GROWING STRONGER, REACHING FURTHER
Children and Young People's Participation 30 years after the Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Overview

1. How I got involved

2. 30 years of participation across a huge range of policy and practice contexts.

3. A multitude of models

4. Research methodology, methods, techniques and practice

5. Moving forward: Children as "activists", empowerment and protagonismo

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1. How I got involved

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1993 – The Right to Play

My first publication:
"Adventure Playgrounds, an Introduction". (Shier 1984)..

I started my career in the 1970s, working on Adventure playgrounds in the UK.

Then I 'discovered' children's rights at the 'World Play Summit', Melbourne 1993

This experience changed the course of my life.

Whatever issue you are concerned about, children's rights provides both an underpinning framework and an overarching approach – which I have been committed to ever since.

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1998 – The Article 31 Children's Consultancy Scheme

There was a fashion for making programmes and institutions "child-friendly", particularly in the arts, culture and recreation sectors.

Expert advice was being sought.

(Shier, 1995)

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1998: Child consultants advising the management of the new Manchester City Art Gallery on how to create a child-friendly gallery *(Shier, 1999).*
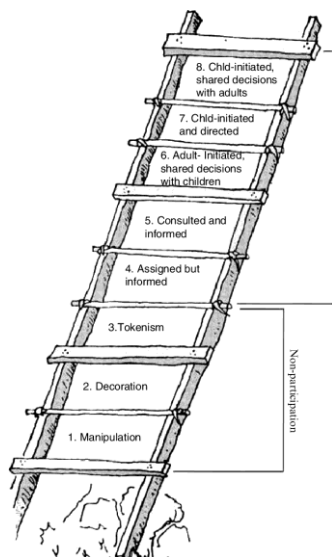
1999: Child Consultants from the New-Age Traveller community in the South-West of England commissioned by The Children's Society to advise on play and recreation opportunities for traveller children.

2000: Child Consultants advise senior management at the Tower of London on how to make it less boring.

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2001 – "Pathways to Participation"

8. Chld-initiated, shared decisions with adults
7. Chld-initiated and directed
6. Adult- Initiated, shared decisions with children
5. Consulted and informed
4. Assigned but informed
3. Tokenism
2. Decoration
1. Manipulation

Non-participation

When I started working on children's participation, the only tool we had was Roger Hart's *"Ladder of Children's Participation" (Hart, 1992)*.

Still the best-known and one of the most useful models for children and young people's participation.

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I wanted to understand how adults interact with child citizens in these situations.

At the turn of the Millennium, my new model emerged

Five levels of participation

Three stages of commitment at each level

1. Children are listened to.

2. Children are supported in expressing their views.

3. Children's views are taken into account.

4. Children are involved in decision-making processes.

5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.

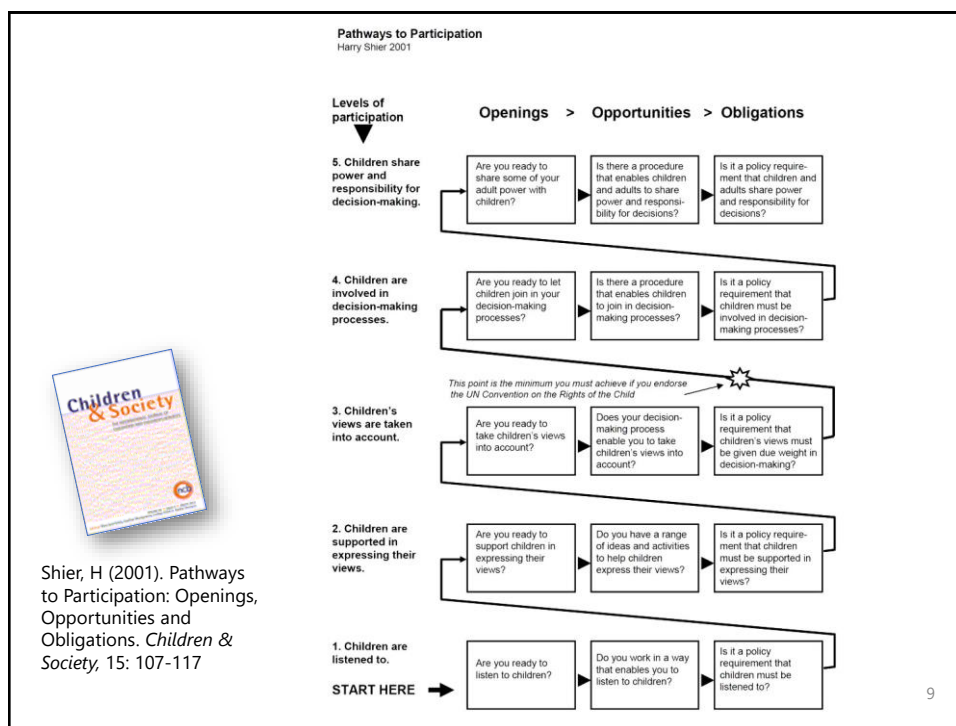| **Openings** >	**Opportunities >**	**Obligations**
An opening occurs when you or your team are ready and willing to work at this level	An opportunity occurs when you have the skills and resources to be able to work at this level	An obligation is established when the organisation's agreed policy requires you to work at this level

