

Street Safety/ City for All

8

Key Unit

THE CONTEXT

Streets are - or should be - children's daily environment, in which they move, interact and grow. In most "developed" cities, children are increasingly disappearing from the urban scene. They are not using public space and when they are, it is under the watchful eye of adults, caretakers and authorities. While there are some good reasons for this such as concerns over safety and security, the cost to both the child and urban life is significant.

- ▶ THE IMAGE
- ▶ Street Safety / City for All
- ▶ Living streets
- ▶ Activities



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THE IMAGE

Street Safety / City for All



The picture vividly captures a “safe street”. The children are in the middle of the street and yet, they appear to feel safe. It could be your city. It looks like an old picture but it is also a very innovative one, a promise for the future. Look closely at it, what do you see? Who’s in the picture and who’s missing? Does it seem like a safe place to you? Why? Why not? We think that there is a lot happening outside the picture which contributes to children’s safety and makes it possible for them to play as they are.

Who and what is out there, along the street front? Who and what make it possible for the children to live and happily play alongside the cars, without worries?

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1 Young people need access to open spaces to meet, interact and play.

2 These paths and places need to be safe and accessible to all people, young and old alike.

3 They can be green spaces, like parks or gardens, or have more specific goals like: bike paths, skate parks, street theatres, etc.

4 All young people, including those with disabilities should be able to enjoy the city and these public spaces.

Living streets

If people are the heart and blood of the city, then the streets and roads would be the veins, connecting and accommodating all that is important in it.

Safe streets, safe city for children and youth?

In all countries the total number of cars has increased enormously in the last 20 years. What we all advocate for is that this increase shouldn't necessarily imply an increase in injuries and fatalities due to traffic accidents. In fact, in many developed countries there has been a decrease in traffic accidents involving children, even while traffic volumes have increased.

However, traffic hasn't adjusted to the children, but rather, children have adjusted to traffic. Children don't play outside as much as they used to, mainly because of unsafe traffic. When children go outside to go to school or to play with a friend, they usually are supervised by parents. The freedom of 4-to 12-year-old children has decreased; to what extent can this decrease in freedom of movement be seen as an explanation for the decrease in the number of traffic injuries?

¹ Tjeerd Deelstra, Childstreet safe 2005.

One generation ago children played outside more often than nowadays. Children were outside their homes most of their time and had more freedom of movement. The games children played demanded a lot of (public) space. Today playing outside is not an obvious choice for a lot of children. Playing in the streets is hardly the norm anymore. Children now tend to mostly play outside in backyards or squares.

Invisible children

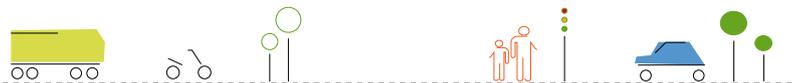
"Children with their playful and particular behavior are often overlooked in the process of city planning and street design, just as they are physically overlooked in daily traffic. As a result, the possibilities for children to safely use the street to play, walk and bike are limited."

Excluded members

The excluded members of the community include children and the elderly, the physically and mentally impaired, the poor and disempowered, people who do not speak the "dominant" language or know its culture and moves well... the list is endless.

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Children's health

It is well known that free playing outdoors and independent mobility have a positive effect on children's physical and mental health. City planning and institutions that manage public space should therefore create a rich learning environment for children that allows them to gradually grow into independent little pedestrians and cyclists in their town or city. By creating such favorable conditions for children, urban planners and managers will also be developing an environment beneficial to all, not only facilitating the mobility of the elderly and the handicapped, but also stimulating people in general to meet each other, experience city life and discover the urban cultural heritage.²

A sense of community

Research and experiences have demonstrated that on a safe street, more people know their neighbors and their children, and they have more friends to rely on in times of difficulty. Streets and public open spaces are important components the livability of a community and should be made safe and accessible for everyone, whether young or old, those who live in the neighborhood and those who work there: pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Get involved

Around the world, many important organizations and coalitions, as well as National and Local Authorities, are taking action to change our streets and cities. One very interesting approach to creating "streets for all" goes under the name of "Complete Streets" (<http://www.completestreets.org>)

"The streets of our cities and towns are an important part of the livability of our communities. They ought to be for everyone, whether young or old, motorist or cyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. But too many of our streets are designed only for speeding cars, or worse, for

creeping traffic jams. Now, in communities across the country, a movement is growing to complete the streets."

Right to participate

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children possess the right to receive information, participate, express their views and be listened to regarding all matters which regard their well-being.

Children as street safety activists

Creating a traffic-safe environment can't be left alone to the urban planners and policy makers at the city's level. Children must have a say about the many causes which render our streets unsafe and /or inaccessible for children.

A coalition

Teachers, parents and community networks are the children's fundamental allies.

Educational Approach – note for teachers

By starting from personal meanings of safety and focusing strongly on "street safety", children and youth become the protagonists of a process in which they explore multiple meanings of mobility and safety in their environment.

