

“No Lingerin in Lewisham.”

Andrew Stuck

Rethinking Cities Ltd.

Contact Information:

Andrew Stuck

Rethinking Cities Ltd.

London, UK

andrew@rethinkingcities.net

No Lingerin in Lewisham! was a collaborative project that explored ‘play’ spaces in Lewisham – spaces that are provided, adopted, imagined, special and future - and the pedestrian journeys between them. Working with young teenagers at a secondary school in the north end of the borough, an innovative consultative process was devised, to inform stakeholders on what makes a great ‘play’ space.

Teenagers ‘hanging about’ are often viewed as a negative leisure activity (for example, in shopping centres groups are often moved on for lingering). The project sought to provoke a creative response to this issue that involves young people mapping alternatives that invited debate with the local council and residents.

The workshops were designed to stimulate creative responses to local urban planning of ‘play’ spaces (from walkways to fields) with those who wouldn’t usually be invited or concern themselves with this kind of intervention. They included auditing and mapping of routes and lingering places, stakeholder role play, modelling of desired places and routes, face-to-face and on-line conversations with policy planners, and presentations made by young people.

The key objective was to involve local users in gathering information and having ideas on what makes a successful and sustainable play space for the city/locality. Target user groups included local councillors, policy planners, local residents, young people and teachers.

In particular, the project aimed to impact on future access to and planning of public/private space in the built environment and how young people are invited into these decision-making processes.

The paper will outline the process and how it was developed, identify the critical “moments of truth” and the lessons learned, and provide an evaluation of the project and the next steps that include the process being adopted borough-wide as a valid consultative tool involving young people.

Project collaborators included the Design school at Goldsmith’s College of Art & Design (University of London), the Inter-Cultural Cities Project, officers and councillors from Lewisham Borough Council, including the Young mayor, and students and teachers at Deptford Green School.

Andrew Stuck is a Managing Consultant at Rethinking Cities Ltd. based in London. He provides advice to clients across the built environment, health and transport sectors. He promotes participative walking initiatives that bring a broader audience to walking: deviser of Romantic Ribbon walking routes, co founder of Map Ramblers and a foundation director of the Museum of Walking. He is presently an artist in residence at the Banff Centre of Art in Canada.

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An official police notice in the shopping centre in Lewisham (an inner London suburb) declared that its precincts were part of an anti-social behaviour dispersal zone and that the police had the right to ‘disperse and move on’ groups of three or more was the catalyst for a project in which young people would audit spaces in which to ‘hang out’.

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The project sought to provoke a creative response to this issue that involves young people mapping alternatives that invited debate with the local council and residents.

This paper describes how the project came about, how the project methodology evolved, how young people undertook the auditing, and the recommendations they made, and how the authorities received these. It also provides an insight into participative working with young people and a local authority and reveals the lessons learnt by the project convenors.

Context

Since the early 1990s research has revealed that there are fewer opportunities for children to get out and about on their own. Partly due to fear of ‘stranger danger’, partly due to increasing road traffic, and partly due to the decline in designated play areas and the loss of informal places to congregateⁱ.

The new Labour government in 1997 heralded a key change in transport policy, with less emphasis on road building, and an increasing emphasis on improving the lot of the more vulnerable road userⁱⁱ. New practices from Europe and elsewhere were piloted, including walking school buses and home zones, in part to discourage parents from driving their children to school, and to reduce the number of seriously injured or child fatalities associated with road danger.

The creation of the Social Exclusion Unit and the new emphasis in the Department of Transport towards restraining car use instigated research into the needs and desires of young peopleⁱⁱⁱ. Concurrently there was a significant review of play facilities undertaken by the Department of Culture, Media & Sport^{iv}.

For adults, the majority of journeys we undertake are to reach a specific destination and have a purpose. For many the car provides the convenience to reach destinations well beyond our local neighbourhood. For children and young people, with a limited choice of transport modes, the distances they can travel are much less, and the number and variety of destinations within their reach is often significantly few. For children, many of the journeys they undertake are part of playing or ‘hanging out’ with friends – there is also a lot of time spent waiting for parents or public transport to take them somewhere.

The United Nations Child Friendly Cities initiative is further evidence of significant anxiety about the quality of the urban realm and the environment in which we expect children and young people to grow up in^v.

Subsequent Labour governments have put an increasing emphasis on safer neighbourhoods and have passed a significant number of laws to try to reduce street crime and anti-social behaviour^{vi}.

