment. If we are

to appreciate this 'realness of place' from the perspective of children rather than as an 'adultist' perception then we not only need to give children a voice, but we also need to listen to the voices, understand them and meaningfully engage with children to achieve this and as a means of empowerment.

The aim of the study was to address the following research question:

How can the planning and design disciplines involved in the built environment profession together with policy makers and researchers facilitate the empowerment and understanding of the existing and aspirational place experiences of primary school children, by **finding and understanding the children's voice?**

The central hypothesis of this study was that there are aspects of the place perception of primary school aged children relevant to existing places they encounter and aspirational places they can imagine, that remain inaccessible to planning and design professionals using conventional methods of consultation. If this is accepted, then it suggests that potentially important aspects of the voice of children that may have a beneficial influence on the design of the outdoor places they use remains unheard.

The key question for the research then was to develop a participative method that could find and understand this voice.

Study Aim

- To develop a participatory method that would find and understand the children's voices.

Secondary aim as a consequence

- In the making of the methodological model explore issues of the children's place experiences that were revealed through its application and development.

Objectives

- Reflect on practice experiences
- Review cross disciplinary literature and identifying common themes
- Develop methodological constituents to create a provisional method
- Apply the provisional methodological constituents of the method

- Analyse the findings

To achieve the research aims, there was a reflection on practice based case study experiences as well as a literature review across a number of topic areas and disciplines. This review sought common themes for the research to explore and address through the development of a method that would answer the research question. Through exploration and testing of methodologies and subsequent refinement and analysis of findings the research developed the participatory framework, approach and constituents of the **INSIGHT METHOD** which is the product of the research. The **INSIGHT METHOD** addresses the research question and aim by providing a practical method of constituent components. This can be used by researchers and practitioners of the built environment professions to ensure that the hidden views of children's place experiences can be actively sought in appropriate ways, taken into consideration, valued and understood. These then must be incorporated in the design and planning decisions of the physical forms of the children's everyday place experiences which have a significant impact on their physical and mental health and well being as well as their cognitive, learning and social development.

The **INSIGHT METHOD** has at its core a fundamental **approach**; it comprises of a number of **methodological constituents** and **analytical tools** based in a qualitative paradigm. The detailed development of the **INSIGHT METHOD** is discussed in the chapters that follow this introduction. A schematic summary of the **INSIGHT METHOD** resulting from this research is as follows:

INSIGHT METHOD

APPROACH:

Stance

- Principles of a longitudinal approach employing reflective practice; adaptation and being responsive
- Empathic
- Child/person centric
- Empowerment
- Ethical perspective of children's informed consent inclusion
- Multi-route facilitation

Methodological perspective of grounded theory principles, qualitative paradigm and multi-route methodological components of participative tools

- Research
- Plan
- Instigate
- Reflect
- React
- Implement response

METHODOLOGICAL CONSTITUENTS:

A Child centric multi route methodological tool kit of participation that values the individual and facilitates the children's revealing of their place experiences. These tools recognise the need for a range of ways for the children to be able to express themselves and consider the concepts of learning theory and learning styles in facilitating a child centric focus of expression. Ethical considerations are paramount along with relational modes in terms of working with children individually; in pairs or small groups. The constituent's application and combination will respond to the children by selecting appropriate tools from the following multi-route methodological constituents:

- Semi structured interviewing using three dimensional models and maps, warm up techniques and relationship building in the form of task oriented techniques. Informal conversation guided by pre-determined themes relevant to the project brief.
- Cognitive mapping and drawing tasks using appropriate tools to enable visual expression of ideas of existing place associations and meanings accompanied with conversation to explain meanings and significance.
- Wish pictures to empower and elevate children's aspirations for their neighbourhood to be manifest within a picture accompanied by conversation to explain meanings of a visually dominant task.
- Adaptive photo-elicitation tasks to test hypothesis regarding children's place perception, emotional responses and preferences by a variety of means of engaging the children in experiencing place through a visual method.

Views by the children of their experiences of the participation are considered important and their opinions should be reflected in the sequential application and selection of appropriate constituents in order that they become co-authors of the project's participatory phase.

Additional tools for potential inclusion to gather **primary** information:

- Written based tasks in the forms of:
 - Text based diaries
 - Wish poems
 - Word pictures
- Self directed photography
- Child directed accompanied walks around site.

Additional tools to gather **secondary** information:

- Mapping children's place experiences using the techniques of experiential landscape place.
- None participant observation
- Anthropological tracking

ANALYTICAL TOOLS:

A reflective and responsive approach using the principles of grounded theory in adapting methodological constituents in response to evolving themes and using the following evaluative tools in the context of a qualitative paradigm whose multi-method approach provides triangulation of data.

- Evaluation of initial stages of participatory phases by evaluating data by tabulation. Categorise recurring themes into a Leitmotif Code that is hierarchical in its constituents and composed of themes, typologies and elements, for example:
 - Object and Place themes with typologies of natural and built environments composed of a number of elements developed from tabulated data derived from the children by the employment of the multi-route methods of participation.
 - Feelings and Emotions theme with negative and positive typologies with constituent elements derived as above.
 - Imagination and Recollection theme with typologies of imaginings, recalled experience and story telling.
 - Interactions theme with typologies of social aspects and dynamic action comprising of elements derived as stated above.

- Collation of data into collective categorisation of the Leitmotif Code to form hypothesis relating to children's place preferences and emotional responses tested by a final participatory phase to contextualise the adultist perception into a child centric response, to inform the conceptual realisation of child friendly environments.

- Collective categorisation for informing child friendly environments from the children's perspective of place experiences includes:
 - Houses
 - Streets
 - Shops
 - Places to play
 - Boundaries
 - Access points
 - Alleyways
 - Pathways
 - Places to rest
 - Places to go
 - Animals
 - Vegetation
 - Water

- Tabulation of data from final phases of participation into trends of preference as well as recognising the value of grouping variables such as age, gender and socio-demographic.

- The use of ranking and visual patterns to highlight similarity and differences in the data.

2. Literature Review

“I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcade’s curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of the relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past...” (Calvino, 1997, p.10).

2.1. Introduction

The literature review draws together a range of disciplines to give a Landscape Architecture perspective which embraces by examination aspects of research from other disciplines and topic areas relevant to the study. These include environmental psychology, human geography, and anthropology. There are commonalities within these arenas in terms of people place relationships and, relevant methodologies for discovering such humanistic tendencies of environmental interactions and associations. More specifically research was undertaken into what is meant by participation, and the diversity of its application, interpretation or misinterpretation and misuse as a process and label for legitimacy. Current political and social frameworks relevant to the research were examined in terms of contextualising where the study fits in terms of contemporary policy and what it could contribute to it. The main area of literature research was undertaken on children specific topics relating to developing an understanding of theories of childhood, learning and participatory issues of engagement. Additionally there was an exploration of children place relationships that are significant in terms of children’s social, cognitive developments, health and wellbeing. Commonality exists between many of these disciplines and perspectives regarding the diminished lack of connection between children and the external environment. There was also a realisation evident of the need for the concept of child friendly environments in the public domain relating to the children’s doorstep experiences. From school runs now dominated by adult supervision in motor vehicles to the risk averse society we inhabit that shackles the extent of free range children, limited experience of the outdoors has long term implications. The literature research contextualised the study as well as showing its relevance. In addition cross-disciplinary areas of psychology and geography were drawn on and had an important role in the methodological development which was the product of the research.

Before commencing with the main body of the literature review an overview of the concept of children and childhood is seen as informative to contextualising the study

as children are the co-authors of developing the research methodology. Within recent social theories childhood is now seen as a structural feature of societies and children are perceived as social actors (Chawla, 2002; Prout, 2002; Christensen and James, 2000). This perspective recognises the interactions that children have with each other adults and structural forms as well as the “locales of their lives” being shaped by them and shaping them (Prout, 2002, p.69). Childhood is seen then as a social construction and not a biological state of an adult in waiting (Matthews, 2001). Matthews continues to discuss childhood with a summary of five widely held misconceptions relating to western childhood;

- “The child is a radically separate being from the adult.
- Childhood is a stage of incompetence relative to adulthood.
- Adults are rational, physically independent, autonomous, with a strong sense of identity and consciousness. Thus, they are able to make informed and sensible choices for which they can be held personally responsible. It is because children lack these adult competencies that they may not participate in the adult world.
- Children do have virtues – for example, innocence. But an innocent cannot belong to an adult world.
- To be a child is to be not yet an adult. Adulthood is something that is gained.” (ibid, p.18).

These misconceptions become barriers to children’s empowerment and result in exclusion from community affairs and are a result of a socially defined condition. In so doing children are demoted into an unnatural realm of incompetence where their capacities skills and powers are mostly unrealised, it is not until we accept children as real people do mutually ethical relationships develop during projects (Alderson and Morrow, 2004), and this stance is the position of this research.

2.2. Children: Participation and Engagement

2.2.1. Participation and Consultation: an overview

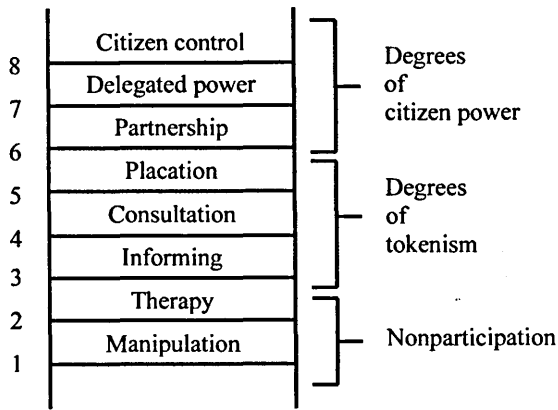
The literature research and practice based reflection examined what specific participatory methods were appropriate for the context of the research and this is discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Firstly however, the issue of what is meant by participation is explored and the theories and empirical issues that proliferate this stance or otherwise.

According to Sanoff (2000b) participation means different things to different people and different things to the same people according to the situation. Participation can also be a bandwagon for political gain or even as Johnson (1979, p.27) states; "... as a legitimising device for all kinds of environmental proposals..." My practice experience as a Community Landscape Architect imbibed a certain amount of cynicism as to whether participation was merely a legitimising device, or another output seen as a tick box to complete on a Quarterly monitoring return of a scheme's progress. Alternatively was it, as it should have been an effective method of engagement about real issues that affect people on a day to day basis on their own doorstep, and this perspective seems in keeping with others experiences of Local government, for example Freeman *et al* (2003).

Johnson (1979, 2000) alludes from experience gained from a trench eye view stating that the designer's attitude is key and the traditional approach of 'we know best' only results in designs that embody values alien to the individual residents. Those who commit to the local community and work in a process of mutual education work for the mutual benefit of designer and resident, but this demands more of the designer and a certain re-examination of entrenched ideas.

This view of participation of being an elastic coverall for many approaches from lip service to real partnership is not without theoretical credence. Arnstein (1969) proposed what has now become a much cited and even iconistic metaphor in her ladder of participation whose bottom rung gave the citizen no power but moving up the ladder to the top rung gives the categorical term of Citizen Power, see figure 1.

Figure 1: A Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969, p.217)



Sanoff (2000b) however states that this has now been refined to a more modest level to include information exchange, resolution of conflict and for supplementing design and planning. Sanoff states that participation is “contextual” (2000b, p.8), and cites Deshler and Sock (1985) as identifying two levels of participation:

- “Pseudoparticipation, categorised as:
 Domestication – This involves informing, therapy, and manipulation.
 Assistencialism – This includes placation and consultation.
 Genuine participation, categorised as:
 Co-operation – This refers to partnership and delegation of power.
 Citizen control – Which means empowerment.”(Sanoff, 2000b, p.8)

Forester (2000) proposes five underlying challenges of participatory planning:

1. Learning about values (ethics).
2. Facing difference/distrust (recognition).
3. Building capacity/relationships (participatory rituals).
4. Enabling surprise/discovery (deliberative rationality).
5. Integration of negotiation with participation (consensus building).

We are often concerned that opening a dialogue with those whom are affected by or have an interest in our proposals will some how compromise our ideas and a fait accompli approach will lead to less confrontation. In reality Forester (2000) proposed that parties need to be seen to be taken seriously and that differences need to be exploited and it is not enough to only seek common ground, as this only achieves a compromise that no one is happy with. There is a need to get past the presumptions of others and for all to appreciate what is important to each party. A summary of the participatory window of opportunity according to Forester (2000) is shown in figure 2, where effective negotiation through high participation achieves collaboration and low levels of participation to avoid conflict, results in poor compromise solutions.

Figure 2: Forester's window of opportunity in participatory planning

	High participation – many voices	Low participation – fewer voices
Efficient negotiation	Democratic deliberations Incentive: collaboration/joint gains	“Old boys” – deal making Incentive: Control maintained
Less efficient negotiation	Joint gains unrealised Incentive: appearance of listening	Poor Compromise Incentive: conflict avoidance

Discussions in other disciplines regarding participation and its value not only to a process but to whom it empowers is ongoing, for example in the context of International Development there are arguments particularly relating to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which is used as an approach by Non-Government Agencies (NGO's) and others involved in International Development. The PRA utilises a number of participatory methods based upon oral communication techniques towards a goal of decentralization and empowerment. Cooke and Kothari (2001) however argued that participation had tyrannized development debates without presenting evidence that empowerment had actually been realised for marginal people. In response Hickey and Mohan (2004) propose that participation has actually:

“deepened and extended its role in development, with a new range of approaches to participation emerging across theory, policy and practice.... Most significantly, people in developing countries are continually devising new and innovative strategies for expressing their agency in development arenas. What remains to be explored is not only the extent to which the current generation of participatory approaches can offer answers to the critique ranged against participatory development, but can also (re)establish it as a legitimate and genuinely transformative approach to development.” (p.3).

This appears congruent with the debates discussed above, and perhaps most appropriately discernable from the work of Johnson (2000, 1979). Figure 3 is from Sheat and Beer (1994, p.92) who show an abridged version (from Baldassari *et al*, 1980) of Johnson's “Trench eye view of participation” (Johnson, 1979, p.27) which presented an iconoclastic guide to explode some of the myths which surround it.

Figure 3: Johnson's 'Trench eye view of participation'

Interpretation of participation	
As a design theory	Based on the view that people are perfectly capable of creating the environments they need – with the designer acting as a 'midwife' or 'enabler' only
As a means to political change	Based on the idea of 'citizen participation equals citizen power'
As a sop to public opinion	Based on designers' hopes that participation will lead to support design
As nostalgia	Based on a desire to return to the days when everyone did their own designing
As community development	Based on the idea of participation to rally the community into action
As education	Based on the view that through participation people will learn more about their environment and their actions and interactions with it
As aesthetic theory	Based on a reaction against modernist design – an attempt to add more complexity, contradiction and individuality
As a bandwagon	Based on the idea that participation is the 'in' thing to do – a means to legitimise all kinds of proposals
As a social conscience	Based on the 'service ethic'
As a means to a better solution	Based on the idea that the best solution will emerge by consensus once everyone understands the facts
<i>Baldassari et al (1980) in Sheat and Beer (1994)</i>	

Given this trench eye scepticism, which is inherent in Sanoff and Forester's discussions, Johnson (1979) concludes that the purpose of participation can be seen primarily in terms of a means to achieving a better end product and that by involving people in a project engenders a sense of theoretical ownership that will make them feel protective towards it. However he views these two reasons as, at best paternalistic and that the aim of participation should be fundamentally a political one in moving control of resources to a local level and as a way of facilitating the adoption of power by local groups. To achieve these aims, Johnson (1979) continues with the proposal that it is;

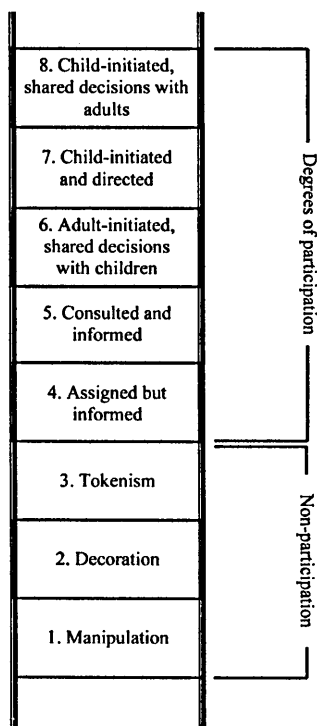
“The designer's attitude is the key issue. It is all too easy for him to adopt the traditionally arrogant professional role, over-riding the community's wishes by virtue of his superior skill and knowledge, and producing a design which largely embodies his own values.” (p.30).

Whatever our stance on participation it is crucial to understand why it is being undertaken and what effects it will have upon the people who participate, our approach and standpoint are paramount, and this should also include our perspective of its efficacy in terms of who benefits. Our tools and techniques should also be appropriate, but also our approach is paramount. Johnson (1979) states that the

architect should: "...commit himself to the local community and work with them in a process of mutual education." (p.30). Romice and Frey (2003) comment that "... effective interaction between community groups and professionals is of vital importance", and that community participation will only produce "good results" if the process is systematic and based on "strong foundations" (p.10).

Participation should not be seen as a means to an end in fulfilling a project demand or financial spend; it is a process of reciprocal communication which the people taking part should be empowered to be able to influence a physical outcome. Appropriate, none jargonistic methods should be used that the participants will be able to meaningfully engage with and express their views which will be valued and understood as an integral part of a process which is integral and not superficial. The standpoint that participation should be a reciprocal process of learning, borne out of mutual respect and openness was significant to this study. This is part of an empathic approach which is discussed in chapter 4, together with methods to facilitate a process of meaningful engagement, learning, and through the act of participation, empowerment.

2.2.2. Children and participation



Roger Hart outlines his own version of a ladder of participation which relates specifically to children's participation. Hart (1997) recognised that there was a plethora of information available regarding youth organisation but very little material available that offered information regarding children's participation. In his ladder of children's participation (figure 4) Hart uses the diagram as a metaphor for illustrating "degrees of initiation and collaboration children can have when working on projects with adults." (ibid, p.40).

Figure 4: A ladder of children's participation (Hart, 1997, p.41)

The rungs of the ladder ascend from the first three, categorised as non-participation as follows:

Manipulation

The bottom rung of Hart's ladder is manipulation, and represents a model of when adults use the voice of children as a means of delivering an adult's message. Hart uses the example of publications by adults that may use children's work to illustrate an adult's point. In such cases the work such as children's drawings are taken out of the context from which they were made and have no reference to the guidance given to the children for making the work. Another aspect of manipulation is cited, for example if the children were not involved in selecting which drawings were included in the published work or in the editing process. Hart (1997) clarifies that if the publication states the basis of the selection process or context for their production and does not imply or state that the children were involved in their selection then this is not manipulation. Another aspect of Manipulation is said by Hart (1997) to be that of Deception which is more prevalent. An example cited is that of gardens designed by adults but where children are involved in planting the scheme, and publicity then profligates a false impression that the children designed and built the garden themselves. The deception is a denial, because there is a desire for the project to be perceived as entirely driven by children. Hart (1997) sees this as a diminishment of respect for the children's involvement giving an unrealistic view of what the children achieved and often results in patronization from adults.

Decoration

Is described in the sense of children being used to promote an adult led cause or issue by their presence at demonstrations or meetings usually in costumes or clothing that have explicit messages about the cause displayed on them. Hart (1997) sees this as a rung above manipulation because no pretence is made that the issue protested about is led or inspired by the children themselves. Qualifications about the use of children in costume in general is made, this can be in the context of performances, and where no attempt at misleading people into believing that the children are the author's of songs and music performed then this should be appreciated for its entertainment value and not as a rung on the ladder. There are legitimate performances of children that are constructs of genuinely participative practices and these can include role play, street

theatre and drama where these are written by and performed by children themselves (Matthews, 2001).

Tokenism

Hart (1997) sees the issue of tokenism a potentially problematic one, as it is usually manifest in the work of adults who have a strong concern to give children a voice but have not considered carefully enough how this is achieved or been self-critical in the ways of undertaking it. The way that tokenism is present in the design of such projects is that the children do not contribute to the topic choice or the ways in which it will be communicated as well as not being given time in which they can form their own opinions. The example cited by Hart (ibid) is that of the selection of children on panels, where the most articulate are selected as representative by adults, and are not given an opportunity to elicit views of their peers whom they are supposed to represent. No attempt is made to convey the selection criteria of the children to the recipient members of an audience, who are more concerned with and impressed by the presence of children on a panel. Tokenism is often used to impress, but does nothing for empowerment of the children, who should be involved in conferences at the upper most rung of the ladder, where their involvement is truly participative.

The next rung on the ladder is the commencement of the models of genuine degrees of participation and are conceptualised in the following ways:

Assigned but Informed

This fourth rung on the ladder is also termed "Social Mobilization" (Hart, 1997, p.42), and is cited as the most common approach used in developing countries by international development agencies. It is seen as problematic to discern whether these projects are the results of voluntary schemes or are governance driven and only people from within the culture that have knowledge and understandings of the inherent systems are able to make a judgment as to whether they truly promote the democratic socialization of children.

Consulted and Informed

In cases where projects are run and designed by adults, there can still be participation if children are consulted, have their opinions treated with respect and facilitation has taken place to enable the children's understanding of the process and issues of the

project. Hart (1997) cites examples of City wide surveys where opinions were sought of children who were also involved in analysis and debate of the results. A base line of participatory process is outlined for such projects that should fully inform the children of the purpose of the survey, request children to volunteer and fully inform the children of the results.

Adult-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Children

Hart's next rung on the ladder contextualises the majority of community projects where there is no emphasis on a particular demographic and that they should encompass all of the community. It is often the case however, that the most politically active dominate decision making, and Hart states these as being people over the age of 25. There should be an inclusive approach that seeks to involve those that normally are excluded. This is a significant stance, and one that is returned to in the conclusions chapter as an aspect for future research in the development and application of the

INSIGHT METHOD.

Projects that Hart (1997) cites as using this level of participation have been involving children in the planning and design of environments that they use, such as play spaces. A critical aspect is to have an open mind, with no pre-conceived ideas as to what the children will suggest. A further aspect is that the children should be involved in the whole process and not in the initial conceptual stages only. If they cannot be involved in technical resolution then they should be involved in discussions on why for example, compromises have to take place to achieve their goals on the ground. This is a way of empowering the children's knowledge of the reality of achieving environmental projects and avoids them perceiving that their views are tokenistic.

Child-Initiated and Child-Directed

This category according to Hart (1997) is one where example projects are particularly difficult to find, they are often play related and emanate at schools where teachers are particularly conscious of the kind of objects that children will creatively play with and are not directive in their stance. Environments such as adventure play areas that facilitate objects that offer affordances and acts of adaptation and creativity as well as social interaction through contact with others and experimentation offer learning through cooperation and give the children capacity for making contributions to their

communities. The adults that facilitate this rung on the ladder are particularly astute and amenable to recognising children's own initiatives and allowing them to happen without controlling them. Hart (1997) cites examples of children initiating a clean up of a local stream in Vermont. Hart states that due to adult dominance and controlling tendencies or the perception that they will not understand the children's capabilities to carry such projects out a lot of these types of projects are carried out by the children in secret.

Child-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults

Hart (1997) defends his choice for the last rung on the ladder in terms of the adult involvement rather than their exclusion by children. He states his goal is not:

“to encourage the development of ‘children’s power’ or to see children operate as an entirely independent sector of their community.” (Hart, 1997, p.45)

Rather he perceives this top rung as accounting for children's initiation of a project and subsequent management and direction as being one to be recognised and acknowledged. But if they themselves elicit collaboration with adults on projects they initiate then this is seen as demonstrable of the children's confidence to work as equal members of a community. Above all choice should be paramount and Hart does not perceive that it is necessary or desirable for children to always operate at the highest rung on his ladder. Projects should however be designed to maximize opportunity for the children to choose a level that they wish to participate at, according to their personal abilities.

As with Arnstein's ladder in a wider context of participation, Hart's ladder has now become a well cited and iconic metaphor in the context of children's participation, but there still remains either an ignorance of meaningful and truly participatory processes or reluctance to implement or recognise them. Matthews (2001) discusses this in terms of adult's reluctance to engage children in decision making processes that will impact on their lives and of others. Matthews (2001) cites four reasons from Lansdown (1995) why this may be the case:

- “children are not competent to participate in decision-making
- giving children rights threatens the harmony and stability of family life
- children cannot have rights until they are capable of exercising responsibilities
- imposing responsibilities detracts from the right to childhood” (Lansdown, 1995, p.20).

Matthews (2001) discusses these reasons, firstly in terms of children's competence as being inappropriately founded on the assumption that children live without responsibilities. It is often the case that children have varying degrees of responsibility within the home which can be from the perspective of a carer looking after siblings or even looking after parents. A further proposition is made that education hides many responsibilities that children encounter within their school work. Lansdown's second reason alludes to the status-quo within a family scenario in that adults have a "... natural authority to decide what is in the best interests of a child." (Matthews, 2001, p.23). Any attempt to give children rights will therefore cause this inequitable balance to change thus threatening the adult dominance within the family. The third proposition relates to a misconception that children already have too many rights which they are incapable of exercising with any degree of responsibility, and is associated with a perspective of children being a social problem. This situation can be mitigated by the very nature of participation, by adults gaining a positive insight into what children can offer through such a process.

The final reason for adult's reluctance relates to the view that giving children responsibilities has a negative effect on children's rights to childhood, which is viewed mistakenly by some as a time in life that should be free from issues of concern (Driskell, 2002; Matthews, 2001; Lansdown, 1995). This view appears incongruent with the situation that proliferates within children's existing lives where children have many real concerns which Matthews (2001) states as being "... the products of the same social and economic forces as those that effect adults." (ibid, p.23). These concerns are real and manifest when talking to children and range from environmental issues to anti-social ones such as bad language, drugs and racism. One of the most thought provoking issues regarding children's participation in terms of how adult's value and promote it is within the context of the UNESCO Growing Up in Cities project which has its roots extending back to the 1970's. Chawla (2002) reviews the project from Kevin Lynch's initial pioneering work to its revival and raises a continuing contemporary issue of the extent to which there is still adult prejudice "... against the view of children as independent and responsible actors." (Chawla, 2002, p.21).

There are additional debates regarding aspects of children's participation such as the learning of democratic responsibility as a process ongoing through childhood in the form of democratic education. This is rather than one that manifests itself from nowhere in adulthood without having experienced the processes and responsibilities as well as acquiring the necessary skills. The counterpoint to this argument is stated in Matthews (2001) as education of this kind results in disempowerment, as it integrates the children into "... existing social and institutional structures, on which they are unable to exert any real influence." (ibid, p.24). From this standpoint, the view of children's participation as being effective is that the influence of children should become "... progressively enlarged." (ibid, p.24). Arnstein and Hart's ladders of participation present useful and influential visual metaphors for representation and analysis of degrees of participation as well as identifying what is not participation (Lansdown, 1995). However there are scenarios that are dependant on both the researcher's standpoint and context of the project and this is particularly relevant to the debate of consultation and participation, where the terms are often used interchangeably. Cele (2006) raises this issue in her thesis and cites Hill (2006) who states that consultation relates to; "... finding out views in order to inform decisions" whereas participation is where "... direct inputs are made into decision making." (Hill, 2006, p.72). Adams and Ingham (1998) qualify this perspective in that they see feedback as a form of participation, and where there is no feedback or explanation to children as to how their opinions have increased understanding or informed a particular decision or action then this remains an exercise of consultation. This view of participation slipping into the realm of consultation is also shared by Driskell (2002) who also cites projects where children's views have been sought and then no significance has been attached to their thoughts or input, and this then descends the project into non-participation.

2.2.3. Issues in researching with children

Appreciation of participation as a concept and theory is fundamental to this research study, in addition there was also a need to understand how to effectively engage with children as well as other issues relating to research with children such as ethics and methodologies. One debate within the literature that was seen as important is the question of; is there a difference in the way we work with children, or is it the same as working with adults? Greene and Hogan (2005) debate whether there is a need for

different methods to conduct research with children, Christensen and James (2000) take the standpoint that there is no need for the adoption of different methods, but there is a need to assume practices that "... resonate with children's own concerns and routines." (ibid, p.7). We need to seek ways of both giving children a voice but also understanding it, we also need to realise power relations that exist between adults and children. To understand the language and ways children express themselves and their conceptual meanings and actions is a further aspect of what is needed in research with children (Cele, 2006; Christensen and James, 2000). Samantha Punch debated such issues (Punch, 2002) and proposed that adults should also be recognised as individuals within research and that methods that are innovative which can be interesting and fun, for both children and the researcher should be recognised as "person-friendly" techniques, rather than "child friendly" which is perceived as patronising (ibid).

Working with children therefore requires an appreciation of the child as a highly informed expert of their own lives (Dudek, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004) and that research with children should be on a responsive continuum that reacts to various factors such as the individual children, research questions and context, the age ranges of the children as well as the researcher's own attitudes, values and behaviours (Punch, 2002). Failing to recognise and adapt to these, results in adult power dominance and a difficulty in empathizing with children's priorities and sense of time (Hill, 2005). If this is not the stance of the research then there will be a power imbalance as well as other implications. Hill *et al* (2004) raise the issue that some participative practices that have not recognised these issues have had a negative effect, by for example limiting the number of children who feel able to be involved. Christensen and James (2007) debate the power relationship between adults and children and propose that researchers should recognise this as inherent and should take this into account during the research process rather than the assumption that it can be eradicated to the degree of becoming inconsequential.

Other issues of engaging with children include the ethical considerations that the research considered; these not only influence ways of engaging with children using appropriate methodologies, but also they must consider confidentiality and view the children as participants and not as objects or subjects (Christensen and James, 2007; Hill, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). Ethical issues should also be concerned with

respect of the children participating, fairness and non discrimination as well as protecting the vulnerable. Hill (2005) suggests a framework for a set of rights which include: "... self determination, privacy, dignity, anonymity, confidentiality, fair treatment and protection from discomfort or harm." (ibid, p.65). Part of this ethical framework is one of self determination, which relates to choice in the form of consent. Hill (2005) cites informed consent as good practice, provided the children have the ability to understand the project and its consequences. The informed consent path not only addresses the children's rights but also seeks to give them a sense of control that contributes to their wellbeing through respect. It is suggested by Hill (2005) that an ideal scenario is to obtain informed consent in person following a presentation of written or verbal information about the research, which should also give opportunities for discussion of issues or concerns that the children may have.

Ethical issues were a prominent part of this research study's design and planning and are discussed in detail in chapter 6.2, together with the way informed consent was sought from both parents/guardians and children, and the preliminary discussions that took place with prospective participant groups of children. A further consideration discussed in chapter 6 is the ways to access children for participation in the study and relationships with "gatekeepers" and the effects this can have upon the research as well as the make up of the resulting participant group (Christensen and James, 2007; Hill, 2005; Punch, 2002).

2.2.4. Adultist and Child Centric Perspectives

The literature research was deliberately and necessarily cross disciplinary with much influence from the social sciences and another valuable resource was that of the theories and research of the children's geographers. Kraftl *et al* (2007) discuss the terminology of children's geographies as a term now accepted to;

"... describe an inter-disciplinary group of researchers – although very often geographers – who are concerned with children's use and experience of diverse places" (ibid, p.399).

Mckendrick (2004) reviews the discipline and sees how it contributes to understanding children's relationships with place, space and environment. Barker and Weller (2003) see the contribution of geographers as identifying the significance of place and spatial variations in childhoods at scales from local levels to global. Barker

and Weller (2003) also recognise the importance of the everyday places that children encounter which was the focus for this research, they see the contribution of geographers in research of children's encounters of such places and "... through which children's identities are made and remade." (ibid, p.209). There is a growth in studies relating to young peoples environmental interactions having grown since the mid 1990's (Kraftl, *et al*, 2007). Some extremely relevant contemporary studies, such as those of Nicola Ross (Ross, 2007, 2006, 2005a, 2005b, 2004) and Sofia Cele (Cele, 2006, 2004) emanate from a children's geographers perspective and another influential proponent is Hugh Matthews whose later work (Matthews, 2001) has already been discussed but whose 1992 publication: *Making Sense of Place: Children's Understanding of Large Scale Environments* was very influential on informing the relevance of the study in its early developmental stages and beyond.

Within the discipline of children's geographers there appears a debate analogous with that proposed by Colin Ward in his original work first published in the 1970's (Ward, 1990), this time Matthews and Limb (1999) some thirty years later raise a similar perspective. Hugh Matthews and Melanie Limb describe a situation where "Children are seemingly invisible on the landscape" (Matthews and Limb, 1999, p.66). Matthews and Limb (1999) describe a situation where lip service is paid to children's needs in the form of playgrounds and generally their real needs are subverted by the requirements of adults. Adults make assumptions on what children need within the environment and fail to understand that children differ "... in their ways of seeing" (ibid, p.66). Much of the debates in this chapter are analogous with this discussion and are seen as significant academic platforms for the study's research and perhaps this was fittingly summed up in Matthews and Limb's closing comments that:

"Children need allies. For these allies there remains to be solved the contradiction between the world from a child's viewpoint and the world they experience as adults" (Matthews and Limb, 1999, p.83).

Within the context of the thesis, specific methodologies that provided an initial framework for the participatory sessions are discussed in chapters 4 and 5, and their subsequent development is discussed throughout section 3 of the thesis. There are more general issues in the context of methodologies used in research involving children that are obviously relevant to the research. In Ross (2005a) Nicola Ross discusses the formulation of her research methodologies in order to facilitate the

children to "... convey their knowledge through multiple routes of expression" (ibid, p.336). This is consistent with research into learning theories that sees engagement through a range of ways as applicable to the way children respond to environments and learning and this theory is discussed in the next sub-section of this chapter. This multiple route approach is also consistent with the stance of Hugh Matthews whom Nicola Ross cites, and who sets out guidance on ethics and methodologies for researchers in Higher education embarking on or considering research with children. Matthews *et al* (1998) emphasises the need to explore differing methods than qualitative ones that are a form of "... adultist emphasis" (ibid, p.319). The reliance of methods such as; semi-structured interviews or focus group discussion ignores other aspects of children's communication in the forms of "... art, drama, music, activity." (ibid). These methods are seen as ways to promote children's imagination through the use of creative methods rather than a reliance on factual accounts of past experience (Greene and Hogan, 2005).

The appreciation that children express themselves in a variety of ways, through a variety of media is essential in being sensitive to them as individuals who have opinions, interests and viewpoints that are of value (Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006). Clark and Moss (2001) developed a multi-method approach of working with under five year olds as a way of listening to children's perspectives of their lives using a variety of methods to discern their thoughts. A significant issue with respect to methodologies is to select ones that are appropriate and not just an arbitrary mix to substantiate the research by the prospect of the more methods employed will be seen as triangulation and therefore increase validity. What is more important by far is the clear rationing of thought that seeks methods that are appropriate (Greene and Hogan, 2005). This means, appropriate for the participants, the researcher, ethics, and the context of the project. Project considerations are issues such as; the time available to make the resulting data evaluation as meaningful as the method's application from which they are derived, and in the case of a funded project; the budget available may be a limiting factor (Matthews, 2001).

As part of the research that informs this study's methodologies a discussion is held exploring learning styles in chapter 4.7, this examined the way in which we learn and thereby communicate. This, together with the review of children's learning theories

that follows, was a way of seeing the vision of inclusive participation that informed the appropriate selection of multiple routes of expression through creative methods, rather than participation as a means to an end viewed exclusively through an adult's 'eye'.

2.2.5. Learning Theories

The way we engage with and understand children's perception is fundamental to the background of being able to communicate effectively with them, for them to communicate with us, and for their views and opinions to be understood. How we learn is partly perception and to understand this in an elementary form facilitates the meaningful interaction and effective communication with children.

Mooney (2000) in her practitioner's manual 'Theories of Childhood' sets out to describe major learning theorists in order to facilitate a better understanding of "... how children think and act and how to be more effective with them" (ibid, p.xv). She describes the works of the main theorists in this field whom she cites as; Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget and Vygotsky. Mooney states that these theorists have a common message relating to children's learning in, that children learn from the act of doing and that:

"... education should involve real life material and experiences and should encourage experimentation and independent thinking" (ibid, p.4).

Whilst this research does not aspire to educate children, it does however seek effective ways of reciprocal communication with children and to test a range of methods in which they can express their experiences, this is why the aspects of how children learn and are comfortable in participating in the study were important. By understanding these principles commonality was drawn from the ways children respond to teaching methods that formally promote learning in classroom based subjects as well as how children learn informally by their interactions, observations and experiences of each other and their environment. It is recognised across many disciplines that the knowledge gained from learning theory research has greatly influenced those that research and work with children (Greig and Taylor, 1999). Learning theory was therefore a significant aspect of this research in developing the means of engagement and understanding of children.

In a sense, the study tried to encapsulate in a research context what Mooney cites as one of Dewey's most prominent theories about education; "[T]rue education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself." (Mooney, 2000, p.4), and it is the 'powers' of the child that this study is trying to 'ignite' or indeed empower. Mooney goes on to state that Dewey proposed that children learnt best by experiencing a variety of environments, where they interacted with others and when they worked alone and "... cooperatively with peers and adults" (ibid).

Another significant theory for this study was that of curricula planning, which had relevance to this study's planning stage in developing an initial methodological framework of appropriate methodological constituents. According to Dewey, when undertaking curricula planning there should be due consideration of the interests and background of the children as individuals and groups. This aspect of considering the children as individuals is recognised in the study's planning as well as in its ethical stance which contributed to the approach is discussed in subsequent chapters.

Mooney (2000) continues the exploration of learning theories by describing those of Montessori, whose principle acknowledgement in this field was the recognition of the significant impact that the learning environment had upon the children. Use of the word environment not only recognised the significance of the space the children occupied but also the "... furnishings and materials" as well as "... the adults and the children..." (ibid, p.24) with whom they spent their time, and that the environment should be orderly and beautiful. Mooney (2000) also discusses Montessori's thoughts that the children should be given experiences of "... wonderful sights, textures, sounds, and smells..." (ibid), and that this would facilitate the learning of language and life skills from their environment derived without conscious effort from the sensory experiences promoted by such environments. This is a lesson that would be well learnt when designing the external school environments of today, which appears to proliferate manufactured objects set on pungent rubber safety surfaces, which Woolley (2008) has described as "KFC", and is discussed later in this chapter. Part of Montessori's belief was that the children should be provided with appropriate tools that considered the children's size in relation to them and that the tools should be organized in such a way that they were accessible to the children. These aspects of

appropriate environments and tools were significant to the organisation and planning of this study's participatory phases. The consideration of the setting for these phases, where they would take place and what materials would be needed, all formed part of the methodological approach, discussed in section 2.

The theory of Erikson that was of relevance to this study was in the context of the influence that the actions and interactions experienced in early childhood has on our emotional and social development for the rest of our life. This has resonance in terms of the significance of the environments that we encounter as children in the way that they can afford (or not) experience, profligate social interaction or seclusion or boredom. Mooney (2000) quotes Erikson's stages of psychological development and recognises that Erikson also held the view that we are able to "... go back and renegotiate issues from a previous stage of development." (p.39). Mooney (2000) describes Piaget's contribution to learning theory as proposing how children arrive at what they know, and that Piaget's "... stages of cognitive development have created our overall view of how children think..." (ibid, p.60). Piaget claimed that children "... construct their own knowledge by giving meaning to the people, places, and things in their world." (ibid, p.61). The point was that children learn best when they undertake work themselves and develop their own understanding rather than by being handed an explanation or a fact.