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Pathways to Participation
Harry Shier 2001

Shier, H (2001). Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations. *Children & Society,* 15: 107-117

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"*Pathways to Participation"* was published in the UK 18 years ago, in April 2001.

Today it is one of the most widely used tools for analysing and enhancing children's participation, in academic study, policy and practice, throughout the world.

Three weeks later, on 5th May 2001, I arrived in Nicaragua...

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2001-2012: Nicaragua, Children's rights on the coffee plantations

Child labour on coffee plantations

The struggle for the right to education

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A new approach to participation: "Protagonismo Infantil" *(Shier 2019c)*

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CESESMA, the Centre for Education in Health and Environment, a local voluntary organisation based in San Ramón, Nicaragua. *(Shier, 2010)*

CESESMA's office in the town of San Ramón – bought and renovated with support from the Irish Government through Irish Aid.

The CESESMA team in 2010.

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Our Mission

Contribute to the promotion and defense children and adolescents' rights through processes of learning and empowerment in rural schools and communities, in partnership with children and young people and other members of the community.

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Our vision

Children and adolescents with their families living in secure environments, with equality, equity and respect; with opportunities for an integrated education; capable of organising themselves and influencing those around them to promote and defend their rights and contribute to the development of their communities.

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Our central strategy: Training, development and support for young community education activists (promotores and promotoras). Typically aged 12-18, these are young people trained to run out-of-school learning groups with younger children in their communities.

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This gives them a leadership role and a platform for active organisation and engagement in community development activities, and direct action in defence of children's rights, through which they influence political processes at different levels.

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Some milestones
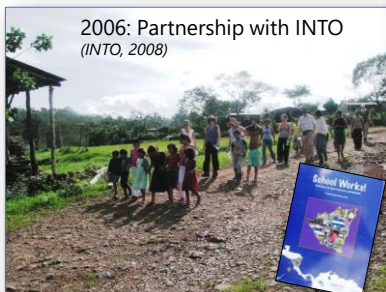
2006: Partnership with INTO
(INTO, 2008)

2007: First children's consultancy in Nicaragua *(YCSM, 2009)*
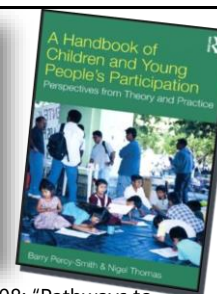
2008: "Pathways to Participation Revisited" *(Shier, 2010)*

2011: Children's action on UNCRC Recommendations *(MNAC, 2012)*

2009: "Defending our Right to Play" campaign *(Shier 2012)*

2010: How children and adolescents influence public policy *(Shier et al, 2014)*
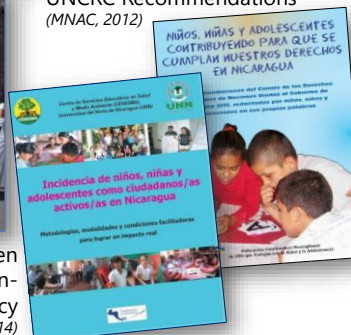
2012: "Learn to live without violence" *(CESESMA, 2012)*

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2012 – Return to Ireland: Children as Researchers

Children's Rights in School: The perception of children in Nicaragua

Harry Shier

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Queen's University Belfast, February 2016