It is becoming evident that local authorities are increasingly using powers under the umbrella of the government's anti-social behaviour regulations to designate dispersal zones to attempt to control disorderly behaviour by a small element of society.

Experience gained from involving young people and local authority officers in processes to improve transport opportunities, had shown that for many young people, their views were rarely sought or listened to^{vii}. They have become increasingly disenfranchised.

Objectives and anticipated outcomes

No Lingerin in Lewisham sought to provoke a creative response to this issue by involving young people in mapping alternatives that invite debate with the local council and residents. Young people gathering information and suggesting ideas on what makes a successful and sustainable play space. It aimed to impact on future planning of public/private space in the built environment and how young people are invited into these decision-making processes.

The groups that were to be targeted were policy planner and political representatives from Lewisham Borough Council, local residents from north Lewisham, young people, their teachers, guardians and parents.

Issues to be investigated included:

- What makes a 'play' space special to young people
- What are their needs and visions
- How a borough council can be responsive to the needs and visions
- Public space/private space (ownership and occupation)
- Pleasure, safety, etc of the walk to and from the place

The anticipated outcomes were:

- A collectively produced map that connects several existing and/or planned play sites in North Lewisham with creative responses to these sites and the journeys between
- A blog space (Internet web log) for reflection and comment during and after the workshop
- A one-day exhibition in the supermarket car park

Originally a one-day workshop involving young people was planned, but it quickly became apparent that it would be impossible to undertake site visits and feedback to stakeholders all within such a short time.

Provisional planning

In April 2006 the Planning and Urban design team at Lewisham Borough Council were approached by Rethinking Cities Ltd., a consultancy with many years' experience of working with children and young people in participatory initiatives with local authorities. Lewisham Borough Council was chosen as it has a reputation for providing platforms to young people, being the only authority in the UK that has an elected Young Mayor.

The Borough Council recommended that locally based Goldsmith's College of Art & Design should be approached to work in collaboration. A joint approach was made to Lewisham's Young Mayor's office in July 2006 by Rebecca Maguire Cultural Development Manager at Goldsmiths Office for Business & Community Development, Juliet Sprake of Goldsmiths Design Department, and Andrew Stuck of Rethinking Cities Ltd.. Although the project won political support from the Young Mayor's office, all the funds for that year had been committed, and this was also the case when a further approach was made to the local authority's planning department.

Fortunately, McDonald Egan, a commercial residential developer, local to the area funded some 60% of the project budget. Sufficient funds were available from the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise^{viii} to allow the project to proceed.

The first intention was to recruit young people through community groups from key housing estates, and provide them with resources, but with the restricted funding it was felt that the project would only succeed if a secondary school, equipped with modern computers and broadband internet could be enlisted.

The project was to take place at the end of September to coincide with a London-wide Design Week, but this clashed with Young Mayoral elections and proved to be too soon after the beginning of the new school year for schools to be recruited to take part. It was delayed until the beginning of December, with fears that any later inclement weather might force the site visits to be cancelled.

Lewisham Borough Council were part of an international Inter-Cultural City project (managed by COMEDIA) that had been carrying out consultation with community groups, but had significantly not included young people. So they became particularly interested in the No Lingering project as it could provide them with valuable evidence to support their research. Barbara Grey, the borough council officer leading on the Inter-Cultural project lent her support to the project, volunteering to take questions from the young people back to her colleagues. Assistance was also forthcoming from Sarah Walsh, an urban designer within the borough's planning team.

Lee Faith, Deptford Green School's newly appointed Head of Citizenship realised the potential of the project, , and recruited students from both the lower and upper schools – some 18 in all, ranging in age from 11 - 14. However, the school's timetable required the 2 day workshop to be re-formatted over a number of days. We had hoped to recruit one other school in the vicinity but this proved not to be possible.

Amanda Egbe, a post-graduate documentary film maker was recruited to make a video of the project as was Gesche Wuerfel, an urban planner and a graduate from Goldsmith's Urban Photography faculty.

Project methodology

The workshops were designed to stimulate creative responses to local urban planning of 'play' spaces (from walkways to fields) with those who wouldn't usually be invited or concern themselves with this kind of intervention. They included auditing and mapping routes and lingering places, stakeholder role play, modelling of desired places and routes, face-to-face and on-line conversations with policy planners, and presentations made by young people.

