



A causeway to impact: A proposed new integrated framework for intergenerational community-based participatory action research

Emma Loudon¹ | Joanne Neary² | Ben McAteer¹ |
Kathryn Higgins¹ | Christopher Chapman²

¹Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK

²University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Correspondence

Emma Loudon, Queen's University Belfast, Queen's Communities and Place, 2-8 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast BT9 2AW, UK.

Email: e.loudon@qub.ac.uk

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Abstract

Over recent decades there has been growing interest in amplifying children and young people's views (CYP) within policy debates. Despite this, they are rarely invited to participate in key policy-making discussions, and when they are, this tends to be tokenistic. This paper presents an intergenerational methodological framework 'The Causeway Approach', inspired by the mythology of the Giant's Causeway, which addresses the challenge of CYP's voices being drowned out by adult stakeholders. This contextualised approach has significant potential to benefit CYP and communities through capacity building, strengthening of social capital and fostering intergenerational connections.

KEYWORDS

children, community and possibly intergenerational, participation

INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes a novel intergenerational model of participation. The conceptualisation of this model was prompted by the findings of an empirical project, Children's Learning and Inclusive Places (CLIP) which engaged with children regarding the built environment in their neighbourhood. One key finding was that this group of children and young people (CYP) felt

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their voices were less likely to be heard, despite feeling their views relating to the place in which they lived should be considered important, a phenomenon well confirmed by related work and the literature (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020; Natil, 2021; Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2021; Ward et al., 2021). We propose an attempt to address this issue in the form of an integrated intergenerational participatory model, which we developed through consideration of the existing models, reviewing the literature and by engaging in creative conceptualisation. We begin this paper by turning to relevant publications.

In a review of the literature pertaining to CYP's participation McMellon and Tisdall (2020) highlighted familiar patterns of framing; that the UNCRC and Article 12 are not only of importance but are radical, innovative, or challenging; that what Article 12 challenges is the traditional view of CYP as vulnerable or worse incompetent; and finally, a shared concern about poor implementation. At the risk of falling into these same 'tropes', we concur with the view that while the rights of CYP to have their views heard in matters that affect them is not new, it remains important and despite the push towards involvement in wider civic discussions, their participation remains limited or tokenistic (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020; Zeldin et al., 2000). Furthermore, participation in broader civic discussions is often restricted, either in terms of scope and/or input.

When CYP's civic engagement and participation are discussed, it is often as an isolated group (Cho et al., 2020; Flanagan, 2009; Olson, 2012) though increasingly the potential of intergenerational democracy (ID) has been explored (Buffel et al., 2014). There may also be variety in the extent to which these endeavours are 'top-down' or 'bottom-up', with the range extending from government-led consultations to grassroots activism and subject to their own pitfalls and 'participation traps' (e.g. symbolic participation or tokenism) (Van Meerkerk, 2019). Inherent in this top-down/bottom-up dilemma is the idea that youth activism belongs entirely to the young people versus the potential for youth activism to become *a space of intergenerational dialogue* (Taft, 2015, p. 465) where both CYP and adult perspectives are valued. Existing models of intergenerational engagement show this approach has multidirectional benefits for improved relationships, reduced ageism, and increased empowerment, capacity, and social capital (David et al., 2018; Gamliel, 2017).

Given the complex challenges facing many communities in high-poverty settings, there is an increased move to adopt place-based approaches combining research and developmental activity. Methods that are participatory provide the opportunity for research and its findings to be more contextually relevant and more equitable (Borén & Schmitt, 2022). It is apparent that collective ownership of outcomes is critical (Kania & Kramer, 2011) and so co-production with stakeholders and their active participation in defining impacts should be embraced (Brereton et al., 2017).

CLIP was a joint project between Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and the University of Glasgow (UOG) exploring how best to facilitate CYP's engagement in research and civic participation within their community. The CLIP study demonstrated the capabilities of children to be involved as stakeholders in matters that impact them. As demonstrated in the literature the authentic participation of CYP in civic and social issues not only empowers them, but also increases social capital (Ginwright, 2007) and creates more equitable cities (Gleeson & Sipe, 2006). However, there are continued challenges when seeking to present children's views to adult decision-makers including the strong potential for those views to be overlooked (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020; Natil, 2021; Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2021).