Critics of Piaget's work, for example Donaldson (2006) argue that there are limitations of his studies in terms of their scientific validity. Other critics according to Mooney (2000) question his focus as being too orientated on thought processes and not enough on children's feeling and social relationships. Questions are also raised of his work's validity in terms of it being observational of his own three children and not scientific research. However Mooney (2000, p.61) cites Jones (1986) who states that "Piaget was an unusually thoughtful observer and generalizer." and that some principles are valid even if led by observation because they do happen, which is an interesting validation of observation as a method.

Vygotsky is the final theorist that Mooney discusses in her book. She describes his theories as differing from Piaget's in respect of Piaget's proposition that viewed children's knowledge as a construct of personal experience. Whilst Vygotsky also

believed this to be the case, he proposed that personal and social experience were inseparable, and like Piaget he believed that a good deal of learning takes place through play. A significant element of Vygostky's theories to this study is the perspective that children's lives are:

“... shaped by their families, communities, socioeconomic status, education, and culture. Their understanding of this world comes, in part, from the values and beliefs of the adults and other children in their lives. Children learn from each other everyday.” (Mooney, 2000, p.83).

This issue from Vygostky raised questions of ownership in the context of this research as to whose experiences the study revealed, contemplation such as; were the experiences actually those of the children taking part or were they influenced by peers participating. Also, to what extent do the opinions of their family regarding specific places for example contaminate their experience or colour their response into one that they felt was appropriate. This was found to be the case by Hood *et al* (1996) when there was a tendency for some children to repeat what their parents thought. Hood *et al* (1996) also consider whether the children “... had absorbed adult messages, and were providing information that they thought adults wanted.” (ibid, p.122).

A discussion took place regarding the point of adult influence during an email exchange with Maria Nordström, an environmental psychologist and senior researcher based at Stockholm University who researches aspects of children's experiences of their environments. The exchange resulted in an interesting discussion relating to exactly whose voice we hear when researching with children, and in particular some of the difficulties that the youngest children (aged 7) involved in Maria Nordström's study had in using some of the study's methods to express themselves, and the subsequent influence of adults who assisted them:

“... we found the help that their teachers gave them indispensable. In this situation how can we hear "children's voices", I wonder? Also working with 12 year old children it happens that I think that what they are telling me about the physical surrounding is what has been told them and really is the voice of their parents...” (Nordström, 2005).

This raised interesting questions relating to the design of the participatory phases of this research as to the possible influence of peers during group or paired work. Also related to this was the help of classroom assistants or other staff assisting in the research as well as the hidden dimension of parental or family member's influences.

These issues were considered in the design of the participatory phases of this research and are discussed in section 3.

2.3. Children: Environmental Policy/Political and Social Issues

We often hear or participate in conversations around the theme that ‘it was never like that in my day’, or perhaps reference to the ‘good old days’ and how we should return to such times in an attempt to contextualise the growing media focus of ‘bad’ things that happen on what appears a daily, if not hourly basis. Carol Mooney (Mooney, 2000) cites the author and historian Stephanie Coontz’s perspective of trying to address some of today’s challenges by stating what seems the obvious but nonetheless important to recall, that:

“Nostalgia for ‘the good old days’ is not an answer, but addressing the changes of our times is necessary. Our challenge is to find adequate and creative ways to adapt to these changes.” (Mooney, 2000, p.xi).

So what are we doing to address the challenges of these times, and what are the socio-political challenges relevant to this study? Within this part of the thesis the socio-political framework that forms one of the contexts for the study is discussed, followed by an examination of related topics of; health, play, risk and open space policy relating to cities, neighbourhoods, streets and the school run.

2.3.1. Policy

There is what seems a somewhat bandwagon now rolling within the socio-political agenda to bring children into the forefront of policy in a varied range of arenas, and whilst this is no bad thing it is perhaps with slight scepticism that the scene of a minister who “... leapt onto a rope swing to publicise progress in the government’s Children’s Plan.” (BBC, 2008) may be viewed. The more serious point of this is the recognition for the need to provide a coherent framework for providing children and young people with the opportunity to achieve and be safe, which were two themes of the government green paper, *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003a). This paper set out five themes that “mattered most to children and young people” (DfES, 2003b, p.7), that were proposed to be taken forward into policy. The other three themes of the paper were: being healthy, making a positive contribution and economic well-being. One of the aims of the Government’s Children’s Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a, 2007b) was to address issues arising in the 2003 green

paper and “make this the best place in the world for our children and young people to grow up” (ibid 2007a, p.1). This is a ten year plan of the government’s objectives, which has five principles at its core. The most relevant to this research being;

“children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life’ and ‘ services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries...” (ibid, 2007b, pp. 5-6).

Within the plan, one area recognised as important to families was the need for safe places to play outside, and the plan commits to spending £225 million over a three year period (increased to £235 million in April 2008). This budget was capital funding for the building or renewal of 3,500 playgrounds which would also consider: accessibility, and the creation of 30 new adventure playgrounds “...in disadvantaged areas...” (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007b, p.6). Safety is a further issue considered by the plan, and amongst its propositions is to encourage the creation of 20 mph speed zones in appropriate locations to reduce child fatality connected with pedestrian activities of our streets. Within this ‘Safe and Sound’ section the government also proposes a “... proportionate approach to health and safety...” (ibid, p.8), in allowing children to take risk as long as they are safe. This is an issue which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Traffic speed as well as the traffic/human relationship of the street have long been recognised as issues, perhaps most notably addressed in the 1970’s in the Netherlands in Woonerf where upon entering, Francis (1987) describes that one “... immediately recognises that something special is going on” (ibid, p.34). Cars move at pedestrian speed, and the surface of the streets is shared with no kerb to differentiate vehicle or people and for free flow of bicycles and pedestrians. In the UK there is now a greater recognition of the significance of ‘home zones’ which have been the focus of attention of the Children’s Play Council and Transport 2000, to create safer streets for play by a change in emphasis from the street for vehicle to places for people (Gill, 2006b, 2007b; Hamilton-Baillie, 2006, 2002). The home zone has now entered government policy and has funded 61 schemes that limit vehicle speed and aspire to create streets for people (DfT, 2006, 2005a, 2005b).

Under the context of ‘Active Childhood’ children are seen as wanting places to play and having accessible safe environments is recognised as significant. Ways in which children benefit from outdoor play is seen as important in many contexts, such as

capacity building in social aspects, health benefits and enjoyment, as well learning to deal with risk (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a, 2007b; DfES, 2003a, 2003b). All of these issues are relevant to the experience of the outdoor environment which children encounter and are discussed in a wider socio-political context later in this chapter.

2.3.2. Health, play and risk

There is an increasing awareness regarding the loss of contact with the external environment and its consequences that this leads to in terms of detrimental health issues. There is guidance and recommendations with regards to increasing physical activity (DoH, 2004), for example for addressing issues which include obesity which:

“Increases the risk of a wide range of chronic diseases, principally type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease including stroke, as well as cancer” (Butland et al, 2007, p.5).

Within Butland’s report key determinants of obesity are identified, one of which is the level of physical activity that people engage in. One of the identified approaches to assist in changing our behaviour and thus improving the “obesity epidemic” is to change the “obesogenic environment” (ibid, p.10), which includes both food and activity related environments. Of key relevance is one of the issues of providing “Solutions to address the obesogenic environment such as changes in transport infrastructure and urban design.” (ibid, p.11). The report proposes a “life long approach” as one of the measures in tackling the issue and sets out a diagram of “critical opportunities for intervention during an individuals lifecourse” (ibid, p.63), which identifies the age range of 5-11 years as one where the development of physical skills is amongst the key issues.

The report cites the need for formal physical activity as one of the measures to combat obesity, but recognises that this is not available to, or used by all, in particular those of “... lower socioeconomic status”. One recommendation that the report offers is “... through designing opportunities for health and activity into architecture and urban design” (ibid, p.66), in addition to active transport promotion by increasing cycling and walking opportunities. The report recognises the limitations of this without considering commuting distances as well as the distance to places frequently used and visited, such as shops, schools and workplaces. It states that:

“... high connectivity and land-use mix have been used to indicate the walkability of the environment. There is also evidence of a relationship between the perceived and actual safety, greenery, aesthetics and upkeep of neighbourhoods and physical activity.” (ibid, p.67).

Whilst the report is substantive in the area of obesity issues concerned within the UK's general population, it does not stand in isolation in terms of considering children's obesity as an issue. Popular media is constantly reporting this obesogenic trend amongst the young (Henry, 2007; BBC, 2006) and also the government has recognised this in its proposals for Eco towns that see a requirement for 'fitness' to be incorporated within their planning and design (Wintour, 2007).

Not only do the government and healthcare profession recognise this issue (NICE 2008a, 2008b), but it is also rightly of concern to the professions involved within the design and planning of built environments to also recognise this as an issue (UDG, 8/2/2008; CABE, 2006). Aspects of the relationship between environments and physical activity allude to a loss of connection with places that afford activity, either through neglect, policy maker's attitudes to preventing activity such as skateboarding, the loss of the street as an active environment, the proliferation of vehicle dependency, as well as poorly designed play environments (Mahdjoubi, 2006). Additional ways to address the issue have been explored, for example within the context of school grounds. Studies have examined the relationship between physical activity and the school environment and the role that the grounds can contribute to promoting this (Bell, 2007; Finn, *et al*, 2002).

Play is of significant value to children, and the Children's plan recognises this as an important factor in children's lives, not only in terms of enjoyment or amusement, but also in terms of its social benefits and learning. The significance of play has long been recognised as a social or political issue, and play provision has historically been on many agenda's including the political one as demonstrated by the Recreational Grounds Act of 1859. It was also recognised prior to this, in terms of a pioneering personal ambition within Bristol, UK during the 1840's by Mary Carpenter who was a charity worker, school founder and subsequent author on the plight of poor children. Mary Carpenter recognised the need for and value of children's recreation and planned for it (Bristol Adventure Play Association, 1974).

On examining the current political scene, there would appear to be similar discussions ongoing some two centuries later, where these issues are part of an ongoing political agenda to provide play provision, and to make public spaces more child friendly. This is evident in the Government's Fair Play strategy (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). There is at present an online Government national consultation on this Fair Play strategy taking place which ends in August 2008 and is aimed at gathering both adult and children's views on local play areas. There seems to be a serious attempt to bring play provision to the forefront of the current political scene, with not only play being recognised at national levels (DCMS, 2006; 2004) but also incorporated within regional or city planning guidance (Greater London Authority, 2006). This regional perspective also forms part of the Fair Play strategy, where there is a requirement of local authorities to have a play strategy. Additionally there is a plethora of guidance on what play provision should accomplish as well as design guidance (Play England, 2007; Cole-Hamilton, 2006; Children's Play Council, 2004, 2002a, 2002b; NPFA, 2000), as well as resources for the improvement of neighbourhood play spaces by the empowerment of community groups (Kapasi, 2006).

Perhaps these guidance's and higher levels of awareness of the contribution play has on the health and development of children will go towards the mitigation of the proliferation of objects in 'rubber' that tend to be attention grabbers of the young for fairly fleeting visits, and also address issues where:

“... twentieth century playgrounds were a way of isolating children from the dangerous city, but also the city from dangerous children” (Mahdjoubi, 2006).

Lamine Mahdjoubi (2006) continued a presentation at an Urban Design Group conference by discussing the “obsession with safety” (ibid) that promotes a fear of litigation, and a diversion of resources into safety surfaces. This is seen as doubling the cost of playgrounds and reducing the amount of appropriate spend by local authorities on more engaging play environments, all contributing to playgrounds losing their appeal to children. Woolley (2008) as cited earlier, terms these spaces as KFC playgrounds, that comprise of “Kit, fence and Carpet” (ibid, p.501), or in other words standardised play equipment set in rubber safety surface enclosed by fencing. Woolley (2008) sees the proliferation of standardised playgrounds across England, which mostly do not consider “real landscape design” (ibid) or reflect the character of

the local neighbourhood. Whilst these places may be popular with the young, Moore (1989) states that this is because of the restricted access to other play opportunities in the external urban environments in which the children live.

There appear to be many issues relating to risk and play. Some are culturally associated such as not allowing children out to play because of the fear of abduction or harm from strangers, what some see as 'parental paranoia'. This is said to have a negative effect on children's social development as restricting their freedom to spend time outdoors affects their ability to socially engage and make friends (Womack, 2007a). Thomson (2007) also alludes to parents thinking that they will be perceived as bad parents if they do let their children out and that this social stigma adds to the desire to keep children indoors supplied with an ever increasing array of virtual equipment and ipods in the safety of the home. Thomson also alludes to visits to the local park where there are "...signs in the playground saying that parents may be prosecuted if they leave their children unsupervised..." (ibid). The fear of "stranger danger" (Gill, 2005a) is seen by the author and consultant Tim Gill as analogous with "... holding our children captive indoors." The fear of traffic, and the risks associated with strangers have real foundations, but their proliferation into a scenario where we do not let children outdoors will have a detrimental affect on the children as cited by these commentators.

Tim Gill, is noted for his examination and exposure of another facet of contemporary concern, that of physical harm through play and the proliferation of 'risk free' environments or the minimisation of risk in play environments. These are now increasingly seen as unnecessarily restrictive on children's freedom and development in terms of experiencing risk, which was one of the children's plan's objectives of learning through taking risk as long as children are safe. There is now what appears to be a counter-point to what seemed an ever increasing mania of risk aversion in play. ROSPA (2007) states "... children need wilder places to play where they can take risks...". There is recognition that perhaps there is an imbalance of being stuck in front of a computer than being outdoors, and that there is more treatment for repetitive strain injuries caused by moving a computer mouse indoors than incidents of falling out of trees (Telegraph Correspondent, 2007).

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Earlier research, for example those of Robin Moore, recognised issues of children and risk in a variety of contexts, such as the negative influence of traffic on children's street play (Moore, 1989, 1987; Moore and Young, 1978). Other fears and issues recognised by Moore were those of social apprehension in avoiding certain undesirable people, lack of spatial competency resulting in remaining close to home as well as physical dangers of dogs, heights and water (Moore and Young, 1978). It appears to have taken some thirty years, but there now seems somewhat of a tidal wave of turning opinion on risk. There appears a growing role in policy and socio-political guidance of the effect of the limitations of risk on the experiences of children whose access to outdoor environments are restricted because of it. We now see publications from organisations such as CABE (2005) who see "risk-consciousness..." as a "... growth industry" (p.3), needed to be addressed in creative ways of risk consciousness without risk paranoia. ROSPA's recognition of the need for children to learn from risk was widely reported in the media (Woolcock, 2007; Womack, 2007b), and practitioners and politicians are also being made aware of the issue (CABE, 2007a; CABE 2007b; Madge and Barker, 2007; Mahdjoubi, 2006; NCB, 2002).

Tim Gill has argued this standpoint (Gill, 2007b, 2006a, 2006b, 2005b, 2004) stating that; "There is growing recognition that the damaging consequences of excessive risk aversion need to be tackled..." Gill also calls for dialogue to distinguish fact from emotion within this context. Gill (2007c) states:

"... that public policy must take seriously the need to create more child-friendly communities; and that services and institutions should reject what might be called the philosophy of protection and instead adopt a philosophy of resilience." (ibid, p.76).

There is an obvious dilemma to supporting challenging environments with the omnipresent risk of litigation. But perhaps if we all take risk seriously mediated with reality and the consideration of the potential damage of trying to avoid it at all cost, we shall avoid what Neil Postman describes as the "disappearance of childhood". Where children's games become "endangered species" where in the past these games once visible on "the streets of our towns and cities" are now disappearing. The games were spontaneous acts, not requiring "... instructors or umpires or spectators; it uses whatever space and equipment are at hand; it is played for no other reason than pleasure." (Postman, 1994, p.4). The author Sue Palmer succinctly relates the value of

such games that Postman sees the demise of and this re-enforces the discussions about play held earlier, she writes that:

“The glorious thing about play is that its fun: the young of every species are designed by nature to learn fundamental physical, social and emotional lessons through sheer enjoyment.” (Palmer, 2007, p.47).

Palmer (2007) continues with an earlier theme of the scenario regarding children being lured away from play outside to a place of virtual reality, where the replacement of activity, risk learning and socialisation is replaced by “... a solitary, sedentary screen-based lifestyle.” (ibid, p.48). Can and does the present environment lure the young outside to develop in these ways, and can we as a society learn to accept and manage risk? Some of the answers to this first question were revealed in the participatory phases of this study’s methodological development, in the context of the experiences of the children who participated. The second question can not be answered by this study, but is recognised as important for the continuation of children’s life experiences, within a safe and caring environment.

2.3.3. Public realm experience

Much of the discussion so far has focused on children’s play within the context of play facilities or school grounds. This is obviously relevant to the study as it seeks to understand children’s interactions with and experiences of the external environment. But it is not a specific objective of the study to examine play settings, which would be a limitation to the study’s area of research. Accordingly, the context for the study is framed in the children’s environmental experiences which will include places that are not specifically designed for play; these will be the places that they routinely encounter within the public realm. To contextualise this aspect of the study, an exploration of current debates regarding the wider public realm relevant to children follows.

Within the context of the city, author and commentator on open space issues Ken Worpole together with Liz Greenhalgh published their thoughts on ‘The freedom of the City’ (Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1996) within which they state that only half the population goes out after dark and “... fewer than a third of children are allowed to walk to school” (p.7). Their observations on the use of public space are seen as being defined by us and having rhythms and patterns of use defined by season, diurnal affects as well as culture. They exemplify the value of public space by stating that the

“... sense of ownership derived from their popularity, makes them immensely valuable to the life of the city” (pp.12-13). In a more recent report Beunderman *et al* (2007) confirm the previous discussions regarding the benefit of children’s access to the external environment, stating that “...the way that children experience the public realm, and how they are treated in it, is an integral part of their wellbeing.” (p.25). The context of the public realm and its relevance is not only related to the civic square, but also “...the informal, encompassing a diverse range of spaces, such as streets and pavements, parks, community gardens, allotments – even cul-de-sacs.” (ibid, p.26). This is significant, and the document is not only contemporary but also comes from a respected and influential source, being the “think tank for everyday democracy”: DEMOS.

As stated in the introduction chapter, the roots of this study go back to the late 1990’s where as a practitioner the formulation of its relevance was informed by a growing awareness of the significance to the political agenda in terms of the ‘ordinary places’ that we encounter was emerging. This ordinary everyday local environment of incidental spaces that children routinely encounter was recognised as important to many aspects of children’s development as well as having implications on their health (Thomas and Thompson, 2004; DTLR, 2002). Worpole (2003) suggested that there is a loss of connection between children and outdoor settings and given the foregoing discussions it can be seen that this has potentially long term implications. As stated in the introduction the aim of the research was to develop a methodology that would give children a voice to be heard, understood and recognised in the policy and design of these ordinary places. Young people do not necessarily gravitate to designated play areas each day; they often inhabit public space, “...as a series of stopping points in a continuous process of wandering through neighbourhoods” (Worpole, 2003, pt 1, p.4). To emphasise the impact of the ordinary, Worpole (2003) explains the context of public space as being:

“... the continuous network of pavements, streets, amenity land, parks, playing fields, town squares, forecourts and curtilages (e.g. railway station forecourts, or retail car parks) and other paved open spaces, which children and young people use in the course of their daily lives, and which make up that familiar territory of place and attachment so often beloved in the literature of nostalgia in every generation.” (ibid, 2003,pt 1,p.3).

Beunderman *et al* (2007) also recognises this everyday environment in terms of the continuous network of varying spaces that form the routine, and usually subliminal,

backdrop of daily life. These spaces are seen as vital in terms of their potential value to the social lives of communities (Worpole and Knox, 2007) and their recognition as such is important in political, planning, design and management contexts and there is now recognition and value placed on this perspective (Gillespies, 2007; CABE, 2004a, 2004b; ODPM, 2003).

Of further relevance to this study and its significance to children's wellbeing is the conception of the value of the street and consideration of the 'school run' as potential for amongst other beneficial aspects of "promoting positive behaviour" (Landlines, 2003). Government guidance on this aspect of children's daily experiences of travelling to and from school has also been published (DfES, 2003a, 2003b; DfT, 2003). The issue of the school run being of concern is not limited to the UK, as a recent newsletter from the Urban Design Group highlights the situation in the United States of America:

"Concerns about safety are the main reason that less than 13 percent of U.S. children walked or cycled to school in 2004, compared to more than 50 percent who did so in 1969. The concerns are strongly influenced by the environment children navigate between home and school. The greener the route, the more likely it is that children will walk or go by bicycle." (UDG, 28/3/08)

Through developing the methodological product of this research the study's secondary consequential aim was to discover the children's experience of such everyday environments through its development through the participatory phases. It used the school run as an example of routine activity and then examined the children's wider neighbourhood experiences, which included places actively sought out for varieties of reasons whether they were play, social or functional purposes. Within the introduction to the children's plan it is stated that the formulation of the plan was made by holding:

"... events across the country at which parents and professionals debated the issues affecting children and young people. We invited children and young people to participate in discussion and held an online consultation to gather views." (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007b, p.15).

It is not stated how many children took part, what methods were used other than online discussion to engage with the children, and the "Tellus2 survey" (ibid, p.29) that children complete in schools. It is not clear whether any children accompanied their parents to meetings, or if the views of children were actively sought by people

going into schools for example. It is unclear whether the use of a variety of ways to engage with the children meaningfully on a personal level was used.

Ways of understanding the issues of children's engagement or lack of it, with the wider environment are seen as significant to understand issues of "behaviour, affordance and territoriality" by methods relevant to environmental behaviour, rather than "cost effective" methods using large anonymous sample sizes of self-report instruments (Moore, 2007). Whilst this comment from Robin Moore is a reflection on the situation in the USA, it has resonance in the way that the information that informs the Children's plan may have been obtained. Perhaps of even more significance is how the consultation with children will be undertaken to ascertain what the children's views are on their 'play requirements', will this be in a meaningful way other than the online method cited earlier? This research is relevant to these issues, given that it sought to develop an approach and a range of methods to engage with children to reveal their place experiences. The study and its subsequent research agenda therefore contributes to this debate by providing the means and tools to do this meaningfully.

2.4. Children: Environments they encounter

2.4.1. Introduction

Within this sub-section research and thinking that relate to children and the environments that they encounter are discussed. This is in the context of scale, from the city to the street as well as place preferences, issues of play, studies relating to children's kinetic movement and activity, concluding with studies relating to health matters and child relevant environmental psychological issues. There is obvious repetition of some of these theme titles from the last sub-section; however these were previously discussed in terms of the study's position within the agenda of socio-political views and doctrines, whereas this sub-section looks more to the academic framework and research within which the study lies and contributes as well as to other social issues.

2.4.2. Children and large scale environments

Colin Ward's renowned book *The Child in the City* was first published in the mid 1970's and within it he has a number of interesting observations and discussions. In

one particular chapter he describes the work of the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies in Birmingham, UK and a particular study they undertook as part of a research programme. This particular study involved a local newspaper circulating a map of central Birmingham with the middle of the map omitted; adults and children were asked to fill in the missing part of Birmingham according to their mental image of the place. Ward (1990) reveals that it was of little surprise that there was a variation of people's perception of the city in relation to their age, social status and lifestyle. He states:

“You might regard this as so obvious as to need no proving, but if you look at the redevelopment of central Birmingham, or of virtually any other British city, you can see that the unspoken assumption has been made that the city exists for one particular kind of citizen: the adult, male, white collar, out-of-town car-user.” (ibid, p.25)

Colin Ward's comments are insightful of a perspective of regeneration in the middle 1970's and it would seem that for some thirty years there has been an awareness of the need to understand places from many perspectives including those from a child's. Research for example has been taking place since those times into children's acquisition of spatial cognition and interpreting and testing the philosophical speculations into the application of large-scale spatial cognition on children's understanding of such city environments (Cohen, 1982). Hugh Matthews, a prominent figure in the study of children and young people has been influential in this arena. His publication: *Making Sense of Place: Children's Understanding of Large Scale Environments* (Matthews, 1992), discusses theories relating to children's development in spatial cognition relevant to large scale environments which were of importance to this study. Matthews (1992) cites three theoretical standpoints; *nativism* where spatial knowledge is “... given innately, and closely aligned to language acquisition.”; *empiricism* being the acquisition of ability from direct experience; *constructivism* being the coalescence of “... inherited and experiential factors.” (ibid, p.69). The standpoints of acquisition being along a continuum from learning from experience to the belief that knowledge is the product of “...hereditary and biological forces.” (ibid). Rather like the environmental psychology models to be discussed later in this chapter, Matthews through his research alludes to the acquisition of environmental knowledge as being “... a product of both indirect and direct experience.” (ibid, p.131). Where indirect knowledge can be acquired from a variety of sources, Matthews states that “... direct experience of large-scale environments usually comes from physically moving through them.” (ibid).

Given this theoretical and philosophical background to children's spatial cognition and the context of large scale environments, the child's perception and experience of such places is important in the context of children's experiences of their wider neighbourhoods within this study's exploration.

Other relevant research into children's perceptions of cities is published, for example in the context of seeking to understand the experiences of children's concerns and fears about using such large scale environments. Woolley *et al* (1999a, 1999b) discuss children's concerns relating to perceived threats in cities from strangers, groups of youths and from those unfamiliar groups who are non resident. This was in contrast to children from smaller towns who saw traffic as being the determining negative factor. Woolley *et al* (1999a, 1999b) also revealed that a lack of maintenance provision indicated to the children that there was apathy conveyed in a lack of care, and that older people, police and CCTV cameras were welcome indicators of safer environments. Other studies regarding children and the city have looked at children's environmental competence (Nordström *et al*, 2002) and have sought children's perspectives on their interaction with the physical environment.

Further insights into the dichotomy of the child and the city are offered by Gleeson and Sipe (2006) who refer to one of the pathways to create child friendly cities is for "... planners to first acknowledge that children's interests should be explicitly acknowledged and represented in the planning process." (p.153). They see children as being 'submerged' by adults who argue their perspectives in a planning arena; it would seem that Colin Ward's comments of some thirty years ago are equally as relevant today. These views are not isolated, spaces within the public domain can be avoided by children, or indeed if populated by them, the children can be seen by adults as anti-social (Gill, 2007a; Mahdjoubi, 2006; Woolley, 2006; Penn, 2005).

Ways for designers and planners are needed to engage with children meaningfully and to create places that are child friendly and sustainable. Francis and Lorenzo (2006) cite a model for the qualities of city design that reflect good cities from children's perspective as a city that has: accessibility; mixed use and mixed users; sociability. It is also: small feasible and flexible; natural, environmentally healthy, growing and in

movement; having a discernable urban and place identity. It would also have: places and opportunities for participation.

2.4.3. Children and the street

The preceding sub-section was concerned with children's experience of large scale environments which were of obvious interest within the context of this study, of equal interest if not more so, is the experience of perhaps more local, and smaller scale environments such as the street. Similar perspectives of the difference between adult and children's environmental perception was expressed 20 years ago by Robin Moore, his chapter on *Streets as Playgrounds* opened with the statement that "Great differences exist between adults and children in their perception and use of the outdoor environment." (Moore, 1987, p.45). In this work Robin Moore describes the adult functionalism view of a street as a means of getting from A to B, whereas the child sees the street as a playground. One could say that streets are, or perhaps used to be littered with play opportunities; from the kerb edge, lampposts, manhole covers, steps, piles of leaves and all of the other paraphernalia of vehicular and pedestrian engineered objects, which when accessible are amenable for children to use in creative ways. Moore (1987) states that; "Children measure the environmental quality of streets by the presence or absence of these mundane objects, not by the ease of traffic flow and parking. Nonetheless, traffic has a critical effect on street playability." (ibid)

Robin Moore considers that street play remains of significant contemporary relevance. Whilst this is true, and should be so, the manifestations of the risk averse society that we now live in coupled with the virtual attractions of the indoors and increasing desire for neatness of aesthetics in the public domain, demeans the street's attraction and its accessibility for play, and this gives reasons for concern. Perhaps instead of what seems to be manifest in many new developments in the form of the obsessive desire for the neatness of the street and the formality of a designated play space that serves to segregate the social interactions of children and alienates them as undesirable. There should be an encouragement for spontaneous and informal play, facilitated by informal spaces that need not be scruffy but are responsive to the temporality of ownership by children and also valued and used by the whole community. Whilst still having regard to safety, this should be part of the designers and planners palette and brief. ..

Moore (1987) saw traffic density as the most constraining aspect of children's use of the street, and also observed the spatial arrangement of housing as affording play opportunity. Front gardens were social and play spaces, topographical features afforded excitement and Moore also found that;

“... streets that work best are connected to a subsidiary network of ‘side,’ ‘back,’ and ‘front’ spaces of many kinds that greatly extend the variety of children’s behaviour.” (ibid, p.53).

This appears cognisant with Michael Martin’s assertion regarding the social and communal aspects of such spaces as “back-alley’s” (Martin, 1996) with the caveat of the need for visual permeability for safety and self policing by residents. Moore (1989) looked at the state of children’s play provision and commented on the sterility of playgrounds coupled with their lack of maintenance. The child is exemplary at free play but is stifled by the controls of parents who are wary of children’s free range because of social safety. There is much commonality with the status quo of twenty years ago as there is of today, and yet there would seem agreement of the significance of the local environment for offering the potential for play, not just for pleasure but also for children’s development and transition to adulthood (Jefferson *et al*, 2001). It would appear that Mary Carpenter got it right in the 1840’s in Bristol by understanding the need for play and planning for it.

Within a Dutch context, Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) describe the emergence of “indoor children” who no longer frequent the outside environment to play, but use the interior of their homes much more freely for play than in previous decades. Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) see the emergence of more freedom to play inside combined with the limitation of the child’s freedom to play outdoors as factors for the absence of “free play” outdoors. Another factor in the reduction of outdoor play cited by Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) is parental control, which sees parents accompanying children to most activities, giving rise to an “... expansion of children’s daily activity space.” (p.152). Observations are made of Dutch children travelling to activities, Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) report that the journey total for a day was 17 kilometres for the under twelve’s of which 14 kilometres were in the car and thus supervised by an adult, and a similar situation is cited in Belgium. There is a paradigm of children’s spatial range being diminished in respect of their independent activity within their own neighbourhoods, but increased greatly “under escort” to “disconnected places...”

(Karsten and Van Vliet, 2006b, p.152). They too allude to the children's loss of the street, to adult domination where children are tolerated as apposed to being encouraged or accepted as part of community living.

Recent Urban regeneration appears to deter the family with children (Thwaites, *et al*, 2007). Indeed, Gill (2007a) reports an experience of two acquaintances posing as potential home buyers visiting a 'new village' who were told by the marketing agent for the development that:

“One of the things that we're really proud of is that we've made it so that your kids can go and play on play areas, but they won't cause any problems to anybody else. We've put all the kids' play areas at least 200 metres away from any of the housing.”

Robin Moore described the non-toleration of children's physical play by adults in private yards and gardens which were often too small to accommodate active children and delicate plants, as well as the effect of the undesirable noise levels that may ensue, and it was therefore the street which was the place for play and socialisation (Moore, 1987). Given the apparent desire now of the developers to market communities where play is sanitised and pushed even further away from home, it is perhaps not surprising that Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) allude to the fact that parental decisions on whether to stay in the city or move to suburbs is influenced by the outdoor environment in the context of providing play opportunities. Far from encouragement it appears that in some cases children are not welcome. Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b) see a key challenge to changing the current state of children's remoteness from their local environment as the “... lack of understanding and recognition by planners of the importance of the local scale in the everyday lives of children and parents ...”. They see the reclamation by families of the 'street level' as the space “... to meet their children's need for places to play and socialize.” (ibid, p.163). There is the same message evident in the UK; that the everyday environment of incidental spaces should offer opportunities for play and socialisation, and that children's perspectives should therefore be taken into account in the planning and design of such places as they have an impact on children's social development and wellbeing (Beunderman *et al*, 2007; Worpole and Knox, 2007; Worpole, 2003; DTLR, 2002).

2.4.4. Children friendly environments

Francis and Lorenzo (2006) described a ‘child friendly’ model for the qualities of city design, Kyttä (2004) cites Moore (1990) as stating that there are two fundamental criteria for child friendly environments; diversity of environmental resources and access to play and exploration. Marketta Kyttä conducted an analysis of children’s environments based upon the occurrence of actualised affordances to assess their child friendliness (Kyttä, 2002). In her doctorate thesis and latter papers (Kyttä, 2004; 2003) Marketta Kyttä examines the “interrelationship between independent mobility and the actualisation of affordances.” using a hypothetical model (Kyttä, 2004, p.179). Marketta Kyttä’s study used four hypothetical models during interviews with children, and proposes within her findings that:

“The more mobility licenses the children have, the more likely they actualize affordances in the neighbourhood. Actualized affordances in turn motivate children to be mobile.” (Kyttä, 2004, p.194).

With this particular model notated as the “Bullerby environment” it was proposed within Kyttä’s research context as one that facilitated both the children’s effective interaction with the environment and the opportunities “... within the environment to perform independently at a level appropriate to their physical and cognitive capabilities.” (ibid).

Other studies have focused on child friendly cities for example Pia Björklid’s study (Björklid, 2006), where interesting comparisons were made of the views of professionals with “child centred perspectives” and children as to their views of child friendly cities. It would seem that the two views are not dissimilar and that importance of places to children relate to experiences of emotional attachment and feelings of significance or conversely boredom or threat. Both professionals and children expressed the importance of access and reduction or preclusion of traffic, the presence of nature in terms of green spaces. Socialisation was also important in the context of places to meet, whilst negative aspects referred to misuse, such as drug users or alcoholics. Pia Björklid’s findings again are cognisant with the previous studies, but also allude to an understanding of professionals involved in the field of child-centred disciplines being aware of manifestations of child friendliness.

Maria Nordström reports the results of a Swedish study on discerning children's views on child friendly environments (Nordström, 2006). The aim of the study was to discover the perceptions of 12 year old children from three environmentally different neighbourhoods, from inner city, sub-urban and rural communities by way of completing a questionnaire. The responses were coded into three "dimensions" of classification: *basic services; safety and security ; urban and environmental qualities*. There appeared differences in the resulting perceptions of the children, for example the children in the rural location did not perceive the dimension of *safety and security* as a problem, whereas issues of traffic, classified within the safety and security dimension were a perceived problem for the children residing in the city as an obstacle for accessing their nearby environment. The children in the suburb with easy access to spacious environments and little traffic were limited in their use of the environments because of "social fears and difficult family relations with restricting rules of behaviour".

Given the foregoing, perhaps a re-conceptualisation of the concept or term child friendly environments may be appropriate. Where this terminology does not imply, for example, a concept of exclusivity, or design at the preclusion of adults, indeed Moore and Cosco (2007) investigated the universal design of parks in order that they promote and facilitate inclusiveness. This perspective was within the context of a sustainable communities model and examined the role of the park not only in terms of children's play but as a place that could facilitate their "territorial range development, behaviour setting and affordances" (ibid, p.87). All of which were considered as a framework for testing how a universally designed park would be used and perceived. Robin Moore's and Nilda Cosco's study is interesting in that not only is play seen as imperative in a child's development, but it also acts as a vehicle for inclusion and social interaction of adults. The universal design concept is one that promotes the use of the park by children not only in terms of a child friendly environment but also by encouraging the adults that would accompany the children to take them to these places, and thereby increasing the children's and family use, as the demographic, socio-cultural and ethnic diversity is promoted as an aim of inclusivity. Churchman (2003) raises several relevant issues of child friendly environments including children's participation in planning within the context of the city and urban environments, additionally and consistent with Moore and Cosco (2007).

Churchman (2003) stated, that to create better environments for children does not make changes to existing environments impossible to achieve, but that they require more than a cosmetic change. We consistently hear now in the UK the phrase 'makeover' which alludes to a 'quick fix' solution whose long term sustainability is questionable. Additionally Churchman points out that:

"All, or most, of the required changes will also have a positive influence on the lives of adult groups, such as elderly, those with handicaps, the poor, the parents of the children (particularly their mothers) – in other words, the vast majority of the population." (ibid, p.109).

The model offered is quite specifically not playground specific, but for all public open space. The characteristics of the model are concerned with issues such as neighbourhood density, accessibility, accessibility to open spaces and amenities through pedestrian or cycle routes, all consistent with the models cited previously.

2.4.5. Children and play, car dependency and place related experiences

Mary Rivkin's work regarding children's relationships with natural environments and the benefits of play outdoors captured what we all to some degree intuitively know, that outdoor play has been diminishing through the factors already highlighted previously, but that this loss of connection with natural environments has detrimental affects. Play and contact with nature is not merely a "supply of material needs" (Rivkin, 1995, p.6), but it also facilitates intellectual, cognitive development and satisfaction along with socialization aspects. Rivkin (1995) also commented that the development of the children's perceptual abilities also suffers through the limited and virtual experiences now omnipresent through remaining indoors, which is consistent with the proliferation of the 'indoor children' model of Karsten and Van Vliet (2006b). Rivkin (1995) stated concerns that:

"... TV, computers, books, and media ... require but two senses. The senses of smell, touch, and taste as well as the sense of motion through space, are powerful modes of learning." (ibid, p.7).

These sensory experiences are limited or ordinarily absent indoors, and are further limiting factors on children's development. Rivkin (2000) highlights the demise of unsupervised outdoor play, again relating this as a consequence of fears of safety, lack of suitable places and the competition of the ever increasing number of indoor media and technological attractions. The values of outdoor experiences are many, in addition to those discussed earlier, Rivkin (2000) cites; exploration, observation and

experimentation of "... 'big behaviours' such as shouting, running, climbing and jumping" (ibid, p.3), which are usually difficult to practice or discouraged indoors. The children's outdoor play experience is often limited to either organised and supervised events, or designated playgrounds "... typically limited to combinations of asphalt, turf, and some large-motor structures." (ibid, p.3). The need for and value of informal outdoor play in 'unofficial play spaces' is again seen as important and yet diminishing.

These 'big behaviours' were also recognised by others as important. During the late 1960's and 1970's in the UK, the Opie's did much to draw attention to children's play and the places they prefer to explore, encounter and take a form of ownership over by many ways of expression, through scribbling on pavements to building dens. The Opie's work was conducted during playground observations (Opie, 1993) and prior to that in neighbourhood contexts of streets and playgrounds (Opie and Opie, 1969). The big behaviours in streets manifested in play that;

"seem deliberately to attract attention to themselves, screaming, scribbling on the pavements, smashing milk bottles, banging on doors, and getting in people's way." (ibid, p.11).