(Shier, 2015; 2016)
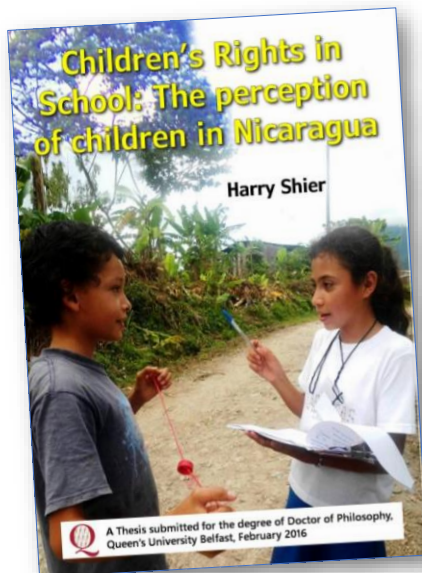
An analytical tool to help researchers develop partnerships with children

Harry Shier

Phases of the research process	← Dimension of decision-making power or control →				Who is involved and who is excluded?
	Children are not involved	Children are consulted	Children collaborate with adult researchers	Children direct and decide for themselves	
Deciding on the research question		Children asked about problems that concern them.	Children and adults jointly define research question.	Children choose their own research question.	Who has a say in the research question?
Designing the research and choosing methods		Children consulted on what research methodology to use.	Children and adults deliberate and jointly decide on the methodology to use.	Children decide what methodology they want to use.	Who is invited to get involved in the research design?
Preparing research instruments		Children consulted on (and perhaps test) research instruments before use.	Children and adults work together on design of research instruments.	Children create their own research instruments.	Who gets to work on the research instruments?
Identifying and recruiting participants		Children asked to advise on recruiting participants.	Children and adults jointly identify and recruit participants.	Children identify and recruit research participants.	Who has a say in choosing participants?
Collecting data		Research involves adults interviewing children or surveying their opinions.	Children and adults collaborate on data-gathering activity.	Children organise and carry out data collection activities.	Who gets involved in data collection?
Analysing the data and drawing conclusions		Adults show preliminary findings to children and ask for feedback.	Children and adults work together to analyse data and determine conclusions.	Children analyse data and draw their own conclusions.	Who has a say in what the conclusions are?
Producing a report		Adults consult children on aspects of the final report.	Children and adults work together to produce a report.	Children produce their own report in their own words.	Who gets credit for the report?
Dissemination of the report and its findings		Adults consult children on how to disseminate findings.	Children and adults collaborate on dissemination and awareness-raising activities.	Children undertake activities to disseminate their findings.	Who is actively involved in dissemination?
Advocacy and mobilisation to achieve policy impact		Adults consult children about possible advocacy actions.	Children and adults work together on plans for advocacy and mobilisation.	Children develop and implement an action plan for advocacy and mobilisation.	Who is active in follow-up campaigning and advocacy?

(Shier, 2019a)

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2. 30 years of participation across a huge range of policy and practice contexts

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Participation in global childhoods: Africa, Asia, Latin America
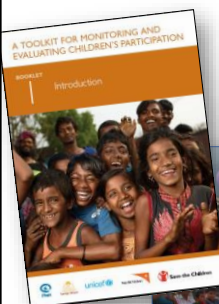
Resources for study are more available in the North. In practice, there is dynamic leadership in the global south.

MELLICENTIA

(Lansdown and O'Kane, 2014)

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Participation in Education

- A wide spectrum from participation as classroom management through to radical democratic education
  (Fielding and Moss, 2012)

- A massive literature on "student voice".

- Student Councils, Student Unions, student protest movements, school strikes etc.

"*Connect*", the Australian student voice journal was **40** years old in December 2019. (https://research.acer.edu.au/connect/)

SCHOOL STRIKE 4 CLIMATE

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Human Rights Education, "Rights-Respecting Schools"

There is a whole separate literature on Human Rights Education.