Models of CYP participation, beginning with the influential Hart (1992) have long sought to improve the way in which we engage with children. A seminal model posited by Lundy (2007) was devised to support policy-makers and educators to better implement UNCRC Article 12 and involve children meaningfully in decision-making in matters concerning them. Key to Lundy's

model was four separate factors: space, voice, audience, and influence. These factors referred to the various mechanisms required to ensure that listening to young people could lead to action. Taking a community development lens there is a challenge regarding enacting Lundy's four factors, perhaps most significantly 'influence'. A solution to this may be establishing spaces and networks within the community that provide a supportive scaffold to facilitate children having their voices heard.

Lundy's work was closely considered when developing the new framework to support intergenerational community-based participatory action research (CBPR); the Causeway Approach, which we present in this paper. In this model, CYP are located within the wider community population rather than viewing them in isolation positioning them as stakeholders in issues affecting them and their neighbourhoods. It aims to address the problem of CYP's voices being drowned out or silenced and adds to the literature regarding intergenerational explorations of community issues. Additionally, this paper positions the Causeway Approach as a strong social justice lens to examine the influences and interrelationships between and within groups and structures. Issues within a community are rarely nested within one population and this novel intergenerational model of CBPR recognised the potential of addressing problems from multiple perspectives.

The paper opens with an overview of the literature on young people and civic engagement. Second, we explore the empirical work which led to the development of the methodology. Finally, the integrated framework is presented, and we examine the methodological considerations which need to be acknowledged when working with an intergenerational model.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Evidence regarding the civic participation of CYP in shaping their local environment highlights the ways in which young people can take an active role in issues that affect them (Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2022). Previous studies have highlighted the link between civic engagement and improved opportunities for leadership, decision-making and problem-solving for young people (Barnett & Brennan, 2006; Brennan et al., 2007). Furthermore, Ginwright (2007), in their exploration of critical social capital and young Black community activists, emphasised the significance of increased intergenerational ties as a form of social capital. According to Ginwright, these ties are essential components that enable black youth to become more engaged in community change activities. Critical social capital, as proposed by Ginwright, extends beyond mere social connections; it involves the active participation of CYP within intergenerational networks, which in turn empowers them to address community issues collectively. The term 'critical social capital' denotes a form of social connectivity where power dynamics are equitable, allowing CYP to have meaningful influence. However, it's crucial to critically examine these connections. While on the surface, increased intergenerational ties may seem empowering, it is essential to explore the underlying power structures within these relationships. In some cases, these connections might be purely causal or tokenistic, with power remaining concentrated within specific adult groups. Our analysis of the CLIP study aligns with Ginwright's insights, highlighting the importance of genuine and empowering intergenerational ties. This perspective challenges traditional power imbalances and emphasises the need for authentic collaboration, ensuring that CYP's contributions are valued and not overshadowed by adult priorities. This form of social capital resonates with Sampson et al.'s (1999) discussion of collective efficacy:

Collective efficacy for children is produced by the shared beliefs of a collectivity in its conjoint capability for action. The notion of collective efficacy emphasizes residents' sense of active engagement. (p. 635)

Samson and colleagues view CYP as active participants capable of being involved in community change through the engagement in intergenerational and other social networks. Our engagement with CYP in the CLIP study supported these ideas from the literature that children were capable and willing agents of community change while also suggesting that without some effort towards integration, their input may be overlooked in favour of adult priorities.

To inform the potential of the development of a novel intergenerational methodology it was necessary to look more closely at existing models, several of which are explored in the next sections.

CYP AS RESEARCHERS

We have come a long way from research that views CYP as passive 'research subjects', something to be measured, tested, or analysed (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006; McCartan et al., 2012) to young people as active contributors and co-researchers. Connected to this shift in positionality of CYP in research settings, was the adoption of participatory action research (PAR) methodologies, for example, community-based participatory research (CBPR). Central to these methods is the connection with local contexts, social relationships, and focus on research that enables critical reflection and action (Baum et al., 2006). Also key, is the critical way in which PAR seeks to readdress the traditional power dynamics of 'expert' researcher and 'novice' participant, and instead looks to advocate power in terms of promoting the lived experience of participants (referred to as 'experts by experience' in healthcare literature, for example, Mayer & McKenzie, 2017). In seeking to blur the line between 'participant' and 'researcher', often the participants are invited to become partners in the whole research process, which may involve selecting the research topic, contributing to data collection and analysis, and deciding what should happen following the publication of findings.