The Opie's considered street play and whether the children expressed more than just "high spirits" in their games in the road, the suggestion being that the children's sense of where they lived was part of who they were, more so than with adults and it maybe manifest in children's games that challenged traffic as expressions of territoriality, of "... protest in the tribe" (Opie and Opie, 1969, p.11). Ward (1990) reports some adults as seeing such street games as not only "... territorial conflict or resistance, but as an outright war with adults." (p.83). The Opie's also see that the "... children's deepest pleasure ... is to be away in the wastelands..." (Opie and Opie, 1969, p.11). A similarity can be seen in Nicola Ross's recent work (Ross, 2005a, 2005b, 2004). This research involved conducting a study in Fife, Scotland to examine the importance of the significance of incidental and natural spaces to children. These spaces were often ignored or "disregarded by adults in their everyday routines" (Ross, 2004), and as a consequence this was one of the factors that made them so appealing to children. Nicola Ross's work showed a fascination expressed by the children for these 'unofficial play spaces', which have been cited by many previously as potentially being particularly rich in experience. This is analogous with what Colin Ward had

observed some twenty years ago in terms of the contrasts between children's play in the country and city and how there was a prizing of left over spaces in urban environments that were not fenced off by adults as valued places to play and explore (Ward, 1988). These locations in Nicola Ross's study included manifestations of "unkempt areas of abandoned waste ground, derelict buildings and marginal spaces." (Ross, 2004). Nicola Ross's study engaged children between the ages of 10 and 12 and demonstrated the significance of these spaces to the children who used the spaces in a variety of ways characterised within the study as "spontaneity, improvisation and temporality" (Ross, 2005b, p.22). The children engaged in a sequential experience of; building dens, 'mucking about', wandering off and moving on. Nicola Ross sees the way children used what they found to construct and create places or objects as significant and the process that they involved themselves in was of paramount importance "rather than the finished product" (Ross, 2004), which again is alluded to in Colin Ward's work (Ward, 1988). Nicola Ross observed spontaneity in the way the children walked about and hung around waiting for events to unfold. It was "... the potential that was alluring, the spontaneity of a game developing." (Ross, 2005b, p.23). Like Moore (1987), creative use of the ordinary was seen in Nicola Ross's study in the way the children adapted and transformed their environment where "... the very fabric of the environment is incorporated into their play as they utilise railings, steps and ledges..." (Ross, 2005b, p.23). The children were aware of and used the minutia of the environment which was "transformed through this active, imaginative play." (ibid, p.24). Nicola Ross's work reveals the significance of such places for children, the value of play and the attachment and exploration of the ordinarily encountered and natural environments. This message has common threads through research and literature for some thirty years and is still relevant today.

One of the issues relating to the limitation of children's environmental experiences is that of access to the outside and children's kinetic movement. Studies have been undertaken to examine this in the context of neighbourhoods and the limitations that car dependency has on children's experiences of their local environments (Karsten and Vliet, 2006a; Mackett *et al*, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). In addition studies have seen the significance of the school run as a focus of limitation or opportunity in children's everyday experiences and the urban forms that facilitate this or otherwise discourage or prevent it (McMillan, 2006, 2005, 2003). Other barriers to children's active

transportation on foot or bicycle, rather than the sedentary vehicular based ones have been explored by O'Brien (2004). In Canada O'Brien (2004) proposed that planning issues should consider child friendly planning guidelines to ameliorate such transportation issues and also bring children's participation into the planning process in order that these be considered from the reality of the children's own perspectives. The significance of children's unaccompanied pedestrian school journeys was also examined in Nicola Ross's work with the 10-12 year old children. This journey was again seen as a significant contributor to the children's imaginative and active engagement with their local environment which also developed the children's community relations which increased their sense of safety through casual surveillance and potential support of community members (Ross, 2007). This is again an important part of children viewing themselves as part of the community, having a sense of place and belonging (Ward, 1990; Opie and Opie, 1969), which we are in danger of denying them.

In Nicola Ross's work (Ross, 2005b), she described how children engaged with their environment; the children related how they improvised with artefacts of discovery and built dens etc. Other research has also highlighted the preference for and benefits of contact with natural environments and 'special places' like dens. The benefits of which are evident in terms of children's learning, experience and cognitive development, facilitation of places of retreat as well as the long term associations and recollections that we develop from them and carry into adulthood (Louv, 2006; Cele, 2004; Kylin, 2003; Kahn and Kellert, 2002; Moore and Wong, 1997; Moore, 1990). In addition to these beneficial aspects cited and the consequences from the disappearance of connection with them, there are psychological and other health issues that are manifest in children environment relationships, some of which have been discussed earlier.

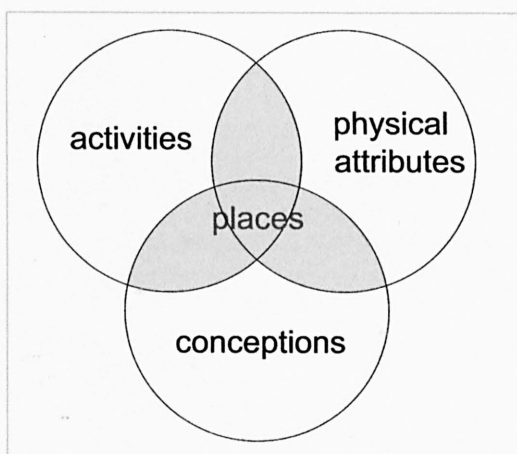
Mitigating the effects of sedentary lifestyles by the encouragement of physical activity by contact with the outdoors has been discussed. This is seen as a crucial intervention in early childhood to avoid such a pattern of inactiveness developing (Cosco, 2007, 2004). In addition to the physical benefits of the outdoors, and the cognitive and learning ones discussed, there is also a growing body of research to support the therapeutic effect of the natural environment on children in addition to the research

that discerned this as a beneficial restorative aspect for adults (Moore, 2007; Wells and Evans, 2003; Wells, 2000). In Korpela *et al* (2002) it was seen that children used what they termed as their ‘favourite places’ which were not necessarily ‘natural environments’ for cognitive restoration and for a third of the children involved in the study, they used them for ‘emotional-regulation’. The older children within the study (12 to 13 year olds) were found to more likely visit their favourite places with friends, and an interesting outcome was that ‘many parents’ were not aware of where their children’s favourite places were as a result of completing a questionnaire for the study. The favourite place is often seen as one outside of parental control and social demands and was used as a place the children frequented after being emotionally challenged as well as for cognitive restoration and relaxation. The significance of self-regulation, and facilitation of the environment to offer such places is therefore an important factor in the children’s health and wellbeing in both physical and psychological functioning and a discussion relating to this in terms of place theory and environmental psychology follows.

2.5. People place relations: an outline of relevant concepts

2.5.1. Canter’s Place Theory

David Canter developed a model for representing the constituents of place, which is shown in figure 5. This has been widely cited and used as a way of conceptualising the human-place relationship. Whilst Canter’s proposal emanates from an environmental psychology stance, he stated its significance in terms of the perspective of creating meaningful places by generating “new procedures for designing and

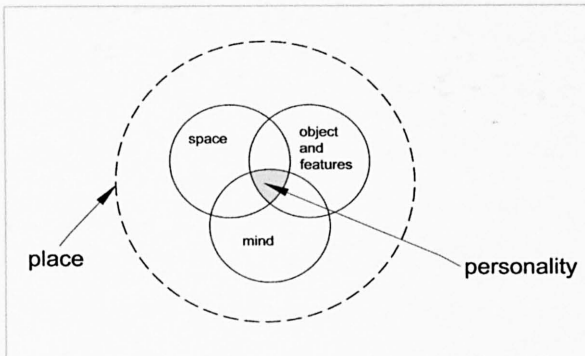


producing places”. (1977. p.5). He continued by stating the direct value to people of exploring the psychology of place by the “identification and use of places in a clear and consistent way.” (ibid).

***Figure 5: ‘A visual metaphor for places’
Canter (1977, p.158).***

Canter's proposition is that the consideration and understanding of the 'psychology of place' by designers and decision makers would mitigate the profligation of the now ubiquitous international homogeneity that our urban forms move towards. This assumes that a planning or design role should not be the mere assemblance of space and mass decorated by objects and features in a two dimensional diagrammatic representation. In the context of maps, Canter describes the paucity of a humanistic approach in that they tell us nothing of the human experiences and emotions that take place or are associated with them. In describing cognitive systems as opposed to maps Canter proposes that these will not only be receptacles of information about where places are locationally but also what they are, what will probably happen there and who is likely to be present. This is significant in terms of our appreciation of the environment, both in existing situations and within our proposed designs. Canter defines a way to conceptualise his place-theory propositions in a slogan: "The Goal of Environmental Design is the Creation of Places" (p.157). For practitioners the consideration of the relevance of the psychological aspects that our work will have as an inter-play between human and environment should be paramount and there has been an ever increasing shift in the designers mindset that overly prescriptive, mechanistic and or aesthetically driven design lacks humanistic consideration. The publication of the Urban Task Force final report 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (1999) raised the role of design in achieving fulfilling open space experience to UK national importance. An emphasis on quality places is given in the context of quality being associated with place experience rather than admiration of its beauty (Gillespies, 2008; Llewelyn-Davies; 2000; Baxter, 1998). If we therefore accept that there is a need in Landscape Architecture to consider the close bond of association between space and the experience of it, then the work of the environmental psychologists is significantly relevant. Designers and planners exploration in particular how certain experiences might be interpreted spatially in neighbourhood settings is of significant importance for the social sustainability of places and communities. Canter (1977) argued that definition, recognition, structure and location of places would emerge from this standpoint and whether we are dealing with cities, schools or merely a quiet corner of a room the identification and conception of place is significant to the creation of meaningfully people-orientated space.

Research into Canter's work on place assisted greatly in conceptualising the design process to take account of place attachment and social activity within design projects. This influenced many practice based projects used as case studies in this research that informed its initial stages of methodological review and exploration. In particular a



response to the visual metaphor for places was an adaptation used to schematically demonstrate the 'collective personality' of place with regards to its relationship with space, mind and objects and features (see figure 6).

Figure 6: the 'collective personality' of place (Simkins and Thwaites, 2004)

This model was used as part of a response to try to reveal the collective personality of a place and then to reflect this in the design of practice based school grounds improvement projects. What this means is that anywhere used as intensively as a school will have the habits and activities, personal preferences, meanings and associations, of all its users – adult as well as children – projected into the physical surroundings. These places are as much the product of mind as they are material fabric and if this can be imbued into the way improvements are conducted, then a greater sense of place attachment and ownership should be generated. This is analogous with the observations of the Opies and Ward, discussed earlier relating to children's views on where they lived being part of them (Ward, 1990; Opie and Opie, 1969). In other words, the resulting school grounds scheme would mean more to the children and adults of the school, because it resonates better with the collective personality already there (Simkins and Thwaites 2006).

To appreciate the human-environment relationship, environmental psychology theories were reviewed. Gifford (2007) discusses four theories relating to environmental perception; he states that no one model is universally accepted because they individually or in combination provide a platform for exploration. The four standpoints discussed are: Probabilistic Functionalism; Collative Properties; Affordances; Phenomenology. Within the context of the wider cross disciplinary nature of this research these stances are considered.

2.5.2. *Brunswick's probabilistic functionalism*

This theory is based on the assertion that both perceiver and environment are important and that the environment “offers a multitude of cues; the perceiver must make sense of the most important ones to function effectively in a setting” (Gifford, 2007, p.29), and that is why Brunswick is viewed as a functionalist. The basis of the theory is developed around a lens model in that only a few cues are useful to the perceiver in a given scene. Gifford continues with a proposition regarding young children who may become overwhelmed in a new setting, by the number of cues, because they have not yet learnt to prioritise those which are important. The second aspect of the model relates to the probabilism concept which refers to the belief that no cue on its own is either perfectly reliable or unreliable as a clue to the true nature of the environment within which it manifests itself and therefore has a probability factor, and some cues may be considerably less certain or accurate than others. This scale of truth between the cue and environment is termed the ‘ecological validity’. In order to navigate the environment Brunswick proposes that perceivers: “intentionally seek useful images of the environment to assist them as they make their way through the world.” (ibid, p.30). Our repeated use of and thereby sampling of settings make us familiar with them, and problems arise in new or unfamiliar settings which offer “patterns or cues which do not bear a resemblance to those in our familiar settings” (ibid). The relevance of the description of Brunswick’s model has resonances in the work of others such as Lynch (1960), Alexander (1977) Bentley *et al.* (1985) and the Kaplan’s (Kaplan, *et al.*, 1998) for example where aspects of their work propose or utilise patterns or cues to make or read the environments that we encounter more legible and profligate attachment rather than dislike, avoidance or even fear.

Lynch (1960) proposed a conceptual neighbourhood structure where some cities were more understandable to the user than others or more ‘imageable’ which was synonymous with its ‘legibility’. Lynch defined five categories within which the image of the city could be considered:

- “Path: Channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves. Can be streets, walkways, transit lines, canals, railroads. For many they are the predominant element in their ‘Image’ of the city. People observe the city while moving through it along these paths and the other environmental elements are arranged and related there.
- Node: Strategic spots in a city into which the observer can enter, the intensive foci to and from which he is travelling.

- Landmark: A point reference that is external and cannot be entered by the observer.
- District: Medium to large sections of the city, conceived of having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters and which have a recognisable identifying character.
- Edge: Linear elements not used or considered by the observer as a path. The boundaries between two phases i.e. the breaks in continuity” (ibid, p47-48).

Bentley *et al* (1985) identifies with Lynch in terms of a place’s imageability and uses the terminology of Legibility to describe how easy a place is to understand. Bentley *et al* (1985) also use other means of designing ‘people friendly’ places by considering issues such as ‘Variety’ as being important experientially in offering choice of experience through varied forms and meanings as well as opportunities for ‘personalisation’ as the quality of offering the user the opportunity to impart their own decisions on a place.

Others who seem to offer similarities in applications of understanding experience in relation to spatial design include Marcus *et al* (1998) and Cullen (1971). Cullen refers to a:

“... person’s sense of position, his unspoken reaction to the environment which might be expressed as ‘I am in IT or above IT or below IT, I am outside IT, I am enclosed or I am exposed’...” (Cullen, 1971 p.29).

Cullen (1971) also proposes the perceptions of ‘hereness’ as the feeling of identifying with a place that cannot exist alone without there being a counterpoint of a sense of ‘thereness’ which is not the same as ‘here’.

2.5.3. Berlyne: Collative properties

Some aspects of Cullen’s work together with others cited have commonalities with another model of environmental perception cited by Gifford (2007), this model is of ‘Collative Properties’, by Berlyne and relates to environmental aesthetics. This perspective is that environmental scenes have several collative properties in that there are characteristics that cause the perceiver to “pay attention, investigate further, and compare.” (ibid, p.31). These properties are classified as:

- novelty – where something is new to the perceiver
- incongruity – something appears out of place

- complexity – large variety of elements
- surprisingness – unexpected elements

and that these collative properties influence “... aesthetic judgements and desire to explore” (ibid, p.32).

Figure 7: a place with a potential collative property of surprisingness that may engender a desire to explore.



These views again have relevance in the discussion regarding the complexity of environments as opposed to the ‘sameness’ of much modernist development. Issues for example that are argued in terms of ‘time conscious urban design’ (Thwaites *et al*, 2007) and the desire for complexities (although legible) of streetscapes (Porta and Renne, 2005) in terms of social sustainability models, as well as those of Canter (1977) already described.

Other works of note relating to Environmental Aesthetics include Nasar (1992) with contributions from amongst others Heath, Kaplan and Appleton. Heath discusses “collative variables novelty, complexity, conflict and uncertainty.” (p.6). These are illustrated through the work of Kaplan and Kaplan (1982) describing environmental features that are ‘present, or immediate and those that are future or promised, which has resonance in Cullen’s ‘here’ and ‘there’ proposition. Indeed Heath continues to explore Kaplan’s notion of ‘legibility’ and ‘mystery’ as the former being “... an environment that looks as if one could explore extensively without getting lost.” (Heath in Nasar (1992 p.7) citing Kaplan and Kaplan (1982, p.86) with the later being the ability to “... learn more through locomotion and exploration.” (ibid). Again both of these concepts have parity with Lynch’s work. Heath also explores aesthetic response in terms of our past experiences: The environmental psychologists Rachel and Stephen Kaplan propose that one reason places may feel comfortable whilst others

are not can be familiarity, even when one has not actually been there before “... a place may be familiar by reminding us of another place we know.” (Kaplan *et al*, 1998, p.31) This resonates with anthropological perspectives discussed later in this thesis.

There are again a number of convergent ideas cross-disciplinarily connected and relevant to this study. Appleton (1975) proposes a theory of ‘Prospect and Refuge’ in terms of environments that afford the opportunity “... to see without being seen.” (p.70) and environments that facilitate this become “... a more immediate source of aesthetic satisfaction”. (p.73). Appleton (1992) revisits this theory in the light of criticism, which he states as being misinterpretation. The interesting point that Appleton makes here is that whilst he proposes that landscapes which offer prospect and refuge are aesthetically more satisfying than one that affords neither (Appleton, 1975,) in Appleton’s later publication he clarifies that “... this balance does not necessarily have to be achieved in a single momentary view from a particular viewpoint...” (Appleton, 1992, p.43). This again resonates with the Kaplan’s perspective that the landscape offers present and future prospects, as well as being manifest in Cullen’s work in the context of ‘serial vision’ and ‘townscape’ (Cullen, 1971). In Cullen’s work the reader is taken on a journey through an imaginary town to show how the various changes in spatial volume, landmark features and focal points work together to provide an experience of flowing through space. This serial vision of ‘revealingness’ and expectation being more satisfying than being recipients of ‘everything all at once’ where:



“the even progress of travel is illuminated by a series of sudden contrasts and so an impact is made on the eye, bringing the plan to life (like nudging a man who is going to sleep in church).” (Cullen, 1971, p.17).

Figure 8: Kendal High Street (UK) offers two pedestrians ‘prospect and refuge’

2.5.4. Gibson: Affordances

Another model described by Gifford (2007) and referred to earlier in the literature review in the context of the research of Marketta Kyttä, is that of Gibson's 'Affordances'. Gifford states that Gibson's approach to environmental perception differed from Brunswick's in that Gibson proposed that; "Certain arrangements of cues give the perceiver *direct, immediate* perceptions of the environment." (p.31). Gibson's approach was to conceptualise the environment as being composed of substances or the materials from which the environment is made such as clay, steel, glass etc., and the surfaces of the environment in terms of its floors walls and ceilings. The composition of these, spatially as layouts gives affordances or "... instantly detectable functions." (Gibson, 1986, p.127). Gibson's stance centres on the hypothesis that perceiving the layout of surfaces is to constitute what they afford, and in so doing they are then perceived as to what they can afford. The implication being that we can directly perceive and attach values and meanings to things in the environment, which Gibson proposes as an explanation as to why the sense in which values and meanings are "... external to the perceiver." (Gibson, 1986, p.127). In terms of encapsulating the concept Gibson states that; "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill." (ibid).

Gifford describes the differing theories of Gibson and Brunswick in terms of Gibson's proposal of affordances not requiring an interpretation of "... sensory information, construct reality, or weight cues as in Brunswick's theory." (Gifford, 2007, p.31). Gibson also proposes that our perception of the environment is not in terms of its form and shape, but we perceive place in terms of what it can do for us "its affordance". (ibid). In Gibson (1986) there is a description of what is now a classic example of affordance:

"If a terrestrial surface is nearly horizontal (instead of slanted), nearly flat (instead of convex or concave), and sufficiently extended (relative to the size of the animal) and if its substance is rigid (relative to the weight of the animal), then the surface *affords support*. It is a surface of support, and we call it a substratum, ground, or floor. It is stand-on-able, permitting upright posture for quadrupeds and bipeds. It is therefore walk-on-able and run-over-able. It is not sink-into-able like a surface of water or a swamp, that is, not for heavy terrestrial animals...." (Gibson, 1986, p.127)



Figure 9: affordance in Stockholm, Sweden.

Globally our observance of affordance is an everyday occurrence, whether it is children balancing on a low railing the intended use of which was to physically separate paths and grass in Stockholm (figure 9), or steps outside a historic building in Leeds as somewhere to eat lunch (figure 10).

Figure 10: steps outside The Corn Exchange, Leeds (UK).

Gibson's theory is recognised as significant in many disciplines from psychology, environmental psychology, landscape architecture and urban design disciplines (Gifford, 2007; Heft, 2007; Clark and Uzzell, 2006; Ward Thompson, 1995; Kaplan, 1992). Affordance also has great relevance to the way children use and value the environments that they encounter. Referring back to Moore, Ross and Kyttä's work



discussed previously, what the children sought in order to be creative was the affordance of the landscape, in other words what the everyday objects of the street and waste land could afford in creative play, or any other adaptation of their intended use (Ross, 2005b; Kyttä, 2002; Moore, 1987).

In the context of the Leeds image (figure 10), the design objective of the flight of steps would most obviously be first observed prima-facie as a physical object to facilitate the movement of people (without physical disability) to access the building. What is seen are the steps being used as seating in order for the two men to eat their

lunch. Two other related theories can also be observed as manifest in the image; 'personal projects' and 'sedibility'.

Personal Projects are defined by Little (2007) as "extended sets of personally meaningful action in context" (p.3). What Little proposes is that methodologies exist to investigate and recognise these projects, which can be as mundane as "Putting out the cat" or a "clearly complex pursuit such as 'sack Troy'.." (ibid). The significance of this in terms of the context of Landscape Architecture and Urban Design (and therefore this study) is the recognition of this as an influence on people's experience of the environment as a reciprocal interaction which has a temporal context which Little describes as being:

"... over time, between persons and their social and physical surroundings, as mediated by the goals, pursuits, and purposive actions of individuals and groups." (Little, 1983 pp.298-299).

The relevance of the concept to this research can be conceptualised in terms of people's interactions having dynamic and social aspects relational to the environments that are encountered, and that relationships with the environment are developed and change over time. This can be contextualised as 'of the moment' where children act spontaneously to affordance or situations. It can also be manifest in diurnal aspects in terms of the daily activity and difference between, for example the morning school run and the return journey home. Also it will be influenced seasonally as the changing weather and diminishing light levels affects sensory, tactile and the visual composition of the environment. This then influences our place experience, and our personal projects walking to school turn from knocking the heads off daffodils in spring, to kicking fallen leaves in the gutter or looking for conkers in autumn. Or this can be over a longer span where our cognitive development, on set of puberty, adulthood and then maturity influence our personal project actions and interactions.

In terms of the Leeds image (figure 10), the personal project is probably: *I want to eat lunch* and likely to be *Chat with my friend, while doing it*, the steps provide an affordance for this personal and social pursuit. One could also perceive that depending upon the location and use of the doorway to the building (which is in this instance known to be an 'emergency exit' and not in everyday use by the general public) the affordance, personal projects also coalesce with 'prospect and refuge'. Although the

occupants of the steps are in view, there is refuge by the elevated position they occupy and enclosed nature of the building edge, whilst prospect is offered by the raised location. This affords the men's observance of passing pedestrians and traffic who would be engaging in their own personal projects, which could include stimulation to get their own lunch, promoted by the men's personal project, there could also be social interaction with the men in the form of verbal engagement to ask; '*where did you get your chips from mate?*' The design of this location in Leeds has now taken on a new significance, given the spatial and experiential qualities of what could have been space, into what is (at that point in time) place, with further relevance's to model's already cited (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007; Bentley *et al.*, 1985; Cullen, 1971; Lynch, 1960). Another example of affordances, with relevance to the Leeds image (figure 10), have been highlighted in the research of Porta and Renne (2005). Porta and Renne propose the term 'sedible' for objects and features in the environment that afford seating opportunities; this can range from traffic bollards to steps and any other object of an appropriate height. In Porta and Renne's research this aspect of environmental affordance was used as one of a set of street indicator's linking urban design to social sustainability. Whyte (1988) also recognised such affordances and termed such objects as sitable. The significance of these sedible/sitable affordances was evident in the research undertaken in the participatory phases of this study, and are discussed in section 4.

2.5.5. Phenomenology

The final theory discussed by Gifford (2007) as having relevance to environmental psychology is phenomenology. Gifford assesses the phenomenological perspective differing from or being similar to the previous three models because the emphasis of a phenomenological perspective is on individuals or at least one individual at a given time, rather than "... on group averages." (p.32). With regard to Gibson's theory it is similar in that it attempts to "... overcome or erase the distinction between the setting and the perceiver." (ibid). This is in contrast to Brunswick's proposition. The phenomenological stance sees the researcher as preceptor and that the researcher sometimes requests assistance by asking residents or workers of a setting to report their views of a place. A model of site specific information gathering will be discussed in chapter 12, which advocates a hierarchy of responses to site investigation one of which accounts for differences in 'professional and resident's views' and ways of

accessing these. The final point Gifford makes regarding phenomenologists is that they attempt to;

“... understand the unique and holistic meaning of a place qualitatively, as revealed *by* the place, rather than resorting to external concepts or ideas” (Gifford, 2007, p.32).

Landscape from this humanistic stance is viewed as an expressive medium, and Motloch (2001) describes this phenomenological perspective in this context as landscape as a “... sensual experience” (p.18). Motloch (2001) further explores the concept of sensual aspects of perception in terms of the stimuli of the physical conditions that we experience as mental constructs. This is not confined to landscape, as the same perspective of the built forms of cities as constructs of place experience rather than mere objects of physical construction is also held as significant (Bloomer and Moore, 1977).

Gifford comments that phenomenology emphasises each unique setting and that this has provided revealing images of locations. He cites Jacobs (1993) as an example of this in the context of a city. Particular experiences have also been revealed by others, such as topophilia, a term used for the emotional attachment to a place (Tuan, 1974) and existential outsidership or alienation from a place (Relph, 1976). Relph (1976) cited by Bonnes and Secchiarioli (1995) recognises a

“... dialectic between ‘existential insidership’ – the degree to which people feel part of a place or place attachment and ‘existential outsidership’ as ‘... central aspects of human place experience.” (p.164).

There appears from Relph’s perspective a scale for ‘insidership/outsiderness’ in which different places take on different identities for different individuals, and again resonates with the earlier discussions regarding children feeling part of their neighbourhood and it being part of them (Ward, 1990; Opie and Opie, 1969). Given this continuum, there then may be the prospect of more of an orientation to the extent of ‘outsidership’ with the emergence of car dependency and “indoor children” (Karsten and Vliet, 2006a; Mackett *et al*, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

2.5.6. Human psychological functioning and other health issues

There is much research that relates the mental health benefits of our encounters and associations with natural environments. Perhaps the most well known proponents of this work are Rachel and Stephen Kaplan who have for many years drawn attention to

their work on the benefits of natural settings (Kaplan and Ryan, 1998; Kaplan, 1995; Talbot and Kaplan, 1986; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1982). The Kaplans summarise the benefits of natural environments as being "... particularly effective for rest and recuperation." (Kaplan, *et al*, 1998, p.67). Settings do not have to be dramatic to achieve this, nor do the people who benefit actually have to be within the setting to access a benefit. Kaplan *et al* (1998, p.67) further propose that even a "... short exposure can be helpful", and that these benefits can be achieved even if that was not the original intention, and that the benefits may not be necessarily instantaneous.

A particular focus of this theory of the restorative benefits of natural environments has been researched within the context of healthcare by, for example Roger Ulrich (Ulrich *et al*, 1991) whose studies looked at issues such as the benefits of natural views from hospital windows, and the effect on recovery of health or healing gardens. Others who have continued and contributed to this area of research are for example, Patrik Grahn (Grahn *et al*, 2007) who recently at a conference in Edinburgh, reviewed the work of a rehabilitation garden in Alnarp Sweden. This garden had a significant positive impact on the health of patients who had joined a scheme of attending and working in the garden as part of their therapy. Those participating benefited from this in many ways following mental collapse and were supported by a team which included landscape architects, occupational therapists, physiotherapist, horticultural therapists as well as physician/psychiatrist and psychotherapists. This project helped people experiencing a mental collapse return to everyday life and for some that included a return to employment. The recovery was developmental and the garden was used in many ways in sensory communication and developing place and symbolic attachment and activity.

Related areas of therapeutic gardens are those in the area of Alzheimer's sufferers.

The work of John Zeisel in particular has investigated the effect on patients with this disability, although he states that it is difficult to quantify the benefits, which can include the reduction of :

"... sleep/wake disturbances and sundowning [reduction in daylight], and generally to regulate the damaged mental/body clock of people living with the disease." (Zeisel, 2004, p.5).

Other benefits of the therapeutic gardens discussed by Zeisel (2004) included an increase of independence by patients using the garden independently of staff, careers

or family. Garuth Chalfont has also explored the benefits of therapeutic gardens in such circumstances. His research into the effects of natural settings in Dementia care homes (Chalfont, 2007) has now taken an empirical direction with commissions to design such settings in existing and proposed residencies. Although Garuth Chalfont's aspirations for the application of his research are not confined to care as he seeks ways of facilitating such environments within a model of social sustainability, where care in terms of a home is not the objective and integration within the community is.

Another notable contributor to the concept of restorative environments is Terry Hartig (associate professor of applied psychology, Uppsala University), who has for many years researched the effects of nature experience as a health benefit (Hartig, 2007; Hartig and Staats, 2006; Hartig, 2004; Staats and Hartig, 2004; Hartig, 1993). There is now a growing interest in expanding the exploration of restorative environments to include the spatial, visual and physical attributes of urban spaces. These urban open spaces are proposed as a mosaic of small incidental spaces the network of which has a synergy effect offering restorative potential and being socially beneficial (Thwaites, *et al*, 2005; 2004). Other related studies have examined for example the effect of natural environments on health in the context of residential areas and the difficulties associated with assessing their benefits (de Vries, 2007), and the challenge to design communities to balance the density of built form in order for there to be "satisfactory access to nature experience." (van den Berg, Hartig and Staats, 2007, p.79). Another interesting study is that of Kuo and Sullivan who examined the effects that nature can have on reducing mental fatigue in inner cities. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) discuss how this can manifest itself through aggression and violence, and interestingly conclude that vegetation in low density and in small areas can have far reaching effects on a number of outcomes including "... residents' management of major life issues." (p.566) as well as social aspects as proposed in Thwaites, *et al* (2005; 2004).

The psychological benefits of open space, or contact with nature/natural environments is now well documented and ongoing. The perspective of healthcare environments has been well explored and we are now more aware that natural places can help in the alleviation of the everyday stresses of urban living and contribute to a positive change in behaviour traits (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). All of which are of relevance to the study, in that to understand place and peoples response or potential responses and

associations, will assist in the challenge of designing better environments of the places encountered routinely that are more amenable to promote positive behaviour as well as having health benefits. This is in addition to the growing proliferation of valuing natural environments for their support of physical activity (NICE, 2008a; 2008b) which also has psychological benefit as well as those associated with mitigating obesity, diabetes and other conditions.

To summarise the significance of understanding place from a person perspective the following citation is from Lynch and Rivkin's (1959) research on urban perception which was made by accompanying people and recording their responses on a walk around their block:

“Most of these people felt strongly about their visual world, even if they found difficulty in being articulate about it. Emotions were associated with the spatial characteristics, in particular, and with the apparent coherence (or lack of it) in the whole scene. They seemed to search for, or try to create, a sense of order and continuity in what they saw. The look of the world about them did indeed make a difference to their lives.” (pp.24-25).

The evidence of people-place associations, attachments, preferences, dislikes as well as the context within which we use or avoid place is an everyday normality that we observe or experience personally. What this study seeks is to understand these naturally occurring events of human environment interactions by considering and being informed by the cross-disciplinary research of the psychological aspects explored in this sub-section. A further aspect raised as a common thread is alluded to in Lynch and Rivkin's quote, in that people's environmental experience makes a difference and therefore has an effect upon them; positive or negative, which will be returned to in the following chapters. The following key points significantly relevant to this study to emerge from the review of psychological perspectives relate to how we perceive places, are emotionally attached by some and not others and how we negotiate places in terms of way finding systems, and how some environments can be read whilst others are confusing or overly complex, as well as the psychological benefits offered by natural elements. A summary of all key points from the literature review and practice based reflections that are relevant to, and inform the study's research questions, area of investigation and methodological issues are discussed in chapter 3.2, following the reflections on practice which was a primary source of information and development.

'If you want to know how the shoe fits, ask the person who is wearing it, not the one who made it.' – unattributed from Wates (2000)

3. Reflections on Practice

The origins of this research study are many, but principally it is as a result of both my educational and research experiences and interests emanating from my practice based work which began in 1999 and has continued since. Over the first five year period practice based projects were carried out at 8 primary schools, and at one school it also included working with nursery children (3 – 5 year olds). In total I worked with approximately 800 children involved in participatory processes to develop their school grounds. At each stage of these projects the participative tools and techniques that together with the literature review informed the initial methodological framework of the research were developed and refined. These are discussed further in section 2 of this thesis. In addition, freelance practice work was also undertaken at a High School, where adaptations of some of the developing techniques were also trialled with 58 Year 8 (13 year old) children over a three day period.

My first job in the public realm was an appointment as a Community Landscape Architect for a Local Authority in the North East of England, (UK). The Community Landscape Architect post was funded largely by the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and focused initially on two specific projects; The 'Green Corridors and Gateways Project' (GCG) and the 'Grounds for Learning Project' (GFL). The GCG project required the development and implementation of a landscape strategy of environmental improvements on strategic and major corridors throughout two SRB areas in the North East town (UK). Potential sites had been previously identified for improvement in a scoping strategy within the projects funding bid. Subject to SRB board approval schemes were to be implemented with involvement of the local community, ward members, agencies and public bodies together with business stakeholders. The project also required the maximisation of local employment, training and safety initiatives. The schemes were to be driven by consultation and participation of the community through workshops and exhibitions.

The GFL project proposals included the following aims:

- To create defensible and sustainable spaces within school grounds which allow the external environment to be in such a way that provides a safe and stimulating environment.
- Encouragement will be given to involve pupils' parents, teachers and governors at all levels throughout the life-time of the project.
- To provide physical environmental improvements improving the aesthetic quality, recreational and educational value of school grounds.

Five primary schools and one secondary school within the defined SRB area would benefit from SRB funding in the form of landscape improvement projects. As part of the funding bid these improvements were outlined as a result of an initial consultation scoping exercise. This consultation was carried out with the head teachers at each school and a representative from the local authorities' Landscape and Conservation department who would be implementing the improvements. The improvements would involve the participation of the schools through discussion with teachers and governors and developed through workshops with pupils and teachers. Proposals were then to be finalised and managed to completion.

These projects required some form of participation to meet the funding objectives. On first being appointed to the post within the Landscape and Conservation section, I was given a list of requirements that the first school had for their grounds improvements. This list was the result of a follow up consultation exercise to the initial one that outlined the school's requirements and was undertaken by my predecessor with the school. It comprised of a number of items, which included; a netball post, a goal, yellow road and somewhere to sit. It appeared to me that the consultation that had taken place stressed object, function or budgetary driven outcomes. I had a particular concern that within the consultation that had taken place and the resulting list of requirements that there was a lack of emphasis on the creation of meaningful places and how the children would actually experience them. Was it the case that the design was being made for them, and not created with them as a result of a partnership, which much of my research to that point had indicated would be a more meaningful and sustainable solution?

In effect I felt I was handed a shopping list of objects and features, in addition to which there was a comment that stated that one of the preferred places that the children liked was the drain covers near the school building. For me, the same dissatisfaction was re-emerging that was first apparent at University where there seemed to be no balance of objects with place experience, and whilst some form of consultation with the school had been undertaken, this was no basis to form a design with any particular sense of place attachment for the children. Although they had been involved in some form it was consistent with a tendency to overlook, undervalue, or at extremes conceal the experiential content of outdoor place making which has long been recognised as a limitation in approaches to environmental planning and design. This mechanistic approach is frequently held responsible for producing solutions that lack social relevance and human value (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d; Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Alexander, 1977; Norberg-Schulz, 1971).

Within the literature review section perspectives of participation have been discussed together with the lip service paid to it (Forester, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000b; Wates, 2000; Johnson, 1979; Goodman, 1971). The practice experience of working in a Local Authority Landscape department, implementing regeneration schemes that were conceived to be inclusive was another interesting perspective on the term participation which is often used synonymously for consultation. Sanoff (2000b) points out that where control of a project rests with administrators and not the residents then this is 'Pseudoparticipation', and the level of participation is that of people being told what is being planned for them, a perspective that sits neatly in Johnson's model cited in Sheat and Beer (1994, p.92) within the category of 'As a bandwagon' to legitimise all kinds of proposals, and Hart's tokenism (Hart, 1997).

The development of the design process in terms of its initial participative outcomes for the first school grounds project I encountered in practice seemed to have some of the characteristics of Sanoff's definition of pseudoparticipation in that it appeared to be the result of conversations with the Headmistress and to some extent the children, although this was not documented. Because it is difficult to discern to what extent the children were involved I perceive it to remain categorise in Hart's model in tokenism rather than moving up into the assigned but informed category (Hart, 1997). The pseudoparticipation produced a set of deterministic outcomes in the form of a list of

objects that were desirable by the implication of their inclusion, the most interesting of by-products that was not given any significance was that the children thought that the manhole cover was a special place. There was no attempt to ascertain why the children thought this, and no document, memo or other record of how this information had been obtained. The manhole cover shows that things important to children are often small tatty and incidental, valued as discoveries of their own rather than facilities provided by others (Ross, 2005b). Crucially the valuable affordances of such artefacts of every day environments also seem to be overlooked by these processes of so called consultation that are oblivious to research in this area to understand why children seek such places out. Armitage (2001) observed exactly the same phenomena in his experiences as a play worker; he describes a play ground observation of activities around such a place where “Marbles [were] being played exclusively on a metal drain cover.” (p.47). The Opies had observed children’s playground games for decades and not only seen what the children were doing and where they did it, but most importantly understood the meanings behind it (Opie, 1993; Opie and Opie, 1969).

The resulting design of my first practice based project was therefore a professional’s interpretation, or an adultist perspective (Matthews *et al*, 1998) and little more than an imposition or assemblance of its ingredients. Whilst the Headteacher expressed her satisfaction for the completed scheme, this could not appease my concern as to what methods of participation would be appropriate in the context of my future work in developing school grounds meaningfully for the school community. Against this background and attendance at the 2000 *Designing with Communities* Conference organised by the University of Strathclyde where I met many influential people including Henry Sanoff, John Forester and Ombretta Romice, there followed a series of subsequent school grounds improvements. These would inform this research by providing case studies to establish the foundations for deeper levels of understanding and engagement with children which recognised the act of effective participation itself as a fundamental component to the process of successful place making.

3.1. A case study from practice: exploring and developing methodology

3.1.1. Introduction

With these issues in mind the second school grounds improvement project was undertaken during 2000. There was no pre-determined list of objects for this project, other than that derived by my predecessor as part of the funding bid in the form of a scheme description which was produced in consultation with the school as follows: “Provision of an outdoor classroom to include seating, raised planting beds, art work...”

This project became a case study for exploring methodologies of participation and their application, as did all of my subsequent practice based work. This project being the first one that I could be involved with from the start was extremely instrumental in my exploration of participative methods to understand not only the children’s attachment to their school as well as their use and aspiration for their school grounds, but it also sought ways to seek the views of other members of the school community. The following description demonstrates how children and staff at this second school, which was a Roman Catholic Primary School participated in a process to bring out the ‘personality’ of their school in improvements to the school grounds. This concept of the ‘personality’ was discussed in the literature section (2.5.1) and highlights in particular that the personality of the school resided, not only in its spatial and physical elements, but also in the minds and imagination of the school’s users. From a designers perspective one of the aims of the project was to develop a methodology to draw out meanings and associations that the school’s children and adults had and felt about their environment. This was held as especially important to inform design decision making that would ultimately develop a school environment that would not only fulfil funding objectives and the school’s aspirations in being functional and relevant to learning, but also that it would be emotionally and experientially rich with a unique sense of place. In the words of Simonds; “Plan not in terms of meaningless pattern, or cold form. Plan, rather, a human experience.” (1961, p.229). Because; “What counts is the experience!” (ibid, p225), and it was felt that this was lacking in the earlier case study project I had inherited.