Therefore, an educational approach to safety should focus on both the real, experienced environmental and social conditions, as well as people's perceptions and feelings regarding "safety" in these places and in general.

In order to improve children's and young people's feelings (and real experiences) of urban safety, school-based activities should channel their active, critical attention towards all of the above factors. The significance of safety needs to be contextualized in real, known places and become the object of dialog and collaborative action between children, youth and all interested community actors.

² Inviting streets for children, Janneke Zomervrucht, policy consultant, Veilig Verkeer NL, former 3VO (National Traffic Safety Organisation of the Netherlands)

YOUR ideas

“Three places where I feel safe.”³

What are “safe streets”? Are our streets safe? What do the various actors think? How can we all contribute to making our streets safer and greener?

■ Brief

Activate and focus individual and group reflection concerning the characteristics or qualities of places which facilitate a feeling of “safety”.

(In a second moment), reflect on how to apply these considerations (ingredients) to the “unsafe” places, selected by children, which they wish to transform.

■ Materials

Sheets of A4 paper, fine and thick point colored pens, large newsprint wall sheets.

■ Steps

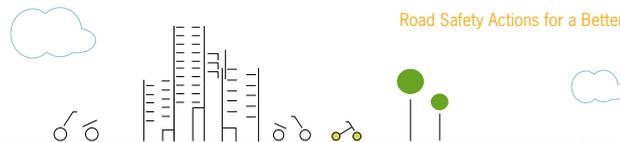
The students are invited to individually list 3 places where they feel safe. Their descriptions should be as detailed as possible. They should be stimulated to not only describe the spatial characteristics of the “place” but above all the social aspects and relations, the atmosphere (how do I feel? who’s present? how do they contribute? etc.) According to project phase, these places can be domestic, in school, in the neighborhood, etc. They can be daily places experienced in the neighborhood (if they’re lucky!) or from special occasions, in non-local sites (vacations, relatives’ homes, etc.). They reflect on a wide array of experiences in diversified settings and will serve to enrich the components which may, eventually, be included in the project.

³ Activity based on “Five Favorite Activities” by Randy Hester. Source: Community Design Primer. Ridge Times Press, Berkeley 1990.



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▶▶ When the students have had time to think and jot down notes or sketches on personal sheets (or in notebooks), - their individual reflections are transcribed onto centrally located large newsprint sheets. Three columns have been previously traced on the sheet. Insert the “places” into the first column and the “description” in second. The third column (“ingredients”, and/or “determinants”) being the most important, will probably require some discussion before the children address it. In fact, the “game” is to describe in detail the physical and social characteristics (or “qualities”) of the settings which, according to the students, most contribute to their feeling safe.

In the discussion, the students can identify which “determinants” appear most often; where there are relationships between determinants and types of places; and which “determinants” can be generalized across types of places (homes, schools, streets, neighborhood, etc.).

This activity, of course, can be also focused on “places where I feel unsafe”.

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YOUR initiatives

■ Objectives

To get students to change their perspectives about mobility and to find alternative transport for going to and from school.

■ Materials

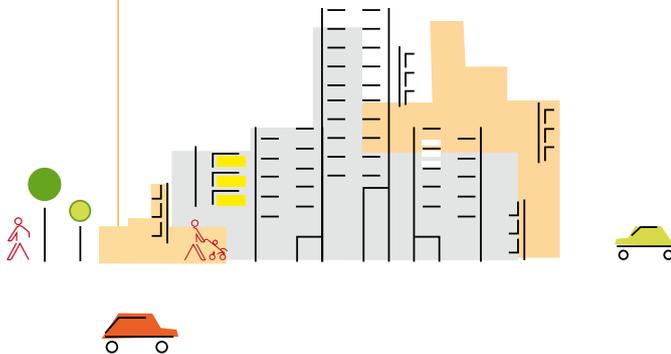
Internet, pens, paper.

■ Steps

Students should question the way they go to school, the type of transport they use, and how they can participate in providing greener mobility. Based on their analysis, they can discuss and implement new ways of going to school and develop a plan of action to be safe and reduce their carbon footprint for their journey to school, e.g. taking public transport.

Walking to school can be unsafe; therefore the students should write a letter to their local government asking for action to be taken. For primary school students, they could ask for a Pedibus system where local authorities provide helpers to take the children on foot from a designated area to the school. Parents will leave the students at the designated area and the helper or helpers will take them on a route to school.

Secondary school students could ask for safer crossings in a one mile radius of the school providing safer access for students to walk to school.



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YOUR ideas

■ Objectives

Define a manifesto for the school about road safety and mobility.

■ Materials

Pens, paper, computers, internet, board.