Where PAR involves CYP, there is variation in terms of methodology and depth of involvement in the co-production stages of research. Where young people have been involved in the various stages of research design, from generating research questions to analysis and dissemination of findings, it is described as addressing the 'limitations of voice as a meaningful participatory exercise' (Percy-Smith, 2010, p. 108). While PAR illustrates an encouraging directional shift there are important considerations to ensure that children can engage in meaningful ways, especially on issues regarding rights, or local policy decisions, that they may have little experience with (Lundy et al., 2011). Without capacity building, it may risk reinforcing existing stereotypes about children and prevent their voice from being heard (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017, p. 400). The work of Children's Neighbourhood Scotland, using the Capabilities Approach (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993) provided an exemplar of capacity building with children through their Capabilities Research Model (Ward et al., 2019). The programme worked with children and their communities to make sense of different services and projects in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty. A key dimension of this involved working with CYP to identify their own priorities for development and action (Ward, 2022).

Working with groups of CYP, recruited from primary schools to identify the key domains which were then explored in more detail during small focus groups to generate a set of 'functionings' for

each domain. Interviews were then undertaken with a range of stakeholders including teachers, parents, community representatives and other key actors.

The work of CNS and their use of the CA was a main precursor to the CLIP project. CLIP offered the opportunity to learn from the achievements and challenges of the CA, for example, the key mechanisms of capacity building and demonstration that CYP were important and capable stakeholders. However, concerns remained that without more integration of their viewpoint and collaboration with adults, the likelihood of their views being actioned was low. Indeed, it has been acknowledged that there was a lack of action on key capabilities developed by the CNS research project, for example, family relationships and having a job, warm safe place to live, food and clothes (Ward et al., 2021). CLIP sought to leverage the community and local government connections of the wider Queen's Communities and Place project to attempt to ensure some action on the views of CYP in the project (Higgins et al., 2023; McAteer et al., *in press*). The CLIP project illustrated that while those in power might listen to and consider young people's views, decisions regarding civic matters had often already been made, and CYP's viewpoint alone was not always strong enough to make a significant difference. It's a common misconception that merely amplifying children's voices alongside adults will lead to immediate changes in policies or community decisions. The reality is that even when adults or entire communities' campaign on issues, the desired results are not always achieved.

However, this should not diminish the value of involving young people in civic engagement efforts. Through their participation, children and young adults learn a crucial lesson: the importance of having their voices heard and that while they will not win every battle, their perspectives matter. This realisation is an essential part of their civic education. Adults, too, face challenges in shaping policies and decisions, and learning from both successes and setbacks is an inherent aspect of active citizenship.

In instances where community-academic partnerships foster intergenerational collaboration, such as highlighted by Ardoin et al. (2014), there is evidence of improved relationships between younger and older stakeholders. These partnerships facilitate the development of mutual concerns, collaboration, and a better understanding of decision-making processes within the community. Therefore, while immediate change might not always occur, the collaborative efforts between generations lay the foundation for a more inclusive and informed civic society, teaching young people that persistence and understanding the complexities of decision-making are valuable aspects of social change.

INTERGENERATIONAL METHODOLOGIES

The importance of intergenerational working has long been acknowledged, in areas of practice, learning and consultation. Intergenerational practice involves three aspects: participants are people of different generations; participation involves activities aimed at mutually beneficial goals; and the participants maintain relations based on sharing (Buffel et al., 2014, p. 1786). A significant community benefit derived from these range of approaches is improved social cohesion (Melville & Bernard, 2011) and social capital (Ginwright, 2007) which in turn increases feelings of power and collective efficacy (King, 2015).

An example of an intergenerational methodology is ID which proposes a move towards participatory democracy for the whole community and recognises that there are quieter voices, particularly those of children which are rarely heard in policy and planning forums (Davies, 2012). Davies (2012) developed a model of ID for addressing issues of environmental

injustices. This aimed to renew a sense of belonging and promote sustainable environmental behaviour, through a three-stage process of establishing equitable boundaries, consultation and then implementing action through programs for all ages. This model finds agreement with approaches with a place-based focus that have found the potential to create better cities for all by consulting with the very young and very old, those who have inhabited the space for the longest, and those who will continue to live there for many years (Moore-Cherry et al., 2019).

The eight core practices of intergenerational working laid out by Pinto et al. (2009) include, mutual ownership, careful planning, cultural awareness, strengths-based, and promotes community bonds and active citizenship, and is a highly effective way of building stronger, better-connected communities with increased social capital. These principles are used widely including as part of the Age-Friendly Belfast Initiative (Intergenerational Toolkit, 2014). The authors of this paper find agreement with these principles and would go further to suggest that intergenerational practice can also be transdisciplinary, crossing discipline and sectorial boundaries (Morton et al., 2015).

