



Designing Child Friendly Urban Environments

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Abstract

The built environment is a dynamic ecosystem that impacts children's wellbeing. By 2050, nearly 70% of children worldwide will reside in urban areas, yet they represent a constituency that is frequently left out and discriminated against in planning processes. UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI), aids cities in integrating children's rights into local systems but lacks practical guidance for designers and stakeholders who also shape bottom-up development. The Child Friendly Urban Environments (CFUE) framework addresses this gap, providing a roadmap for practitioners to accommodate children's needs. Spanning from city-wide interventions to neighborhood-level improvements, CFUE comprises six distinct pillars (Wellbeing, play, mobility, social amenities, community, and safety) which practitioners can use to audit existing environments, assess design schemes, and integrate child-friendly principles into various RIBA design stages.

The goal of applying CFUE is to create an inclusive landscape of affordance for children, rooted in ecological psychology and phenomenology discourse that stress the wellbeing benefits of children's independent mobility and interaction with diverse environments. The pillars of CFUE are informed first by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF's best practices which set out basic rights for children. Additional objectives and targets are developed based on rigorous examination of academic and industry-based literature, which suggest methods to ameliorating common globo-local childhood vulnerabilities, such as traffic and pollution, that hinder children's integration, and access to spaces. Practical applications of the CFUE framework include workshops to gather qualitative data, and providing quantitative toolkits practitioners can employ themselves.

Keywords: Urban discrimination, Built Environment, Design, Framework