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Making children's rights mainstream: Taking children's participation into account when (re)designing a public play space.

Child in the City Seminar, 19-20 May, 2022, Cascais, Portugal, Rianne Jansens

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Presentation outline



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-  Introduction to myself and my PhD
-  Background: Children's right to share their views and children's right to play
-  Aim and purpose: Opportunity to mainstream the application of children's rights in local policy planning
-  Desired outcome: Enhancing all children's participation in designing public playspace

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Children's participation:

"individuals or groups of children having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely **express their views**, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views **given due weight** in accordance with their age and maturity."

Art.12-13-15-17 and GC 12



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Children's right to rest, leisure, **play**, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts:

Children's play is "**any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured** by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may **contribute to the creation of environments** in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation."

Art. 31 and GC17


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Children's participation



 Adult-driven process (Bae, 2009; Lundy, 2007; Horgan et al., 2017)

 A voice based approach (Bae, 2009; Clark et al., 2006; Horgan, 2017)


 Not often outside formal institutions like schools (Nolas, 2015)


 Giving due weight is not well operationalised, impact on policy making processes is unclear (Clark et al., 2006; Lundy, 2007)

 Not relating the topics of discussion to everyday occupations (Clark et al., 2006; Davey et al., 2011; Horgan et al., 2017; Tuukkanen et al., 2013)


Children's right to play

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 No agreement on definition of play (Lynch et al., 2018)

 Art 31 and GC 17 not fully understood (McKendrick et al., 2018)

 Play for the sake of play and play like activities (Besio et al., 2017)

 Lack of inclusive playspaces in community setting, the lack of environmental support (Prelwitz et al., 2007; Moore et al., 2020; Woolley, 2013)

 Children's experiences and perspectives on play are not enough known and represented (Lynch et al., 2018; Wenger et al., 2021)

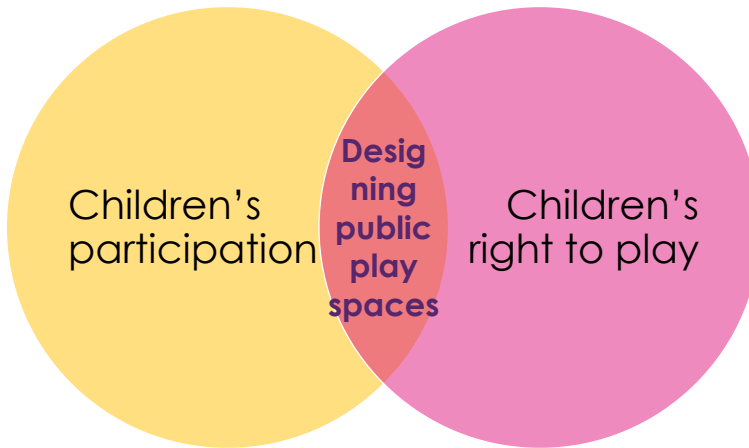
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Key message:
Designing public playspaces = major opportunity to
mainstream the application of children's rights in local policy
planning



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Public playspaces



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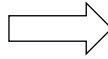
- 🌈 "A **good playspace** therefore needs to be designed to provide good quality play experiences, and to provide affordances for varied forms of free play that incorporate challenge, stimulation, personal preferences, and fun." (Lynch et al., 2020; Woolley et al., 2013).
- 🌈 **Planners** have attention for children but the everydayness of their doing seems not to be understood well (Horton et al., 2006), research about rural areas is scarce (Freeman, 2020).
- 🌈 **Municipalities** are confronted with a lack of policy and guidelines to value play and to create appropriate play facilities (Davey et al., 2011).
- 🌈 Designing an inclusive public playspace **requires knowledge** from childhood, from disability, from play, from design and demands collaboration with stakeholders at all stages (Woolley, 2013).
- 🌈 Limited availability and understanding of designing **inclusive** playgrounds (Lynch et al., in Encarnação, et al., 2018)

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First phase of PhD: Review of existing guidelines



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Possible outcomes:

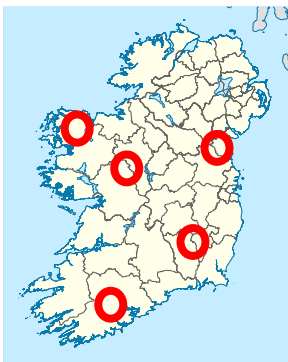
Different guidelines for (re)design of public playspaces
→ strategies for enhancing children's participation

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Second phase of PhD: Review of experiences in Irish municipalities



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Possible outcomes:

Suggestions/strategies on how children's participation is currently done and can be incorporated in guidelines on (re)design of public playspaces.