THE PROJECT—CLIP

CLIP was a joint research initiative between CLIP was a joint project between Queen's Communities and Place (QCAP) at QUB and the Network for Social and Educational Equity (NSEE) at UOG which had the overarching aim to explore how to build effective place-based and community-centred research with children, regarding their communities, and the environment and to promote knowledge exchange between the two institutions. The approaches taken by the two institutions differed in that QCAP moved from 'outside in' adopting a community perspective, working with community partners to support engagement with CYP and the local primary school. In contrast, NSEE adopted an approach where schools were the starting point for engagement, working with schools, moving from more formal to informal notions of education. These differing perspectives were a key point of mutual learning and knowledge exchange between the institutions.

The CLIP project set out to explore CYP's understanding of activism and how they felt about their future involvement with issues that impact them in their communities. The risk for CYP's voices to be drowned out became clear as most children involved shared doubts that those in power would listen to them. One participant's insight, however, provided inspiration and a starting point for our conceptualisation when they shared *there is a chance they would listen to us, because if children are saying the same thing as the adults, they'll know that even the children think the same thing* (McAteer et al., [in press](#)).

Those working on this project had already begun to consider the benefit of an intergenerational model of community engagement, which would enhance the CYP's civic contribution and encourage adult stakeholders to consider their views more seriously. Given that adult systems and views continue to lead on decision-making, we knew that children tended to be precluded from having a meaningful say in issues that affect them (Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra, 2021). The Causeway Approach was developed as an attempt to solve the problem of how best to empower and amplify young people's voices in decisions that impact them at a local level within the context of adult-centric policy-making. It does this by suggesting a framework to support the integration of local voices and create a pathway to enable meaningful community consultation involving multiple generations.

The Giant's Causeway provided the creative spark, as in mythology it was thought to have once been a pathway between the Northern Ireland and Scotland. Appropriate, as we sought to build an academic bridge and a pathway on which the different groups in our model could attempt to reach their desired destination. We borrowed further imagery from the causeway in the form of hexagonal steppingstones to mark stages in the model. As the Causeway Approach began to coalesce, attention turned to the literature including existing knowledge and models of youth participation and intergenerational approaches in communities.

THE CAUSEWAY APPROACH

The proposed framework emerged as a means of integrating the learning from the empirical research activities in Belfast and Glasgow. Both projects highlighted; the capability of CYP to engage in meaningful discussions on place, the environment, and civic matters; the value of their viewpoint, and their unique perspective apart from adults; their rights and appetite to have their views not only heard but actively considered as routes to change; and the unfortunate reality of adult views superseding children's. The Causeway Approach built on these findings and on literature within the purview of children and youth studies, community development, and is informed by key methodological perspectives from intergenerational studies.

The Causeway Approach is an integrated conceptual framework, which falls within the transformational paradigm (Mertens, 2007). The central tenet of the transformational paradigm is that power is an issue that must be addressed at each stage of the research process. It is an approach concerned with social justice and holds that knowledge must be co-created with those who it is most relevant to and that it should be driven by a strong human rights focus. Furthermore, engagement in the process is not a passive act and will inherently and explicitly seek to build skills and capacity. This is the epistemological stance of the QCAP initiative when working with communities (Higgins et al., 2023).

Community, often poorly defined both spatially and systemically, is an inherently relational entity. The Causeway Approach is informed by the understanding of community being a network of interconnected units (Wellman, 2018). Furthermore, the community system can be described in relation to the informal and formal networks that exist between people, groups, and organisations (Gilchrist, 2019). The growing field of community network theory argues that an individual's behaviour is highly dependent on their social networks; for example, following the advice or instructions of others when making decisions. Social support and practical help have effects at the individual and community level and communities coalesce around shared experiences, particularly of adversity (Gilchrist, 2019). Furthermore, the CYP engagement is integral to a sense of cohesion and social capital that can improve circumstances and outcomes for the future.

According to network theory, a community's experience is shaped by informal networking, serving as both the backdrop and outcome of communal interactions. This theory underscores how internal and external structures profoundly impact the community's ability to achieve its well-being objectives (Gilchrist, 2019). Therefore, we are interested in the interaction of individuals, groups, and structures within the network. The transformative paradigm is also centrally concerned with the interactive relationship of the researchers and the research participants (Mertens, 2007).

