

When designers meet children

What adults can learn from children





Creativity, play and transgression: children transforming spatial design

Jo Birch, Rosie Parnell[§], Maria Patsarika and Maša Šorn

School of Architecture, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK



Spatial Designers co-design with children



Creativity
Play
Transgression

Themes emerged

Creativity- the “what if”



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

“They came with some completely whacky ideas [...] it’s almost that thing where you go completely whacky and you come back a few steps rather than starting here and not feeling like you can go much further. It’s almost like it gave a little bit of a license.”

Play



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Childhood is the dominant paradigm for play and children are the experts.



“Habitat for creative collaboration”

“Refreshingly unafraid to say the wrong thing”

“Consented to or perhaps even facilitated imperfections”

“Questioning, critical, uninhibited”



Beyond the imaginary world

“It’s surprising, actually, they can also bring a very practical understanding of what’s important within the environment to them, which can be overlooked by adults [...], they don’t see any reason why [crazy] stuff shouldn’t be part of design, whereas adults, we ‘have ‘taste’.”

“Unlike an adult style of adherence to the ‘status quo’, children were implied to respond more to the moment”



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Transgression with intent

‘You have to listen out for the teacher saying, “oh, no, you can’t do that, so don’t do that”’.

“we kind of came up with some ideas and brought in a palette ... and one of the staff members was like ‘I don't like yellow’ so automatically we were in big trouble [...]





“you don't know what you're going to
face when you go in.”





Questions to ponder

‘Things that as an adult you just wouldn’t notice
[...] it definitely widens your vision of what’s
around by looking at children, they can see things
that we can’t’.