The following format was devised:

Workshop 1 - Mapping

- Introduction to the project
- Personal mental maps of journeys
- Collective coded map of lingering spaces

Workshop 2 - Capturing and annotating an audio-visual story of spaces identified through the mapping

- Site visits and walk about
- Students will produce a series of annotated frames, using the coded map as a prompt to create a real-time narrative of lingering spaces - using digital voice recorders and disposable cameras, mobile phone video

Workshop 3 - Re-imagining those spaces through performing the story as characters with props

- Students re-imagine what the space/journey could be like as characters in their story.
- This process is filmed and an outcome produced for the web map.
- Students have an opportunity to add further photos and audio annotation to the web map - captured using mobile phones or disposable cameras

Exhibition (2 weekends later approx) - Reflecting on the work produced and engagement (in person) with local authority officers and political representatives

Trying to find time in a busy school schedule proved to be tricky and we had hoped that we could have worked through our devised methodology with teachers delivering a variety of curriculum subjects, including Art & Design and ICT, as well as Design & Technology and Citizenship. Without this opportunity, we knew that we had to be flexible in what we hoped to provide for the students.

We ran four workshops and staged an exhibition reception, and although we tried to incorporate on-line discussions between students and stakeholders, we didn't have time (nor the resources) to develop secure on-line forums, and learnt through the process that students' access to the Internet at the school precluded the use of Web 2.0 social networking websites.

Although the project lost a facet that we had hoped to include, we actually gained time to allow students to exploit the opportunity of modelling their ideas for parks and play spaces.

What took place in each workshop is described below:

Workshop 1 - Mapping

During this workshop we wanted students to think about how they get to the places (as well as the places themselves) in which they like to linger, play, or hang out with their friends.

We asked them to think about how and where they go in their 'free time' by asking them to keep a simple travel diary for a week. This revealed when they had 'free time' (what time they considered was 'free'), and when and where they are allowed (by parents, carers, or economic, environmental, physical or social constraints) to travel.

We wanted them to begin to develop a spatial awareness of the places and destinations around them, and begin to understand what is or isn't within their range.

During the workshop we explained the concept of mental maps and invited them to draw their own maps of those places they went to when they were not in school (and how they got there).

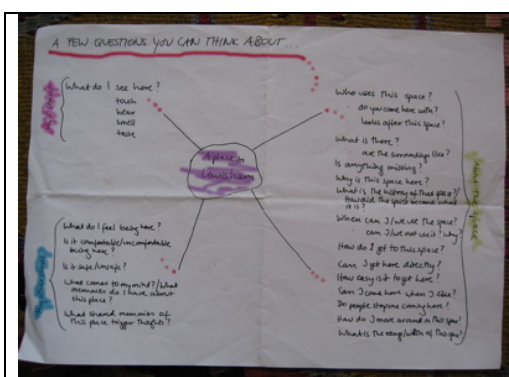
They can explore how the route or mode they take alters their attitude to making their journey – what are the aspects that impinge on their ability, comfort or confidence - comparing the routes each of them take, the times at which they travel, and the distances, and route characteristics.

We asked them to think about what they liked and they can be invited to offer contrasting places, so that they can start to understand that variety of destinations and places adds to the attractiveness of neighbourhoods. They can start to understand the layout of their neighbourhood.

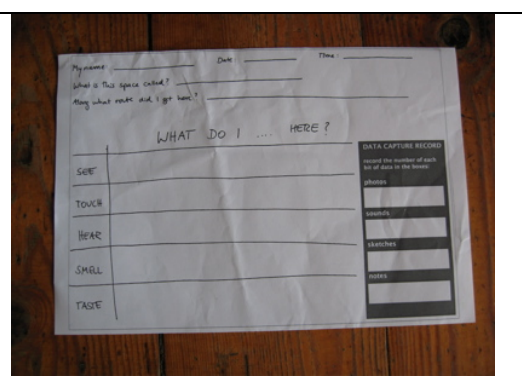
On a large scale map we asked students to place labelled pins on those places at which they 'lingered' – the labels representing whether their visit was in daylight or after dark, whether there was a charge or if it was free, and whether it was indoors or outside.

Workshop 2 (one week later) - Capturing and annotating an audio-visual story of spaces identified through a walk-about

Each young person was provided with a micro digital camera and a digital voice recorder and encouraged to use their sketchbooks to develop a story about the lingering places. We provided them with data recording sheets and explained how they should make notes of each photo, recording or sketch they make. They were also given a prompt sheet that included questions about places and spaces (a copy of which is also given to local authority officers to use at a later date), and one for them to record their experiences through their use of their senses.



Prompt sheet



Data record sheet

Students were also given a map of the chosen walk-about area. A teacher and a member of the project team accompanied them but they chose which route they wished to follow and the places they wanted to audit.