Below we suggest four stages to be applied when using the Causeway Approach (also see [Figure 1](#)). In keeping with the wider approach, the stages offer suggestions for how to engage with multiple voices within communities and to create a cohesive account of community need.

The Causeway Approach In Action

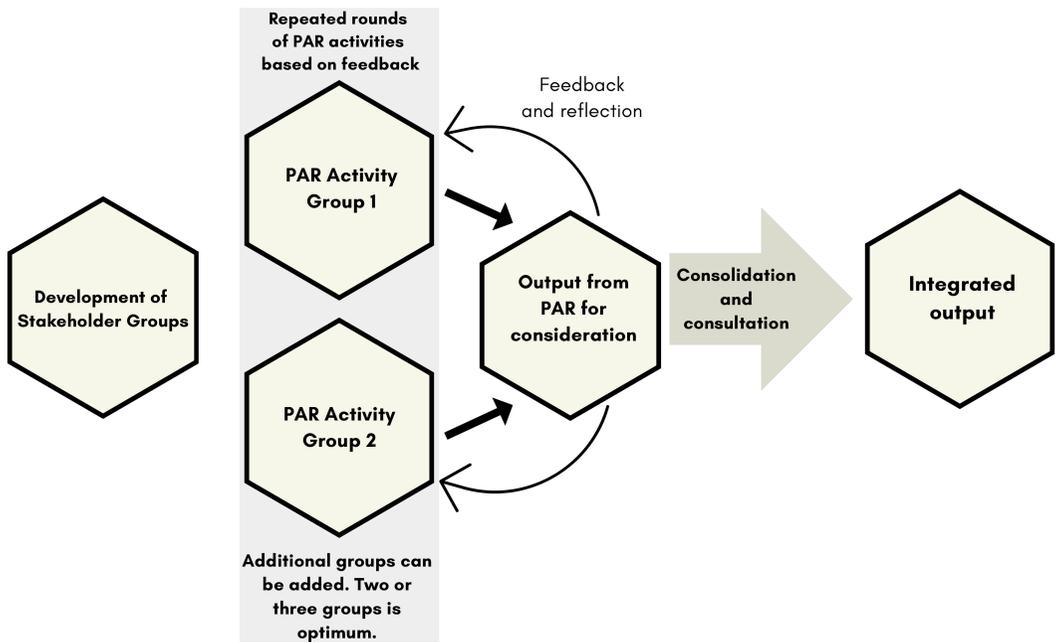


FIGURE 1 The Causeway Approach. PAR, participatory action research.

Stage 1: Development of stakeholder group(s)

Develop a stakeholder group to situate the research within the community and to facilitate wider community involvement. Ensure involvement of CYP can be facilitated within the membership of this group, by including young people themselves as well as adult gatekeepers, for example, youth workers, schools. Gatekeepers are important to facilitate recruitment, however, while serving as valuable intermediaries, they inherently possess influence and certain power dynamics within the community. Their position can significantly impact the inclusivity and authenticity of the stakeholder group. It is essential to ensure the gatekeeper's role does not inadvertently create biases, restrict access, or favour specific perspectives within the group. Addressing these potential issues is pivotal for fostering a genuinely representative and diverse stakeholder community. The role of the academic partner in this process is to encourage processes of participatory democracy at the beginning of the process and throughout the activities.

The initial stakeholder group will act like a steering group, to provide initial input as to the direction of research and to act as facilitators to wider community groups to ensure multiple community voices can be included and listened to within the timeframe. The principles of social justice through which this method operates should be seeded from the beginning. Founding these groups on the principle of equity and introducing the process to participants as seeking to increase agency and build the skills in communities necessary to effect change. Stakeholder groups should remain open access to other members as the process continues.

Stage 2: Community engagement research activities

The Causeway Approach encourages the integration of multiple perspectives, so that separate groups, for example, intergenerational groups or different school classes can provide their perspective to be combined into a single output. In practice, this will mean activities to develop research questions and organise data collection. It would be suggested that this would involve several codesign sessions with separate and combined groups within the community, for example, engaging with young people and adults separately before bringing them together to share ideas. Researchers should be mindful of the accessibility and capacity of different community groups, and ensure this stage is seen as a worthwhile and engaging opportunity (for more information, see [Stage 2a: Building capacity in community engagement research activities](#)).

The research activities can be as simple as a focus group or forum, questionnaires, or participatory methods such as narrative walkabouts, photo elicitation, art-based activities, or drama-based workshops. Where possible, the community groups should have a say in how the data is collected, as well as what questions could be asked.