My approach was supported by the Head teacher and his staff, and the first stage of work carried out at this school helped forge a relationship that extended over four years and two further projects at the school. The methodological exploration continued to be developed at other SRB funded school improvement projects in the region and continued in subsequent independently commissioned projects, all of these formed the basis of the case studies. Collectively these have helped to further refine techniques of participation that focus on experiential dimensions of school ground use and their translation as a spatial design language.

3.1.2. Site context, preliminary brief and adult workshop

This second school project to be developed under the GFL programme was a courtyard, which was to provide an outdoor classroom to include seating, raised planting beds, and artwork. The main entrance vestibule of the school overlooked the courtyard and on the north eastern elevation was the hall/dining room. On the western elevation double doors lead onto a pathway giving access to the main playground. The space was bleak, largely featureless and dominated by a floorscape of concrete paving slabs with a central slot drainage channel.

To meet the central objective of the GFL project to involve pupils, parents, teachers and governors a more meaningful inclusive approach to the design process was sought to engage with as many members of the school community as possible. Following initial discussions with the Headteacher an evening meeting to discuss the proposed approach was arranged with staff and parent/governors. The design development aims discussed reflected a range of functional, educational and experiential objectives, including:

- To fulfil functional needs, by engaging in a range of consultative workshops to establish what physical elements were required.
- To be a resource for learning, by maximising the learning opportunities within the design by discussion with the children and staff.
- To promote a sense of ownership, by active participation of the school community to enable the project to evolve from the school in meaningful partnership instead of the imposition of an externally generated design solution.

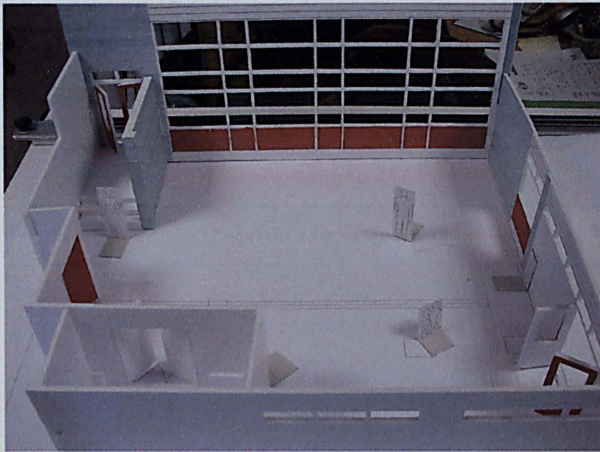
- To promote an exploration of people-place experiences, by consideration of the experiential qualities of the design.

Achieving these aims involved recognition of the need to create a unique sense of place, rather than merely a space, even an attractive space, that would be part of the children's daily routine experience during their time at school. Central to this would be to understand the essence of what made the school unique in the minds of the staff and pupils.

3.1.3. Methods and approach employed

The approach taken in the children's workshops was as informal as possible whilst having a structure to the time spent with each class from years 3, 5 and 6 (7 to 11 years old). This was a dynamic process that stimulated creativity, where discussions were conducted in a semi-structured nature in jargon free language using the following predetermined themes; by way of an 'ice breaker' to try and engage with the children, the question was asked: 'What is a Landscape Architect and what does a Landscape Architect do?' this resulted in a variety of responses, mainly focused on themes emerging from television garden makeover programmes. Next the concept of different activities for different places and scale was discussed; a way of trying to stimulate the children's imaginations was used to get them to picture various metaphors that could relate to this, such as: you can't fit an elephant into a hamster's cage, or play football in a shoebox. Finally a blackboard was used to sketch a plan view of the courtyard boundaries and features, by asking the children to suggest what was there and where these things were located. The analogy of viewing the courtyard as if they were seagulls was used, to try and stimulate understanding a plan view of the place. We all then went into the courtyard accompanied by the class teacher. Cues were used to prompt discussion, the children were asked what could they see, smell, touch and hear. The children were asked to close their eyes and describe what it felt like to be in the courtyard.

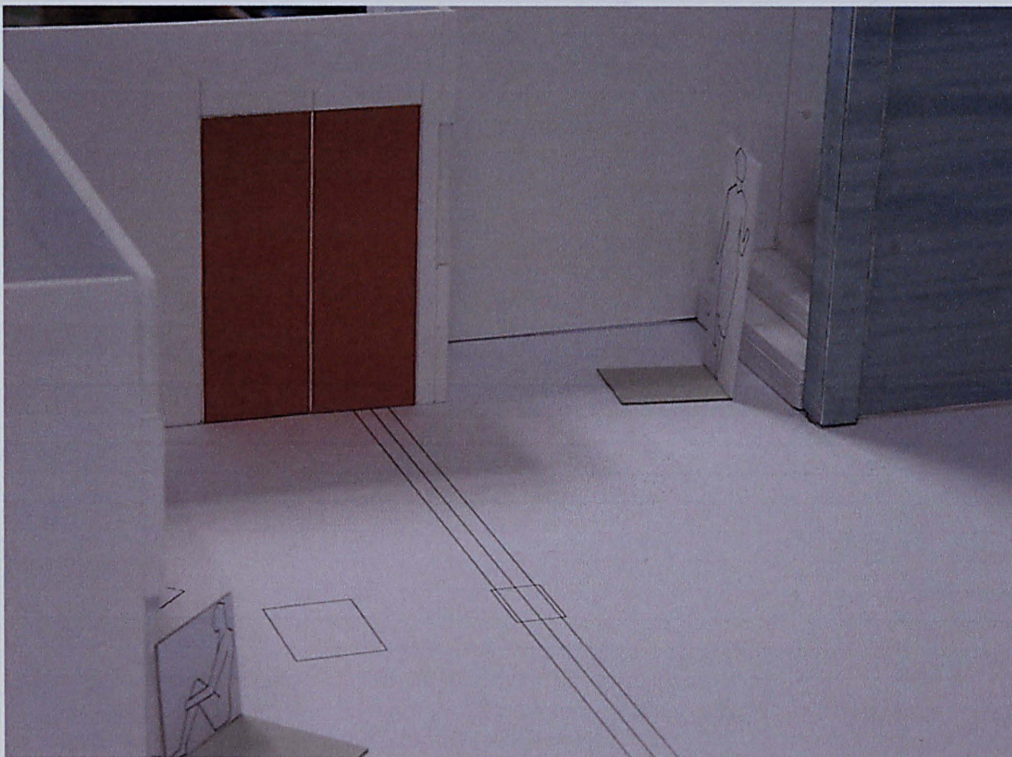
Figure 11: the 3d model of the courtyard



It is often difficult to understand a place in the two-dimensional context of a plan. In order to circumvent this issue a three dimensional scale model was made prior to the visit, which included movable scale figures of adults and children. On returning to the classroom, the model was used in order for the

children to be able to relate to the courtyard for further discussions on the following themes; what could they do in the courtyard as it was presently laid out, what would they like to do in the courtyard and what would they need to be able to do it? This prompted much discussion and their suggestions were listed on the classrooms dry wipe board.

Figure 12: cut out figures representing an adult and child



Finally the children were given a pre-prepared A3 scale base plan of the courtyard showing its existing features, and they were asked to draw their own ideas for the courtyard on it adding their name, age and class.

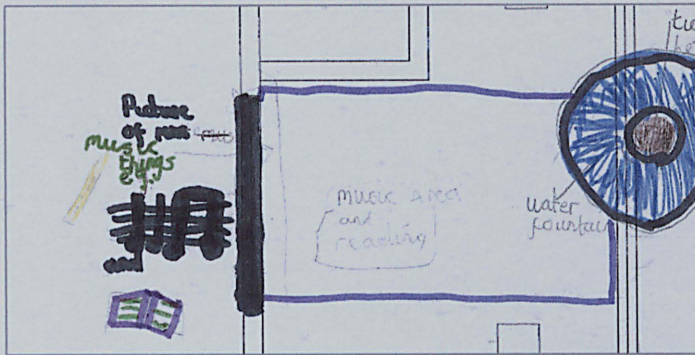


Figure 13: Lisa's drawing showing her ideas; a water feature and music area

In addition to the taught lesson time, assembly was attended with the children and observations of the children's play were undertaken at break times as well as discussions with teaching staff. Lunch was taken with the children, which was not only a less formal setting for conversation but an opportunity to see the impact of the courtyard from the dining room that overlooked it. I was invited to sit in on a Religious Education (RE) lesson with the year 6 children. This provided an interesting insight into the faith aspects of the school's culture, which had been dominant and explicit in most aspects of the school day as well as in the pictures that hung in the school corridors and classrooms.

3.1.4. Evaluating the work with the children

The children's designs and suggestions for the courtyard project were extremely creative and influential on the concept that was to develop. Although the purpose of the work with the children was to produce qualitative information for informing the conceptual design, the information gathered was tabulated to give an indication of a prioritisation of functional elements (figure 14). Headings such as; settings, plants, walls, water, physical objects, floor and themes were used to categorise the suggestions within the children's designs and then the data was tabulated for comparative purposes by year group. This approach of tabulating the themes is significant within the context of the study's research, and will be discussed in chapter 4 within the principles of grounded theory.

Figure 14: an example of the tabulation of ideas from one year group.

Settings	Plants	Walls	Water	Physical Objects	Floor	Themes
Music Corner	Flowers	Hang paintings	Pond	Crosses in gravel	Gravels	Nature
Sheltered Spot	Grass	Space to write	Rill	Moveable benches for shade	Painted snake	Disney Characters
		Patterns and colours	Fountain	Paintings	Crosses	Bright Colours
			Fountain with lighting	Benches	Paint ramp	
			Water Fall	Shelter	Maze	
				Bird Box	Hopscotch	
				Tables		
				Rocks		
				Drawing Table		
				Sand Pit		
				Bridge		

From the participatory workshops, conversations, observations and an examination of the children’s work it became apparent that the personality of the school was manifest in the school’s faith, from the iconic imagery inside the building to the conduct of the school community in their daily routines of activity and thoughts. It was this that made the school ‘special’ to them, and it was this ‘golden thread’ that could be adopted as the ‘personality’ of the design to make it a more meaningful place.

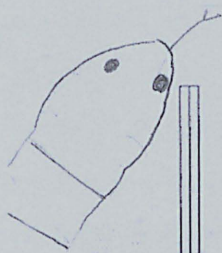
3.1.5. A ‘real and participant meaningful’ brief emanating from the workshops

Taking into account all of the participatory work, which included workshops with adult members of the school community, a design brief was formalised as follows: The setting for the courtyard to be for a place of quiet contemplation and reflection accommodating a full class or smaller group depending on the final spatial arrangement, and aim to include some of the following as appropriate to the scale of the site and budget:

- Water, in one or more states i.e. in repose or moving, and possibly to include lighting.
- Seating offering a choice of location.
- Partitions i.e. opportunities for exploration and for climbing plants.
- Discreet views in, potential for creating ‘port holes’ by use of paint to windows or other materials.
- Painting of doors to the storeroom.

- Opportunity for the children to engage in horticultural by means of raised planters.
- Differing floor levels by creation of raised areas.
- An area that could be easily changed i.e. transient, this could manifest itself by way of a feature for the children to draw on.
- Reflection of the school faith by implicit and explicit means this could be in the choice of plants, colours and the spatial arrangement and could include space for an icon.

3.1.6. A concept informed by participation



One of the strongest images explicit within the children's drawings was that of a snake, this was a recurring theme within their sketches (as shown opposite). There is also an obvious theological reference with the garden of Eden, and this together with other work the children had done and the

experience of the R.E. lesson led to the initial layout being conceived as a series of themed gardens. The series of gardens were developed as; Mary's garden, an orbit garden, music garden, quiet garden, water garden and jungle area. The plant species and composition of each garden was carefully selected not only to add natural and architectural features but also to be colourful within the theme for each garden. Some like Honeysuckle had fragrant flowers other were aromatic when crushed such as Rosemary whilst others by their forms gave all year round interest. It was also desired



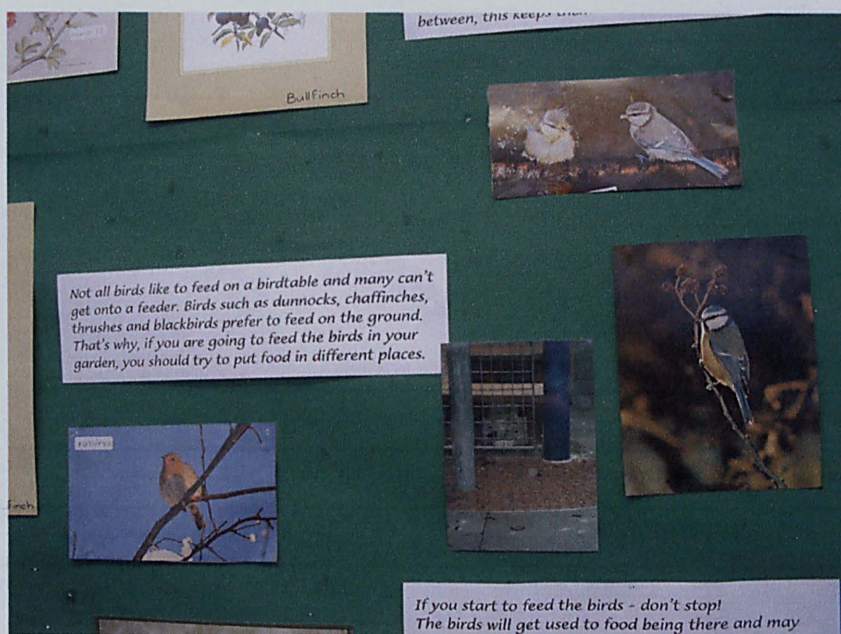
that the planting should reflect the general ecumenical theme such as the use of the Passion Flower. Others like Red Valerian and, Bergamot attract insects. The school commissioned an artist (Frances Connolly) to work with the children and paint scenes appropriate to each garden using the children's ideas. The artist also painted a snake on the jungle and quiet garden floors; she also painted a background for a water feature and setting for the musical notes in the music garden which spelt the name of the school.

Figure 15: a view of the 'orbit garden' july 2002

3.1.7. Project summary

Through working with the school teaching staff it was also apparent that they wished to use the courtyard as an outdoor classroom. This was then conceived as a design aim, in that it would not merely become a receptacle for learning but should promote learning from its forms, colours and geometry. It was possible to use the setting as a resource for lessons in subjects such as geography, science, history, English, art, music and maths and discussions were held with the school as to how this could be achieved. The children and staff quickly personalised the courtyard with the addition of bulbs, seasonal plants and bird feeders, and a project on the birds observed in the courtyard gardens was displayed inside the school, following the implementation of the completed design. Discussions were undertaken with the children involved the participative process in order that they could see their ideas incorporated in the design prior to implementation. It was also suggested that a permanent record be kept of the building of the courtyard for future generations of pupils not included in the process, to be aware of its conception. A document was prepared and given to the school which contained the history of the participative process using images from the children's work as well as the construction of the courtyard in progress. This document remains in the school's reception area which overlooks the courtyard.

Figure 16: the children and staff used the courtyard for various learning activities: including bird watching.



3.1.8. Summary of issues emanating from the case study

The following is a summary of the significant aspects relevant to this research that were explored in, or emanated from this case study:

- Relationships are a significant part to developing trust and understanding, and are important both in the context of:
 - Staff who act as gatekeepers (Punch, 2002) and co-participants.
 - The children, who may be reticent when engaging with a stranger.
- Recognition of power relations and means of addressing the extremes of these are required, such as the use of non-jargonistic easily understood language.
- The use of props and everyday life examples such as television programme analogies is useful to communicate ideas.
- Three dimensional models are easier to contextualise and understand than scale drawings of a site that appear anonymous and devoid of human scale or attachment values.
- It is important to work with a variety of appropriate methods in order to engage individual children in a way that they are comfortable in expressing their ideas. This also facilitates a better reciprocal understanding of what is being communicated as it allows testing of previously raised issues or assumptions evolving from an earlier task or activity to be clarified and explored.
- An open mind without preconceived ideas is important in order that the children are not steered in an adultist agenda. This should also be the case during conversations where open questions should be used, rather than those that proliferate a yes or no response (Greene and Hogan, 2005).
- Taking the children out of the classroom and into the place is important, as the contact with the environment is more sensory stimulated, than remote observation.
- An ethnographic stance of a longitudinal model is not always possible in a practice based project. At best snapshots are received, but this should be recognised as such and attempts made to mitigate this. Being embedded in a whole school day allows familiarity and relationships to develop with the children. It also allows insight into spontaneous as well as routine occurrences that would be otherwise missed on a single classroom based visit. Observations of events can reveal many things and allowance within the

programme for structured sessions as well as passive observation and informal conversation will lead to a better understanding of issues.

- Methods of evaluation are as important as methods of engagement and they should be appropriate in order to facilitate an understanding as to the meaning behind the data that is gathered.

3.1.9. Practice case studies with a local environment perspective

Subsequent practice work allowed me to extend the domain of working with children to a wider neighbourhood context. One project was to develop school grounds, at a school in a small rural village that historically was the centre of social interactions for the village inhabitants. The staff at the school saw this as an important aspect of the schools standing in the community, and as a result I was allowed to explore the children's experience of the wider neighbourhood. This became my first exploration into accessing the children's experiences outside the confines of the school grounds and a number of themes were used with the children to discern information about how they felt about their neighbourhood and the significance of the linked incidental spaces that they encountered on their journeys to school which were invariably by foot.

A further opportunity for exploration of children's neighbourhood place experiences that were no longer biased to school grounds was afforded during 2005, by taking part in a project that would form part of a participatory exercise to develop a Village Design Statement (VDS) which is:

“a document that gives voice to local opinion about what is valuable and important about the village so that this can be taken into account when assessing the suitability of planning applications that would affect the village. Developing a VDS requires the collecting and collating of information about the special and unique qualities of the village” (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007).

As part of this project participant residents included a number of children, the VDS working group set a number of objectives in the form of a brief for the development of the VDS, these were:

- That the Village Design statement should reflect the views of the community.
- The VDS would become a planning document adopted as supplementary planning guidance, as planning applications have to take account of the VDS in addition to other Planning Policy Guidance's.

- An aspiration was to attempt to express how things ‘look and feel’, not so much physical features but ‘style’ – extrapolated by a process of consultation.
- The VDS should produce a Character map of the village.
- What is special and important about the village should be revealed and preserved via the VDS, i.e. having a planning policy voice and influence.
- Discussions would be held as to where the neighbourhood was perceived to start and finish.
- Had the village an identity, if so what was it, and was it distinct and separate from the neighbouring town?
- Were there different zones in the village?

This case study again afforded the exploration of wider neighbourhood issues with the participant children. It was also significant in terms of exploring methodological development in the form of a semi structured interview the themes for which developed from the brief and therefore took account of the wider neighbourhood experiences of the children. The semi structured interviews were undertaken in the presence of parents and with the child’s and adults consent. Using the experiences of practice together with conference discussions and more significantly the Planning for Real workshops ways of engaging with the children were explored. This was done playing a game by using a model house to locate where the children lived on a base plan of the village as an opening exercise. Additionally for the first time the sessions were recorded using an analogue tape recorder. Following the game of identifying where the children lived on the base plan an attempt was made to make an informal contact with them by asking what they would normally be doing on that day, which was a Saturday. Some talked about watching Rugby on the television and a conversation ensued about England’s latest performance, others talked of shopping and various other activities. Having made some form of initial contact the conversation was steered towards routine activities within the village, and the village school was used as an example of the children’s sequential experiences of a routine daily basis. If they did not go to the village school then they were asked if they went anywhere else regularly in the village for example to a friends etc. Then we played a game to find out what they noticed on these journeys and where did they feel they had arrived at where they were going. A similar conversation then took place about their

journeys home, they were also asked about their favourite and worst places in the village.

This method of semi structured interviewing was a significant progression from the classroom based large group discussions of the school grounds projects and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. The focus of discussion and the research moved from the particular practice based brief of school grounds improvements to examine the wider experience of the neighbourhood. A focus for this was the journey taken between home and school as an example of a type of spatial continuity that children experience routinely and frequently. This as a consequence over time may have a significant impact on how children come to understand and recognise their neighbourhood, its wider setting and their own sense of location and that of places important to them within it (school, home and friends, for example). In this context the school run is understood as a largely sequential mosaic of incidental spaces through which they pass by various means most days: this broadly corresponds with how the DLTR (2002) conceptualised outdoor environment from the perspective of children. The key aim of the research was to find ways to understand the hidden dimensions of children's place perceptions of these spaces and to use this capability to gain insight into aspects of their neighbourhood perception whilst developing the methodology.

3.2. Summary and Concluding Remarks relating to practice and the literature review

The literature review covered aspects of research, political and social frameworks as well as other issues relevant to the research; the perspective has unfolded many relevant points within current and historical debates. Within the potential milieu there are 'golden threads' which are significant and highly relevant to both the design of the study, its intellectual background, social and political context as well as identifying what the study could contribute in these arenas.

The main aspects of the literature research are summarised in the form of 'bullet points' to highlight the main concepts and theories that were relevant to the research as well as informing the study's methodological development and context.

Human place relationships:

- The human environment interplay is paramount in differentiating space and place, and design should account for place attachment and account made of the social activities that should be offered to promote a sense of place (Canter, 1977).
- A phenomenological perspective seeks to understand the holistic and unique meaning of place in a human-environment relationship (Gifford, 2007).
- The environment can offer a multitude of way finding cues that a perceiver interprets within a given scene, children's cognitive development may restrict their prioritisation of such cues (Gifford, 2007). Ways of reading the environment have been seen in models of patterns and cues in order to make places legible (Kaplan, Kaplan and Ryan, 1998; Bentley *et al.* 1985; Alexander, 1977; Lynch, 1960).
- Environments have collative properties which can be attention grabbing, engender a feeling of exploration and surprise or be complex and therefore confusing and illegible (Gifford, 2007; Porta and Renne, 2005; Canter, 1977).
- Places are often sought in familiar and unfamiliar environments that offer an opportunity of prospect and refuge, a chance to observe whilst not being perceived as being observed (Appleton, 1975). Environments that offer sequential experiences such as future prospect, and present refuge are appealing in terms of their psychological benefits (Kaplan, Kaplan and Ryan, 1998). These landscapes arranged with change in spatial volume offer a sequential experience of revealingness rather than being presented all at once, and are of value to the user for their aspects of serial vision (Cullen, 1971).
- Perception of the environment is locationally relational, in terms of our sense of position within it, above it, below or outside it (Cullen, 1971).
- Places are as much the product of mind and experience as they are material fabric and of particular significance is that our perception of the environment is not in terms of its form and shape, but we perceive place in terms of what it can do for us 'its affordance' (Gifford, 2007; Heft, 2007; Clark and Uzzell, 2006; Ward Thompson, 1995; Kaplan, 1992; Gibson, 1986).
- A frequent manifestation of affordance is the plethora of urban materials that are of a height and sound enough to be sat on, these affordances offer sedibility or sittability (Porta and Renne, 2005; Whyte, 1988).

- We invariably experience place as a result of personal projects, which are an influence on environmental experience within a reciprocal interaction, over time, between persons and their social and physical surroundings. (Little, 2007; 1983).
- Studies as long ago as the mid 1970's have recognised the need to understand place from a child's perspective (Ward, 1990).

Children's Participation:

- Recognition of what participation means and the degrees of participation are important in order that projects do not pay lip service to the children's inclusion resulting in manipulation, decoration or tokenism in order to promote an adult's agenda (Hart, 1997).
- There are issues explaining why adults are reluctant to engage with children (Driskell, 2002; Matthews, 2001; Lansdown, 1995). Recognition of this is important in order to deal with such issues and promote and recognise the children as responsible actors and experts of their daily lives (Dudek, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Chawla, 2002).
- Mechanisms that facilitate the children's understanding of how their views have made a direct impact is important. Often views are sought to inform, and this belittles the children's involvement and returns participation to a consultation stance (Cele, 2006; Hill, 2006). Direct feedback and continuing the participative process into the physical manifestation of the children's involvement is important to empowerment and demonstrating the value of the children as co-authors (Driskell, 2002; Adams and Ingham, 1998).
- Ways of meaningfully engaging with children to create child friendly sustainable environments are required. Great differences between adult and children's perception of the environment require to be recognised and addressed (Matthews and Limb, 1999; Moore, 1989; 1987).
- The way we engage with and understand children's perception is fundamental to the background of being able to communicate effectively with them and also understand them. How we learn is partly perception and to understand this in an elementary form will facilitate a meaningful interaction and effective communication with the children. (Mooney, 2000; Matthews, *et al*, 1998).

- A child centric perspective appreciating the language and ways children express themselves is important to a meaningful understanding (Cele, 2006; Christensen and James, 2000). Opportunities to allow the children to express themselves in a variety of ways, through a variety of media is essential in being sensitive to them as individuals, and children. (Ross, 2005a; Matthews *et al*, 1998).
- Power relationship recognition is important and should be taken into account, rather than assuming this can be eradicated (Christensen and James, 2007).
- Ethical issues are a crucial component of research with children. These not only influence methods but also should consider issues such as confidentiality and viewing children as participant individuals and not as a homogenous mass of subjects (Christensen and James, 2007; Hill, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). The ethical stance should consider; respect, fairness and non discrimination which has a self determination stance allowing children to say that they do not want to take part at the start of, or at any time during the project (Hill, 2005).
- Relationships with gatekeepers can have a significant impact on the research and this should be of consideration in the study's planning (Christensen and James, 2007; Hill, 2005; Punch, 2002).

The benefits of contact with natural environments:

- The effects on people interacting with environments, in particular natural ones are beneficial in terms of restoration. (Hartig, 2004; Kaplan, *et al*, 1998; Kaplan, 1995; Talbot and Kaplan, 1986; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1982; Hartig, 1993)
- The psychological benefits of open space, or contact with nature/natural environments is well documented in the context of healing gardens and care homes. There is also an awareness that these places can help in the alleviation of everyday stresses in urban environments and can contribute to a positive change in behaviour traits in such environments (Chalfont, 2007; Hartig and Staats, 2006; Thwaites, *et al*, 2005, 2004; Staats and Hartig, 2004; Ziesel, 2004; Kuo and Sullivan, 2001; Hartig, 1993).
- There is increasing awareness within the political-socio framework regarding the beneficial issues relating to children and outdoor environments and the

detrimental effects on health of a sedentary lifestyle (NICE 2008a; 2008b; UDG, 2008; Butland *et al*, 2007; CABE, 2006)

- Natural environments and ‘special places’ like dens are significant in terms of learning, experience, social and cognitive development, places of retreat as well as developing long term associations and recollections into adulthood (Louv, 2006; Cele, 2004; Kylin, 2003; Kahn and Kellert, 2002; Moore and Wong, 1997; Moore, 1990).
- Research demonstrates the restorative effects of natural environments for children (Moore, 2007; Wells and Evans, 2003; Wells, 2000).

Issue relating to children’s play:

- There is a political focus on children-environment issues, mostly centred on play provision and transport issues (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a; 2007b).
- Public space should be more child friendly in terms of play provision and recognised within policies (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; DCMS, 2006; 2004)
- Risk is an omnipresent barrier to children’s experience of the outdoors, manifest in ‘stranger danger’ as well as the over sanitation of play facilities, a tide is turning now in terms of being risk conscious without being risk averse (Gill, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Thomson, 2007; Womack, 2007a; Gill, 2006a; 2006b; CABE, 2005; Gill, 2005a; 2005b; 2004).
- Children’s play is significant in a child’s development; physically, emotionally, socially, and in cognitive and learning development. Unsupervised play in the context of outdoor experiences is significant for this development to take place (Beunderman *et al*, 2007; Worpole and Knox, 2007; Karsten and Van Vliet 2006b; Worpole, 2003; DTLR, 2002; Jefferson *et al*, 2001; Rivkin, 2000, 1995; Opie, 1993, 1969).

The significance of the environment encountered on a routine basis:

- The significance of the public realm in terms of children’s experience should not only be considered at a city scale but should also consider the incidental spaces encountered during the routine of everyday life. (Beunderman *et al*

2007; Worpole and Knox, 2007; Thomas and Thompson, 2004; Worpole, 2003; DTLR, 2002).

- The use of unofficial play spaces is important to children and often such places are overlooked or disregarded by adults (Ross, 2005a; 2005b; 2004).
- Children's environmental experiences are limited by accessibility issues and children's movement around them (Mackett *et al*, 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Karsten and Vliet, 2006a).
- Child friendly environments should be a model that considers: accessibility; sociability; natural elements; diversity of resources and access to play and exploration (Francis and Lorenzo, 2006; Kytta, 2004; 2003; 2002).
- The school run is seen as a significant opportunity for children to engage with their local environment, and is seen as in demise due to the increase of supervision in terms of vehicular transportation (McMillan, 2006; 2005; O'Brien 2004; McMillan, 2003).
- Children's attachment to favourite places which are not necessarily natural environments are beneficial in terms of being outside of parental control and social demands, a place frequented after being emotionally challenged as well as for cognitive restoration and relaxation. The significance of self-regulation and affordance within the environment to offer such places is an important factor in the children's health and wellbeing in both physical and psychological functioning. (Korpela *et al*, 2002; Ward, 1988; Hart, 1979).

This study was informed by a complex map of resources, whilst being initiated from the perspective of Landscape Architecture its considerations were cross-disciplinary. Canter (1977) states a similar perspective for his concern that the psychology of place should be cross discipline from psychology and geography "... as well as the professional boundaries of social science and design." Canter continues that "... the welding together of material from such a variety of sources has enabled an alloy to be manufactured which is likely to be stronger than each of its constituents in isolation." (p.25).

Given the contemporary research undertaken into the issue of children and their environments and the emergence of its prominence during the last thirty years it

remains an interesting and significant observation that Kraftl (*et al*) (2007) make, that in spite of the diverseness of work in this field;

“... there remain significant methodological difficulties in presenting research in such a way that it can be effectively and efficiently used by built environment professionals to improve the places inhabited (or not) by young people.” (p.401).

Kraftl (*et al*) also make a point that to promote debates in resolution of this is to “... consider new methodologies for encouraging young people’s participation.” (*ibid*). This contextualises this research and gives gravitas to its contribution to this debate. The key aspects of the literature review relate to two elements of this research, the first is the primary research question of developing participatory methodology that is appropriate for engaging with children in order that they can reveal their place experiences, and that this should be done by employing multi-route child centric methods that recognise the different preferences that children have to express themselves. The second aspect relates to an appreciation of the human place relationship from children’s perspective, in order to understand and explore issues that arose as a consequence of conducting the participative phases with the children to develop the **INSIGHT METHOD**. Appreciation of the differences between an adultist perspective and a child’s is important, for example one view of an object will be its engineering function, and a child’s may be the affordance. To be aware of and recognise these differences was fundamental to understanding the nuances of the children’s place experiences and facilitate a meaningful evaluation of the data that arose from a child centric method that valued, encouraged and sought to understand their voices.

The practice based projects provided an initial platform for tools and techniques to be trialled and tested, borne initially from disillusionment with existing methodological focus and inherited practices. The developing ideas and themes became an integral part of personal professional practice and led to the evolution of the refinement and development of other methods to engage with primary school aged children to discover their place perceptions of their wider neighbourhood. The tabulation of qualitative information is one that is seen as significant to this research as well as adopting a multi-method approach in a longitudinal perspective, even if in the reality of a ‘real project’ because of budget and time constraints this takes the form of more than one visit, or being with the children all day for a one off workshop. The value of

reflection also is apparent, where subsequent meetings with staff and governors and then children and staff and governors again shows an approach with a grounded perspective (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) which allows adaptations and reflections to emerge from the sequence of meetings.

The professional case studies were crucial and informative in many ways, including:

- My development as a practitioner to understanding and value the design partnership that develops from the reciprocal process emanating from the children's participation (Foster, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000a; 2000b; Wates, 2000; Sheat and Beer, 1994; Johnson, 1979).
- The participative approach facilitates the development of environments that are meaningful to the children as well as environments that engage children in formal and informal activities to promote their learning and cognitive development (Beunderman *et al*, 2007; Worpole and Knox, 2007; Karsten and Van Vliet 2006b; Worpole, 2003; DTLR, 2002; Jefferson *et al*, 2001; Rivkin, 2000, 1995).
- Commencing to reveal the significance of places that the children felt were special, and that are usually ignored by adults in terms of their aesthetic or value – like drain covers, (Ross, 2004; 2005a; 2005b; Korpela *et al*, 2002). The case studies also recognised the differing perceptions between adults and children, and sought ways for the children to 'have their say' as well as for it to be valued and recognised (Moore, 1989; 1987).
- Engaging with children in appropriate ways is important and using a variety of methods is essential to be sensitive to them as individuals (Mooney, 2000; Matthews, *et al*, 1998). Having often worked with large groups of children within the classroom setting of asking people to volunteer their ideas to be recorded for discussion, for example on a dry wipe board has benefits of accessing children's ideas quickly when there are time constraints, it does not however facilitate the more reticent members of the class to contribute. Using additional methods which require a more creative individual input such as drawing assists in mitigating this. There is however a need to engage verbally with the children in order to understand the significance of what they have drawn, and adopt a child centric approach (Ross, 2005a; Matthews *et al*, 1998).

- Longitudinal studies are important in exploring issues and are a means of using a range of methodologies. In practice this is often not possible, however immersing oneself in the school culture can reveal significant aspects of the 'collective personality' that exists (Simkins and Thwaites, 2004), as well as ensuring the support of the majority of the school population from dinner ladies to the parish priest. To immerse oneself may not be practical to take place over long periods, however the value of a whole day at the school in order to see the routines and be able to engage in conversations outside classroom environments in for example dining halls and playgrounds can give some ethnographic insights, and can be followed up by other visits where possible.
- Observations in the practice case study described, did not take the form of recording 'naturally occurring events' within the 'project area', because the courtyard was not used for anything apart from access. Observing the children's reaction to being there was useful in getting their perspective on the experience. More casual observations throughout the school day in a variety of settings assisted in understanding the children's use of the whole school environment as well as making me more visible and less of a 'stranger'. This helps in building a relationship, in particular asking for children's assistance in finding a particular classroom, or what meal to choose or how to empty my tray, dismantles the adultist prospective and empowers the children as well as engaging at their level (Mooney, 2000).

SECTION 2

Developing the **I**NSIGHT METHOD

Methodology

Methodological constituents: tools

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

From a design discipline perspective, in most cases the creative act benefits from expressing concepts and thoughts and seeking a response and discussion. This is not only to inform, and refine but also to be the generator of new ideas that can often make abstract connections clear; this is a fundamental part of a creative process. Schön (1987) contextualises this within the discipline of architecture as providing "... access to a prototype of the designer's reflective conversation with his materials" (p.43). The qualities of such a system developed in design studios has been explained by Schön to have "... evolved their own rituals... all attached to a core process of learning by doing." Schön explains the importance of such systems and the environments that facilitate it as offering "... privileged access to designers' reflections on designing. It is at once a living and a traditional example of a reflective practicum," (ibid). This is synonymous of the reflexive approach of the social sciences in ones self examination to bring our attention to our own assumptions and the affects they can have when working with children (Cele, 2006; Punch, 2002; Clark and Moss, 2001; Davis, 1998). With this ingrained mindset the design of this study's methodology was only personally meaningful if it was significantly reflective and responsive to the act of 'doing' and that this act would continually inform subsequent acts of 'doing' throughout the study. In other words the children would be co-designers of the methods and their response to the participative workshops would refine the subsequent phases.

This has been at the forefront of my practice based work seeking ways of participation to work with children enabling the development of initial techniques that facilitated participation to produce schemes that were more meaningful to the children involved and reflect their aspirations and thoughts. The ultimate participative objective of these case studies was the production of a physical design which the children had been co-authors in its concept development and detail. Additionally in later projects the children were also involved in a physical activity of personalising these places by planting, sowing seeds and painting collages to be hung at various locations as well as all of the activities of play and learning that have been facilitated. This moved from perhaps the initial 'Decoration' or 'Tokenism' rungs on Hart's ladder of participation

to the 'Adult-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Children' (Hart, 1997, p.41) rung. My acts of doing and reflection have enlightened my perspective of the benefits of children's engagement and have led me to actively seek, refine and test different techniques for the children to communicate their thoughts and ideas and for me to understand them (Mooney, 2000; Matthews, *et al*, 1998). The participation has truly been fundamental to my education as a practitioner and the children have taught me a great deal through this reciprocal learning process (Foster, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000a, 2000b; Wates, 2000; Sheat and Beer, 1994; Johnson, 1979). An initial methodological model of participative constituents was constructed and their evolution from both literature and practice based case studies are discussed in this and the following chapter. The point of the research was not to demonstrate that this methodological model was the answer to the research question in that the method to find and understand the voice of the children had been resolved through the case studies and literature. On the contrary, the research sought to test the model's constituents and develop them in further reciprocal processes with the children involved in this research which empowered them as co-designers of the developed methodology. This was the output of the research as there was no tangible physical outcome in the form of environmental improvements.

The research paradigm adopted was qualitative to reflect the subjective nature of place experience, and given this context the overall approach was informed by the principles of Grounded Theory. Grounded theory identifies the components of a structured way to develop new concepts and theory from the sequential coding of data derived from direct observation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The term 'grounded' here refers to the importance of allowing concepts and theoretical insights to emerge directly from the phenomena being investigated, rather than using the study context as a means of confirming or refuting pre-existent theories, for example. This qualitative theoretical framework provided a basis from which to design a programme of participatory methodologies across three participative phases. The approach adopted facilitated the detailed content of each phase to evolve and be informed by the previous phase following evaluation and reflection. This is an important methodological principle that allows for the exploration of themes as they emerge during the process and also allows for adjustments to be made for example, that may make the children

participating more at ease or engaged with the process consistent with the empathic approach of the study.

Against this background the participative phases of the research were developed as a longitudinal study to test, refine and develop case study work and literature exploration of relevant methodologies. These participatory phases would also respond to themselves in that the evaluation of the initial phases would inform subsequent phases. The techniques explored theoretically and developed in the participative phases of the study made a new contribution to the development of a participative method used to engage meaningfully with the particular study group of primary school aged children. The approach used within the method was considered as significant as its methodological constituents, and this is also discussed in this chapter.

4.2. A Longitudinal Study with a Qualitative Paradigm

Longitudinal designs are employed where repeated measures on the same variables for the same group or groups are employed “on an extended series of occasions” (Robson, 2002, p.160). Kumar (1999, p.85) states that their use is appropriate for determining “the pattern of change in relation to time,” or for collecting “factual information on a continuing basis” (ibid). Irrespective of the time gaps during the visits of longitudinal studies the information gathered at each time is identical, and it is the patterns of change that are measured. Robson (2002) also cites some of the potential problems of longitudinal designs including: sample attrition or fall out of participants and the need for devising methods that can be used repeatedly. The objective of this study was consistent with these standpoints in that it aimed to engage with the same participants over a period of time, to establish their experience of place. The study collected information over three phases of participatory workshops beginning in September 2005 and ending in June 2006.