Blessed with fine weather, and working in two groups, the students were able to cover quite a bit of ground: including bus stops, a railway and tube station, a major arterial road, residential streets, designated open space, playgrounds, development sites, an industrial estate, car parks, gardens and squares, as well as indoor spaces in a theatre, community hall, leisure centre and a library.

Each student handed in their digital camera and voice recorder for the files to be uploaded to a computer and made ready for the following day's workshop.

They began to work out what were the questions they would like to ask stake holders, including those to be given to local authority officers, with the intention that these could be posted on a blog.

Workshop 3 (the following day) - *Re-imagining those spaces through performing the story as characters with props*

We had to abandon the role playing element as we needed the time for students to create story boards and narratives of the journeys they had undertaken during the walkabout.

The young people collated their findings and compared each other's narratives and to begin to interpret what they had found.

Issues identified including litter, broken street furniture, places blocked off, visibility through CCTV, deserted play areas, and personal safety. Reflecting on the storyboards^{ix} they began to form questions that would like to pose to local authority officers and other stakeholders.

Barbara Grey, the borough council officer leading on the Inter-Cultural project, attended this workshop as an 'observer' – however, her presence was a great opportunity for the students to get some immediate feedback to the questions that they were already forming:

- What will you do about litter?
- Have you already consulted young people concerning future redevelopment?
- More play structures for our age please.
- More convenient entrance to Folkestone gardens (opposite Sandford Street junction).
- Why do you let builders/developers build/dig up both sides of the street at the same time? We think it's dangerous as we have to walk in the road?
- Can we have more parks in place of un used open spaces?

Barbara assured the students that the questions would be distributed to those colleagues of hers that were responsible for combating these issues. She invited the students to choose how they would like to receive answers, via e-mail, a blog^x or in person. Students snatched the opportunity of having officers in person as they realised they could develop the questioning still further.

This may not have been the best way forward, as it meant that hardly formed questions were taken back to local authority officers who had scant knowledge or

understanding of what the project was about and tended to be a dismissive in their responses. However, having people in person would be a boon to the students.

Workshop 4 (one week later) – **Modelling lingering places.**

Working in four small groups, students chose to focus their work on parks. They were provided with a range of modelling resources and quickly got to work in designing and building their models.

Sarah Walsh, an urban designer from Lewisham Borough Council provided an on-the-spot critique of each of the group's models, focussing on the essence of their ideas. She was able to provide them with a professional point of view while interpreting their models and explaining how wide open spaces could be better designed, entrances made more visible and to be better lit.

The student groups had all identified lighting as a key issue, and proposed creative and inventive solutions for offering opportunities for a range of age groups, and incorporating for the needs of adults.

Exhibition (6 weeks later)

Originally the idea was to hold an exhibition in the car park of a local supermarket on the following weekend, but due to the delay in the project, an outside exhibition was no longer possible. A venue had to be found at which the resources the children had created could be exhibited and to which stakeholders, local residents, students and their parents could attend. The school wasn't able to provide this, so it meant that the exhibition had to take place off-site. Arranging this venue and avoiding the Christmas holidays meant that the exhibition took place sometime later.

Several of students were able to attend, some accompanied by their guardians and parents, and smattering of local authority officers were on hand to answer further questions.

Frustratingly, the models created by the students had been inadvertently destroyed at the school, however, the storyboards (and the flash animation), mental maps, travel diaries, sketchbooks, (nascent) blog, codified map were all exhibited, and the audience were able to watch the video. The students being reminded of just how much they had achieved.

Part evaluation, part reflection on the project, students were asked two questions:

1. Are there any good hanging-out spaces near your school or home? Places where you feel comfortable hanging out with friends or family.
2. Now think about what makes a good lingering or hanging out space... if you could make a list of key ingredients what would they be?

Question 1 Are there any good hanging out spaces near your school or home?

What	Where	How
Outside school	Fordham park	Teachers are still in school and keep watch & there is a lot of CCTV, so you feel safe.
	Fordham Park	In daylight with my friends
	Fordham park	Play around, joke, chill
	Fordham Park	It is a big open space and many people are there, so you don't feel lonely.