Stage 2a: Building capacity in community engagement research activities

As previously mentioned, involving young people in civic decision-making and partnership working may involve capacity building, both in terms of young people (building their leadership capacity to speak out regarding issues that impact them) but also in terms of adults (addressing unconscious bias regarding intergenerational working). Children's Neighbourhood Scotland provides an example of capacity-building workshops using the Capabilities Approach (Ward et al., 2019).

CNS Capabilities Approach delivers a series of workshops in order to build a common framework of goals that foregrounds dialogue with CYP; identifies barriers and enablers to young people achieving goals, and therefore provides a contextual analysis of their lived experience of community (Ward et al., 2019). While a series of workshops works to build rapport and capacity over time with CYP this also involves a significant time commitment from any groups involved. For this reason, and to be able to respond in a more agile way to community issues the Causeway Approach would aim to be delivered over much fewer sessions. It does however take inspiration from the CNS Capabilities Approach in the type of activities that are useful for children to enable them to engage meaningfully, for example, walkabouts, photovoice, other art-based activities, training to help young people become co-researchers, support in presenting their views position to other groups. The research activities carried out with stakeholder group/s would be decided based on the subject under consultation and the group needs.

Stage 3: Multi-group consultation

The results from the activities with groups are compared to find similarities and differences with regard to how different groups perceive and experience the same problem and explore how this has influenced their suggested solutions. This document becomes a consultation document that is presented at a session which brings the separate, CYP and adult group/s together. Time can be allotted for each group including CYP to present key aspects of their group's findings, supported by the academic team. These activities build capacity, and skills and encourage individuals and

groups to present their viewpoint and work towards a compromise. While all groups can present their viewpoints more space and support would be offered to CYP to help redress the inherent power inequalities. The opportunity is provided to attempt to reach a consensus on any disagreements through dialogue, negotiation, presenting a case, or debate, which would be facilitated by researchers. This is part of an iterative process, where feedback from this integrated group activity is fed back for further activity to the CYP and adult groups individually as in stage 2. Excepting this iterative feedback process, by stage 3 the separate groups are encouraged to be integrated, to listen to each other and to develop a shared way forward. This activity it is hoped would strengthen intergenerational or between-group bonds build connection and a sense of collective efficacy (Sampson et al., 1999). Wider systems barriers and facilitators to potential change should be acknowledged throughout the process.

Following the PAR activities with the separate groups, there does not necessarily need to exist contradictory perspectives or differing solutions to a problem. If there is already a consensus the integrated output can still be refined and produced with the whole participant group. QCAP for example, will use this approach in community wealth building in which academics and communities are working in partnership on community priorities for proposals to raise investment and to build capacity for continued planning activity in the future. The principles of the approach can be applied to research problems such as how to resolve a contentious planning proposal or to simply investigate community priorities to arrive at an intervention plan.

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#) we built in reflexivity to the Causeway Approach gives us the ability to look at complex problems in non-linear ways. The outputs of PAR activities are revisited and reflected on by the groups. The multigroup consultation stage may result in returning to individual group activities if necessary. The nature of community problems dictates that they are subject to flux and change. Therefore, it is necessary that there be the opportunity for a feedback loop to enable participants to review, reflect and adapt the output of the activity, potentially more than once. This reflexive learning process is also capacity building, developing skills and learning from the process and increasing sophistication in addressing problems.

Stage 4: Integrated output

The aim of the Causeway Approach is ultimately to arrive at an integrated intergenerational output to address a particular community issue. This might constitute a plan to lobby local government with the community wishes or concerns. It might take the form of a decision regarding community-owned assets or an agreement on a previously contentious issue. The integrated output from the Causeway Approach would be codesigned/cowritten with the intergenerational group of CYP and adults and prepared for dissemination to the wider community and presentation to local government or other official bodies. Child-friendly reports should be codesigned with the CYP group for each output and the opportunity for CYP to present findings and campaign alongside adults from the group on the issues should be facilitated.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

The empirical work of the CLIP Project and the development of this methodology served to highlight the value of operationalising engagement with CYP in the ways laid out within the approach. Several actions designed to build capacity and provide the scaffolding to create the

necessary readiness for fuller engagement in civic matters flowed from the work. For example, the NSEE team facilitated children from both primary and secondary schools to engage with local experts including fashion designers about 'fast fashion' and set up a clothing swap initiative within the local secondary school which had garnered interest from surrounding schools. Children from primary and secondary schools in Clydebank were also supported in taking their concerns regarding climate change to a real seat of power at the COP 26 conference.