■ Steps

The students will create a manifesto on road safety. A manifesto is a document or book which outlines the key issues of an organisation. It is usually a document that can be widely available to the public. It can be of a political nature, perhaps the most famous manifesto was Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*. In this respect a manifesto can be revolutionary, but most important, it is designed to stimulate debate.

It should be written in clear and understandable language. One of the hopes of a manifesto is that it raises awareness and gets people to seek more information about the organisation. In addition, the manifesto can be used as a starting point for public discussion, as some readers will undoubtedly critique it while others defend it. These discussions can help refine the manifesto, as members of the public bring up important issues which were not addressed in the original document.

As an accumulation of their work, students will collect together all the work they have done over the course of the project to create a manifesto on road safety. The

manifesto will cover the key areas of the project which include:

1. Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2012
2. Risky behaviors
3. Responsible behaviors
4. Actors of prevention
5. Circular Economy
6. The future of the car
7. The future of cities
8. Safe streets

The first steps will be to think about the main ideas that were extracted from each of these areas and list them. From this list, the students can then extract the key areas in order to organize their work. The manifesto shouldn't be a compilation of the work done on the project but a text that has been rewritten to clearly express the main ideas of the project.

The manifesto will ultimately be designed for and accessible to all the students in the school.

YOUR ideas YOUR initiatives

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YOUR initiatives

■ Objectives

Define a manifesto for the school about road safety and mobility and distribute it.

■ Materials

Pens, paper, computers.

■ Steps

Once the main ideas have been clarified the students should break into groups and then the teacher will give each group a specific chapter to develop. This way there will only be one manifesto produced by the whole class.

One of the most important aspects of creating a manifesto is making it available to a wide audience: distribution. The following is a list of possible distribution methods:

- ICT: create a webpage, blog or wiki exclusively for the manifesto. In addition, a poster in paper format should be produced to display the URL throughout the school.

- A book: write to the local educational authorities to inquire about the possibility of funding the printing of X amount of copies.
- A poster: design a poster with the key points of the manifesto expressed and have a single copy available in the secretary's office/library for those who wish to read further.

Choose a method that is most effective for your class or develop your own.

Each group will then present their drawings to the class. First they will show the map they drew of their community as it is today, explaining the main issues they identified. They will then show the map with their proposed changes.

As a class, they can vote on one important change that they have identified in their community. They will think of ways in which it can be implemented, and propose the change to school or local authorities.

Street safety

ROSACE is an experimental project supported by the European Commission and launched in six European capitals: Athens, Madrid, Rome, Tarragona, Vilnius and Warsaw. It recognizes how important it is for children to be able to move about safely in the city and the community. It will benefit from innovative tools and methods that have been developed in the fields of health and environmental education. The main project partners - competence centers - are experts in child participation and road safety education. The participants acknowledge the essential role of a child-centered, participatory, school-community collaborative approach to achieve the project's objectives.

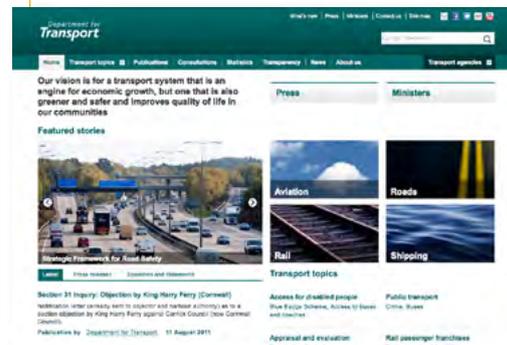
<http://www.rosace-europe.net/>



Designing our streets

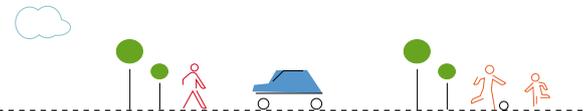
Manual for Streets demonstrates the benefits that flow from good design and assigns a higher priority to pedestrians and cyclists, setting out an approach to residential streets that recognizes their role in creating places that work for all members of the community. MFS refocuses on the place function of residential streets, giving clear guidance on how to achieve well-designed streets and spaces that serve the community in a range of ways.

www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets



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What kids can do

What Kids Can Do (WKCD) is a US nonprofit founded in January 2001, to promote perceptions of young people as valued resources, not problems, and to advocate for learning that engages students as knowledge creators and not simply test takers. WKCD responds to the need to bring youth voices to policy debates about school, society, and world affairs. Using the Internet, print, and broadcast media, WKCD disseminates before the broadest audience possible a dual message: the power of what young people can accomplish

when given the opportunities and support they need, and what they can contribute when we take their voices and ideas seriously. The majority of the youth involved in WKCD are marginalized by poverty, race, and language. The publishing arm, Next Generation Press, honors the power of youth as social documenters, knowledge creators, and advisors to educators, peers, and parents. WKCD is a grant maker too, collaborating with youth on multimedia, curricula, and research that expand current views of what constitutes challenging learning and achievement.

■ <http://www.whatkidscando.org>



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