As this research relates to experience, a qualitative approach was adopted which employed methods that can be used to examine intricate details of phenomena such as feelings and emotions difficult to obtain through quantitative methods (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Qualitative methods are considered appropriate as consciousness is not static and people must be engaged on a level that will bring out nuances of differences depending on the time and purpose of use that the place will have (Hart 1979). To this

end a structured and yet responsive approach to the qualitative methodologies was adopted that allowed for flexibility within the research design.

Criticisms of qualitative research are often levelled at their approach as being unscientific. Silverman (2001) cites Mehan (1979) in expressing the strength of an Ethnographic approach being its ability to give rich descriptions of social settings also being its greatest weakness as it may tend to anecdotalism, or there may be an accusation of extrapolating extremes of behaviour from field notes. In order to avoid such criticism the methodology should not rely on a single technique, but on a combination of techniques which taken in totality makes them more robustly defensible and valid. Additionally a form of comparison of qualitative data by employing differing methods of collection was sought to see if these corroborate each other, this comparison is known as triangulation (Silverman 2001).

Criticisms of qualitative methodologies are in the interpretation of the data collected and to fit data into an ideal conception of the phenomenon (Silverman 2001). It is likely that ones own standpoint provides a bias to the interpretation of the data which is highly subjective and yet no less valid than quantitative studies, and a realisation of this through assuming a critically reflexive approach of ones own biases of assumptions, method selection and role is important (Cele, 2006; Punch, 2002; Clark and Moss, 2001; Davis, 1998). In addition an ongoing assessment of methodological approaches within the context of relevant current literature and their potential application within the phases of the study attempted to alleviate this. Standardising approaches to the field work was an additional requirement in the reliability of the study. Through practice work previously described, the techniques evolved to a set of standard themes. This did not mean that the method was completely structured; it did however provide a standard of reliability in the approach to each sample group at a given phase within the design of the study.

There has also been a criticism of qualitative research of anecdotalism in what data is said to reveal. Silverman (2000) states that the principle of refutability can address this accusation, in that the researcher refutes initial assumptions about the data in order to achieve objectivity.

***Figure 17: the endeavours of a personal project:
rewarded by affordance facilitating prospect and refuge***



For example figure 17, is a picture taken at a school during an observation exercise of a practice based case study project. In the context of this research into the experience of place, it is proposed that the boy has orientated himself to a subjectively significant place. Such places where people attach significance or value to preferred locations are defined by Thwaites and Simkins (2007) as 'centres' however weak or experientially poor they may be. To test the refutability of this assumption one can look at the image from other theoretical perspectives. An examination of the context of the boy's action, by notes taken at the time of the observation reveal that the boy is engaged in a personal project (Little, 2007; 1983), that is a game of hide and seek. The bench has in effect, given affordance (Gibson, 1986) to hide from his friends, and yet he is able to see what is going on in the playground; prospect and refuge (Appleton, 1975). The initial proposal sought to demonstrate that children have an innate tendency to seek out centres even when they are weakly defined. However, supported by additional techniques of mapping analysis that were also undertaken in this project, it is possible to demonstrate a paucity of experiential potential within this particular study site, and additionally a lack of spatial experience manifest by few weakly defined centres. It thereby is argued that an experientially richer place with more centres would offer greater experiential potential and by definition a greater choice of places to hide – an increase in actualised affordances (Kyttä, 2004). So the photograph has, with additional supportive data derived from other methodologies stood up to the refutability principle.

Validity is questioned of qualitative practices and Silverman (2001) raises the following: The impact of the researcher on the setting or reactivity, the values of the researcher and the truth status of the respondent's replies. The first point deals with the relationship that the researcher has with the subject and the approach adopted by the researcher. It is often difficult to be a non participant, in particular when trying to build a relationship of trust with a group of young children. Additionally the truth

status of the replies is open to some degree of exaggeration or willingness to please, however this is one of the benefits of a longitudinal approach as the same participants are engaged in a variety of activities which help to contextualise any deliberate misrepresentation or misunderstanding, and moderate any over-exuberance.

A further problem is the nature of any observational methodology employed, in that it is fixed at a point in time; it takes no account of what happens before or after the visit. Additionally from personal experience star actors tend to gravitate towards cameras and clip boards, and it is desirable to look towards the less open participants according to Silverman (2001) citing Dalton (1959). It is however possible to see beyond the exhibitionism and as with verbal and text based research, read what lies beneath a situation. The use of multiple techniques assists in obviating skewed or misrepresentative data.

The Ethnographic longitudinal approach, using observation produces a rich source of spontaneous data that can not be previously coded unless observed. Opportunities arise during observation that often can not be predicted by more structured techniques, this has been manifest on numerous case studies I have been involved in as well as evident as a valuable method through the literature research (Woolley, *et al*, 2005; Bishop and Curtis, 2001; Opie and Opie, 1969). The Opie's recorded observations of children making squares with dead grass that formed a house, the children then built circles to represent a fire and decorated the living areas with stones to represent a dresser and used bracken as an ornament (Opie and Opie, 1969). When I was observing on a particular case study a similar incident occurred, the school grounds were being prepared for a sports day and the grass was cut prior to lunchtime play. Some children took the grass cuttings and started to build the outline of a structure. The activity increased in intensity and in the number of participants and eventually led to a 'place making' exercise of constructing 'rooms' within a metaphorical house. This was recorded and emphasises both the value of recording spontaneous events as well as observing the innate desire of children to place make and attach significance to places, even in such a temporary context; these are important components of the theoretical framework for the study and consistent with Nicola Ross's study which identified and categorised such occurrences as: "... spontaneity, improvisation and temporality." (Ross, 2005b, p.22).

The case studies concentrated on data collection from sample groups relating to the confines of the school grounds. However the main aim of the research project was to develop a participative method that sought to identify the relationship that primary school aged children had with the environment that they routinely encountered from their front door to the school grounds. Whilst schools provided access to participant children, there was a need for framing the study group and this was based on; firstly the sample group [of schools] should be representative of the [school] population and secondly subjects chosen [the children] to be involved should be representative of their group [within the schools] (May 2001).

The first issue was addressed by selecting schools representing a cross section of demographic and geographic locations i.e. urban, sub-urban and rural settings. In the confines of the study this is from necessity non random. In previous case studies this has not been an issue as a schools willingness to participate was often dependant on those who had a desire to carry out improvements and thereby wish to engage in the process. As a school grounds design was not the outcome for the research study, schools with whom I had an association with, or through colleagues were approached. The literature suggests that within each [school] group subjects [children] should then be identified as individual participants. May (2001) suggests the approach for random samples using a sampling frame. If applied in this research, this theoretical stance would mean that the sampling frame would be the register of pupils at the school from which each would be designated a reference number and a mathematically random selection would then be made. The population of that group would be known and an appropriate sample size would be selected in accordance with sample size tables.

Particular weaknesses in this sampling design for this study was that although the groups would be determined randomly from a table, they would not be derived through self election. There are therefore implications of exclusion by being selective, and there were also the practicalities of carrying out the research which precluded this random sampling. A further weakness is the expectation to use methodological tools that may be inconsistent with a random sample of participants as their age and or ability may prevent this. There was therefore a requirement for redefining the sampling frame to be year 5 and 6 pupils if such techniques were to be used that required a particular aspect of cognitive or learning development such as the use of

text based diaries, or alternatively employ other techniques such as tape recording an audio diary. A further weakness or inconsistency with this type of selection process was that the ethos of the study was to be one of inclusively elected participation and not directed participation, and therefore a sampling framework of 'x' number of children was not necessarily attainable given the willingness or otherwise of participants and their parents/guardians to elect to become involved.

4.3. The qualitative tradition and its flexible designs relevant to the study.

The research study has a qualitative paradigm, and as such requires a flexible design approach (Robson, 2002) in that the methodologies emerged and developed during the implementation of the study as opposed to a fixed design of quantitative rationale which requires a tight pre-specification of the design prior to the study being undertaken. With this responsive and flexible approach adopted for the study, there are three influential design traditions cited by Robson (2002) as being influential in this field of enquiry, and these are: "case studies, Ethnographic studies and Grounded Theory studies" (p.164).

Whilst each offers a flexible approach, they each have different characteristics and applicative disciplines. Grounded theory according to Robson (2002, p.165) citing a model from Cresswell, (1998, p.65) has a 'focus' of "developing a theory grounded in data from the field", its origin is in the discipline of Sociology and its data collection involves "typically interviews with 20-30 individuals to 'saturate' categories and detail theory" (Robson, 2002, p.165). Whereas ethnography has a focus on "describing and interpreting a cultural and social group" and its origins lie in "cultural anthropology and sociology" (ibid). Its data collection methods are "primarily observation and interviews during extended time in the field". The third flexible tradition of case study according to Robson (2002) focuses on "developing an in depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases" and has origins in "political science, sociology, evaluation, urban studies, [and] many other social sciences." The data collection in a case study design uses "Multiple sources – documents, archival records, interviews, observations, physical artefacts."

The Grounded Theory model was the flexible tradition most relevant to this study, the Ethnographic one requiring an almost submergence of the researcher into the cultural situation or group for meanings to emerge from hanging out with them (Silverman, 2000), although this has been seen as beneficial in the comparative studies of Nicola Ross and Sofia Cele as well as in Nilda Cosco and Robin Moore's research (Cele, 2006; Ross, 2005b; Cosco and Moore, 2002). This approach required a 'saturation' of time spent on site with participants for the events of daily activities to evolve meaningful data from this consistent exposure, and whilst elements of this approach are congruent with the study its appropriateness in terms of achievable practicality was questionable, given that the study involved three different and disparate sites, although Sofia Cele's research was undertaken in Sweden and the UK. The Case Study model also has additional relevance in the context of the reflection on past practice work to inform this research.

However there were within each of these models elements amenable with this study's aims and objectives and as such no singular 'pure' tradition was viewed as a research model. There was a synthesis of elements of the three models in respect of their disciplinary origins, data collection, methods and foci which informed this study through a hybrid of procedures that founded a good flexible approach (Robson, 2002). The flexible nature of the study was framed within a dynamic model that sought to address the research aims and objectives that were pre-determined prior to the commencement of the data collection phases of the study. These aims and objectives were questions linked to contextual theory tested by the research, as well as seeking "... new theory generated by the process of research" (Robson, 2002, p.167), in terms of the experiences revealed.

4.4. Grounded Theory, Ethnographic and Case Study Principles applicable to the study

Whilst the research was not a Grounded Theory study, some of the Grounded Theory Principles were applied in a synthesis of the three flexible designs outlined previously. Grounded Theory is:

"An approach which emphasizes the systematic discovery of theory from data, so that theories remain grounded in observations of the social world, rather than being generated in the abstract." (Robson, 2002, p.548).

The theory was conceived by sociologists Glaser and Strauss emerging in the mid 1960's from collaborative studies they undertook investigating dying in hospitals, in the context of how and when professionals and patients acknowledged or discussed death with terminally ill patients. The theory was developed by the exploration of analytical ideas evolving from extensive conversations and exchanging preliminary field observations analysed in note form. From their study they developed systematic means for social scientists to utilise in the context of a variety of studies. Their resulting model proposed for developing theories from research grounded in data rather than "... deducing testable hypothesis from existing theories" (Charmaz, 2006, p.4). Since Glaser and Strauss's proposed their model of the mid 1960's a difference of opinion evolved between them and Strauss developed a further evolution of the model with Corbin which they subsequently taught and published related works during the 1990's.

Robson (2002) conceptualises Strauss and Corbin's 1998 Grounded theory model as data analysis using methods of three sets of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding being the formation of initial categories of information relating to phenomenon being studied derived from the initial data gathered. Each of these categories comprise of sub-categories (*properties*) and data is then sought to differentiate (*dimensionalize*) the possible variance of these properties. Axial coding is a means of constructing the data post open coding. In order to achieve this, a *coding paradigm* is developed which is also known as a *logic diagram*. This articulates a central category relating to the phenomenon, explores categories of conditions that influence it, specifies actions or interactions that result from the central phenomenon, identifies the conditions that influence the strategies and delineates the outcomes of the strategies. Selective coding integrates the categories of the axial coding model and hypotheses are then proposed. This is not a necessarily sequential model of analysis and the coding types often overlap.

The principles of coding were used by way of evaluating the information derived in order to develop and categorise themes into a framework to inform the participative phase of the study. Other Grounded Theory methodologies that formed a framework for the application of the developing tools and methods was the utilisation of memos and diagrams (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These were used as interim means of

recording ideas, written records of analysis, and notes made in the participative workshops as well as during the post phase evaluation and summarizing. They took the form of visual devices depicting relationships as well as text based information.

The administrative and analytical framework for the study used elements of the grounded theory model by developing an operational format in the form of a session proforma used in each of the participatory sessions. This maintained consistency as well as being an 'aide memoir'. In addition diagrams were made during or post sessions to express ideas and themes from a particular occurrence or allude to data within that particular session. Memos took the form of the partial transcription of audio recordings of the sessions, these then recorded events and data for evaluation purposes. These grounded theory approaches are detailed in chapter 9 in the context of their application within the study. The principle of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) "characteristics of a grounded theorist" are also a useful and relevant stance for the study's approach, these are stated as:

1. "The ability to step back and critically analyze situations.
 2. The ability to recognize the tendency towards bias.
 3. The ability to think abstractly.
 4. The ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism.
 5. Sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents.
 6. A sense of absorption and devotion to the work process."
- (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.7)

The study also employed certain Ethnographic stances such as the use of semi structured interviewing using pre-determined themes in an informal model (Flick, 2006, Kvale, 1996), this is discussed as a methodological tool in the next chapter. Other Ethnographic methods used in practice based case studies have been previously described and are more fully considered in the next chapter, these include the use of non-participant observation, although to be in a truly Ethnographic context this would require covering "... the round of life occurring within the given milieu." (Charmaz, 2006, p.21). Although in mitigation of its proposed use as a 'snapshot' (Greene and Hogan, 2005) other proposed techniques meant that there was no single reliance upon this as a method, and this is comparable with Ethnographic studies. Another method considered was 'visualizing anthropology' which utilises the recording of occurrences on site in the form of visual data by means of photographic records (Grimshaw, 2001).

4.5. The Development of a person centric approach

4.5.1. A person centric approach – an empathic stance

Within the method developed, not only were the methodological constituents important to develop, but also the approach that would be used in engaging with the children was as significant. This approach was founded in the principle of a person centric approach of being empathic, which is "... a mode of human contact" (Egan, 1990, p.123), or one of "... putting yourself in their shoes" (Wheeler and Birtle, 1993, p.34). This in other words is the perspective of appreciating other people's viewpoints instead of judging them (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990). Part of the empathic approach is manifest through an empathic understanding which according to Rogers and Freiberg (1994) in the context of teaching occurs:

"When the teacher has the ability to understand the student's reactions from the inside, has a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student, then again the likelihood of significant learning is increased" (p.157).

As part of the stance of the research the recognition of the individual was important rather than an assumption that any group is homogenous. Rogers and Freiberg (1994) describe attributes of those who are successful in facilitating learning and are considered here as other examples of a person centric approach. As well as being able to communicate and listen effectively as facilitators and themselves learn, this aspect is one of prizing the individual, and respecting their opinions. Paul Ramsden (2003) defines a set of key aspects of teaching, which includes having "Concern and respect for students and student learning." (p.94). These stances are examples of what is seen as a person centred approach based on theories of teaching, communication at a personal and humanistic level as well as respecting individuals. These were all perceived as relevant to the approach of this research study to engage with the children as co-authors of the research rather than recipients of information, theories and hypotheses to respond to.

Of similar significance to the developing stance of the method is that of "acceptance" (Lago and Shipton, 1994, p.29). We all have a tendency to have opinions that will pre-judge situations, or people, either based on attitudes, or sometimes, either their physical manifestations of choice of clothes or hairstyles, it is however vital that we accept rather than pre-judge. Lago and Shipton (1994) propose acceptance as assuming

“... a manner that is non-judgemental” (p.29). Another facet that we are all guilty of at times is the inability to listen (Lago and Shipton, 1994; Rowland, 1993) especially to children (Ward, 1990). In listening there is an implication that we hear, but not only should we hear but we should also understand. For this to be achieved we need to concentrate and respond appropriately to not only what is being said but the meanings behind it. In other words we engage in a conversation and listen attentively not succumbing to distractions. Given the environments that participative work can take place in this was an important consideration for the research and one which is discussed in the context of the participatory phases. Egan (1990) describes empathic listening as one of “... contextual and integrating.” (p.131). The stance of listening rather than merely hearing words being in keeping with Strauss and Corbin’s fifth characteristic of a grounded theorists approach cited earlier. Being listened to can have a powerful positive effect upon the children involved in what is seen as “... authentic participatory processes.” (Chawla, 2002, p.232).

During practice work it was often the case that there was significance in the meaning and context of the words rather than the words themselves. For example in the case of the manhole cover being prized by children, prima-facie manhole covers are good and children like them, whereas the realness of the situation which informed by listening to the message rather than the words would have been; we really like playing marbles and this is the only place we can do it in our playground. The methods used to engage with the children gave many insights into the children’s meaning of place and activity that occur there because of affordances that would be otherwise concealed unless the act of listening contextually was assumed as a fundamental stance. This is what Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe in the context of grounded theory as “... developing sensitivity to the meanings in data” (p.46), or “... being able to see beneath the obvious to discover the new”.

It is interesting that not only is participation seen as a reciprocal process (Foster, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000a; 2000b; Wates, 2000; Sheat and Beer, 1994; Johnson, 1979) but it is also viewed as an important aspect of a person centric approach in the context of teaching where learning is also a reciprocal process where the tutor [or researcher] should learn from students [or children] (Ramsden, 2003). To be effective the grounded principles (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and reflective approach (Schön,

1987), of constantly seeking to refine, review and respond to feedback, which can be both explicit and implicit as well as evolving themes and events was fundamental to the person centric stance which was empathic.

If there is a failure to demonstrate an empathic and person centred approach, then disengagement can be implicit and pass unnoticed. An important aspect of this issue, as previously stated, is to identify participants as individuals and a need to understand the way they function, acquire and express knowledge. If a purely evaluative approach is adopted then the potential for disengagement can be overlooked. There can be social and cultural barriers which are perceived or real, which can lead to disengagement, and additionally as individuals there are personality traits that can create difficulties, which should be recognised and ways sought to overcome. Other potential issues for disengagement are those of communicative problems which could be through personal development issues, cultural, social or learning difficulties and means of facilitating expression should be sought for effective communication. With such an approach of being person centric and empathic there are potential issues that some participants may not be comfortable with an empathic approach which may be mistakenly considered as familiarity. Part of the process of understanding, is to recognise the requirements of people as individuals and implement appropriate means of support. There can be occasions in the context of empathic considerations and a desire to support that there is a danger to 'lead'. This can contaminate the research with assumption and bias and there would be a danger of a focus on promoting the success of participant's engagement and the research outcome at the behest of its validity.

Another potential issue within the desire of obtaining a meaningful outcome for the research was to develop a relationship that was not just one of trust but was also one of becoming a friend. Wheeler and Birtle (1993) cite this as an: "... easy, informal, two way relationship with tutees based on mutual liking and respect without the burden of power" (p.17). This is however inappropriate in both a research or student/tutee context and the adoption of a person centric approach should not profligate a degeneration of an ethical researcher/participant relationship.

The adoption of a person centric stance mitigated by ethical and research considerations was significant to the research. The implications of not adopting the approach are proposed as unacceptable in a study where the recognition that people matter is fundamental to the reasoning that drives the research question and aim. It was inappropriate not to engage on a personal level to develop relationships in this research study as the children needed to be engaged at a level that was not patronising, adult biased and inconsiderate of them as individual people (Punch, 2002). This did not overlook the significance of the need to maintain professionalism and appropriate ethical stances. The research into this subject, coupled with the experiences of the practice based case studies provided an opportunity to acquire, practice and refine these skills which should be a mandatory requirement for developing an approach to engaging with children as equals in a partnership of developing the study. In order to keep this central to the approach assumed for this study and to strive to achieve this the thoughts of Rogers (1967) were empathised with.

“As a consequence, I realise that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my behaviour” (p. 276).

By reflection on and responding to the methodologies as well as the children participants the grounded approach was validated. This became the means for conducting the research and engaging with children meaningfully and as individuals to be valued as experts about their behavior and meanings of their surroundings, not patronized or viewed as subjects for a means to an end (Dudek, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Moore and Young, 1978). This was a stance of the approach within the methodological model.

The person centric approach was significant to the study in the following ways:

- The study’s standpoint was analogous with that of participation being borne out of mutual respect and openness (Punch, 2002; Foster, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000a; 2000b; Wates, 2000; Sheat and Beer, 1994; Johnson, 1979).
- To understand a child’s perspective the children were allowed to communicate in appropriate ways for them as individuals, and respond to their own concerns. (Punch, 2002; Matthews, 2001; Christensen and James, 2000; Hart, 1997)

- The means and approach assumed in engaging with the children was child centric. (Ross, 2005a; Matthews *et al*, 1998)

4.6. An exploration of a participative method

It was clear from the discussions in previous sections that an examination of an empirical participatory method relevant to revealing the children's place experience was required. This was in order to ground the case study and literature based tools in a wider context. In parity with the case study model of flexible designs an examination of the Planning for Real technique was explored for its relevance to the study.

Planning for Real is a relatively well known consultation technique used first in Dalmarnock East Glasgow in 1977 as a way of diffusing the conflicts that arose at public meetings and the entrenched 'us and them' attitudes of professionals and residents. The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation (NIF) is a national charity specialising in community participation and conducts training courses on the Planning for Real technique which is a registered trademark of NIF. The Planning for Real exercise has been widely used from Wrexham to Accrington (UK) in regeneration areas and in areas where minorities need to be given a voice.

As part of practice based learning and continuous professional development, as well as in response to my research interests a two day residential course was undertaken in July 2000 as an introduction to Planning for Real. The course objectives together with the principle methodology are discussed below in the context of their relevance to the research study.

As stated Planning for Real has its foundations in the search for an alternative to the public meeting that was experienced in case studies as a vehicle for pseudo-participation or project objective led consultation. NIF suggest that the public meeting model often does not work as a means of participation because of one or more or combination of the following:

- Domination of the meeting can occur by one or more parties.
- The process is intimidating to participants.
- Non-structured meetings create an 'us and them' attitude between the consultants and participants.

- There is often a lack of a useful end product that is valued and seen as a worthwhile reason to being involved in the process.
- The venue and time of meetings are often inappropriate to be inclusive.
- Apathy and boredom mean low turnouts.
- The meetings become operational dealing with too many minor issues and are not strategic.
- Controversial proposals promote a response, but positive proposals do not.
- The consultation is open to interpretation by individuals with differing viewpoints.

NIF propose that Planning for Real seeks to address these issues by the use of a three dimensional model as a tool to involve and engage people in real issues that they can relate to. It is said by NIF that the technique effectively secures community involvement and therefore ownership for the following reasons:

- It is a highly visual technique allowing participants to 'show' what they mean.
 - It is used in a way that is anonymous, which means personalities are not attached to ideas.
 - The media used is a demographic and socio-economic 'levelling' device. The use of a three dimensional model and pictorial and graphically illustrated colour coded idea cards avoids language and articulation difficulties. It is socially inclusive, where everyone can have their say.
 - The focus of the three dimensional model is conducive to consensus building and compromise rather than face-to-face confrontation. The model allows for non-threatening communication and participation rather than standing at a meeting and shouting.
 - Planning for Real is a novel way to catch people's interest and negate apathy.
 - Greater numbers and a diversity of the community can become involved and the diverse nature of involvement can lead to a greater range of ideas and solutions.
- (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, 1998).

The use of the three dimensional model is a fundamental part of the participatory process as it is made with local people usually school children between the ages of 7-11. A base plan of the area is created at a scale of 1:300. NIF propose this scale for two reasons, firstly it is a scale that shows people their front door and secondly so far as professionals are concerned it is a 'bastard scale' and as such maintains the ethos of

a rough and ready community built model rather than a polished professionally made presentation. The materials chosen to make the model should be easily accessible inexpensive and robust. NIF suggest mounting the base plan on sheets of polystyrene tiles. Folded card cut outs representing differing house types are then stuck to the model base, and this can be further enhanced by photographs and labels being stuck to the houses and the model can also be painted using simple poster paints to identify areas of open space, roads pavements etc.

In essence the aim of the model is as follows:

- To be of a scale no smaller than 1:500, ideally 1:300 to make identification of resident's front doors possible.
- Practical and portable so as it can be transported to the people.
- Dynamic enough to be changed easily.
- Rough and ready in appearance.
- Approachable.
- Tactile.
- Easily understood in order that people can identify their 'area'.
- Promote ownership of the model from participation in building it.

An aim of the Planning for Real process is for everyone to move a project forward in any way they can, an inventory of people's particular skills is undertaken to assess who can and is willing to do what. This takes the form of a skill survey, using words as well as pictures in order to make it user friendly and none-official. As the information is gathered it is displayed and updated and is used at the Action Planning stage of the Planning for Real exercise. The Planning for Real event often takes place as part of a fun day or local festival, it can however be a stand alone event held at a specific time or times over 1½-2 hours. The choice of venue is considered important, room size as well as availability and also meaning attached to the building or owners by residents needs to be considered as some groups may feel excluded from attending a certain venue, two or three different locations may be required.

At the event the model is set out in the centre of the room, accessible from all sides, and so called experts such as Local Government Officers are on hand to answer questions without having to stand up in front of an audience. Displayed around the

model are sets of pictorial colour coded option cards and blanks for people's own ideas. Residents are requested to examine the cards and select cards that relate to issues important to them. The residents then put the cards on the model at a location where they feel are appropriate to that issue. The cards are placed anonymously and the only rule in Planning for Real is that you can not move or remove any other persons cards already placed. The cards are a clear visual aid at the end of the event to identify from the dominance of a colour or volume of cards at a locality the issues and areas of most concern. All suggestions placed on the model are recorded together with their exact location on the model on a set of proforma data sheets. Usually a separate event is held a few weeks later to prioritise suggestions and carry the project forward to suggestions for what needs to be done and by whom.

In the context of this study, the essence of the Planning for Real methodologies, are the activity based participation using simple techniques that are understandable by lay people and engage them with everyday objects that are manipulated by the participants to express their feelings about aspects of their neighbourhood. The three dimensional use of the model is important in people understanding their neighbourhood as a place rather than as an abstract two dimensional plan, the scale is significant in order that participants can identify their front door and the participation in building the model is also seen as important in creating a sense of ownership within the process. The rule of valuing everyone's opinion is also important, manifest in not being able to move any one else's card from the model. The act of doing rather than entering into argument is also significant, for participation rather than being in receipt of a professional standpoint, participants need to take ownership and know that their views are valued and not being collected in order to tick a box of consultation. The facilitation of personalisation, by providing blank cards for people's own ideas to be placed on the model is another example of recognising that everyone's opinion is valid, and it invites their expression of their own specific opinion that may not be evident.

4.7. Recognising and valuing difference: an exploration of learning styles

In order to engage with participants as individuals, the lessons of the Planning for Real case study as a model of using a variety of different visual media to engage with people was seen as significant for the research study. This has resonance in understanding people's preferences relating to how they learn and engage with tasks and activities to do so. In seeking to recognise individual needs and differences Hart (1997) states that:

“Most generally, it can be stated that different children interpret the ‘same’ situations, activities, tasks, information, etc. in different ways – a phenomenon that is called ‘cognitive learning’ or ‘learning style’” (p.38).

Being unaware of the existence of the phenomena is seen as leading to misunderstanding when working with children, and understanding ones own learning style preference is seen as an important aspect when working with children (Hart, 1997) and as part of the reflexive process of understanding ones own preferences (Cele, 2006; Punch, 2002; Clark and Moss, 2001; Davis, 1998). Learning is said to be concerned with “the processing of information both from outside and a reprocessing of ideas already possessed.” (Moon, 2004, p.232). As a consequence examination of learning styles was held as an important model to understand how the study could engage with the participants as individuals.

In addition to the exploration of learning theories discussed in the chapter 2, recognition of the impact upon the research of the concepts and research into learning styles was recognised as important. A learning style is described as “... a unique collection of individual skills and preferences that affect how a person perceives, gathers and processes information.” (Study Advice Services, 2005, p.1). In this context the way the children were engaged with the study and able to express their ideas was seen as synonymous with the concept of learning styles, and Hart's standpoint. A definition of learning styles is given by Keefe as:

“The composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment.” (Keefe, cited in CLaSS, 2005).

The learning style theory is congruent with the multi-route participative stance seen as being child centric (Ross, 2005a; Matthews *et al*, 1998) and recognising individual

preferences. Another relevant issue from the learning style debate is that information presented is real, or contextually situated (Grantham, 2005). This again related to this study's participatory context of undertaking work with the children in terms of identifying a range of methods to engage with them that recognise the different preferences that we all have in learning and expressing ourselves. A number of theories about how people learn exist, which appear to differ, the main theories were researched and are discussed.

Kolb's experiential learning model is at the forefront of conceptualising learning style theory: "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (cited in Riding and Rayner, 1998, p.54). There is a clarification by Kolb of the experiential learning process with an emphasis on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes. Also there is the stance that knowledge in itself is not independent as an entity to be received or passed on. It is in a constant state of flux and transformation between being created and recreated. Learning transforms experience both objectively and subjectively through a reciprocal relationship to understanding learning and the nature of knowledge (Kolb, 1984).

The model of experiential learning offered by Kolb is based on the cycle of experiential learning which has four adaptive learning modes with unique characteristics indicated in italic text:

- Concrete experience (**CE**) - *Concrete individuals rely on or apprehend by the tangible, felt qualities of immediate experience.*
- Reflective observation (**RO**) - *Reflective individuals exhibit intention by internal reflection on the external world.*
- Abstract conceptualisation (**AC**) - *Abstract individuals comprehend information conceptually and symbolically.*
- Active experimentation (**AE**) - *Active individuals extend the environment by external manipulation.*

(Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993, p.251).

Kolb's learning process structure is modelled within transactions between the four adaptive learning modes, represented by the schematic in figure 18.

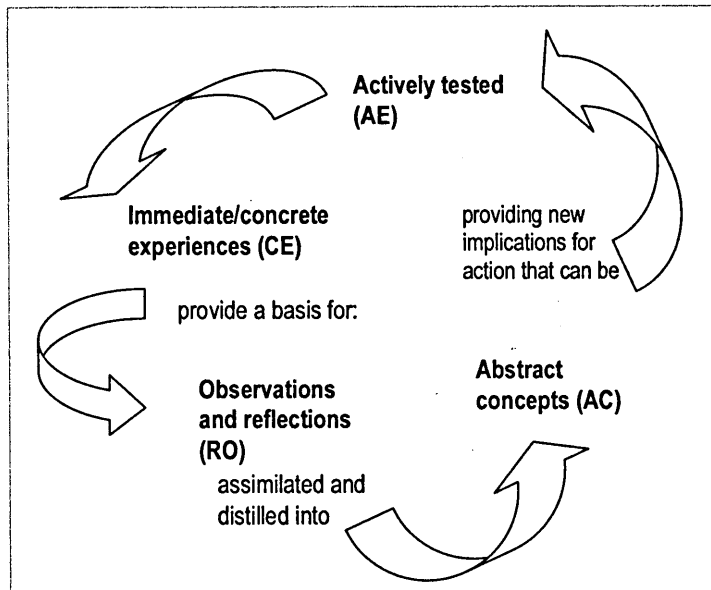


Figure 18: Kolb's structure of the learning process (Simkins, 2006c, p11)

From Kolb's construct there are four-typologies of learning styles, each representing a combination of two preferred styles from the cycle:

- diverger – concretely processes it reflectively. They need to be personally engaged in the learning activity; (CE and RO)
 - converger – abstractly processes it reflectively. They need to follow detailed, sequential steps in thinking during a learning activity; (AC and RO)
 - assimilator – abstractly processes it actively. They need to be involved in pragmatic problem-solving in a learning activity; (AC and RO)
 - accommodator – concretely processes it actively. They need to be involved in risk-taking, making changes experimentation and flexibility in learning activity; (CE and AE)
- (Riding and Rayner, 1998, pp.54-55).

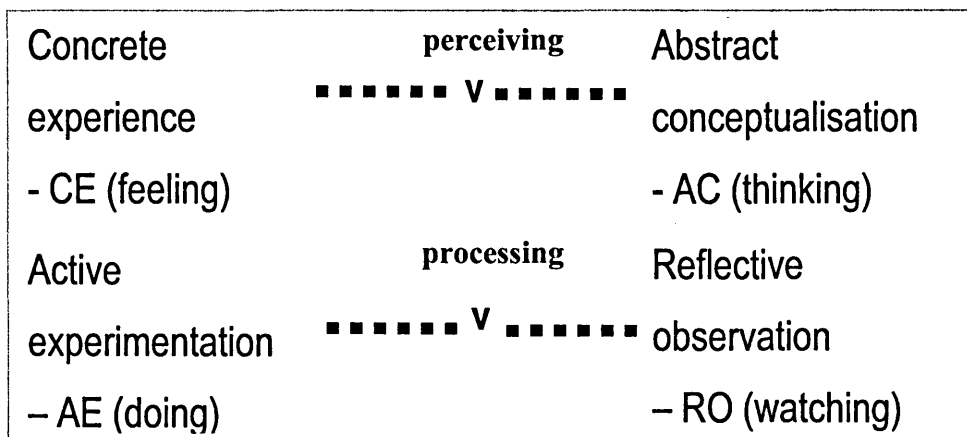
Different people naturally prefer a single different learning style and there is recognition that factors influence a preferred style. Experiential learning theory proposes that there are three stages in a person's development of learning style:

- Acquisition – birth to adolescence. Development of basic abilities and cognitive structures.
 - Specialisation – schooling, early work, personal experiences in adulthood development of particular 'specialised learning style' shaped by social/education/organisational socialisation.
 - Integration – mid-career through later life expression of non-dominant learning style in work and personal life.
- (Kolb, 1984, pp.142-144).

Within Kolb's model, the preference of a learning style is the synthesis of two pairs of variables or choices:

- perceiving (concrete and abstract thinking)
- processing (an active or reflective information-processing activity) (Riding and Rayner, 1998 p.54 and Kolb, 1984 pp.40-41).

Figure 19: Kolb's preference of learning style model (Simkins, 2006c, p.13)



This model of learning style can be perceived as the synthesis of two continuums or axis of relational modes: those that relate to doing, watching or grasping experience and those relating to feeling and thinking or Transforming experience.

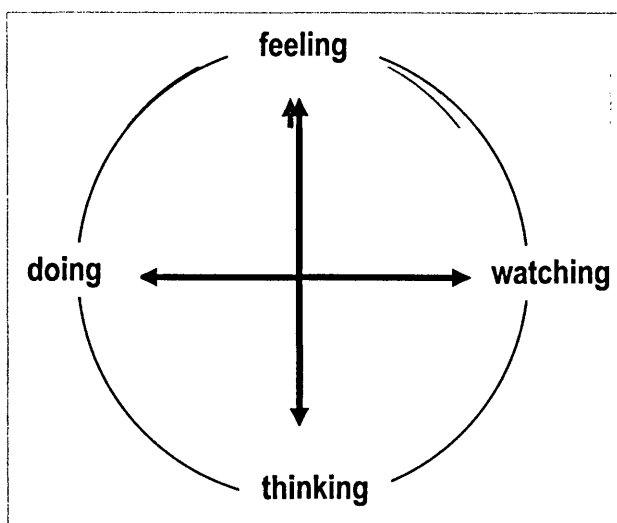


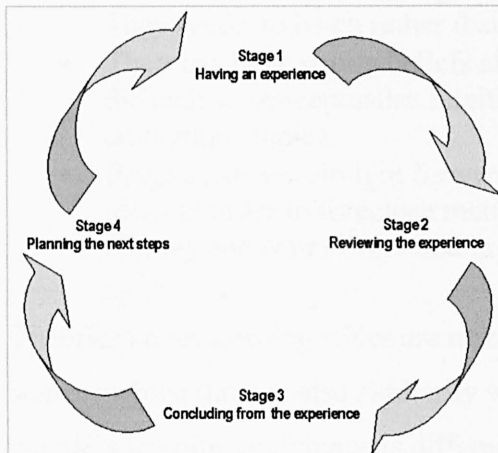
Figure 20: learning style continuums of experience (Simkins, 2006c, p.13)

Moon (2004) proposes an adaptation of the experiential learning cycle:

- the 'having of' the experience;
- recognition of a need to resolve something;
- clarification of the issue;
- reviewing and recollecting;
- reviewing feelings/the emotional state;
- processing of knowledge and ideas;

- eventual resolution, possible transformation and action;
 - possible action.
- (Moon, 2004, p.115).

A simpler four stage version of the learning cycle is offered by Honey and Mumford (1992), these stages relate to: having an experience, reviewing the experience, concluding from the experience and planning the next steps. The cycle in this model is a continuum "... a never ending spiral" (Honey and Mumford, 1992, p.4). The cycle has origins in Kolb's work although alternative terminology is used from Kolb. Honey



and Mumford's four stages are mutually supportive, but as a learning process none are fully effective in isolation. Each stage is of equal significance within the process as a whole, whilst there can be significant difference between the time spent on each.

Figure 21: Honey and Mumford's learning cycle (Simkins, 2006c, p.14)

Honey and Mumford (1992) state that people develop preferences for certain stages, distorting the process of learning, increasing the significance to some stages and diminishing it in others. These preferences and the distortion that is manifest as a result are summarised as follows:

- **Experiencing preference:**
 - Addiction developed for activity; to the extent that a person cannot remain still.
 - Results in abundance of experiences, assuming that having experiences is synonymous with learning.
- **Reviewing preference:**
 - People are reticent about first hand experiences; postpone reaching conclusions for as long as possible in order to facilitate more data collection.
 - Results in over analysis, extreme contemplation and little action.
- **Concluding preference:**
 - Compulsion to reach and answer at haste.
 - Results in jumping to conclusions and circumventing review stage which requires greater deliberation over uncertainties and ambiguity. Security in conclusions even if they are incorrect.
- **Planning preference:**
 - Seizes and implements an expedient course of action without adequate analysis.

- Results in ‘quick fixes’, over emphasising the planning and experiencing stages at the behest of reviewing and concluding. (Honey and Mumford, 1992, p.5).

Honey and Mumford (cited in Campaign for Learning, 2006) proposition of learning styles differ from Kolb and is summarised as follows:

- Activists who prefer to respond spontaneously and flexibly to events, rather than plan. When things go wrong they accept the consequences and put it down to experience, enjoying the drama and excitement of crisis.
 - Reflectors who like to leave no stone unturned and would assert that decisions should be based on thorough analysis of information rather than intuition. They prefer to listen rather than talk.
 - Theorists have strong beliefs about right/wrong, good/bad. They find it difficult to conceptualise intuitive responses and dislike subjective and ambiguous topics.
 - Pragmatists are straight forward no-nonsense proponents of practical realistic ideas in order to foreclose matters.
- (Honey and Mumford, cited in Cotton, 1995, pp.119-120).