In Belfast, working directly with the local development organisation, the Market Development Association, in the community, QCAP leveraged support to initiate a new codesigned community youth forum in the Market area within which the Causeway Approach will be utilised. The approach was also written into a successful joint application to UKRI for a community research network grant. This will allow the Market community to explore research within and between groups and communities and provide an opportunity to empirically evaluate the Causeway Approach.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given the complex issues facing our most deprived communities, more needs to be done in both understanding and addressing the root causes of these challenging and entrenched problems. The Causeway Approach suggests an intergenerational and multi-sector approach to understanding how different groups within communities understand the challenges facing their local area, and what their solutions would be to improve them. Incorporating key stakeholders as well as general community members, we acknowledge that there is likely to be multiple suggested solutions and perspectives on the same issues. Using the University as a facilitator, the Causeway Approach suggests a qualitative methodology to gather opinions from these disparate groups who are all impacted by wider issues both to drive the research agenda and to develop a strategy to improve targeted issues. This encourages a shift in traditional power dynamics, from the University as 'expert', to focusing on the lived experience and expertise of the local community. This programme of work reflected a networked learning system core dimensions (Madrid Miranda & Chapman, 2021) where different forms of knowledge and expertise are combined across boundaries to enhance knowledge and understanding that promote new ways of working. The Causeway Approach is not an off-the-shelf 'solution', but rather proposes a framework of activities to provide engagement and development opportunities that can be adapted to fit different community needs.

However, participation and codesign with children have come under criticism for emphasising participation based on age, maturity and voice and not sufficiently recognising the range of participatory activities in children's everyday lives (Horgan et al., 2017). Arguably the Causeway Approach perpetuates the process critiqued by Malone and Hartung (2010) who suggested that current systems tend to focus on formal participation where a particular model of engagement is used, potentially reinforcing the sense that children must be asked to participate and cannot initiate it themselves. Perhaps if there were an existing mechanism or infrastructure where children could easily and organically engage in social and civic decision-making then there would not be any need for an approach such as this, or other models such as the CNS capabilities approach (Ward, 2019). Given the need we saw clearly demonstrated in our empirical work, the Causeway Approach could allow for otherwise drowned out or ignored children's views to be given due consideration.

Furthermore, what started as an approach to support children's participation developed into a system for including multiple voices across the community, while also ensuring that young people

are adequately supported in having their voice heard and their opinions taken into consideration. This may require an additional rung added to Hart's (1992) 'ladder of participation' which relates to adult-initiated or collaborative involvement with young people. It is possible that this could be criticised as 'less than' involvement which is fully initiated and led by CYP. However, if we refer to Lundy's (2007) model of participation it should be noted that the Causeway Approach attempts to address the four elements highlighted, for example, Space, voice, audience, and influence. The design of the approach was prompted by the need to improve the 'influence' of children's participation by providing 'space' within the framework and supporting their ability to use 'voice' through capacity building to arrive at an integrated output that will be given due attention by the desired 'audience'.

A key issue we set out to address concerns how adults perceive young people's right to participate in civic discussions, both in terms of their capacity to have an input but also when young people's views come into conflict with the dominant view of adults (Forde & Martin, 2016; McMellon & Tisdall, 2020). We need to move beyond hierarchical, adult-centric notions whereby professional adults are the key designers, decision-makers, and voices within these approaches (Chapman et al., 2019). Returning to the Lundy Model, we see that this is an example of young people having a voice and an audience, but lacking influence (Lundy, 2007). The Causeway Approach aims to facilitate engagements that promote compromise and encourage adults to enhance the views of CYP aiming to increase influence. It seeks to capitalise on communities' inherently relational nature by supporting people to engage and collaborate. This approach strengthens bonds and increases social capital by increasing empathy, understanding and shared ownership of potential solutions. While the definition and utility of social capital have long been under debate, we understand an increase to mean improved social connections and *collectivity* to positively impact economic goals and improve outcomes in health, education, and well-being, thereby increasing the inherent value of community membership (Robison et al., 2002).