"Whole School Approaches"

- UNICEF "Rights-Respecting Schools" in the UK and Canada.
- UNICEF also has a "Child-Friendly Schools" programme worldwide.
- Amnesty International's 'Human-Rights-Friendly Schools' programme
- Amnesty International Ireland's 'Whole school approach to human rights education'. *(Amnesty International Ireland, 2011).*
- UNICEF/UNESCO 'Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All' *(Lansdown et al, 2007)*

   (Full details and analysis of all the above in Shier, 2016, pp 49-57)

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH
TO HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL   Irish Aid
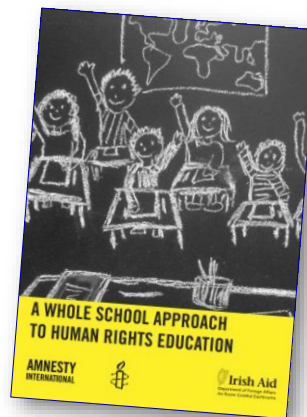
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Early years participation

Article 12 guarantees the right to be heard to every child capable of **FORMING A VIEW**.

A major focus here is on the challenges of authentically facilitating, hearing and responding to the voices of very young children.

Alison Clark
LISTENING TO YOUNG CHILDREN
A Guide to Understanding and Using the Mosaic Approach

(Clark 2017)

Emphasis on methods, techniques and practices

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Children and citizenship *(Cockburn, 2013; Milne, 2013)*

Voting age:
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
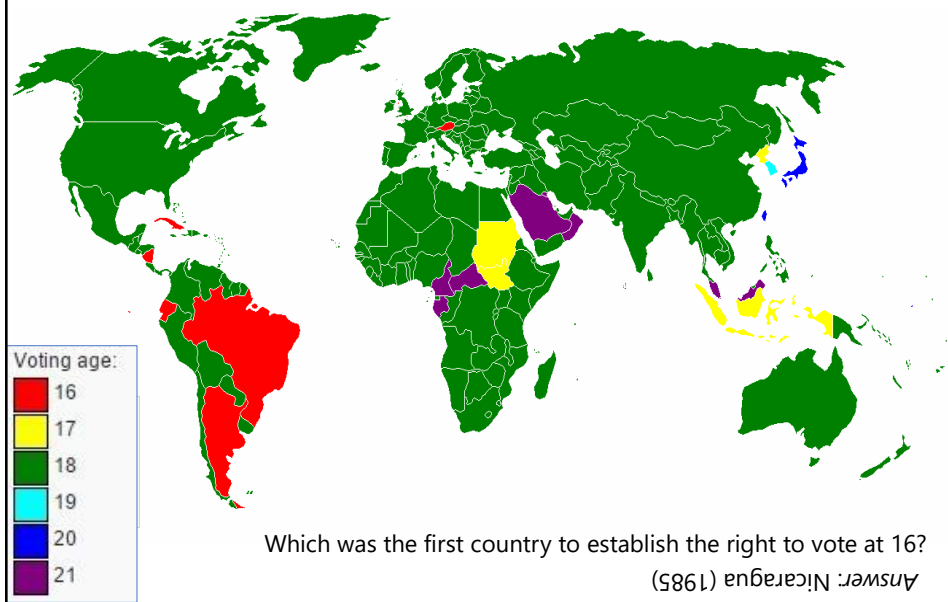
Which was the first country to establish the right to vote at 16?

Answer: Nicaragua (1985)

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Health

- Service-user consultation
- Informed consent
- Participatory Health Research: The **Kids in Action** network *(Gibbs et al, 2018)*

Lisa Gibbs speaking at UCD Children's Day Conference in November 2019

(http://www.icphr.org/kids-in-action.html)

CHILDREN SHAPING THEIR WORLD: AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF CHILD PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS

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Family law and the courts

The child's right to be heard in legal proceedings is the focus of Article 12.2. of the CRC *(Tisdall, 2015).*

> "...the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law."

"Child-friendly justice" *(Liefaard and Kilkelly, 2018)*

(https://www.ucc.ie/en/childlawclinic/)

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Social care, social work, children looked after

(https://www.epiconline.ie/)

- Children not only heard but involved in decision-making.

- Children having their say in policy and practice in services they use.
  (Grace et al, 2019)

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Children with disabilities

The notion of "vulnerability" is too often used to deny certain children their right to be heard. *(Tobin, 2015).*

Children with disabilities have equal rights to be heard and influence decisions.

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The digital world/social media

Wonderful new opportunities...

... chilling new risks.

An area where academics are struggling to keep up with what children are doing in the real world?