	Kennington Park	There are bright lights and lots of play areas
	Lewisham shopping centre	Loads of people & wardens, & CCTV so it makes me feel comfortable
Shopping	Lewisham shopping centre	I only go there with my friends for 1-2 hours.
Local flat area	Lovelinch Close	Nice to hang around, little chats.
Maddock Way	Walworth estate	Playing football with friends on weekends
	McMillan park	Lots of play spaces and things, and people go there, so you feel safe
A playground, a football area, places to walk a dog or ride a bike	Peckham Park	Riding my bike, taking my dog for a walk. There are lights and I only usually stay there for an hour at the end of school or early in the morning.
Go to the cinema	Southwark	CCTV
Exercise & play	Southwark Park	It is safe. Wardens close park at dusk
	Southwark park	Play, have a good time
Buy stuff have fun.	Surrey Quays mall	Security
	Surrey Quays mall	It has loads of CCTV
	Telegraph Hill	Loads of people & children so it feels quite safe there

Question 2 Key ingredients for a good lingering or hanging-out space:

Access	Interventions	Security
Bus stop	Car park	CCTV (2)
Children can go there	Somewhere to sit	Comfortable
Easy to access	Somewhere to eat	Lights (2)
Opens at appropriate times	Weatherproof shelter	Safe place (2)
		Wardens (2)

Activity	Physical features
Adventure Playground	Grass
Fun	Open spaces (4)
Good atmosphere	Parks (2)
Interesting areas [Variety]	Quiet place
Lots of people	Trees or flowers
Local shops	
Places to play (3)	
Places to play football	
Shopping centre	
Sometimes quiet	
Things to do	

Reflections on the project

Remarkable what was achieved in such a short time on a very limited budget of less than £10,000.

What went well

Winning political support from the (outgoing) Young Mayor and taking the opportunity of feeding into the Inter-Cultural Cities project.

Excellent facilitation by the project team engaged the children immediately and took them beyond the limits of the classroom. Documenting of the project through video and still photography was very successful.

Overcoming last minute room changes and being able to adapt the workshops while still ensuring the students benefited.

Each workshop was a success in engaging the students.

We managed to equip the children with resources that they could personalise and keep: e.g. the sketchbooks were well received and subsequently well-used, and the digital camera.

The walk about provided excellent experiences for the students and derived a terrific amount of material for the latter half of the project.

Barbara Grey and Sarah Walsh - the officers from Lewisham Borough Council – had good rapport with the students.

Local authority officers did provide some answers to the questions raised by the students.

What could have been better

Local authority buy-in at the beginning of the project, not just in terms of financing but also in tying in commitment from officers and political representatives and in easing school selection, and yet to be designed places is a prerequisite that we failed to win.

A more diverse student population – i.e. another school, students of mixed ability including those with special education needs.

More time to prepare the school or community group. This would have given us a chance to discuss the IT resourcing (photo editing software, digital cameras, school policies on access to the Internet etc.), and the way in which the project could be woven throughout a series of curriculum subjects

Students came from wide geographic area so were not easily able to identify shared lingering spaces. Some arrived late, didn't know each other (as from different school years).

Downloading images from the digital cameras was awkward and caused us to have to scrap part of one workshop.

Inevitably with model-making coming to the fore, and the lack of integration with the school's ICT / IT we lost out on the on-line element of the project, that would have made the project more replicable.

Models made by students were destroyed before the exhibition took place.

Other stakeholders beyond local authority officers selected by Barbara Grey were not involved e.g. the Police, park wardens, transport planners etc.

And finally...

We need to ask ourselves whether we can recapture some of the objectives we set ourselves in the first instance? A key element was to encourage conversations between stakeholders and young people and to do this via the Internet, for the very

reason that this hasn't been tried before, and so that it could be easily and cost effectively replicated so that many more young people could experience improved consultation. We also wanted young people to consider spaces that as yet had not been designed with them in mind – can we do this elsewhere in the borough?

References

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^{iv} Dept. of Culture, Media & Sport. (2003). Getting Serious about Play: A Review of Children's Play HMSO London

^vDeflt Manifesto on a Child Friendly Urban Environment was ratified by participants from 22 countries worldwide attending ChildStreet2005. and considers a city friendly to children is a city friendly to all.

^{vi}Home Office. (2006). The Respect Action Plan HMSO London

^{vii} Franklin, A & Madge N. (2000). In our view: Children, teenagers and parents talk about services for young people. National Children's Bureau, London
Department for Transport. (2004b). Young People and Transport: Understanding their needs and requirements. HMSO, London.
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^{viii} London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise is a collaboration between seven London universities (including Goldsmith's), which promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise with the capital's arts and cultural sectors.

^{ix}Subsequently these storyboards were incorporated in a 'flash' animation and packaged with the video documentary on a DVD made available to the Borough Council, the Intercultural City Project and other stakeholders.

^x <http://lingeringlewisham.blogspot.com/>