Theories about learning styles are many and some take what appears to be opposing stances whilst there is also similarity within many. They all however recognise that people’s learning preference is different and that there are different styles of learning. Having an appreciation of difference in learning styles was important in exploring ways to engage with the children in the research study group by facilitating a range of means amenable to them for expressing their place experiences. Adopting a pragmatic approach to examine what methods and activities suit different learning styles the model proposed by McCarthy was a useful model that proposed four modalities:

- Visual
 - Use many visuals, for example, wall displays posters, regalia, flash cards, graphic organizers etc.
 - Auditory
 - Use audio tapes and videos, storytelling, songs, jazz chants, memorization and drills
 - Allow work in pairs and small groups regularly.
 - Kinesthetic
 - Use physical activities, competitions, board games, role plays etc.
 - Intersperse activities with ones that require quietly sitting, and others that allow movement around and being active
 - Tactile
 - Use board and card games, demonstrations, projects, role plays etc.
 - Use while-listening and reading activities. For example, ask for a table to be filled in while listening to a talk, or to label a diagram while reading.
- British Council (2002).

Within the limitations of a practice based participatory study it may be impractical to employ all of these methods all of the time. However in this research, to recognise their potential impact on engaging with the children, by accommodating and indeed embracing difference was a crucial element in recognition of their individual needs and preferences for expression rather than a single approach which would preclude or obstruct an individual's contribution or inclusion.

4.8. A reflection and summary of the methodology's stance

Qualitative methods facilitate a means by which data relating to the experiences of participants can be gathered and evaluated. This was an integral part of the study and ethos of the research aims to develop a method to understand the existing and aspirational place experiences of the children ordinarily hidden. The synthesis of the three design models to become an adaptive hybrid with some of the principles of grounded theory, ethnographic and case study facilitated a responsive, reflective paradigm that assumed an empathic approach to prize and value opinion and encourage its expression through a variety of means.

The significance of this methodological framework had two main overriding principles that the study embraced and developed;

1. There is an attitude of mind which was crucial to adopt in the way the children were engaged, this was within the premise of an empathic person centred one that:
 - a. valued the difference of the children and recognised them as individuals who had preferences in the way that they interacted and expressed themselves. This had at its core the theories of learning and learning styles as ways to understand this difference and designing participative methodologies that took this into account, by creative expression through different media and routes (Ross, 2005a; Mooney, 2000; Matthews *et al*, 1998; Hart, 1997).
 - b. recognised the person centric stance as a way of being child centric, by recognising potential reticences and allowing the children to be at ease and not threatened or dominated by adult power relations. Additionally there was acceptance of them as individuals (Punch, 2002; Matthews *et*

al, 1998; Lago and Shipton, 1994; Rogers and Freiberg, 1994; Wheeler and Birtle, 1993; Egan, 1990).

- c. when engaging with the children one should listen, not just to the words being communicated, but the meanings implied that can be uncovered by encouragement, without being directive (Lago and Shipton, 1994; Rowland, 1993; Egan, 1990).
- d. accepts and seeks the children as experts and co-designers to the research which is a reciprocal process of learning (Dudek, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Ramsden, 2003; Moore and Young, 1978).
- e. does not misuse the trust built up by the person centric model by compromising the ethical considerations of working with children (Greene and Hogan, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

2. The attitude of mind forms a model of approach, within which there are a range of methodological constituents congruent with its standpoint ethics and the principles outlined above. These constituents were considered for their application in the study to form an initial model of participatory 'tools' that were tested during the first phase of participatory workshops. The model was adapted following evaluation and reflection with a refined model proposed for the subsequent phase, and again the model was adapted and refined for the final phase following further review and reflection. This again was part of the study's approach. A range of potential methodological tools is now discussed which were considered to include in the initial methodological model for the first participative phase of the study.

5. Methodological Constituents: tools

5.1. Introduction

Against the background of the study's qualitative research paradigm and its design being informed by the principles of grounded theory, ethnography and case study models as discussed previously, the adaptive, responsive and reflective aspects were an important methodological principle that permitted the exploration of themes as they emerged during the participatory phases. This allowed for adjustments to be made in later phases that responded to emerging data or the consequence of emergence 'from the milieu' (Charmaz, 2006).

The participative phased exploration of the study evolved from a structured framework of potential methodological tools to be employed. The initial model of methodological constituents is described in this chapter, and is considered in the context of the study's aims and the suitability for employment with the participant group of children. This followed a review informed by initial meetings and communications with the participants, the practice based case study experiences and literature review. Following which the initial model was adapted into a refined one for application and testing in the participatory phases. This refined model then changed and evolved further as a consequence of the dynamic and reflective approach of the study and not all of the tools described in this chapter were applied, the reasons for this are also discussed as well as the evolution of the method and its constituents.

In the context of the grounded theory and ethnographic designs a number of tools were selected as primary data collection sources, secondary data collection relating to the case study design model, was evident in the contextualising of the evaluation of the previous practice case studies. These were recorded in various notes and semi-transcribed conversations and informed modifications to and re-appraisal of the previous case study work. There follows a discussion of methodological tools which are illustrated by examples of their previous application in practice case studies.

5.2. Non-Participant Observation

There are a number of observation methodologies usually employed in studies that have ethnographic perspectives, and some of these have been cited in the discussion of ways of recording observations such as visual methodologies (Hockings, 2003; Grimshaw, 2001; Ruby, 2000). During most of the practice based case studies, Non-Participant observation was deemed the most appropriate, and was one proposed constituent of the initial methodological model for this research. It is a method that involves the passive observing of a group's activities (Kumar, 1999), and it requires the researcher not to be involved in the observed groups activities. It therefore has dual applicability with this study in the context of an ethical stance of less familiarity or boundary defining with the children participants. Additionally it is a way of mitigating the impact of observing the children which can and often does contaminate any activities or environmental transactions that would normally take place without the observation being conducted (Matthews, 1992).

Non-Participant observation seeks to understand practices, interactions, and events which occur in a specific context and is appropriately applied when the behaviour of individuals or groups is sought rather than their perceptions. Or when the participant's involvement in a situation dominates their ability to provide objective information about it (Flick, 2006; Kumar, 1999). It can also provide an insight into social lives and relationships (May, 2001). The concept of, and term 'Observation' implies the use of visual stimuli to produce recordable data, however all senses integrate into observations, including smells, sounds and feelings (Flick, 2006).

The application and trialling of non-participant observation in case study work demonstrated that it was imperative that records of these 'naturally occurring' events and behaviour are studied at source and that the data collected is first hand and not open to further second-hand interpretation. However there is a viewpoint that the very nature of the observation invokes unnatural behaviour and that to mitigate this observation may be conducted by more than one person (Flick, 2006). Whilst this may be considered 'good practice' in larger studies, it was impractical for this research study. From the case studies the method of non-participant observation had proved a valuable resource to collect information regarding children's use of and attachment to place by observing them during the school day.

It had been the experience that this method could reveal significant data that cannot be generated by other means. It provides access to the cultural mechanisms of the school expressed as a collective personality as well as the spatial relationship that the children and staff have with their existing environment. Typically the observations in case studies had been undertaken when the children arrive at school with their parent/guardians, then during assembly and lunch and break times. In each case notes were taken on the children's behavioural tendencies, spatial orientation and use of the environments encountered. Notes were sometimes in text form, but additionally sketches and photographs were used to record the phenomena as it occurred. Playtimes were significant times of activity and use of the external environment and these times formed a crucial part in understanding the way children interacted with each other and with the environment they encountered.

The following are notes and images from a case study non participant observation, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the method, and also issues that occur from its employment, such as the necessity for note taking, and understanding the influence of the observation on the children. Subsequent reflections in the light of the literature review are also included.

5.2.1. Field notes from a practice case study: non participant observation

On arriving at school:

The Head teacher stands (cup of coffee in hand) outside the school building by the main access/egress door and welcomes the children and their parents. This gives any issues a chance to be aired by the parents before the school day begins, and offers an opportunity for less formal 'social dialogue' with the head teacher. This space, therefore which is bounded by a low wall on one side, and the building on two others becomes a significant locality for engaging with the parents and diffusing any issues that may have manifest themselves overnight. It also gives the head teacher a prominent presence both from the point of view of contact for the parents and supervision of the children that have arrived and are at play.

Some children play football, some sit and chat to each other on benches, while others make noises to babies in pushchairs. The active, play tick but most congregate in the rear playground. The walls dominate and make the spaces 'tight', there is no permeability. Some children – not many, play football in the front playground, these tend to be the older children.

Girls congregate around the railings at the top of the cellar, others wave to their neighbours who are leaving their homes for work or shopping. Benches become focal points for social conversation and the observation of more active peers.

Some children follow the painted lines on the rear playground floor in what appears to be a horse role-play game.

9.00am The Bell – not a sound.

Second bell, the line up begins.

The year 6 children become team leaders with some from year 5, each 'shepherds' their group of 4 or 5 younger group members to a particular place in a line at right angles to the playground wall. The young ones fidget and the older ones chastise and coax their team into a straight, still and quiet line. The head teacher awards the 'best' team with the honour of leading the school inside into assembly. Positive behaviour is rewarded with the hierarchy of the assembly parade, the more exuberant, lively, talkative or uneven line remains until last with a few words of carefully chosen admonishment from the head teacher and encouragement that there will be an opportunity to improve tomorrow.

Assembly:

The children are seated in the hall for assembly, remaining in their teams with the older 'leaders' sat bolt upright with arms folded, while the younger ones look around and fidget. I am introduced to the children, the head teacher gives out notices and the rest of the assembly is lead by two girls operating an overhead projector displaying the lyrics to a song which everyone joins in. The older children take responsibility for their team members, they are their behavioural mentors.

Break and Lunchtime:

A similar pattern emerges at break times. In the morning however there is milk or orange juice administered by 'monitors' from a low wall which partly encloses the main entrance area to the building, and is also a place to 'hang about' and lean on when not in use as a 'servery'.



Figure 22: break time – refreshments being administered by monitors

The front playground is the setting for the older children who wish to play football, or watch the activity. The rear playground is frequented by the younger children; some seek out places to engage in conversation away from activity. This place making can be observed at strategic locations such as edges or in the proximity of objects around the school grounds.



Figure 23: a corner – 'a haven of immobility... the space of [their] being'

This corner offers a sense of enclosure by the walls and coats are temporary cushions to be sat on instead of the tarmac; prospect and refuge in a social place, and 'a haven of immobility ...the space of [their] being' Bachelard (p 137, 1994).



Place making by the entrance door, another place of congregation, social interaction and exhibition for the observer? The buttress supporting the wall of the building affords an opportunity to place make by creating a 'crinkled' façade.

Figure 24: a 'crinkled' façade offers additional place making opportunity at the edge.

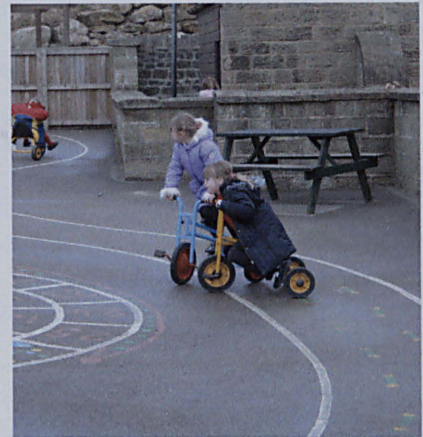


Benches are not just for sitting on, they are also hiding places, and den. A creative actualisation of affordances when there is a paucity of 'place' in a space dominated by tarmac and stone walls.

Figure 25: 'den'

There are opportunities to engage in passive and active activities, as well as to people watch and be observed, there is also anticipation – spontaneity; waiting for events to unfold (Ross, 2005b)

Figure 26: people watching and a sense of anticipation



Potential differences of opinion can arise, there is a paucity of choice of place to engage in a favourite pastime, or opportunities for places to stimulate diversity of preference and accommodate such choices. Activities are confined to the tarmac, while the grass is wet, and therefore there is a condensing of the human/space ratio, inevitably leading to less choice and conflicts between activities and participants.

Figure 27: potential for disagreement

When break time is finished the auditory flavour of the playground changes from the voices and activities of children to those of the local carrion population of crows, jackdaws (*et al*) as they descend to 'clean up' any dropped items of food and explore discarded crisp packets.

Home Time:

The area outside the main door becomes a significant focal point and social area where parents wait to collect their offspring. Some stand or sit on the wall silently while others engage in conversation. Siblings play or watch others, and wait for their older peers.

The door opens and children en-mass descend into the confined space where the parents wait. Dispersal is leisurely with conversations continuing; some children stay and play if their collectors are late.

The above account demonstrated the value of carrying out non participant observation. The first hand observance revealed an extraordinary amount of information regarding the formal and informal transactions that took place between the children, other

people and the specific environment that they interacted with. The picture was rich in information that would not be available through any other single means. It was corroborated or otherwise by the use of additional participative methods to substantiate or refute data derived from the observation and skewing that may have occurred by the presence of the observer.

5.3. Semi-Structured Interviewing

Another tool of participation considered for inclusion in the initial methodological model was to employ a process of semi-structured interviewing around predetermined topics that would be used to guide conversation with the children and allow new questions and insights to evolve during the discussions (Pretty *et al.* 1995). The establishment of discussion themes evolved from the case study work, and the use of pre-determined themes in an informal conversational style is similar to an ethnographic interview (Flick 2006, p.166, citing Spradley 1979). The case studies tested the efficacy of different methods of engaging with children and, particularly, the processes, questions and prompts that they more readily understood and respond to. The themes developed for use in this research study were categorised into three areas of interest derived from the practice based experiences of the case studies and the work in particular of Henry Sanoff, these were : **physical objects and features**, focused on what children liked or did not like about their surroundings; **human experience**, which involved encouraging memories of what they noticed and felt on the way from home to school; **place making**, which looked at how places became distinguished through game playing and other activities. These themes also took account of the developed schema of an expression of collective personality as an adaptation of Canter's model discussed previously. The themes recognise the relationship between, objects features and the experiences of the children that encounter them as well as seeking to find out the children's place preferences by establishing where they preferred to be for a particular activity/mood or interaction.

Figure 28 is an example of the tabulated results from the same case study cited in the non-participant observation example. The semi structured interview was developed into an 'imagine and remember game' relating to the children's place experiences. The discussions were led by three themes: 'imagine coming out of your front door, remember what do you notice?'; 'imagine the journey to school, what do you notice?'; 'imagine arriving at school what do you notice?'

Figure 28: tabulation - human experience themed: 'imagine and remember game'

Imagine and remember game		
<i>Imagine coming out of your front door, remember – what do we notice?</i>	<i>Imagine the journey to school, what do we notice?</i>	<i>Imagine arriving at school what do we notice?</i>
people	people	people playing football
farm	flowers	people playing on bikes
wall & grass	the village green	people playing games
courtyard	steps - the flaggings	big wall all around school
gate	woods	teacher in her office
cars	my house	christmas tree
birds	tree	people talking around benches
cows	big red pick up truck	playground assistant
telephone wires - birds	gates	friends
		teachers on duty
		mums and pushchairs
		children

The tabulation of the emergent themes is consistent with the grounded theory coding model. Turning the session into a game was an attempt to put the children at ease and engage them in the process using an ethnographic standpoint. What is interesting from the table is that the children not only described what they noticed in a visual sense but also what they experienced in other sensory ways, in particular sounds, relating to the birds and people talking, but also the flowers in the context of their smell.

The example above was conducted with a group of children, and written notes were made at the time of the session. In a later case study, described earlier in chapter 3.1.9, one-to-one interviews were carried out in the presence of a known adult. These were conducted using a map of the child's neighbourhood at a scale that was large enough to identify the child's home and school. In this village design statement (VDS) case study a model house was used to mark on the map where the child lived, and wider neighbourhood themes to guide the semi structured interview discussion were used. The VDS study developed these wider themes as a prelude to this research study.

Using this model of semi structured interview proved to be a more effective case study tool, firstly; with a group of children there are always those less willing or even not able to contribute, often through the dominance of more exuberant peers. Secondly; it allowed more freedom to explore issues more personally relevant to the children's place relationships, enabling greater insight to evolve from a potentially more detailed discussion, rather than an 'object and feature' led shouting competition, which can be

manifest when working with a larger group. In addition these last case study sessions were tape recorded (with permission of the child and parent/guardian) using an analogue system. The use of the tape recording was a far more efficient way of both collecting and evaluating the data, as written notes made at the time can distract from the conversation, alluding to an inability to 'listen' due to the distractions which was against the stance of the person centric approach of the study. The distraction can sometimes lead to missing the point or misunderstanding what is being said. A technical refinement to the data evaluation was the use of a digital recording system; this allowed a more effective way of reviewing, editing and evaluating the sessions as well as potential for using transcription software programmes.

5.4. Wish Poems

An adaptation of the semi-structured interview is the 'wish poem' (Sanoff, 2000a; 2000b). This technique had been included in and refined over a number of case studies; it was used successfully with groups of children to determine what their aspirations for their school ground improvements were. As with the semi structured interview technique it uses pre-determined themes to guide conversations. One of the themes used in the case studies had been: 'I wish my playground had'. In both the wish poem and semi-structured interviews the general theme was used to stimulate conversation and to reveal any significance in comments made by children about their experiences, feelings and aspirations. During the case studies the general theme or the poem title was written on the classroom dry wipe board and said out loud. The children were then asked to contribute their ideas which were written on the board verbatim. The words were then used to stimulate conversation to reveal their significance, and this was also made note of beside the initial word or phrase. The member of school staff sitting in on the session recorded everything written on the board on paper, in order that it could be taken away for analysis.

These themes were developed from Sanoff's (2000a; 2000b) model and the game playing in the Planning for Real techniques, in addition to the preceding practice based experiences. The themes used in the practice case studies were specifically orientated towards the school grounds environment and took the following format: Poem theme – its playtime;

- I notice when going onto the playground
- Games we play and things we do

Poem theme – About my school grounds;

- I like ...
- I don't like
- I wish my playground had

Poem theme – Me and my School (My school and I);

- I think my school is special because

Poem theme – A few of my favourite things;

- My favourite colour is
- My favourite shape is
- My favourite flower is
- My favourite lesson is

The themes were used in the practice case studies to explore the significance of physical objects and features the first theme of which was concerned about the existing playground. The data collected from the case study cited in the previous examples was tabulated and shown as a way of summarising the discussions with the infant children, age 4 -7 years and is shown in figure 29.

Figure 29: tabulation of 'its playtime – I notice.../ games we play, things we do...'

Poem – Its playtime	
<i>I notice when going onto the playground</i>	<i>Games we play and things we do</i>
juniors	snakes & ladders
milk/orange monitors	tag
bikes	blocks on grass
walls	handstands on grass
gates	sandpit - needs a new top
	favourite corner - coats on ground for picnic, its sunny. <i>Field note: participate and observe from here</i>

Additionally the poem 'Games we play and things we do (and where)' relates to place making, use of the existing site and meanings or attachments to particular locations for a particular activity. Children have an innate tendency to seek out places however weakly defined, and significance is often attached to such places that it would ordinarily be impossible to understand just by non-participant observation or

professional evaluation of a site, as has been previously discussed in the case of manholes. The relationship that existed between the children and the objects and features they encountered in their school grounds was sought by discussions relating to their preferences and dislikes, in addition their aspirational desires for alternatives was stimulated by using the following poems: 'I like...; I don't like...; I wish my playground had....'

Figure 30: about my school grounds: I like.... I don't like....

Poem – About my school grounds	
<i>I like ...</i>	<i>I don't like</i>
over low wall - playing shops/bars	tarmac - get hurt when fall over
floor markings	people annoying you
football in front playground	juniors take the ball
	getting run over by toy cars in back playground
<i>School House:</i>	cars should keep on track
pond	<i>Field note: conflict between activities, bikes & painted games</i>
cool outside	grass - gets muddy
rhubarb - looks pretty	no bikes left
	can't play football in back playground
	<i>Field note: circles are centres for singing & conflict with other activities</i>
	<i>School House:</i>
	big hole
	muddy
	toilets smell
	dog shed

Figure 31: I wish my playground had ...

<i>I wish my playground had</i>	
flowers	<i>School House:</i>
football posts	more plants
roundabout	grass cut
more floor paintings	bunnies
paintings on wall - game	dragon statue
slide	
swings	
swimming pool	
basketball net	
Pond	
More things to play with	
paddling pool	
more space	
playhouse	
tree house	
dragon	

Part of the aim of the participatory process in the context of this case study was to establish the personality of the school, which was in part established from observation and conversation and by the following themed poem, which tried to establish a human/place relationship which had become extremely significant and revealing in the case studies.

Figure 32: I think my school is special because...

small - intimate
nice things to play with
built long age (1863)
nice teachers
nice toys to play with
live close or in the village
big enough for all of us
like a big house – <i>field note: family</i>
home corner
nice school

To end the wish poem session with the infants, and continue the relaxed atmosphere, the children were asked about their favourite things, this stimulated the commencement of a child’s rendition of part of the song from the sound of music, to which we all joined in. The children were asked what was their favourite colour, shape, flower and lesson. It can become an arbitrary process with all colours, shapes and flowers being shouted out that the children can think of. However it can again be revealing with particular significance being attached to one or another, and it is the deeper questioning of why this is the case that is important and has proved to be a powerful tool in establishing a thematic continuity or personality. At the least it completes the session with an enjoyable test of my graphic and geometry skills as the shapes shouted out are attempted to be drawn on the board, and inevitably there is a failure in getting them all correct much to the delight of the children.

Figure 33: my favourite things

Poem – A few of my Favourite things		
<i>My favourite colour is</i>	<i>My favourite shape is</i>	<i>My favourite flower is</i>
blue	circle	roses
orange	oblong	sunflowers
silver	triangle	daffodils
gold	square	
green	diamond	
multi	hexagon	

The essence of what makes a place special is, by implication, place specific and, at one school, this became related to psychological associations of security that the children projected onto the geometric form of a circle, revealed by the use of this wish poem theme. The importance of the circle became apparent during the workshop as a shape that held strong associations with the certain time of day they engaged in circle time. During this time, they got together as a class with the teacher, sitting on the floor in a circle, to openly discuss issues that troubled them, including issues of bullying and other social problems. The circle seemed to be a recurring theme associated with social significance, sharing and mutual support to the children. So the subsequent design for that case study landscape used the circle as a way of subliminally engendering this same sense of safety and familiarity outside. It was also a place that could be used for circle time as an alternative to the indoor classroom (Simkins and Thwaites 2006).

5.5. Word Pictures

The use of word pictures as a means of revealing experiential dimensions has roots in Alexander's development of proposals for the Mary Rose Museum (Alexander *et al*, 1995). The idea was to develop a means of describing something of the quality of sensations and experience that the museum would deliver to its visitors in advance of thinking about the physical structure and spatial arrangement of the museum's design in detail. Using Alexander's concepts as a starting point, word pictures have been developed and refined in a case study with year 8 and 9 children as well as through work with University students in urban design related modules and a group of adult learners at a Further Education College. In the case study work the word picture had proved to be a very potent tool through which participants (both adult and children) seemed to be able to express their feelings about places they wanted to experience or create. This was done more profoundly and in greater detail than is often the case when using traditional conceptual design methods, such as drawings or text based narratives which tend to focus on objects and features etc. One year 8 student (13 years old) described her aspirations for her school's grounds as follows: '*What we will feel like! Chilled, relaxed, having fun, warm, charm, fresh, like everything is new born, crisp and everything is alive.*' (Thwaites and Simkins 2007; Simkins and Thwaites, 2006; Simkins, 2006b, 2005). The word picture does have limitations however in its application with younger children due to their less developed written

communication skills, and this was a consideration for its use in the participative phases of this research.

5.6. Cognitive Mapping/Drawing

Cognitive mapping and drawing techniques, previously explored in case studies were found to be effective in finding out how people viewed their surroundings, consistent with Wates (2000). Cognitive mapping technique had been used in urban design methodology perhaps most notably to demonstrate how a city's imageability could be expressed by individuals (Lynch, 1960). The use of mental mapping as a technique is well tested, as early as 1913 anecdotal evidence of the ability of individuals to mentally map a locality was based on an ability to orientate themselves centred on locations of their home (Gould and White 1986). The significance of people being able to understand their environment and be able to mentally map it is a prominent component in the development of place perception (Downs and Stea, 1973). Additionally these maps are effective where there are cultural or communication problems which can be the case with employing conventional methodologies due to the age and limitations of understanding of the study group (Wates, 2000). It was evident through the case studies and literature within the context of children's geographies (Cele, 2006; Ross, 2005a; Matthews *et al*, 1998) that account should be taken not only of the children's ability to communicate their thoughts but also of their preferences for how they may express them. This also draws from work examining learning theory (Mooney, 2000) and preference of learning styles, in particular the work on experiential learning by Kolb (1984) and Honey and Mumford's (1992) version of the learning cycle. Both of these identify individual preferences in engaging with learning experiences, and by engaging the children in drawing maps, proposes a physical activity with conversation which some children may find an easier way of expression than solely engaged (or not) in conversation.

Two mapping exercises have been used successfully in case studies where children were asked to respond to the following sentences by means of drawing pictures: firstly; 'This is me and this is what I like doing best, and where', and secondly; 'This is what I would like the outside of my school to be like'. In this research the second map would be adapted to take account the wider external environment that the study considered. Within the case studies these maps had formed an integral part of the participative process. In evaluating the drawings significance was attached to the scale

objects were drawn at in relation to each other, dominant features included, colours as well as the implied and explicit messages that accompanied the maps.

There is a debate as to what actually is a cognitive map (Ingold, 2000). Is it different from a drawing for example, when a drawing can represent the environment in elevation, and not strictly as a mapped plan view of sequential spaces that have a spatial relationship. Some studies have highlighted mental maps as being represented as symbols in order to express and “attach ideas and impressions of places” (Romice and Frey, 2003, p.48) and as such they are a sequence of experiences drawn as expressions against a written comment to define a location such as “Discount Store” (ibid). Downs and Stea (1977) state that a cognitive map is a “product – a person’s organized representation of some part of the spatial environment” (ibid, p.6). In this perspective cognitive maps are a representative organisation of a spatial environment which is for example a “sketch map ... a child’s painting of his house and neighbourhood.” (ibid). In reality then if a child chooses to draw an object such as their house in isolation, i.e. there is no spatial relationship, then it could be said in a deterministic manner not to be a cognitive map. However; what if within the picture of the house there are spatial relationships between floors, windows doors people etc. then is that a cognitive map? I would suggest within this study, it is, although I term this particular tool cognitive mapping/drawing in order to communicate the process, as well as the perception of the aesthetic and perspective of the product.

The format for this method was developed over a number of case studies from ones where children were asked to draw an image of themselves at the centre of a blank piece of paper and draw separate images in boxes around the central one, in response to the sentence: ‘This is me and this is what I like doing best, and where’. In earlier case studies a simple base plan of the existing school grounds has been used, and the children had been asked to draw their response to the same question onto the base plan. This was seen to be too prescriptive and potentially difficult to understand or irrelevant to the younger children. There was also a perception that it was found to be too ‘professional’ in its perspective, and against the Planning for Real model (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, 1998). It had been found through the case studies that a blank piece of paper with no other guidance than the sentence itself stimulated a more expressive response. The wording was deliberately chosen to extract information about the use of the existing places where the children frequently

visited and by their choice of what to draw therefore expressed preference for it as well as information relating to what it is they did at that particular location.

The second task was to draw on a blank piece of paper a response to: 'This is what I would like the outside of my school to be like' again this had been trialled on a base plan method as recorded in early case study work, and on blank paper as in the latter case studies with the same more positive effect. The wording was deliberate and did not ask the children to consider what they would like the outside to look like, this was to try and encourage deeper thought other than the aesthetic effect of what they would like to see.

The case studies demonstrated the importance of combining the mapping/drawing activities with conversation. In some previous studies with large groups of children, the resultant outcomes of the exercise had provided a considerable number of drawings that were interesting and enlightening; but they had been open to limited evaluation within the limitations of the context of my professional background rather than perhaps one of the social science psychology disciplines. Their subsequent evaluation had been useful in developing themes, but had however sometimes been limited to establish their true meanings or significance attached to or concealed within the drawings. It had therefore been seen as necessary to combine this method with semi structured conversation with the children, whilst they drew to understand what they were trying to convey rather than solely appreciating the objects within their work or the spatial organisation of their pictures visually later.

5.7. Mapping existing experience

Symbolising graphically observations or other primary derived data onto site specific base plans is also an important tool, and a graphical 'coding' framework proves necessary to simplify the recording and analysis of the process (Romice and Frey 2003). A developed method of mapping activity had been employed in a number of case studies relating to children's experiences of school grounds and their wider neighbourhoods as well as with adults to reveal their perceptions of urban and rural environments. This method produces a map of contextual activity and experiential characteristics together with fixing these geographically at the locations where they take place.

Ongoing research into experiential landscape place has provided a conceptual framework concerned with three fundamental categories of experience used within this process (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007, 2005). These are: how people attach significance and value to preferred locations; orientate themselves; and develop a sense of home ground. These categories of place experience are translated into the spatial themes of Centre, Direction, Transition and Area (CDTA). Where Centre is a subjectively significant location engendering a sense of here-ness and Proximity, Direction is a subjectively significant continuity engendering a sense of there-ness and future possibility. Transition is a subjectively significant point, or area, of change engendering a sense of transformation in mood, atmosphere or function, whilst Area is a subjectively significant realm engendering a sense of coherence and containment (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007).

Given the development of these categories of spatial themes a method of mapping these experiences had been developed and used to map existing situations as well as those proposed through planning or design projects. As the participative and other methods reveal these subjectively significant experiences spatially in existing situations it has been therefore possible to map the participants existing place experience. A method of symbolising graphically the spatial locations of CDTA from these observations is possible. This method of mapping spatial experiences has been developed and refined since 1999, and produces a map or series of overlays of existing experiential characteristics together with their spatial location. This kind of map represents the combined existing experience from information provided by participatory exercises and observations. The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) enables the 'filtering' of participants results, thus differences can be appreciated between variables for example age groups and genders etc. and thus comparisons could be made between children and adult's experience of a particular location or neighbourhood. Cele (2006) discusses several "research and planning projects aiming at including children's experiences into planning processes" (p.33), by using GIS to locate and record children's experience and use of places that hold different values for them.

Figure 34, is an experiential landscape place map of the case study cited previously, it is an example of how the data derived from the application of the various primary data

collection methodologies described can be used to derive an experiential landscape place map to show the combined experiences of the children spatially located.

The three elements centre, direction and transition (CDT) which combine to read experiential potential, can be seen graphically represented as follows:

Circles/Ovals: Centres (significant locations) (Observation of children's activity)

Blue lines: Direction – View (Observers response to the site)

Green Lines: Direction – Movement (Observation of children's activity)

Red Lines: Transition (change) (Observers response to the site)

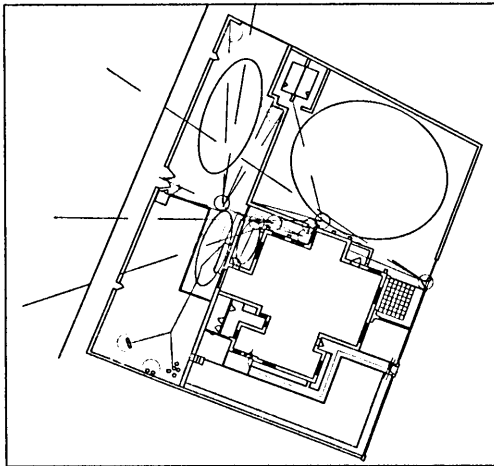


Figure 34: an experiential landscape place map from a case study

Analysis of the map indicated that this site had more centred and directional qualities and very few transitions. There was little connectiveness or linkage, and there was a poor distribution and intensity of symbols representing centres. There was also little evidence of nesting (centres within centres etc.) and little clustering, i.e. places exhibiting all three experiences at smaller scale connected and linked together. Most of the visual aspects of the site were outward looking and thereby there was little to engage interest within the site. There were no apparent centres of restorative benefit (annotated by a green circle), i.e. places which accommodate separation from distraction promote inner calm and harmony, offer shelter, provision for rest and presence of nature or stimulating features for psychological engagement.

5.8. Additional Methodologies from Literature Resources

Two other methodologies that had not been previously employed in the case studies emerged from the literature review as being potentially appropriate for consideration within the study's initial methodological model of constituents, and these were as follows:

5.8.1. Visual data: image based methodologies

In addition to undertaking a photographic record of activities and behaviour, there are a variety of ways in which visual data (including still and motion images) can be used

in qualitative studies (Cele, 2006; Flick, 2006; Ross, 2006; Hockings, 2003; Banks, 2001; Ruby, 2000; Oost and Spinnewijn, 1999; Prosser, 1998). Some studies, in particular Cele (2006) and Oost and Spinnewijn (1999) have demonstrated this to be an appropriate and beneficial method in the context of a qualitative study with children to communicate their place perceptions. To this end children within these studies were provided with disposable cameras to use and record a photographic diary of the places that they routinely encountered. Sheat and Beer (1994) adopted a similar approach by asking pupils at a school to take twelve photographs around their school grounds that would represent how they felt about their school.

There can be a subjective deduction on the views of the children's place perspectives based on the choices of what they photograph if the photographs are considered as a 'product' in isolation, rather like drawings or maps mentioned earlier. Sheat and Beer (1994) obviated this potential problem by giving the pupils a sheet to complete as they were taking the photographs to describe the place, explain why they chose to photograph it and rate it on a scale (not specified) as to how much they liked it. Ross (2006) also demonstrates the value of obtaining more information than an image. In Nicola Ross's study she requested the children to make written and verbal commentaries on their photographs, which were subsequently evaluated as to their content in terms of the location and subject of the photographs. Cele (2006) also describes the subjective misinterpretation of viewing the photographs the children took to represent a place, where they may actually have been taken by the children to represent associations or feelings. The significance of engaging the children in conversations is therefore as significant as if it were a drawing, in order to discern the meanings and associations that the children may have, and therefore influenced their decision to take the photograph.

One of the other methods of using visual data is to offer the children images to discuss as spectators (Flick, 2006). This could be in the form of images from their everyday lives and forms the basis of a photo elicitation interview to prompt narratives about the images (Flick, 2006). Another visual method variation, is "... visual preference appraisal" (Sanoff, 2000b, p.91) in which participants are asked to describe and in some contexts 'rate' photographs (Jorgensen *et al*, 2002), in a form of preference testing.

There are however issues with using images to represent place. Scott and Canter (1997) discuss these by using a study to demonstrate the differences between evaluation of a picture and evaluation of the place it represents, and they proposed that further study was required to "... distinguish between evaluating the content of the photograph and the places represented in them." (ibid, p.263). Whilst Scott and Canter (1997) recognise the valid use of images as representations, they state that this must be contextualised and seen as such "... representations and not the real experience." (ibid, p.264).

Others have also questioned what pictures represent (Heft, 2007; Gibson, 1986). Heft (2007) discusses the 'participatory character of landscape', and outlines a theoretical standpoint that we experience landscape as a "... detached spectator 'taking in the view' ..." (ibid, p.18). He argues the stance of Berleant (2004) in that we are active participants and not observers, "... landscape is more than a composition of two-dimensional forms to be gazed upon in a detached manner; it is an arena for action." (Heft, 2007, p.18). Heft cites Gibson's theory of affordances in the context of our perception of what a landscape offers for action and that our perception of an image as a spectator is therefore completely different from our experience of landscape from a dynamic perspective of what it offers us in terms of its affordances. This is rather than a two dimensional observation of a spectator who considers an aesthetic rather than the place as a collection of affordances.

Within the framework of the provisional model the use of photographs was not included, in part because it had not been trialled in any of the case studies, but also because of the need for selecting a convincingly appropriate aspect of the visual devices reviewed. It was therefore not discarded as inappropriate but considered for future exploration following the ongoing evaluation of the phased workshops that form the participative component of the study.

5.8.2. Text based diaries

Another activity employed in some studies was the use of text based diaries (Chatterjee, 2006; Punch, 2002; Matthews, 2001) where children have been asked to record their daily activities in written form in the context of a diary. Samantha

Punch's research used a range of methodologies with 37 children between the ages of 8 and 14, drawings and self elected photography was used as well as asking the children to "... write a diary of their lives, recording what they had done on the previous day" (Punch, 2002, p.335). Despite the task being unfamiliar most of the children were happy to continue writing the diaries for an extended period of time with over half of the children continuing for more than two months to record their everyday activities.

Another study that used diaries was that of Sudeshna Chatterjee whose research sought to explore the concept of child friendly cities. In her doctoral dissertation the work with children in middle-childhood (7 to 12 years old) is outlined and the 31 children in the study were asked to keep a diary for a week to record what happened from waking up to going to bed, writing down "... all events, conversations and the places where these took place throughout the day for one week." (Chatterjee, 2006, p.73). There are difficulties with using this method in that there are limitations due to children's "... level of literacy" (Punch, 2002, p.335). In some cases in Punch's study it took a long time for the children to complete the diary although some children reported that they became quicker the more they did it. Chatterjee (2006) reported that of the 31 children involved in her study only 4 completed the 'place diaries'. In mitigation of this Chatterjee also asked the children to make sketches of their daily experiences in terms of "... annotated place drawings." (Chaterjee, 2006, p.73) and approximately twenty did so. These issues were of particular concern relating to the children's ability and therefore self esteem as well as their willingness to commit to the use of diaries in this research, and the diary method did not therefore form part of the provisional model of methodological tools, which were the constituents of the method.

5.9. The provisional constituents of the method

The qualitative methodological tools facilitated a means by which data relating to the children's experiences was gathered and analysed. This was an integral part of the study along with the approach to be adopted. The synthesis of methodological tools that were explored theoretically together with those developed in the case studies aimed to make a new contribution to the development of participative techniques to be utilised in engaging meaningfully with the particular study group of primary school

aged children in the context of urban/landscape design and planning related disciplines.

Not all of the ‘tools’ in this methodological framework were employed in the study phases, and their effectiveness or decisions not to use them within the study is discussed in the chapters that follow. The initial model of methodological constituents did however provide the framework of a ‘tool kit’ of participation that was reviewed, modified and supplemented to as the research evolved during its grounded application. This evolution was also as a consequence of the children being active participants in the method’s development. Most of the tools were used in combination with each other either implied or explicitly. For example the principles of the semi structured interview and the person centric approach remained throughout the study as ways of discerning the meanings behind activities that the children undertook. The methodology used the synthesis of principles from the three design traditions of grounded theory, ethnography and case study to develop the provisional model and its subsequent evolution and development. The following were the provisional methodological constituents of the method, the developed method was described in chapter 1, the provisional model is as follows.

5.9.1. The provisional methodological constituents

Participant task based methods

- **Written**
 - Wish Poems
 - A written method requiring the children to communicate their ideas regarding things that they would wish the environments that they encounter to have, or afford.
 - Word Pictures
 - A written method facilitating the communication of the experiences a place should offer and how it would feel to be there.
- **Visual**
 - Cognitive mapping/drawing

- Communicating place through drawing. Significance being attached to places, features, people, objects chosen to be drawn as well as their relationship and scale.
- **Oral**
 - Semi-Structured Interviewing
 - Pre-determined themes developed from case studies and refined to be relevant to this study's aims used to guide conversation, similar to an ethnographic interview.
 - Conversation
 - Using the principles of the semi structured interview to elucidate explanations and comments from the children regarding their task based activities.