(Staksrud, 2016; Livingstone and Third, 2017)

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Children who work

The right of working children to organise, speak out and be heard

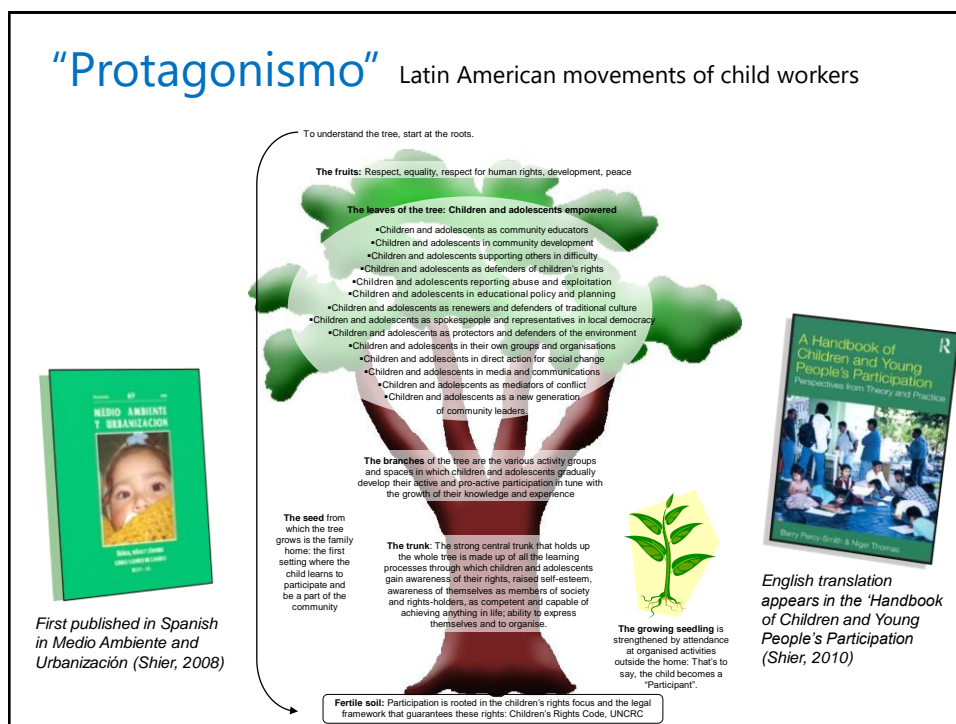*(Cussiánovich and Márquez, 2002; Taft, 2019)*

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Intersected identities: "Worker-students"

(Shier, 2017)

"You're not going because you've hardly picked anything. Look at your empty basket"

"Boss, I've been stung by the bees. I'm going."

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"Protagonismo" Latin American movements of child workers

To understand the tree, start at the roots.

The fruits: Respect, equality, respect for human rights, development, peace

The leaves of the tree: Children and adolescents empowered

- Children and adolescents as community educators
- Children and adolescents in community development
- Children and adolescents supporting others in difficulty
- Children and adolescents as defenders of children's rights
- Children and adolescents reporting abuse and exploitation
- Children and adolescents in educational policy and planning
- Children and adolescents as renewers and defenders of traditional culture
- Children and adolescents as spokespeople and representatives in local democracy
- Children and adolescents as protectors and defenders of the environment
- Children and adolescents in their own groups and organisations
- Children and adolescents in direct action for social change
- Children and adolescents in media and communications
- Children and adolescents as mediators of conflict
- Children and adolescents as a new generation of community leaders.

The branches of the tree are the various activity groups and spaces in which children and adolescents gradually develop their active and pro-active participation in tune with the growth of their knowledge and experience

The seed from which the tree grows is the family home: the first setting where the child learns to participate and be a part of the community

The trunk: The strong central trunk that holds up the whole tree is made up of all the learning processes through which children and adolescents gain awareness of their rights, raised self-esteem, awareness of themselves as members of society and rights-holders, as competent and capable of achieving anything in life; ability to express themselves and to organise.

The growing seedling is strengthened by attendance at organised activities outside the home: That's to say, the child becomes a "Participant".

Fertile soil: Participation is rooted in the children's rights focus and the legal framework that guarantees these rights: Children's Rights Code, UNCRC

First published in Spanish in Medio Ambiente and Urbanización (Shier, 2008)

English translation appears in the 'Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation (Shier, 2010)

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CLOSE-UP ON...