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Third phase of PhD: Children's experiences and perspectives



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What do **young children and children with disabilities** need to share their views in a (re)designing process of their municipalities' playspace?

Possible outcomes:

Strategies for participation of young children and children with disabilities in (re)designing a public playspace.

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Key concepts in my project



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Application of UN
CRC in children's
daily lives

Foregrounding
seldom heard
children as
community
members

Supporting local
policymakers in
operationalising
children's rights

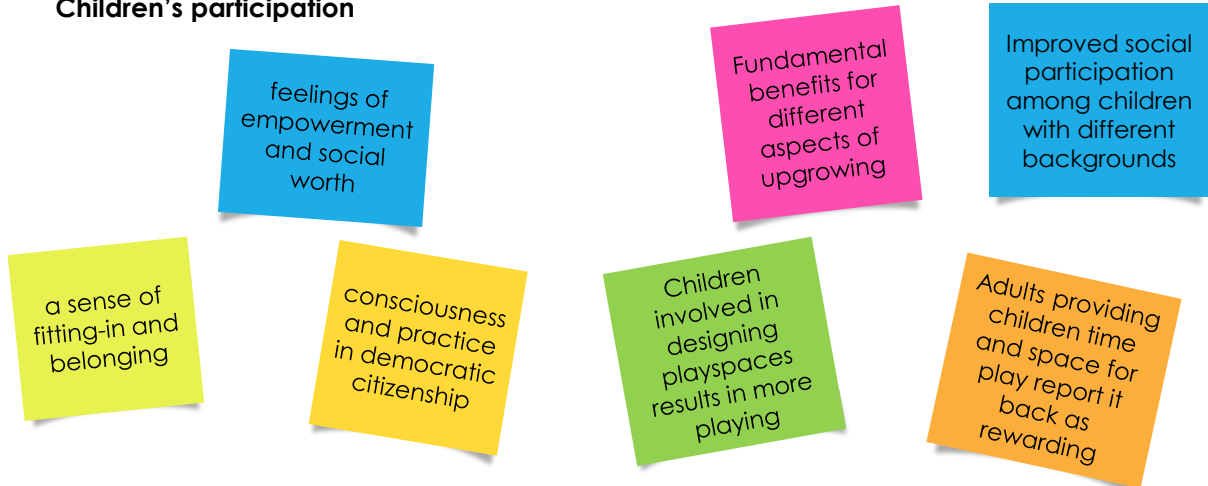
Literature describes benefits of children's participation and play



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Children's participation

Children's play



Jansson et al., 2012; McKendrick et al., 2018; Nicholson et al., 2014; Thomas, 2007; Schoeppich et al., 2021

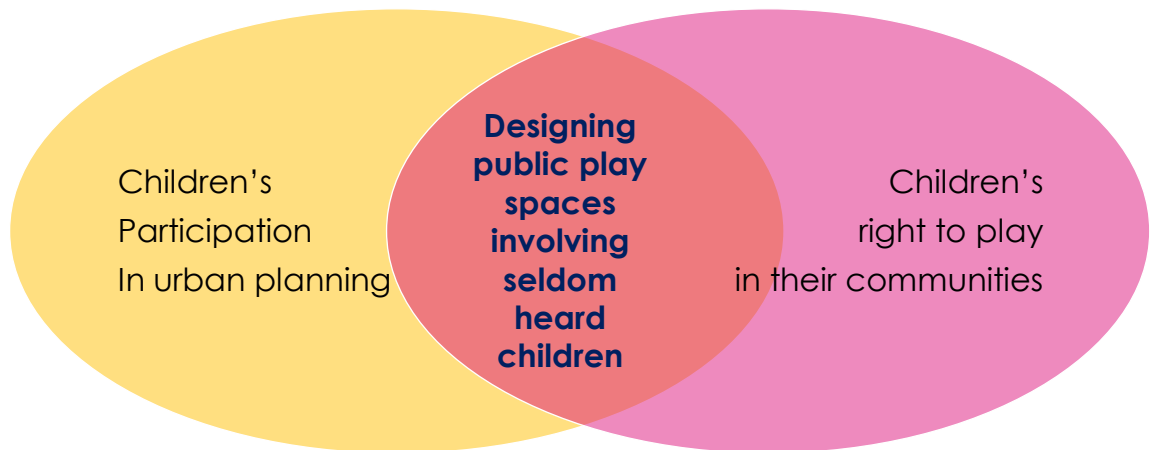
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Contribution to an evident opportunity to mainstream the application of children's rights in local policy planning



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Thank you for your attention



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