Artworks as a tool in Place-making of a Child-Friendly Environment

By

Tun Mohd Irfan Mohd Suria Affandi,
Ismail Said
Hisyam Rasidi

Greenovation Research Group
Faculty of Built Environment
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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As Malaysia’s urban population reaches 71%, it is crucial for the government to ensure that the cities and their urban spaces are designed to sustain the basic needs and welfare of children. Impact of rapid urbanization, children have less access to the natural environment especially of their own (Malone, 2002; Rivkin, 2000)

Rapid Urbanization = New Spaces

However, In most developing nations including Malaysia, children voices are ignored by adults in the development of city public spaces such as streets, squares, parks and playfields (Riggio, 2002)
Place-making focuses on making spaces that are engaging, livable, sustainable and evoking its dwellers a sense of belongingness.
Place-making inspires local communities to work together to reimagine their current public space that could potentially enhance their health, well being and love of their place.

Integrating art in place-making extends it further by tapping into a place’s distinctive character.
Platform for artist to showcase art for locals appreciation
This study addresses the roles of children’s artworks to create a child friendly environment in their cities.

These spaces allow children to develop their cognitive and physical skills, learn a range of social skills with their peers and expend their high energy (Day and Wager, 2010; Freeman and Tranter, 2011).

Secret favorite spaces for play resembles the concept of ‘we-ness’ (Nilsen, 2004) as oppose to ‘our-ness’.

Children participating in social play along a narrow street in Laweyan. To them, the street is a play-cape, affording a variety of functional properties such as playing marbles, running and kicking self-made paper ball.
1. Is creative place-making an art that is part of play?
2. What will creative place-making add or contribute?
3. What can children contribute to place-making?

QUESTIONS

Young children are social beings who recognize peers as buddies. Their perception on what, where and how to play in a house compound is likely in conflict with adults. To them, the flat surface of the Almunawwar Kampung affords them stand-in-row-able, run-on-able, chase-friend-able, hop-on-able, jump-off-able, play-kite-able, etc. The house compound is a place, more than a space, for them to learn social play and to communicate.
The personal connection to the place engages children to create artworks for place-making, it will lead to a culture of getting together amongst young urban neighborhood.

Pupils of Bukit Indah Primary School planting a tree sapling at Taman Bukit Indah community park during a Tree Planting Day program conducted by GIRG, UTM.
Child-Friendly Environment

Child-Independent Mobility

Art and Play

Play

Public Art

Place-making

Method

Gathering and synthesizing of more than 50 literatures
Table 1. Indicates that the domain of child independent mobility and public art shows a profusion of literature towards that body of knowledge, which leads to the idea of play and its benefits.

Play is further elaborated to define its place in a space that is given meanings and importance. These attributes create an environment that is both engaging and child-friendly.

However, there is dearth literature on art and play although it obviously indicates the positive relationship towards the attributes of creating a child-friendly environment.
Neighborhood streets, alleys, public spaces and loose-fit spaces are important sites for children's play and exploration (Witten et al., 2015).

Child Independent Mobility

Children's play is usually organized and managed by adults. This deprives them of being self-reliant, obtain necessary skills and for them to understand their spatial environment (Haider, 2006).

Limited independent mobility not only deprive children of their ability to improvise their social life (Lasch, 1995).

Play Through Art

Art has become an avenue for children to express their cultures, emotion and as a medium of socializing (Boughton and Mason, 1999).

Henceforth, art can be a medium for play.

Arts are child-friendly and engaging because they are as natural as play (Henderson, C. Miki; Lasley, Elizabeth 2014).

Combining art and play within the context of everyday life, suggest an acknowledgement of new ideas about public art as being art plus function. It is both practical as well as aesthetically function (Ryan, 1990).

Artworks

Two-dimensional and three-dimensional public art has become a representation of the identity of the community (Beunders, 2007; Pinder 2011).

“listen-and-lead” and “confer-and-defer.”

confer-and-defer encompasses artworks designed directly by non-artists.
Place-making as Public Art or More?
The children are social actors; their expressions are spontaneous. Here, Children of Solo celebrating the Child-Friendly Cities event on 1 July 2011. Solo was evaluated by UNICEF as the most friendly city in Indonesia.

Parades affords children to view their imagination come true.
Place-making focuses on making spaces that are engaging, livable, sustainable and evoking its dwellers a sense of belongingness.
Children participation on artwork in public urban spaces contributed to three attributes.

1. Positive emotional connection to a locale
2. Display a sense of attachment
3. Continuous participatory by children could nurture community ties and build-up their social skills
Conclusion

This evidently affirms that art is part of play for children.

The process of making art in creative place-making through continuous children participation in public urban spaces especially in those loose fit spaces can potentially nurture community ties, educational, create a sense of attachment and develop children’s social skills.

Therefore, there should be a concern to relate children artworks with child-friendly environments. The result to this relationship will help towards children’s growth and the creation of cities that are child-friendly.
Thank you