The leaves of the tree: Children and adolescents empowered

- Children and adolescents as community educators
- Children and adolescents in community development
- Children and adolescents supporting others in difficulty
- Children and adolescents as defenders of children's rights
- Children and adolescents reporting abuse and exploitation
- Children and adolescents in educational policy and planning
- Children and adolescents as renewers and defenders of traditional culture
- Children and adolescents as spokespeople and representatives in local democracy
- Children and adolescents as protectors and defenders of the environment
- Children and adolescents in their own groups and organisations
- Children and adolescents in direct action for social change
- Children and adolescents in media and communications
- Children and adolescents as mediators of conflict
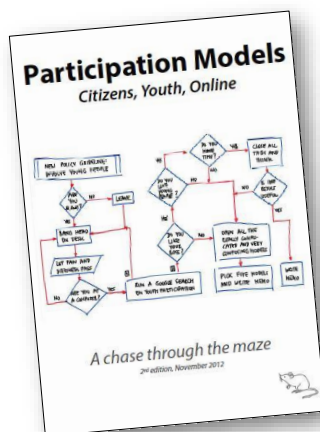- Children and adolescents as a new generation of community leaders.

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3. A multitude of models

"Essentially all models are wrong, but some are useful"
(George Box, 1979)

Andreas Karsten's collection of participation models *(2012)*

Another collection from the 360°
project *(Grace and Grace, 2017)*
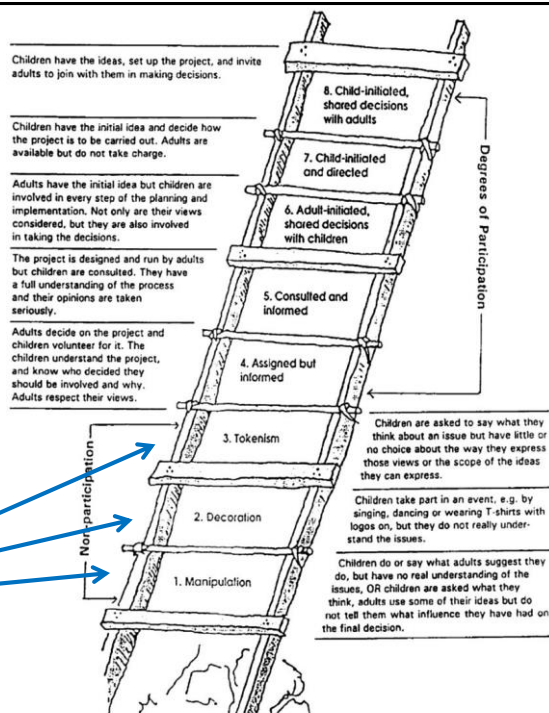
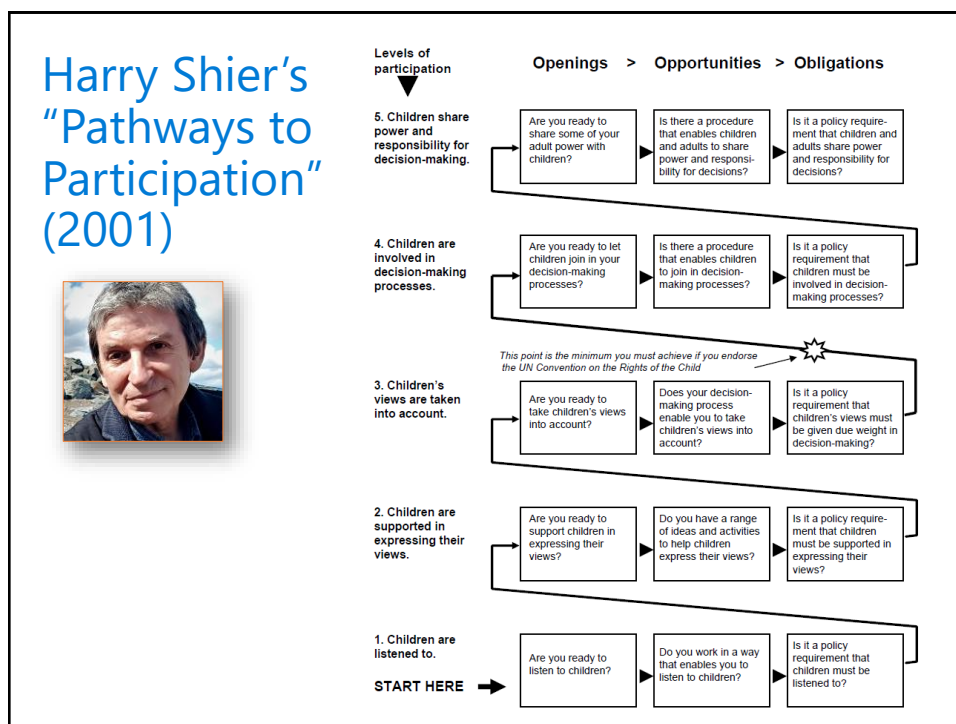Here are the 4 models that I find most useful →
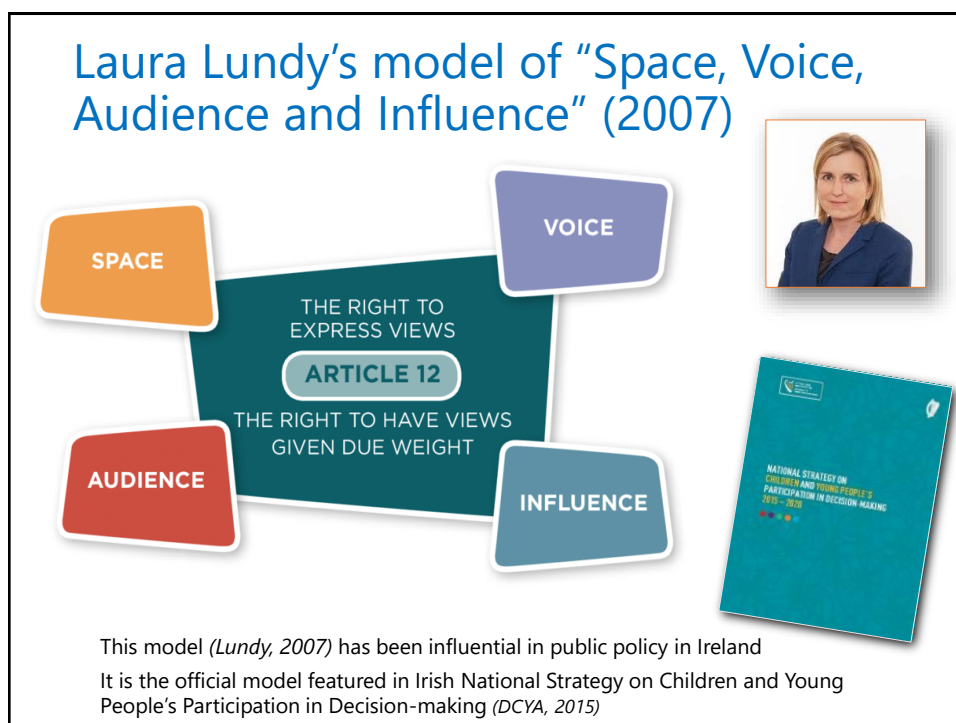
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Roger Hart's Ladder of Child Participation (1992)