Many outcomes are only measurable over long timeframes which can be frustrating for participants, especially children. While the slow-turning wheels of policy are difficult to change, ensuring efficient dissemination strategies are used can reassure CYP that civic involvement and activism are worthwhile and can ensure information is received by all members of the community and the wider society. Local dissemination is a crucial part of participatory research which may often be neglected (Marín-González et al., 2017), especially with CYP (Lundy et al., 2011). The aims of the Causeway Approach, to produce an integrated intergenerational output which is aimed to be disseminated with and to the community seeks to avoid the research-implementation gap whereby scientific knowledge is accumulated but not incorporated into actions or interventions (Westerlund et al., 2019).

The Causeway Approach seeks to create impact through skills development and strengthening networks. It supports capacity building, defined by Arole et al. (2004) as 'Strengthening the ability of a community through increasing social cohesion and building social capital ...members of a community can work together to develop and sustain strong relationships, solve problems and make group decisions, and collaborate effectively to identify goals and get work done.' Work in Scotland over the past number of decades has developed guidance that operationalises community capacity building, starting by working with communities to assess their needs and plan for change, it builds on existing strengths, supports the skills and confidence of activists, and assists communities to use power and influence (The Scottish Government, 2008). This is a key strength of the Causeway Approach. How we evaluate this should reflect the complex and subtle nature of the goals reflected in the definition. The impact may also include increased political activism and enhanced confidence and ability of people to act on local issues themselves, reducing

dependency on outside agencies. Encouraging independence so that community partners gain greater control over their future development is what makes capacity building a sustainable engagement tool.

A final critical point is that the Causeway Approach does not aim to supersede models that support children to take a role in civic and social matters independent of adults. Children are capable social actors and should be considered as stakeholders, all methods that address this should be supported. Rather than replace these crucial methods that work with the youngest generation the Causeway Approach seeks to, as Lock (2020) stated generate 'intergenerational opportunities to help all our collective imaginings come into being' (p. 226). Most importantly this method seeks to engender a sense of collective efficacy, of 'being in it together', young and old, researcher and community member, across different institutions, and country borders and seas. The Causeway Approach was built as a pathway to create change, a bridge across divisions and between different groups. Transformation should be informed by those who are impacted by it and should make room for those voices we do not so often hear, who have less power but no less of a stake in the necessary beneficial changes that society requires to bring us nearer to equality.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None of the authors have a conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

ORCID

Emma Loudon  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6064-0654>

Joanne Neary  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4758-937X>

Ben McAteer  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8989-8141>

Kathryn Higgins  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1834-0279>

Christopher Chapman  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1861-6415>

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



Emma Loudon is a Queen's Communities and Place research fellow at QUB and worked on the Children's Learning and Inclusive Places (CLIP) project. Her current project is the Growing Up in The Market longitudinal study. Through her PhD into whole family experiences of parental mental illness she developed an interest in methodological and conceptual innovation in qualitative research. Her work focuses on experiential accounts of families, children, young people and communities and how qualitative data can inform how we can better address adversity, inequality and other social issues.



Joanne Neary is an interdisciplinary qualitative researcher with an overall interest in social justice, specifically in how social policy addresses, or exacerbates, issues of public health and wellbeing often in deprived urban communities. She worked on the CLIP project. Her work spans education, urban studies, and public health. Recently, her work has begun to explore Whole School or Whole System approaches to improving outcomes for affected populations, and the facilitators and barriers to developing sustainable approaches within this.



Ben McAteer is a Research Fellow based in the Planning Department of Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland. He worked as a researcher on the CLIP project. His current role is as a researcher on the MarinePlan project, an EU-Horizon-funded study that explores spatial conservation measures for marine biodiversity, and teaches undergraduate classes on environmental planning and research methods. Benedict is also a editorial board member of the *Ocean & Society* journal, with his research interests including sustainability, participatory research and knowledge communication.



Kathryn Higgins (PhD) is a Professor of Social Science and Health at QUB. Kathy is the founder and Director of QCAP and was PI on the CLIP project. She has published widely in the areas of adolescent development as well as programme evaluation/implementation science and methodological innovation. She is an experienced research leader having directed two multi-disciplinary research centres at QUB. Her recent appointment as Director of 'Queen's Communities and Place' consolidates her extensive experience in leading research consortiums around community health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations, particularly children and young people.



Christopher Chapman was appointed as Professor of Educational Policy and Practice at the University of Glasgow in January 2013. Chris was also Co-Director of ESRC/Scottish Government funded What Works Scotland Centre and seconded part-time as Senior Academic Advisor to Scottish Government; PI of Children's Neighbourhoods Scotland (CNS) a major Scottish Government investment in researching and developing a place-based approach to tackle poverty and improve outcomes for children and young people; and PI on the CLIP study.

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