Non task based methods

- **Non-Participant Observation**
 - An ethnographic method with origins in cultural anthropology and sociology that records naturally occurring events at source. A valuable method for seeking to validate information and data collected by other methods, in order to see if they actually occur as described by the participants.
- **Experiential Landscape Mapping**
 - Relational with the case study model, using primary data gathered from other methods used in the study to symbolise place relative categories of experience of participants in terms of how significance and value is attached to preferred locations and develop a sense of home ground.

5.9.2. Sequential use and order

Punch (2002) used drawing methods as a “warm up” (p.331) in order to be a precursor to using methods that may be perceived as more difficult for the children, such as written ones or one-to-one verbal methods such as semi structured interviews. Using more activity based warm up methods is also seen as a way of the children

becoming more familiar with “the researcher” (ibid). These were valid points and ones considered in the sequential order of this research. However, the first method used was the semi structured interview, but this was mitigated with task based activities for the children to participate in as a way of distraction from the presence of a stranger and as a means of putting them at their ease. The semi structured interview was seen as a primary method for establishing initial data that could subsequently be compared with the data collected by other methods. Additionally the stance adopted by way of being visible during break times, on the playground or at lunchtimes eating with the children was seen as a means to establish familiarity and relationship.

5.9.3. Conclusions relating to the methodological tools

This section has explored and identified the constituents of an initial methodological model that was developed in part through literature research and refined through testing and developing during practice based case studies.

The provisional methodological constituents of the model applied selectively or as a whole depending upon their appropriateness for the context had potential for fulfilling the study’s aim. This provisional model of constituents evolved as a result of its application and in response to the children being active participants in its design through their use of the methodologies and the subsequent reflection upon their reactions and engagement. The development also took place by evaluating the data derived from participative phases, this used coding in the form of tabulation of evolving themes previously used in case studies and congruous with grounded theory. It also used memos in the form of site notes visual or written as well as partial transcription of the digitally recorded sessions as means of evaluation and reflection.

Certain components of the provisional constituents were subject to further review as well as continuing to consider others not included in the provisional model. For example, the use of a visual method such as images was perceived through the literature research as one method applicable to the study. However the debate regarding the spectator mode of experiencing landscape and use of images promoted interesting questions in terms of how visual data would be used. This could take the form of self directed photography, or in photographic elicitation, and if so how could the spectator mode be obviated by attempting to engage the children to experience the

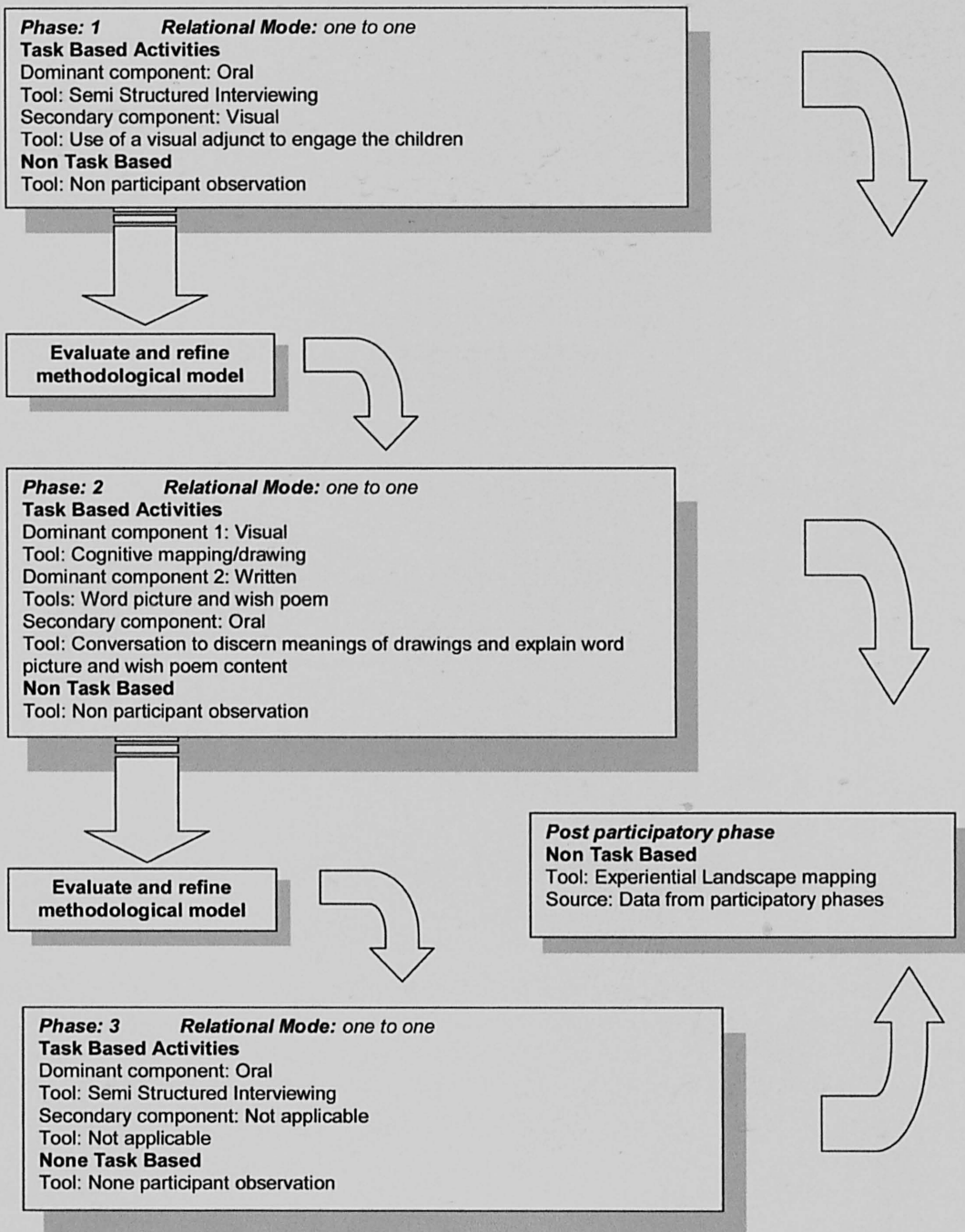
image, its affordance and place. The self directed photography model was perceived as a valid method, however due to the prospective number of participant children likely to be engaged in the study the feasibility in practical terms of using this method was seen as a potentially limiting factor, and for this reason was not included in the initial constituent's model.

Another issue that was of concern was the use of text based diaries. This was two fold: firstly the literacy ability of the children especially the younger ones may have created unease or apprehension in completing this task; secondly the amount of time required to fulfil this task could have an impact on the study. As part of the ethical considerations that are discussed later, it was stated that the study should not impact adversely on the children's learning at school and that sessions would be confined to a maximum of twenty minutes per child or group. If the diary was to be completed in school time this would probably require more visits for it to be achieved. If the diary was to be completed outside of school, then would this be fulfilled without an impact on other activities such as social or homework? Another consideration was that of consistency, in that how many children would be able to or willing to commit to such a task in order for it to be a valid method within the study. Given these concerns the use of the diary was subsequently evaluated as to be not applicable for this study, but was of consideration for future research.

Having continued the review of methodological constituents as well as considering their sequential application, a provisional sequential model of methodological constituents was proposed for application in three participative phases, which is shown in figure 35. This model would be the subject of further evolution and development following each of the participative phases. The schematic shows various aspects of the participative phases, the first is the relational mode of contact with the children; this was in terms of the relationship of our engagement. In each of the phases this is shown as being on a one-to-one basis, meaning that the children would take part individually. The next aspect of the session was the type of task based activities that would take place; this may have comprised of a single dominant activity or be combined with a secondary one. For example, in phase one the dominant activity was oral, using the tool of semi structured interviewing. There was a secondary visual component that would use a visual adjunct of engagement and stimulate the dominant

oral component of discussion. There were also non task based components, such as the planned use of non participant observation. The arrows at the centre of the schema show the pathways of data and their evaluation together with the subsequent routes of refinement which would revise the subsequent phases. The arrows at the right hand side of the schema show the data flow from the participative phases that would inform a post participatory phase of employing the experiential mapping tool to evaluate and represent data from the participative sessions.

Figure 35: A provisional sequential model of methodological constituents



SECTION 3

Application and evolution of the **INSIGHT METHOD**

Study Planning

Participatory Workshop Phases

“Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.”
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: *Le Petit Prince* (1943)

6. Study planning and preliminary participant engagement

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of the participative phases of the study was to test the methodological tools that had been refined through practice case studies and researched through the literature review and then developed into the provisional sequential model (figure 35). In addition it sought to develop new techniques and approaches through its application that would be contextually appropriate to enable an insight into the children’s perceptions of their neighbourhood, rather than a focus on their school grounds in isolation.

The chapters that follow in this section detail the stages and development of the participatory phases conducted as workshops with the children. It took as its starting point the provisional sequential model of methodological constituents which was applied and tested by means of a range of workshop activities in the first participative phase with participant children. Findings from this and subsequent phases were evaluated to inform refinements and adaptations of the tools and techniques into a developed form to address the research aim. An important characteristic of the participative work was its longitudinal nature that facilitated the gradual evolution of the tools and techniques throughout the process. This is different from approaches that set out to simply test a predetermined set of methodological tools, for example, and has foundations in the principles of grounded theory research. In this context, this was important because it allowed for the evolution of the tools as a response to their application, and actively sought the children to be co-authors by reflecting upon their use of the methods and engagement or otherwise.

In order that the study had some validity a number of participant children needed to be involved in the development of the methodological output. The issue of statistical significance was deemed not to be one that this study could address. However within the remit of the research aim and capacity of the time involved in carrying out a qualitative study that would be evolutionary in its methodological approaches, it was

desirable to engage with as many children as possible that would be manageable within the project. In order to access a number of children's opinions it was felt that primary schools should be approached in order to seek their permission to engage with some of their pupils. This had been cited as an effective, convenient and efficient method of accessing children (Hill, 2005; Driskell, 2002), there are however limiting factors of accessing children through the gatekeepers of schools. Hill (2005) states that this can be a non-inclusive approach as it omits those who are excluded from school or are absent. But in terms of practicalities it is often difficult to obtain consent or make contact with children unless parents, schools or a local authority agree. Driskell (2002) also saw potential problems with access via a school gatekeeper in that some children may not want to be involved if they have an established negative view of their school.

Another issue of importance was to determine what age groups of children would participate in the research. Figure 36 shows the age ranges, years and Key stages of the UK curriculum, where the Infant's age ranges are between 4 and 7 years old and the Junior's age ranges are between 7 and 11.

Year	Stage	Ages
Nursery	Foundation	3-4
Reception		4-5
1	Key stage 1	5-6
2		6-7
3	Key stage 2	7-8
4		8-9
5		9-10
6		10-11
7	Key stage 3	11-12
8		12-13
9		13-14
10	Key stage 4	14-15
11		15-16

Figure 36: key stages, year, and corresponding children's ages (Directgov, No date)

Although some empirically based practice work that had formed the case studies had been undertaken with Foundation stage children and Keystage 3 High School children, the majority of work had been undertaken with Junior school aged children (Keystage 2: 7 to 11 years old), and as such these were the children that the study aimed to engage with as the focus of the research. This is within the internationally categorised age range of Young children who are under 8 years old and those in Middle childhood which is between the ages of 9 and 12 years (Cele, 2006). Middle childhood is cited

by Moore and Young (1978) as the age "... when girls and boys are reaching out more actively to grasp and understand the natural world" (p.84). Tranter (2006) states that middle childhood is the age when parents commence giving their children "... many 'licences' of independent mobility, such as the licence to walk to school without an adult." (p.121), and this licensing may therefore facilitate a potentially freer range of experience of the neighbourhood as well as the school run. In Sofia Cele's study, children between the ages of 8 and 11 were chosen to work with, Sofia Cele states that she wanted to "... be able to communicate clearly" (Cele, 2006, p.64) and that this age range of children had been shown in other research to be able to understand other peoples opinions and show interest in activities. It would not be practical to engage with every year group within the Junior school range (early to middle childhood), it was therefore considered that a representation could be sampled by engaging with children from year 3, who would be in the first year at Junior school and Year 6 who represent the last year at Junior school and that these two year groups should be the focus for participant engagement.

Having identified the age groups, it was necessary to consider how access would be gained to them. As stated previously this was to be facilitated by approaching Primary schools, it was considered that these should be in different geographic locations in the UK and that they would ideally be in different demographic settings. Three areas were identified as potential locations for the study and these were South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and the North East of England, schools in North Yorkshire and the North East had been worked with prior to this research as part of previous consultancy work. These schools would give access to settings that were rural and sub-urban, the South Yorkshire location would give access to an urban environment, and additionally the schools were located within a reasonable commuting distance to afford a series of visits. The selection of participant schools primarily reflected issues of accessibility to the locations, the willingness of schools to participate and ethical considerations related to working with potentially vulnerable participant groups. These factors meant that it was considered prudent to select schools with which there was an already established working relationship or as in the case of one school being known to an associate. Driskell (2002) states that one way of access is to identify head teachers who would be enthusiastic about the project, and previous associations and relationships from practice enabled a positive response to facilitate initial discussions.

As the principle focus of the study was to develop and explore the application of a method rather than, for example, comparing place perceptions between age, socio-economic, geographic, or other variables, access to children in this way was considered an appropriate and achievable approach.

6.2. Ethical issues and considerations

The ethical issues were a prominent and omnipresent consideration, this is not only fitting for this research, but would also be applicable from the point of view of a professional engaged in applying any participative process with children (Christensen and James, 2007; Hill, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004). As a practitioner I had applied for and received an Enhanced Disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to show to schools that I worked in as a consultant to demonstrate that I had no Police records of convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings. This also showed that I had similarly no records at the Department for Education and Skills, or the Department of Health.

In addition to this, the University of Sheffield have an ethics review committee to whom a Research Ethics application is required to be made by research students. This application required information relating to the aims, objectives and methodology of the research, and requested information relating to other ethical considerations such as the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to the participants. As a result of the literature review and case study experience the following points were derived from Robson (2002) and used as a model for the key ethical considerations which were addressed in the following manner:

- ***involving children without their knowledge or consent*** – the head teacher at each school would be informed of the study and would be involved in the initial stages of participant contact. The study would proceed on the basis that informed consent would be sought for participant involvement and it was deemed essential for the consent to be from both children and parents/guardians, in order that the children were involved in the project from the beginning and were not assumed to be recipients.
- ***coercing participation*** – there would be no implied or misrepresentation of an individual or school's benefit from taking part in the study.

- ***withholding information about true nature of research*** – school and individual participants would be orally informed of the purpose of the study, with written confirmation on a consent form.
- ***otherwise deceiving participant*** – the schools, participants and parents/guardians would be fully informed of the purpose and nature of study, together with an extent of their commitment and involvement.
- ***inducing participants to commit acts diminishing self esteem*** – the study aimed to engage with children in a way that would value them as individuals, it also required a non-participative stance in observations and aspired to accessing natural behaviours of participants with the influence of participating in the study itself to be as minimal as possible upon the actions of the individual.
- ***exposing participants to physical/mental stress*** – all publishable data would not identify individuals or specific locations, and participation should not be onerous.
- ***invading privacy*** – general themes for the purpose of the research would be adhered to, any sensitive personal information would remain confidential and only be reported to a person in authority if it was perceived that the individual was at risk.
- ***withholding benefits in comparison to peers*** – the onus would be not to disadvantage the participants in taking part, and as such a reasonable timetable would be required with the number of visits and amount of time spent with each individual identified and adhered to.
- ***not treating participants fairly, with consideration/respect*** – not only were the tools and techniques of the study considered, but what was also paramount was the use of appropriate empathic, ‘children centred’ methods developed/ refined in ‘case studies’ and literature research.
- ***additionally:***
 - the research design maintains that there should always be an adult (known to the participant) present or within proximity when ‘one-to-one interviews’ took place.
 - documentary evidence would be provided of the research validity in the form of a letter outlining the research, with contact details of the Universities departmental supervisor’s.

- an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure was available and would be shown to the head teachers.
- no photographic images resulting from the study would be published that would identify individuals, where possible side profiles would be used and consent sought where appropriate.
- participants could choose to 'opt out' at anytime during the study.

Alderson and Morrow (2004) state that projects involving children should consider respect and trust together with clear communication in consent. They also state that "Ethical projects take participants' consent, their informed and freely given 'yes or 'no', very seriously" (p.95). The stance Alderson and Morrow (2004) take is informed by discussions with young people about research who understood the consent process and emphatically responded by saying: "We need to be able to say 'no'" (ibid, p.95). The significance of the children wanting to be involved in this research was paramount to the adoption of the empathic approach which was as fundamental to the study methodology as its techniques. For this reason informed consent from not only the parents/guardians of the children was sought, but also from the children themselves. Hill (2005) discusses how it may be difficult to say no to take part if an adult had already given consent, and this may result in children being reluctant to express their views during the research or make a minimal contribution. Hill (2005) also states that if this reluctance happens for example in an interview situation then it is difficult to discern whether the child is shy or resents taking part in the research because of the consent issue.

The University's ethics review panel approved the study's ethical considerations with suggested minor recommendations which were subsequently addressed; these were to further anonymise the identity of the South Yorkshire school, which had previously been cited by the City within which it was located. In addition it was recommended that a contingency should be made in respect of the number of children to be involved to address potential fall out of participants who may withdraw from the study at any stage. Another recommendation was that not only should parents/guardians sign a consent form but additionally the head teachers at each school should also sign a form giving their formal permission to be associated with the study. The information sheets were also to be reviewed in the following way:

“whilst making an admirable effort to explain the work in child-friendly language, [it] is too long and sophisticated for the age group. We strongly recommend that a shorter (no more than one side) version is produced for the child, and an additional brief is prepared for parents/teachers.” University of Sheffield Ethics review panel (2005).

6.3. Study planning and preliminary participant engagement

Two schools with whom there was a previous working relationship were contacted in early 2005, and a subsequent meeting was arranged with the headteachers to invite their schools to take part in the research. In addition the outline of the study and what the implications would be for the school, staff and participant children were discussed as well as outlining a potential programme of workshops. Both of these headteachers agreed for their schools to be involved and a letter of thanks and confirmation was sent in May 2005. Additionally information was collated relating to the school’s academic year as well as term and daily timetables. The third school approached was known to a colleague and a more formal letter of initial introduction was sent in May 2005. This was followed by a telephone conversation and subsequent meeting, again the head teacher of this school agreed to approaching the pupils’ and parents/guardians. For the purposes of the study, the three schools are referred to as Schools A, B and C and any names of individual children are assumed names for illustrative purposes in the context of the person-centred and ethical approach of the study.

An initial core sample size of 10 children per year group at each school was sought with a balance of gender within each year group. This was deemed to be a manageable number of children to work with given accessibility and time constraints as well as the need to consider any impingement on lesson time and available research time. Any data emerging from the resulting sample size of 60 children could not be said to be statistically representative or significant, but it could allude to trends, differences and themes which may emerge from the work. However following the Ethics Review Committee feedback a contingency was made to increase the study group size to 12 children per year group per school to allow for withdrawals which could happen at anytime during the study, this would make a total study group of 72 children. A letter was sent by the head teacher at each school to parents/guardians of the year group children (see example letter; appendix 1). This outlined the study and enclosed an open letter (appendix 2) with further details explaining the project aims and outlining

an initial proposal for the methodological framework. The school's letter included a tear off slip for parents/guardians to return to the school if their children were interested in being involved in the study. As well as an expression of interest the parents/guardians were asked to disclose what mode of transport the children used to get to and from school, as this was perceived as a potentially significant influence on the children's experience of the school run, and it would therefore be desirable to involve children who used a range of transport methods.

As part of the discussions with the head teachers, an outline programme had been agreed that would include three participative phases. In each phase the schools would be visited and a method or set of methods would be utilised in a workshop with the children. It was also agreed that these workshops would last between 20 and 30 minutes per session, in order that the study had defined boundaries regarding any interference with timetabled lessons. With this in mind an outline 'daily timetable' was planned using a typical school day. For example in school A the school day as with all schools comprised of taught lesson time, assembly, breaks and lunch, but at this school assembly took place between 1.30 and 2.00pm, not first thing in the morning which was the experience at other schools. In total there was 4 hours 15 minutes potential contact time for formal participation, as it was also agreed that the break times should be avoided if possible for the workshop sessions as this was felt to be important social times for the children. There were inevitably complications, for example at this school assemblies changed on Fridays and there were also term variations. In this instance it was calculated that if more children participated than anticipated, taking a number of 13 per year group with 30 minutes per child, the participative phases would take 3 days to complete.

These arrangements were consistent with the other two schools although school B may have required an extra quarter of a day (see appendix 3, daily timetable). This school also had timetabling differences between years 3 and 6 which required consideration, as well as assembly times which changed on a daily basis but that were planned 2 weeks in advance. This complex scheduling demonstrated that with accessing the participant group via gatekeepers such as headteachers there were inevitable complexities and repercussions in the organisation of the participative

phases to conform with accommodating the school day and not compromising the children's studies or their social activities.

During previous case study work some of the place experiences had been influenced by what had taken place at the time of the workshop, and this was affected by a range of variables including diurnal and seasonal influences as well as functional and educational activities. The children's spontaneous building of a house with grass cuttings that arose from sports day preparations cited in chapter 4.2 is an example of this. In order that seasonal and diurnal influences which are seen as influential on the influence of the personal projects and reciprocal relationships of people and the environment (Little, 1983) were considered in the study an outline programme was constructed in order that the participation would take place in different terms and reflect any seasonal differences.

The programme therefore considered the longitudinal study to have three phases, and in each phase the same methodology or methodologies would be implemented at each school. The phases took place in different terms and were planned to require a three day period of workshop sessions at each school, with each session lasting between 20 and 30 minutes, given a potential sample size of participants of between 60 and 78, with an ideal number of 72 to allow for drop out. The workshop sessions commenced in the autumn term of the academic year 2005/2006 and phase 1 was agreed to take place in October 2005 in school A and November in school B and completing in December at school C. A spring term programme ran from January to March 2006 and a summer term programme commenced and concluded in June 2006 (see appendix 4, the outline programme).

A meeting was arranged for early October 2005 with the head teacher of School A in order that the responses from the initial invitation letter could be examined and a participant group of children would then be selected from this by discussing with the head teacher who would be suitable to take part in order that a criteria of gender balance was attained as well as a mix of mode of transport. However, at the meeting a different approach was required, ten year 3 children and thirteen year 6 children had returned the forms. In consideration and response to this as well as the study's inclusive stance, it would be against its principles to exclude one year 6 child from the

study and a decision was made reflecting on the implications this may have at the other schools that would require parity for consistency in the study. A meeting was arranged to meet all of the year 3 children and then all of the year 6 children, the meetings took place in the children's classrooms in the presence of their teachers. In preparation for the meeting a children's participant information sheet had been written to guide the themes for discussion. This was written in accordance with the feedback from the ethics committee review, with the exception of the length which was felt could not be edited any further (see appendix 5 children's information sheet). This meeting was a way of developing a relationship with the children (Punch, 2002) and communicating that their participation was valued in the research. The meeting was carefully planned in order that the children would be engaged in a child centric perspective using informal language, rather than an adultist dissemination of jargon and dominance, sitting in a position and level comfortable to the children, not too close to them or too far away (Hill, 2005; Matthews, 2001; Matthews *et al*, 1998). The following are the details of the meeting:

The meeting themes focused on the points in the information sheet, but the explanations were not read verbatim, but used as a guide, with the actual verbal content being responsive to the children's interest, reaction and questions which were encouraged. The emphasis was on a relaxed approach with the children seated and me sitting on one of their desks in order that I did not appear authoritative, this was also expressed by my clothing; an open neck shirt and casual trousers, the male teachers at the school wore suit and ties. I also made use of gesticulations to make a point and everyday allegory to try and connect with the children, for example: to try and explain who I was and my occupation, I said I was a Landscape Architect, I asked if anyone new what one was, no one did but they made various guesses, we started to talk about garden design and the programme 'Ground Force' was suggested by the children and the analogy of Alan Titchmarsh's designs was used.

I asked if they remembered receiving a letter from school about the research and having a slip to return, and then went on to discuss other points which included; that no one had to take part in the study if they did not want to, and even if they agreed they could change their mind at any time without any negative consequences. We also talked about what would happen if they did take part, in terms of the activities they may undertake and that there were no advantages in taking part and there shouldn't be any disadvantages. We also talked about what would happen at the end of the study; in terms of the 'long essay' I would be writing. We also discussed issues of confidentiality, and who they should speak to if they were worried about anything. At the end of the session the children were asked who would still be interested in taking part, it was then clear that other children were interested as well as those that had returned the initial slip. These other children had either forgotten to bring the initial form back or had lost it.

All of the children that expressed an interest at this initial meeting were given a covering letter addressed to their parents/guardians (see appendix 6 covering letter) which contained details of what they should do if they consented to their child's

participation. Along with the letter was a parent/guardian information sheet, which was similar to the children's version I used to guide the meeting (see appendix 7, participant information sheet [parent guardian]), this sheet also followed the ethic committees review with regard to the jargon free language used. In addition there were two copies of a parent/guardian consent form one copy of which was for retention and the other was required to be signed and returned to the school for my collection should they still wish for their child to be involved (see appendix 8, parent/guardian consent form). As part of the procedure for retaining anonymity for the participants a coding system was utilised, this system would identify a participant in the following way. Their school, by the use of a prefix of A, B or C, their year group by use of a 3 or 6 and then a number unique to that school's year group to identify them. This was used as a participant identification number to identify the participants if there was formal consent. Each set of consent sheets at the first school therefore had either the prefix A/3/ or A/6/ to identify the school and year group, when the forms were returned. As stated earlier, in order that the children felt included from the beginning of the project, two copies of a child consent form was also included (see appendix 9, participant child consent form), for the children to sign and return one copy if they so wished. Although this was not a mandatory requirement for their inclusion in the study, it was desirable in response to the approach of the study that was adopted and remained paramount; valuing the children as individuals engaged as participative partners in the study, and sought to address issues such as adultist emphasis (Matthews *et al*, 1998) and also to mitigate any perceived power imbalance (Punch, 2002).

In accordance with the ethic's committees recommendations the head teacher was also requested to sign a consent form (see appendix 10, Head teacher consent form) which was also retained on my file. The same procedure was followed at school's B and C. Figure 37 shows the number of participants at each school who expressed an interest prior to the meetings.

Figure 37: initial expressions of interest

School	A	B	C	Totals
Year 3	10	30	7	47
Year 6	13	26	6	45
Totals	23	56	13	92

The table shows a disparity of interest between the schools. This was however mitigated when the year group size at each school is appreciated; school C was in a rural setting with small year groups consisting of 15 children in each, whereas school B which was situated in an inner city had year groups totalling 124 children in each. The sub-urban school A, had 20 children in year 3 and 24 in year 6, figure 38 shows the expressions of interest as a percentage of the year group size in each school.

Figure 38: initial expressions of interest as a percentage of the year group sizes

School	A	B	C
Year 3 as % of year group	50%	24%	47%
Year 6 as % of year group	54%	21%	40%

The signed consent forms were returned to the school and either collected or forwarded to me. Some children whom had expressed an initial interest decided not to become involved and some who did not return an initial expression decided to participate following the initial meeting. In total 68 children consented to be involved in the study. None of the children subsequently withdrew and continued to the completion of the concluding phase.

Figure 39 shows the number of participant children from each school involved in the study. The percentage of children consenting following the initial meeting declined dramatically in school B, whereas it remained fairly consistent at schools A and C, although the number of children from year 3 increased by a similar amount to the decrease in numbers of year 6 children.

Figure 39: number of children from each school involved in the study

School	A	B	C	Totals
Year 3	14	18	6	38
Year 6	10	14	6	30
Totals	24	32	12	68
Year 3 as % of year group	70%	14.5%	40%	
Year 6 as % of year group	42%	11.3%	40%	

The participant children's information provided by the return of the informed consent forms was tabulated into a spreadsheet, this information included their home address and date of birth, and was used for reference purposes only. For the purposes of anonymity, the children were given their participant identification number as previously stated for example AY31, AY610 etc. This information was then collated

with each school's daily timetable, and a programme for the first participatory workshop phase was composed for each school, appendix 11 shows the phase 1 programme for schools A, B and C. Additional information was also considered relating to individual children's activities, such as music lessons, sport activities and visits or additional support outside of the classroom as well as absences through illness, there was therefore an inherent flexibility within the timetable.

6.4. Summary and reflections of the planning and preliminary engagement

At the core of the research was recognising and valuing the children as individuals with acknowledgement of their contribution to be made to the study by their engagement and participation as partners and not recipients of didactic research. This was not only held as a theme for the projects aim relating to the ultimate development of a methodology of participative constituents, but also in the empathic approach adopted to the research, manifest in the fundamental standpoint of seeking active informed consent. This proved to be a considerable challenge not only in its administrative implications, but also in planning and liaising with the schools. However this standpoint together with the initial meeting with the children was a significant foundation for the study. The ethical component was additionally quite an onerous procedure. However it was approached in the same way, to discover, reflect, research and inform the initial study design, rather than viewed as a 'tick box' to complete and this assisted in considering the administrative framework as well as the implications of the study for the stakeholders (Kumar, 1999) of: the children, their parents/guardians, the school, the university and myself.

The initial invitation letter sent by the schools was accompanied by a single sided A4 letter from myself and was designed to conform to the University's ethics review committee's recommendations regarding the vocabulary used and length, it included the following paragraph:

"I will also ask the children to do some drawings and make up some poems. I will also want to observe what they do and where they go, on the way to school and when going home. All information which is collected about the children during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about them will have their name and address removed so that they cannot be recognised from it."

One year 3 parent gave some interesting information for future post-doctoral consideration by way of a comment: '*Christopher is concerned about the poem writing and I feel this would put him under unnecessary pressure.*' It is a dichotomy to try and plan for this, but interesting to consider its implications. If you do not outline what the children are likely to be doing then there are issues relating to the study's ethical framework of coercing participation by not stating what was expected, or withholding information about the true nature of the research. It could also be seen as deception which may lead to inducing participants to commit acts diminishing self esteem or exposing participants to physical/mental stress. However by Christopher's decision not to take part, the initial letter of invitation could be said to have excluded him. A review of the statements made and how this is phrased should be a consideration for future studies.

The planning for the participatory phases in respect of their organisation was extremely detailed and thorough, this was done in order that there would be flexibility and an ability to accommodate and promote the unexpected. This ordered approach may appear a counterpoint to flexibility, but without it there would be chaos and no flexibility. The study was reliant on the schools not only as stakeholders, and gatekeepers providing access to the children but also as hosts for the workshops. The potential conflicts between the research interfering with a school day were considered at the planning stage. There were many variables especially at the inner city school whose children were in many different classes as opposed to the rural school where the year groups were in single classes. There was therefore a great deal of discussion and liaison with class teachers and again consideration of the children's individual variations on the school timetable. The planning incorporated contingencies that accommodated variation and even the need for an additional day if necessary or a one off visit to see a child who may have been absent through illness. This addressed some of the issues of using schools to access the children by considering absentees and the effect upon the school day as well as individual and school timetabling issues (Hill, 2005; Driskell, 2002).

6.5. Summary

There are several issues that are seemingly either implied within the above description or hidden due to the detail given. Firstly there is a great deal of significance for the need to have planned the study in detail, from contemplating the number of children

who would be involved, the ages of children to be involved to details such as down to the number of pencils and crayons one should take with you (Punch, 2002). The benefits of issues learnt through practice and research were many fold and these informed the preliminary planning and organisation of the participative workshops and are summarised as follows:

- The need to establish relationships with the schools who acted as gate keepers in order that they would not perceive my work as detrimental to the children's learning or indeed a burden for them over and above facilitation of a room (Hill, 2005; Driskell, 2002; Punch, 2002).
- Provision of a defined preliminary order for the phases that would evolve through engagement, but with a detailed outline facilitated respect and confidence from the head teachers in what was to be undertaken. This also alleviated any personal anxiety that may be communicated to the children and would probably serve to alienate to some extent the relationship of trust that was needed to be built, as well as emphasise an adultist power in controlling a session that may for example over run (Hill, 2005; Punch, 2002).
- The detail considered the children as individuals, it responded to learning theory, in particular the Montessori's principle of ordered environments that are child centric (Mooney, 2000).
- It recognised the potential apprehension of parents and guardians, who may perceive the project to be a burden. Consideration of exactly how long would be spent with each child was important from this perspective as well as in terms of attention spans (Matthews, *et al*, 1998).
- For the participation to be reciprocal and respectful (Matthews, 2001; Foster, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Sanoff, 2000a; 2000b; Wates, 2000; Hart, 1997; Sheat and Beer, 1994; Johnson, 1979), the detail was important in order that I would not be diverted or distracted enough to miss what was being communicated, in other words for my listening to be empathic (Christensen and James, 2000; Lago and Shipton, 1994; Rowland, 1993; Egan, 1990).
- To understand the language and ways children express themselves and their conceptual meanings and actions is a further aspect needed in research with children (Cele, 2006; Christensen and James, 2000).
- The process of obtaining informed consent was not viewed in this study as an administrative procedure to complete; it was seen as a vital component of the

study's approach. It assumed the perspective that children are regarded as equals rather than dominated by adults.

- The wording for all of the consent forms irrespective of context was none jargonistic.
- The consideration for the children to sign a consent form was intended to make them feel part of the study rather than passengers who were told to go on the journey by adult's who would drive the study or give access permission. This did not obviously compromise the fact that parental or guardian consent was also required, but it gave the children the chance to write their name and say I want to take part (Hill, 2005; Alderson and Morrow, 2004).
- The initial meeting with the children, tried to draw on every day occurrences to give examples for example of who I was and what I did, and what I wanted to find out.
- Engaging the children at eye level, wearing appropriate clothing that was non-power dominant and sitting at their level were all seen as important to put them at their ease, engage with them and value their time and input (Hill, 2005; Matthews, 2001; Matthews *et al*, 1998).

7. Participatory workshops Phase 1

- Semi-structured Interviews

Phase: 1 Relational Mode: one to one

Task Based Activities

Dominant component: Oral

Tool: Semi Structured Interviewing

Secondary component: Visual

Tool: Use of a visual adjunct to engage the children

Non Task Based

Tool: Non participant observation

7.1. Introduction

This section discusses the first participatory phase of the study, which employed Semi Structured Interviewing as the tool of its dominant task based activity. This had been used extensively in the case studies and as a result of refinement through its application in the Village Design Statement project described in chapter 3.1.9 a visual component had been added by the use of a scale plan to locate the children's neighbourhood. But more importantly a plastic house was used which the children could place on the map and identify where they lived. This made the session more engaging in terms of the children had an activity to perform and it was a useful tool to be used as an icebreaker taking note of one of the Planning for Real principles of using a three dimensional object to identify place. As discussed in chapter 5, the semi-structured interview method had been chosen to start the participative phases; this was a primary method for establishing initial data that was compared with data obtained from the phases that followed.

Schools were chosen for the study because they provided relatively easy access to the necessary participant groups. They also had the advantage of providing a venue in which to carry out the interviews where young children were likely to feel more at ease due to familiarity, associations of safety, and where 'learning' activities with adults routinely happened. The kind of things that the children would experience during the Semi structured interview may also have some resonance with familiar classroom tasks and this was deemed to be helpful in putting children at ease.

Although every effort was made to arrange for the interviews at each of the three schools to be undertaken in conditions that were as consistent as possible, there were variations. School A, for example, had a building on site that was previously the caretaker's house. This had more recently become the school nursery and a room on the ground floor was made available there for the interviews. In contrast School B was of open plan design and in this case a small niche with a table had been set aside as a venue for the interviews. Unlike School A, where the interviews were essentially conducted in private, here they had to be conducted in a comparatively open environment with members of the school community frequently passing back and forth. At School C the interviews were carried out in the head teacher's office, more or less replicating conditions at School A, if not being a little more formal and perhaps having a potentially different meaningful context for some. Conditions at Schools A and C were also consistent in that an adult, known to the children, was able to be present during the interviews to comply with ethical requirements (Hill, 2005). The adults were either a member of the support staff, a classroom assistant for example, or a parent assisting at the school on playground and dinner duty. School B, however, was not able to provide a supporting adult but as the open plan nature of the environment meant that staff and other children walked past regularly the ethical requirement for passive surveillance was able to be complied with.

The head teachers had briefed teaching staff prior to the interview workshops, giving them information relating to the day's programme. On the mornings of the first phase the head teachers arranged introductions to the support staff at schools A and C who would be assisting. An informal meeting followed where the study purpose was outlined together with the day's activities. The confidential nature of the work was discussed and support staff were reminded not to disclose what the children talked about during the interviews. A copy of the timetable for the day was given to the support staff with the children's names identified along with the time allocated for their session. Any issues that the support staff were aware of, such as a child being absent on the day or engaged in an activity at a conflicting time was discussed and the timetable was revised accordingly.

Following this short briefing and discussion the support staff brought the children to the room, and remained for the duration of the session. At its conclusion they

accompanied the children back to their classroom and returned with the next child. Again, there was a variation in this practice at School B due to the absence of a supporting adult. In this case the first child accompanied me to the interview location and when their session was finished they returned to the classroom requesting the next participant to come. This presented some logistical issues due to the size of the school. Some of the classrooms where the children were taught were some distance away and time was lost during the changeover period which was not recoverable due to the limitations of the school timetable and the large number of participant children at the school. This meant that the time scheduling for each child needed to be a maximum of 20 minutes rather than the 20 to 30 minutes estimated.

7.2. The semi-structured interview (SSI)

The format for the SSI was informed by the aims of the research, the model that had evolved from the case studies and literature review as well as the grounded principles of collecting data for coding and evaluation in order to develop themes for future phases to examine and test.

As described in chapter 5, the semi structured interview was guided by predetermined themes around which conversation was centred, the derivation and determination of the themes was partly informed by the Village Design Statement case study as this particular study had taken the empirical focus away from the school grounds and into the wider neighbourhood domain that was the focus of this research. Predetermined themes were constructed to facilitate an exploration of the children's place experiences and these were recorded on a pro-forma that was used during the session. The purpose of the proforma was focused on prompting me to complete certain tasks and guide all of the sessions within a phase in order that there was parity between the children's sessions and schools when a particular methodological tool was being employed. The prompts were checks and reminders in terms of 'self-memo's' to ensure key issues had been stated, actions had been undertaken and pre-determined topics were discussed. The proformas also provided a means of recording additional memorandums, for example; ideas, things of significance or other thoughts that occurred either during or after the individual workshops. There was a copy of the proforma for each child for me to complete as the session progressed. Figure 40 shows the first page of the proforma used for the SSI session at school A. The same format was used at schools B and C, with the exception of the change to the assigned



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West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ
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Print blurred in original

participants reference number for the project which was relative to the school, the first three headings in the proforma were checks and reminders to me. The headings that followed those were; Introduction; Orientation; Personalisation; Mode of Transport and Routine activity and these were ‘ice breakers’ (Punch, 2002) and the first of the predetermined themes to guide the session. A discussion is held in the following sections of the way in which the SSIs were conducted and reference to methods used to help the children feel at ease during the process and to optimise the detail of their responses together with the themes around which discussions took place. The complete proforma document can be found as appendix 12.