For me this is still essential reading because Hart taught us to look out for the three types of false participation: "Manipulation", "Decoration" and "Tokenism".

Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.

Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.

The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.

8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults

7. Child-initiated and directed

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children

5. Consulted and informed

4. Assigned but informed

3. Tokenism

2. Decoration

1. Manipulation

Degrees of Participation

Non-participation

Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.

Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.

Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.

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This model *(Lundy, 2007)* has been influential in public policy in Ireland

It is the official model featured in Irish National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making *(DCYA, 2015)*

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Gerison Lansdown's 3-way model (2008)

(Very influential at the UN)

Taken from "Every child's right to be heard" (Lansdown 2011):

Consultation:

Is when adults ask children for their views, and children are not involved beyond this.

Collaboration:

Is when adults and children work together, sharing roles and responsibilities in planning and carrying out an activity.

Pro-activism (child-led):

Activities initiated, organised or run by children and young people themselves (adults may still provide support, though not always necessary).

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4. Research methodology, methods, techniques and practice

Mary Kellett's *(2010)* fourfold distinction:

- Research *on* children;
- Research *about* children;
- Research *with* children;
- Research *by* children.

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Four principal reasons for advocating "research *by* children":

"1. Children succeed in getting responses from within their peer group in ways that would not be possible for adult researchers because of power and generational issues.

2. Their work adds to the body of knowledge about children's experiences from a genuine child perspective.

3. The dissemination of research carried out by them and, crucially, owned by them, is an important vehicle for child voice.

4. The experience of participating as active researchers is an empowering process that leads to a virtuous circle of increased confidence and raised self-esteem, resulting in more active participation by children in other aspects affecting their lives."

(Kellett 2010).
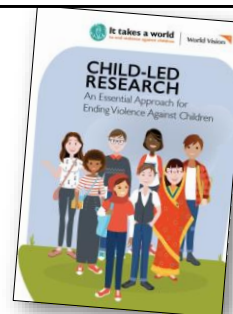
(Cuevas-Parra, 2017)
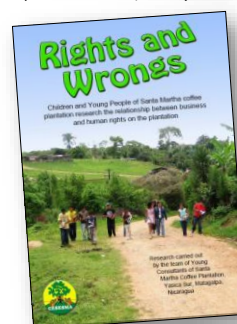
(Young Consultants of Santa Martha, 2011) 41

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"The Children's-rights-based approach to research"

Approach developed by Laura Lundy and Lesley Emerson,

Key principles derived from UN *"Statement of Common Understanding on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Co-operation"* (2003):

1. The research aims should be informed by the CRC standards;

2. The research process should comply with the CRC standards;

3. The research outcomes should build the capacity of children, as rights-holders, to claim their rights, and build the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations.

4. Cutting across all of this is a requirement to ensure that the process furthers the realisation of children's rights. *(Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, p. 79)*

Key features of this approach in action are:

- Every research project involves a *Children's Research Advisory Group* (CRAG). NB. Children are not usually <u>doers</u> of research, but are advisers to the adult researchers.

- Strong emphasis on building capacity in participating children, so they are well-informed about issues being researched.

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5. Moving forward: Children as "activists", empowerment and protagonismo *(Shier, 2019b; 2019c)*
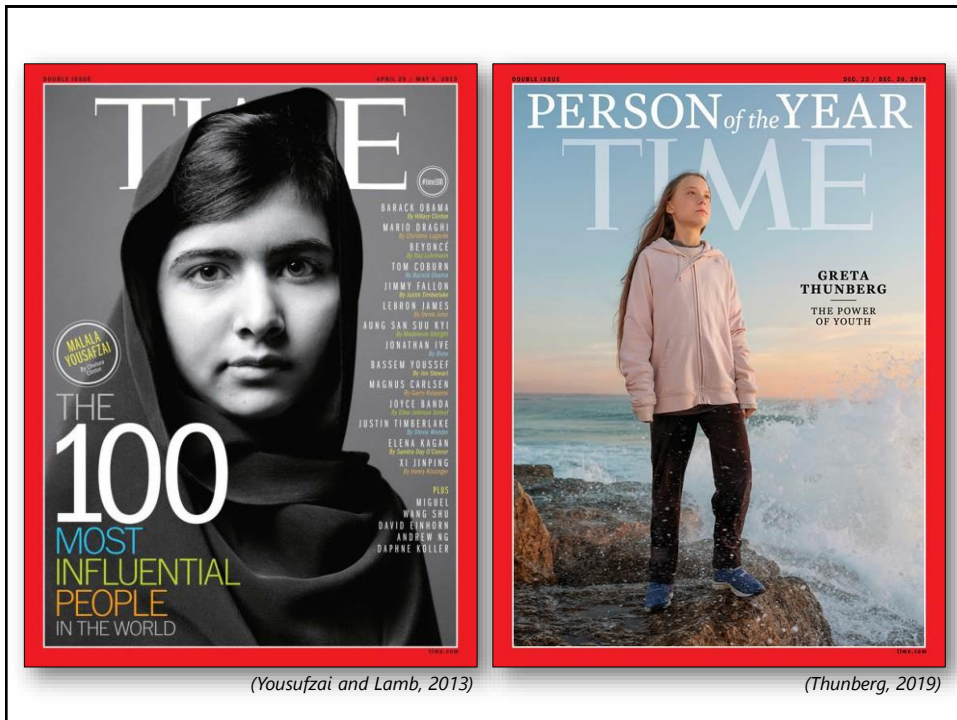
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UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's "Day of General Discussion" 2018: ***"Supporting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders".*** *(Lundy and Templeton, 2018)*

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(Yousufzai and Lamb, 2013)

(Thunberg, 2019)

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THE END

www.harryshier.net

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