The University of Sheffield, postgraduate research
 Ian Simkins:
 The development of an approach and methods to reveal the place experiences of primary school aged children
 DATE: PARTICIPANT REFERENCE: A/Y /
 PARTICIPANT NAME:
 AGE:
 PARTICIPANT ADDRESS:

1. Informed consent: signed copy received back.	
2. Tape recorder on	
3. Ask participant to confirm known adult in room.	
4. Introduction; a. review purpose of study b. session content c. style of SSI: conversation d. why tape recorded	
5. Orientation: a. identify home locate on map & mark with image b. identify school locate on map & mark with image	
6. Personalisation: a. choice of 'character' image b. choice of 'transport' image	No.
7. SSI a) Mode of transport: i. How does the participant travel to school? ii. How does the participant travel home from school? b) Routine activity: i. What route does the participant take to school? ii. Is the route always the same, if not why? iii. What route do they take home? iv. Is the route always the same, if not why not?	

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ph1 ssi format

Figure 40: extract from the ssi proforma

7.2.1. Recording the SSI

The semi-structured interviews for this first phase were conducted on an individual basis, present was one of the participant children, a member of the schools support staff (at schools A and C), and myself. Each interview was recorded using digital

voice recording equipment for which permission had been previously sought and given within the informed consent process.

As discussed in chapter 5, during the early case studies conducted at schools, no recording was made of the participative sessions other than text based notes resulting from either bullet points emerging from group exercises that teaching staff had written at my request in order to note what I was writing on the classroom dry wipe board. During the VDS case study, analogue recording equipment was used to record the SSI's and was found to be an effective way of freeing the distraction of manually recording everything verbatim which had been the case in my first semi structured interview which took place with two adults during 1999. It was extremely difficult to concentrate on what was being said and the whole session became mechanistic instead of responding to the conversation as it evolved, this goes against the principles of empathic listening to put distractions aside and give attention to the participants and what they are communicating (Lago and Shipton, 1994; Rowland, 1993). Recording facilitates concentration on the conversation rather than writing notes and subsequent analysis of the VDS case study had also shown the benefit of reviewing the session at a later time by elucidating the significance of voice nuances and personal expressions as a means of highlighting the significance of things that could not be picked up easily by other forms of written record making.

There is much more of a proposition emanating from discussions in anthropological perspectives to compliment the dominant written methodologies of recording events by other sources such as video, photography etc. (Grimshaw, 2001; Hockings, 2003; Ruby, 2000). The video method provides both aural and visual records and is seen as a way of ensuring no naturally occurring events are lost, which may be the case by using note taking and audio recordings (Mead, 2003). But due to the limitations of access to equipment and the potential for the camera to be perceived as intrusive in the confines of spaces available, the audio recording had shown itself to be a significant development from the early studies. By means of technological progression the rather robust analogue recording device was replaced by a small, slim digital version which once turned on, almost became part of the 'setting' (see figure 41). Whilst from personal experiences unconnected with this research, having a video camera pointed at you does make you feel either intimidated or self conscious so that you mediate your

actions and responses, which I suggest is not the case to the same degree when using such equipment in an external environment, which would be a future consideration.

7.2.2. Interview introduction

Each interview session began with a re-introduction of who I was and what the project was concerned with to remind the children why they were there, as some weeks had passed since first meeting them in a group to discuss the project. The pro-forma check list was completed to confirm for example that the informed consent had been signed and received, and a prompt to ensure that the recorder was turned on and a request for the children to confirm that there was a known adult present.

A printed plan of the children's neighbourhood was used to support the discussion in the session. The boundaries of the plan were able to be determined from the residential address information that parents or guardians had provided as part of the process of informed consent. Along with the location of the school, the plan encapsulated the extent of each child's journey between home and school and its wider neighbourhood context. Because the plan was intended simply to present an image of the relationship between home and school there was no need for the plans to conform to a conventional scale. Most plans were printed, however, at a large scale (A0 or larger) so that individual streets and buildings could be seen clearly. In preparation for the session the rooms were organised in order that the children sat next to the support staff, with me opposite (adjacent in school B), and the base plan was on a table orientated towards the children. Figure 40 shows the digital recorder and part of one of the printed base plans, the streets and houses are distinguishable individually.

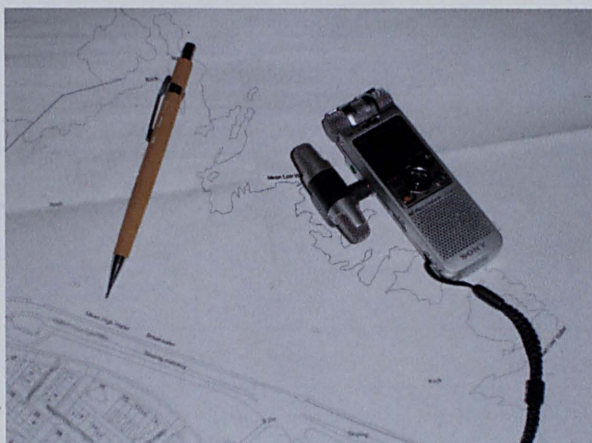


Figure 41: digital recorder with a bi-directional microphone and a base plan

The session objective was to use the semi structured interview to gather data in the form of voice recordings, and additional short notes which would be simple words/bullet points to prompt further discussion during the interview or for bringing attention to a particular aspect of the session when listening to the recordings at a later time. The information that was sought related to the children's experience of places on their school run, and then to expand the discussions to the wider neighbourhood. To facilitate this children were first put at their ease by using a game guided by the theme 'people, place and movement'. This was principally intended as an ice breaker but had an important role to play in helping the children familiarise themselves with both myself as a relative stranger and also with the plan by being engaged in a form of physical activity to find their home on the printed base plan and then mark its location. This technique was an adaptation of the 'NIF' Planning for Real methodology (Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, 1998), where three dimensional modelling helped participants to understand graphical representations of their local environments. It was also consistent with research undertaken on learning styles and conforms to the Kinaesthetic learning style of using physical activities to engage with people (McCarthy cited on British Council 2002), as well as using techniques other than oral or written ones (Ross, 2005a; Punch, 2002; Matthews *et al*, 1998).

This method was developed by preparing an image of a cartoon like representation of



Figure 42: my home

a house, with the text 'My home' added underneath. The image was printed on card, cut out and then mounted on a metal spring clip with a pressure-sensitive adhesive on the bottom (figure 42). The children were helped to locate their home and school through discussion and they placed the spring clip with 'my home' and another one of school (figure 43) at the appropriate places on the plan.

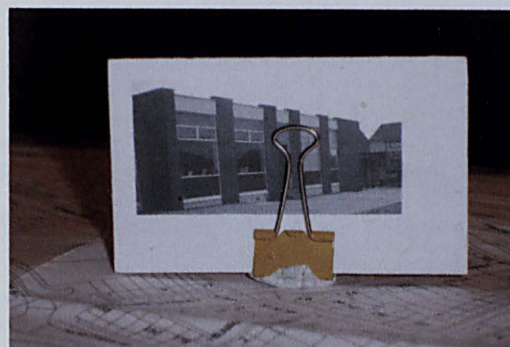


Figure 43: my school

This process helped the children to visualise the relationship between their home and school and gave the subsequent interview a sense of orientation focused on known and familiar surroundings as a way of encouraging an appreciation of personally meaningful places as opposed to the anonymity of the map. Tim Ingold referred to this notion as:

“To use a map is to navigate by means of it: that is, to plot a course from one *location* to another in *space*. Wayfinding, by contrast, is a matter of moving from one *place* to another in a *region*.” (Ingold, 2000, p.219).

Ingold’s definition of a region alludes to the view that:

“... places do not have locations but histories. Bound together by the itineraries of their inhabitants, places exist not in space but as nodes in a matrix of movement... a ‘region’.” (Ibid).

As part of the ‘people, place and movement’ led game the children were asked how they typically got to school, i.e. did they walk, come by car, on the bus or bicycle etc. Their means of getting to school was recorded on the pro-forma sheet and the children were then asked to indicate whether they were alone or with others on the journey. They were then shown three image sheets with of a variety of images printed on them to represent their mode of transport (see appendix 13). The images varied from a variety of private cars, to buses, taxis and also included silhouettes of people on bicycles or walking. The silhouettes had been compiled as part of the observations during case studies, and they were of children arriving or en-route to school. For this research the original images were digitally manipulated into silhouettes in order that they would be unrecognisable as individual people and would also have no individual characteristics relating to dress, style or in some cases gender.

The images included; groups of children, and as illustrated in figure 44, there were also children accompanied by an adult, children with more than one adult and children with adults and other children which may imply siblings or a friend and there were also images of children by themselves. Figure 44 represents a 1:1 scale of the images



used.

Figure 44: children and adults walking and running to school

Once the children had selected a silhouette or vehicle from the image sheet, an individual cut out copy was then inserted into another clip and given to the children to be placed by 'my home' on the plan. Each image had a reference number and this was also noted on the pro-forma sheet (see figure 45).

The University of Sheffield, postgraduate research
 Ian Simkins: The development of tools and techniques for revealing spatial dimensions of place experience in primary school aged children.

DATE: 7/12/05 PARTICIPANT REFERENCE: AY 6 19

PARTICIPANT NAME: _____

AGE: 10

PARTICIPANT ADDRESS: _____

1. Informed consent: signed copy received back.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Tape recorder on	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Ask participant to confirm known adult in room.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Introduction:	
a. review purpose of study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. session content	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. style of SSI: conversation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. why tape recorded	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Orientation:	
a. Identify home – locate on plan & mark with image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Identify school – locate on plan & mark with image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Personalisation:	No.
a. choice of 'character' image	9 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. choice of 'transport' image	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. SSI	
a) Mode of transport:	
i. How does the participant travel to school?	Wattle was worn if cat - cat Cav <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii. How does the participant travel home from school?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Routine activity:	
i. What route does the participant take to school?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii. Is the route always the same, if not why?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii. What route do they take home?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv. Is the route always the same, if not why not?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Figure 45: a
completed profroma
used to ensure parity
with each child

This approach was intended to provide both a means for the children to actively engage with the process in a manner which may have been familiar to many of them through playing board games and also through some of their classroom activities. It was also designed to recognise the likelihood that issues of social interaction as well as mode of transport may have an influence on the children's place experiences. This process ensured that before the actual interview commenced, the base plan was occupied by spatially relational images representing home, school and the child in a mode of transport.

The session's dominant component of the semi structured interview tool was then employed by taking the children through a sequence of predetermined themed discussions reflecting components of the journey they took from their home to school and its wider context. For each theme a series of prompts had been developed and these were used to guide the conversation. In accordance with the semi structured interview method it was important that the style was conversational and not directive, the informal 'chat' being allowed to develop in an ebb and flow, being brought back to the themes when necessary. There was a preliminary categorisation of three areas of interest for the session to explore and these were: physical objects and features of significance; human experience; place association/making. Five themes related to these categories guided the conversation of the semi structured interviews, and these themes were:

1. routine activity
2. imagine and remember
3. nearly there yet?
4. outside at school
5. other places outside

7.2.3. Semi Structured Interview themes

1. Routine Activity:

To establish the children's routine activity patterns they were firstly asked to talk about what route they took to get to school, if the route was always the same and if not what the reasons were for the alternatives. The children were then encouraged to use the base plan to indicate the route by gesticulation or other means, as well as a means of kinaesthetic engagement.

2. Imagine and Remember:

The second theme used an 'imagine and remember' game to establish what was noticed by the children on emerging from their home and along the route to school. This game was introduced by asking in particular the year 3 children if they understood what I meant by using their imagination. If they were unclear I would close my eyes and tell them I was imagining I was on holiday and remembering what it was like, and if it helped them they could close their eyes. They were then asked to

try to imagine they were getting ready for school and coming out of their house, from which door they would leave their home and what was the first thing they noticed on coming out of their house. The children were then asked to talk about things they noticed on the way to school, what they noticed and where and why this was memorable or significant as well as explaining how they felt about these places or features. They were asked if they stopped or paused on the way and if they regularly met or noticed people on the way and if so where that would be. As the children told their story they were encouraged to move the image of themselves along the route on the base plan, again to engage them in a physical activity (see figure 46). As their routine experiences were revealed they were asked to explain what it was that made certain things significant. These were either positive or negative or sometimes a combination of both. This process was repeated for the way home to see what



differences arose from the experience of the route the opposite way and also to try to see if there were any differences related to the mental orientation of being homeward bound instead of school bound.

Figure 46: the school run – an image of a car on a base plan between ‘my home’ and school

3. Nearly There Yet?:

In order to develop an understanding of the children’s perception of neighbourhood, continuity, change and theoretical ownership, they were asked about where in their journey they felt they were approaching school, where they felt they had arrived at school and what they noticed when approaching and arriving. The theme was introduced by the analogy of my own experiences of taking my children somewhere and how they invariably would ask ‘are we nearly there yet?’ This was the metaphor used for this third theme of the session. Whilst the children described the journey to school they continued to be encouraged to move the silhouette on the map to represent themselves on their journey. When the children had finished telling their story of their journey to school they were then asked about the journey home in the same context;

where did they feel they were arriving home, where did their neighbourhood begin and where did they feel was theirs?

4. Outside at School:

The fourth theme related to the children's place preferences and experiences of their school grounds and they were asked to talk about their external school environment. This was led by asking where they went outside at school, what they did there. They were also asked what they liked and disliked about the external school environment, and to explain why, rather than list a set of features or places.

5. Other Places Outside:

In order to widen the scope of the session to understand the children's place perception in a neighbourhood context the last theme developed similar questions. But this time relating to the local environment around where the children lived using the following prompts; where did they go outside, what did they do there, what did they like or dislike and if they had a favourite place to go where was it and what made it special for them?

7.3. Phase 1 summary and reflections

7.3.1. Benefits of employing a physical task

The individual workshop sessions were all voice recorded for the purpose of subsequent evaluation this made evident that it was notable that children were better engaged with the interview process if they had the physical task to do of moving the image representing them on their journey or identifying places on the base plan. When they were doing this their conversation responded accordingly rather than simply responding inertly to questions which some did in a rather mono-syllabic yes and no mode of question and answer rather than explorative conversation. This was concurrent with the research models as well as the kinaesthetic learning style approach to engaging with people, and also with Samantha Punch's assertion of using activities as warm ups and way of relationship building (Punch, 2002), which the physical task of moving and handling the image achieved in part.

7.3.2. A way of listening is a way to understand

A fundamentally important approach adopted for the study was the empathic standpoint used to engage with the children. This was paramount in trying to connect with the children and facilitate their expressions of their experiences (Christensen and James, 2000). Their place experiences were sometimes implicit and required patience and persuasion to reveal the hidden meanings behind what was said in answer to what may have appeared to be a question, rather than an invitation to tell a story, which in essence is what revealed more significant aspects of their experiences. Each child was valued and recognised as an individual and some needed more coaxing and time to develop their thoughts than others.

7.3.3. The potential for an adult domination prospect

Despite the efforts to make the sessions as informal as possible, the issue of being sat opposite a relative stranger looking at a plan of the local area may have been daunting to some shy or naturally reticent children. This was particularly evident with the year three children and despite the coaxing and encouragement some did not respond as well as others or seem comfortable with the conversations. This consideration was reflected upon further as part of the phase 1 evaluative process, and is discussed in the chapter that follows.

7.3.4. The school run is not necessarily a simple journey from a to b

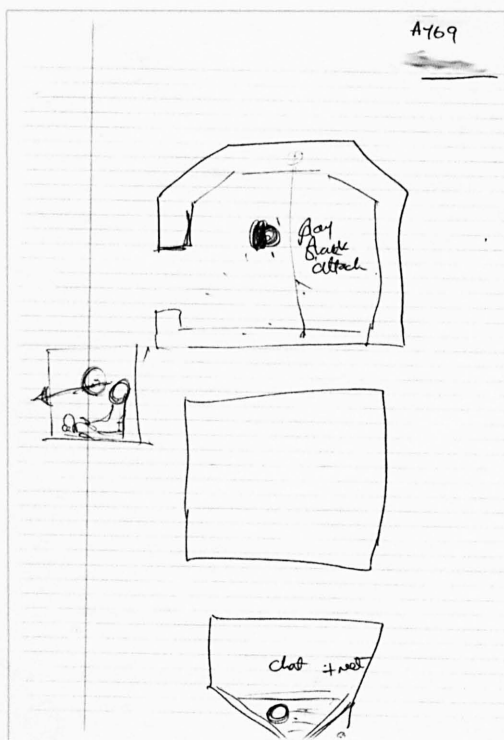
The findings relating to the children's place experiences revealed in this first phase are discussed following an explanation of the methodologies employed in phase two. One aspect of the children's school run that had not been considered prior to the SSI was the complex nature of some journeys. This related to the influences of parental/guardian routines which necessitated a multifaceted mosaic like experience. For example it may include a car drive to a child minder's residence and then a subsequent walk to school, or some days being dropped off at grand parents by car and then a walk to school, or being driven firstly to a siblings school to drop them off and then to their own school.

7.4. The use of Memos

One of the principles of Grounded Theory is the use of memos and diagrams to record themes, issues and thoughts (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These arose either during the sessions or following a review of the recordings. As discussed previously one reason for audio recording was to facilitate listening and obviating the need to make written transcripts, although words, bullet points and phrases were recorded as a spontaneous response during a session or an interval. Visual methods to communicate ideas were often used in the semi structured interview session as a personal visual memo, or with the children to clarify or expand upon a point or comment they were making.

Figure 47, shows such a visual memo as a way of clarifying a proposition of place preference corresponding to use, that Lauren talked about in terms of her use of the school boat in the playground. This transpired to be her favourite part of the playground and within the boat the rear part was “best” because you could play “shark attack”. A contrasting perspective was seen when Lauren said that she liked the front of the boat, but this was when she was waiting for someone, because she could “sit there and keep warm while waiting” she said that she “sometimes looked through the hole to see if they are coming” and it made you “feel cosy and warm there”.

The boat was a significant object within Lauren’s playground, but it also held



associations which were dependant on her activity and social perspectives as well as her own feelings and experience. Many other children at the school who took part in the study also felt strongly about the boat and this is discussed in more detail in chapter 9. Without clarification and the use of the sketch the significance of this place would not have been revealed, the visual memo could be identified with the individual, and was an explicit way of recording the significance of a particular place to Lauren.

8. Participatory workshops Phase 2 – Cognitive mapping/drawing, word pictures and wish poems

Phase: 2 *Relational Mode: one to one*

Task Based Activities

Dominant component 1: Visual

Tool: Cognitive mapping/drawing

Dominant component 2: Written

Tools: Word picture and wish poem

Secondary component: Oral

Tool: Conversation to discern meanings of drawings and explain word picture and wish poem content

Non Task Based

Tool: Non participant observation

8.1. Introduction

The methodology for the second phase was planned in the provisional methodological framework and outlined to employ a combination of tools, as shown above. Themes that would be explored through employing these tools would be informed by the phase one semi structured interviews. The dominant component for the second phase workshop activities would be a visual method, a form of cognitive mapping (Romice and Frey, 2003; Clark and Moss 2001; Ingold, 2000; Hart 1997). This had been developed in the case studies in the form of drawings. The session would also include the use of wish poems (Sanoffa, 2000a; 2000b) as discussed in chapter 5. These techniques would again be framed in a semi structured interview approach of using predetermined themes to stimulate conversation. This would be the secondary oral component of the session. It was also proposed that a non task based method of non participant observation (Flick, 2006; May, 2001; Kumar, 1999) would be used to observe the children on their route to school.

The cognitive mapping was used as a tool to engage the children in graphically expressing their existing neighbourhood experiences pictorially through their choice of what they drew and where it was located in relation to other features and places.

Accompanied with discussion this revealed a further layer of insight into the place perceptions of the children, the conversation that accompanied the drawing task was therefore important. In chapter 5 there has been a discussion of conducting cognitive mapping/drawing workshops with children in the practice based case studies and what these produced. At one school, a teacher from a class of children I had not worked with gave me the 'product' of her class's days work in the form of a number of pleasing and appealing drawings. But because I had not been present when they were drawn it was not possible to discern the meanings behind them. I would have to make assumptions as to what the children were communicating, which would also be skewed by the issue of my adult bias. Samantha Punch (Punch, 2002) also alludes to this issue when she engaged in a similar exercise with a large group of children and was unable to talk to each of them to find out what their drawings were communicating. This is a valid distinction between finding out what they had drawn in terms of the objects rather than why they drew them (Punch, 2002), Driskell (2002) states that in the context of participative exercise with children that "... the discussion that develops around the drawing is the most important part of this exercise – not the drawing itself" (p.117).

Following completion of the cognitive mapping/drawing task, the wish poem would be used to encourage the children to express what they would like their neighbourhood to be like, or what their aspirational neighbourhood was. This method had been used in case studies in order that children could express what they would like to happen in school grounds improvement projects by using the prompt 'I wish my school grounds had....', this was used in discussions along with 'I like, I don't like, My favourite flower/tree/shape/colour...' to understand the children's preferences and reveal some of the hidden meanings which can be concealed by only focusing on object or feature specific issues.

8.2. Methodological review and refinement following phase 1

As part of the planning of the phase 2 participatory session, a review of the first phase not only revealed some interesting insights into the spatial experience of the children's everyday activities, additionally and more importantly to the study's aim, it also raised questions relating to the methodological framework as well as the research environments the children found themselves in. These issues would influence the

subsequent phases of participation and a refinement of the methodological tools that would be used.

8.2.1. The research environment – a barrier to engagement

Issues regarding the effect on the children of the research environment were noticed in the way some children appeared less engaged than others. This was manifest through body language; typically with arms tightly folded across their upper body, heads slightly bowed and also being reticent to talk about their journey to school in other than monosyllabic answers despite encouragement and coaxing. This was probably compounded by the unfamiliarity of talking to a relative stranger on a one-to-one basis as well as the situation of being asked to engage in a conversation rather than a didactic question and answer approach which may have been the more familiar when dealing with an adult in a school environment in a teaching session for example. Hill (1997) discusses the benefits of one-to-one interviews as being private and more personalised, however he states that talking to a stranger can be inhibiting and intimidating. Hood *et al* (1996) discuss the social power differences between the interviewer and children and the restrictions that this sometimes has on children's confidence. It is suggested that this can be addressed by children's support by their peers if the interview takes place in a group where often freer discussion can take place (Cele, 2006; Greene and Hogan, 2005; Hood *et al*, 1996). The attempt to give the children a physical task to do by asking them to move a picture across a map to some degree mitigated the issue and was in keeping with ice breaking activities of other research (Punch, 2002). Although there were further difficulties for some children who struggled to locate journeys on the base plan which may also have been difficult for some to comprehend in terms of its two dimensional and rather formal representations of the streets and places they inhabited on a day to day basis. There was a danger of a sense of inadequacy or even humiliation for those that could not do this task. In other words what was meant to 'informalise' an interview process for some (not all) became an unwelcome challenge that would not have the same appeal as a continuous process such as a drawing, which can be adapted, changed and added to.

8.2.2. Reaction through reflection

A change in the relational mode

Following evaluation of the first phase of the study informed by the recorded interviews a review was conducted of the methodological framework for the subsequent phase and refinements were made to the design of the second participatory workshops. The first development was to address the study environment issue which appeared to promote the disengagement of the reticent and in order to alleviate this, subsequent workshop phases would be undertaken in a different relational mode. This would be done by conducting the sessions with pairs of children at schools A and C and small groups of two or three children at school B depending on the distribution of children across different classes. This would introduce a form of peer support (Cele, 2006; Greene and Hogan, 2005; Hood *et al*, 1996). This had obvious pitfalls since it was possible and in some cases probable that this may generate an element of peer influence (Christensen and James, 2000), but this was felt to be acceptable because it would be ultimately balanced with the personal and individual stories that had emerged from phase one that had been conducted on a one-to-one basis. Another potential aspect would be to introduce peer conflict if the children did not interact well, however for the practicalities of the study this could only be accommodated by suggesting that the pairs were self elected where possible.

Changing the component emphasis in an adaptation of tools

The second methodological development was to adapt and refine the wish poem technique. In order to make the session as comfortable in the context of its activities as possible, a review of the use of the written wish poem and word picture was made. This was in response to any stress that may have been involved in asking the children to write about their neighbourhoods. Although the technique had been used widely in previous case studies, it was in class groups where contributions were recorded on a board at the front of the classroom by me for later evaluation or in one of the later studies year 6 children had been asked to individually write a poem. The potential problems of the technique had also been brought into focus by one parent's comment in connection with their child's apprehension of being asked to do some writing and therefore chose not to take part in the study. It had also been the subject of conversation with some children after the phase one activities by way of them asking

what they would be doing next time and some, especially the younger ones were also apprehensive although this concern was not exclusive to the year 3 children.

In view of this, and also the limitations of the potential amount of time it may take for the children to generate ideas and communicate them in writing, an adaptation and fusion of techniques was evolved in the form of a 'wish picture' which would use the context of the wish poem to stimulate the children's aspiration. The framing of its subject matter would be that of a word picture technique that sought peoples aspirations for place in terms of what they would like to experience (Simkins and Thwaites, 2006; Alexander *et al*, 1995). The fusion of these two written methodologies would now be expressed through a visual task in the form of a second cognitive map/drawing – a wish picture.

Reflection on Non participant observation

A further change in the outline method structure was the omission of non-participant observation. This again had proved an extremely effective technique in the case studies, but this was in the context of school grounds as a tool for observing activity and preference at a specific location. The first phase interviews had however revealed the complexity and variety of the school journeys, and it would not be practically possible to observe each child on their school run. It would be possible to observe their arrival at school, but this was deemed inconsequential to the study and of little value compared to the resources it would require in time to undertake. It remains a valuable technique, and is appropriate when the study is site or place specific which was not the primary object of this research.

The adoption of an alternative ethnographic biased tool

Some means of site specific investigation to clarify or question aspects of certain place experiences where the children's comments related to a particular location specific place, object, feature or activity was of value. This was undertaken in a different context; where non participant observation seeks to observe interactions of people with each other and their environment and is a 'snap shot' of a moment in time, a different technique was employed at a time when the children were either not present, or if they were present they may be engaged in an activity other than the one they had alluded to in their conversations. The adaptation developed for this scenario had been employed in much of the preceding case study work and was termed

‘anthropological tracking’ (Thwaites and Simkins, 2007, 2004). This is a form of observational practice involving “... watching for traces of people, rather than people themselves.” (ibid, 2007, p 87). This method of investigation has been used as a means to recognise evidence of human activity in the environment when people are not present by taking regard of signs of human interaction through evidence of their patterns of movement, activity or place occupation. This has resonance in Lynch and Rivkin’s (1959) work where they accompanied subjects on a walk to discern individual perceptions of their landscape. Not only were features such as iconic buildings significant but also patterns of human life and movement as well as the significance of the quality of the city floor and distaste of the alleyways which were receptacles for dirt and perceived odour.

Often during site visits a great deal of information can be discerned about peoples use of a place by observing and locating the remnants of human intervention or presence, such as in the manifestation of desire lines across vegetation, the accumulation of debris such as chewing gum, cigarette ends and discarded take away packaging. In some instances these observations would be used to clarify interview outcomes, and help to elicit more information of the children’s place experiences at a particular location. At school C for example a walk around the school grounds revealed evidence of well used and, by implication, significant places. A discarded piece of wood attached to ropes that was a toy of some sort and well trodden compacted earth devoid of grass showed this place to be well used (figure 48) as a place to hide or socialise out of sight of playground staff.



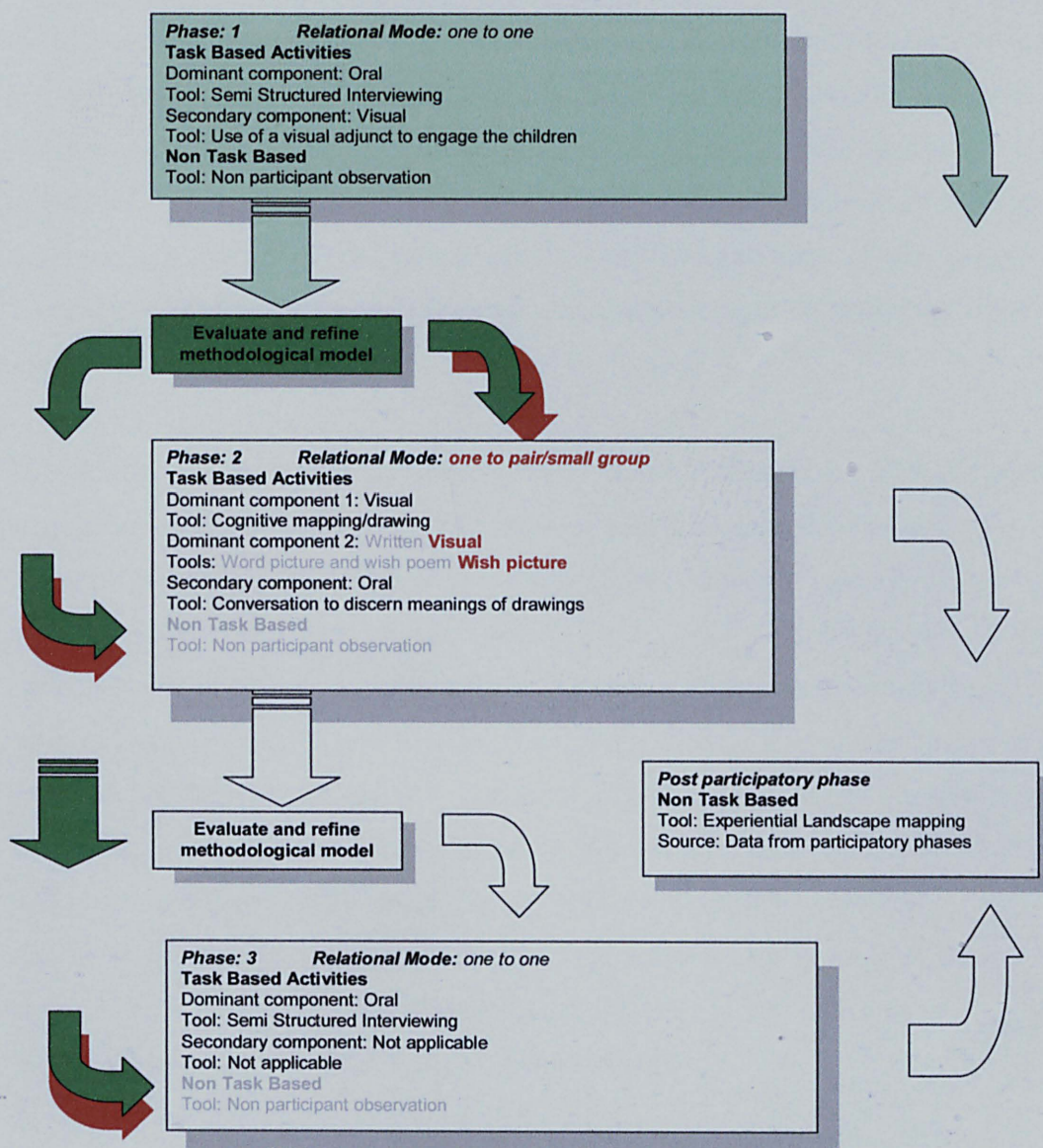
Another example emanated from several children who had remarked at school A about the significance of a local park, which was one of their favourite places in the local neighbourhood, and an anthropological tracking observation was made of the park along with using other methodological tools. The outcomes and significance of which will be discussed in chapter 12.

Figure 48: anthropological tracking reveals a well used place

8.3. Revised sequential methodological model

As a consequence of the review, a revised sequential model of methodological constituents was developed. Figure 49 shows the refined model, with the completed phase one shaded in light green. The changes resulting from the review of phase one are indicated by grey text for components or tools that have been replaced or omitted. The red text indicates the replacement tool or components which are: to change the relational mode of phase two; change the second dominant component to a visual method of a wish picture tool. In addition the removal of the non-participant observation method from phases two and three is indicated by grey text.

Figure 49: Revised and refined sequential model of methodological constituents post phase one evaluation



8.4. Implementing the reflective response: The cognitive mapping and drawing exercises

8.4.1. Preparation, equipment and the contrasting school environments

To facilitate the second phase workshops and in consideration of ensuring materials appropriate for the children and the method were available (Punch, 2002; Mooney, 2000), a range of drawing equipment and media were provided for the children to use. This included blank A3 sized paper, pencils and sharpeners, rubbers and a range of coloured pencils and wax crayons, enough for a group of up to four children to use at the same time. The session was again digitally recorded and a further proforma was designed to guide the workshop on a consistent basis across the schools. Figure 50 shows a completed proforma at school B where a group of three year 6 children worked together on this session. It can be noted again that the fields on the form act as tick box reminders, but also there are comments written that appeared significant. These would be used to stimulate investigation through conversation and as a reminder for the review session that would take place at a later time when listening to the recordings. Notes on this example relate to one favourite place of play being a “cemetery”, whilst a classmate’s wish was for a “more colourful swimming baths” and the third wanted their neighbourhood to be “tidier”.



The group of children were allocated a group number to identify the particular session when referencing the recording media, and each child retained their individual reference numbers for the purpose of the study. For example in figure 50, the group was G6_4 which comprised of participants BY6_10, BY6_12 and BY6_18. This was extremely important in order to be able to associate particular comments with a particular child and then track any themes or contradictions through the study whilst retaining the children’s anonymity. The group referencing system would also allow later evaluation and potential recognition of peer influence and copying. Whilst this system was employed in the study’s administration, the children were not a party to it, and they remained ‘real’ by writing their names on the back of their work. I too recorded their given and family names on the proforma which I have subsequently digitally manipulated in order that they are unreadable.

Figure 50: example of a paired/small group cognitive mapping/drawing proforma



me 11-11-20

The University of Sheffield, postgraduate research
 Ian Simkins: The development of tools and techniques for revealing spatial dimensions of
 place experience in primary school aged children.


SESSION 2 – PAIRED COGNITIVE MAPPING

PARTICIPANT NAME: ~~_____~~   GG-4 - stay in country

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE: B/Y 6110

PARTICIPANT NAME: ~~_____~~   Guy Bates - near colourhill

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE: B/Y 6112

PARTICIPANT NAME: ~~_____~~  - redier face

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE: B/Y 6118

DATE: 10/2/06. ✓

Tape recorder on	
Ask participant to confirm known adult in room.	✓
Introduction:	
a) review purpose of study	✓
b) session content	✓
Drawing 1: mapping existing	
This is what it's like outside:	✓
i) where I live	✓
ii) and on the way to school	✓
iii) and at my school	✓
Now add:	
iv) This is me doing what I like doing best and where.	✓
Drawing 2: mapping aspiration	
This is what I would like outside to be like:	✓
i) where I live	✓
ii) and on the way to school	✓
iii) and at my school.	✓
Now add:	
iv) This is me, and what I would like to do outside, and where I could do it.	✓

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Figure 51 shows the room layout at each school for this phase; the contrast between the school environments was discussed earlier, and this aspect of the effect of the research environment on the children and me is returned to in subsequent discussions.

Figure 51: the contrasting school environments within which the study took place



8.4.2. The first drawing – visual communication of existing experience: a cognitive map/drawing of a journey through their neighbourhood

At the start of the second phase the children were re-introduced to the project as it was some three months since the first session. This took the form of a review of the study purpose and then an outline of the current session's content. The children were asked to write their name on the paper and 'drawing 1', then turn it over and draw a map, or if they preferred, to think of it as drawing a picture. This first map or picture was to discern what they felt important about their existing environment which would be elicited visually; by way of what they chose to include in their map and orally by asking them to explain their drawing. As with the semi structured interview, the mapping session would be 'driven' by pre-determined themes to understand the children's environmental neighbourhood experience that would be sequentially based upon the common theme of the school journey spoken about in the first session. This sequential expression was proposed from aspects of works such as Lynch (1960); Cullen (1971) and Bentley *et al* (1985) in order to view a place as having potential nodes of experience analogous with the perspective of 'region' (Ingold, 2000) and focused on perceptions of neighbourhood.

Three themes to realise the sequential experience were transformed into stimuli for a visual response to the following statements:

1. 'This is what it's like outside; where I live'

This was explained as a way that I could understand what it was like where they lived as I had never been there, and that they should choose what they wanted to draw in order that the picture would 'tell me' what it was like.

2. 'This is what it is like on the way to school'

3. 'This is what it is like at school'

The context of the picture was explained that it was like a map or a picture to represent their own journey. The children were encouraged to start from home as the most familiar place from which to orientate themselves and develop the picture as if they were on the journey to school. The production of the drawing was used as a generator for discussion about what they chose to represent and why they chose to include this in the picture. More paper was offered if the children required more room,

and conversation was as informal as possible, talking about Christmas holiday experience, presents etc. In order to discern environmental preferences relating to the map that they had drawn a fourth proposition was included in the activity by asking them to complete their drawing by adding:

‘This is me, doing what I like doing best and where’.

Some children drew themselves in more than one location, most added an expression on the face of their image indicating a particular mood they associated with what they had drawn, which was also evident in other studies that I had become acquainted with (Cele, 2006; Wilson, 2006). Once the children felt that they had completed the drawing they were given the opportunity to colour it in if they wished and if the time limitations allowed it. The drawings included places the children liked as well as those disliked, and again an explanation for this was sought and the resulting discussions recorded so that partial transcripts could be made later. In addition pictures of the children engaged in drawing were taken (in conformance with the ethical framework) and in the analysis stage a digital copy would be made of the drawing for examination. This first drawing was intended to reveal aspects of the way the children experienced and used their existing surroundings by choosing what to include in their map as well as finding out where they most would like to be in the environment that they had drawn and what it was that they would be doing there.

8.4.3. The second drawing – visual communication of aspirational experience: a wish picture

Following completion of the first drawing a new sheet of blank A3 paper was given to the children. Again they were requested to write their name on one side and ‘drawing 2’, in order to record which picture was the existing experience and which was the aspirational. The children were asked to turn their paper over and to draw the second picture; the ‘wish picture’. This method was designed as a fusion of written methodologies into a visual form as described earlier, in order to reveal the children’s aspirations for their neighbourhood. It was explained to the children in the context of asking them to think about what they would like to change about where they lived, or if they had a wish, and could wish for anything then use their imagination to draw;

‘this is what I would like outside to be like:

- **where I live**
- **on the way to school**
- **and at school.’**

Some children chose to draw a sequential journey of various places and experiences, whilst others drew one specific place that they felt either required improvement or that presently did not exist in their locality. Again informal conversations about what the children drew was used to try and reveal what was the significance behind what they were drawing. On completion of the drawing the children were asked to draw themselves again but this time they were asked to think of wishing for what they really wanted to do outside using the theme:

‘this is me, and what I would like to do outside, and where I could do it’

Again some children drew themselves with an expression on their face associating their sense of place with a particular emotion or mood. Some children drew themselves alone, other children drew an image of them self with friends, and sometimes they drew themselves in more than one place in their picture.