CHILDREN'S RIGHTS RESEARCH WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

THE POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

5TH DECEMBER 2024

REMINDER
THIS SEMINAR IS BEING RECORDED

CONTACT EMAIL: **CHILDRENS.RIGHTS@ED.AC.UK**

Observatory of
CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS
Scotland

CREAN
Children's Rights European Academic Network

Children & Young People Thematic Hub

WELCOME

Prof Kay Tisdall

Chair of Childhood Policy, Moray House School of Education and Sport University of Edinburgh

ABOUT THE OBSERVATORY

❖ The Observatory is a collaborative of Scottish organisations working to drive implementation of children's human rights in Scotland, with local impact and global learning.

❖ It came into being in 2020 and is currently steered by its core members:

- ❖ CELCIS, University of Strathclyde
- ❖ Childhood and Youth Studies Research Group, Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh
- ❖ Children's Parliament
- ❖ Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh
- ❖ Inspiring Children's Futures, University of Strathclyde
- ❖ Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

❖ And the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland as an independent advisor

PROGRAMME

2 – 2.05pm	**Welcome,** Prof Kay Tisdall
2.05 – 2.15pm	**Promoting Children's Rights through CREAN,** Dr Roberta Ruggiero
2.15 – 2.40pm	**The Voice of the Baby Project: Researching with Babies in the Participatory Arts,** Rhona Matheson (Starcatchers), Dr Rachel Drury (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and Dr Cara Blaisdell (Queen Margaret University)
2.40 – 3.05pm	**Building Webs of Voice in Early Childhood Education: provocations for listening and responding,** Prof Kate Wall and Dr Zinnia Mevawalla (University of Strathclyde)
3.05 – 3.20pm	Break
3.20 – 4.20pm	**Workshops**
4.20 – 4.30pm	**Close,** Dr Kristina Konstantoni

INTRODUCTION

Dr Roberta Ruggiero

Director of the Children's Rights Academy, Centre for Children's Rights Studies, University of Geneva

Seminar
Children's Rights Research with Young Children

University of Edinburgh, 5 December 2024

Dr Roberta Ruggiero
CREAN Academic Coordinator
Centre for Children's Rights Studies - University of Geneva

CREAN: A network of 30+ European universities

Children's Rights European Academic Network

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

Global Campus of Human Rights

Universität Potsdam

Swansea University Prifysgol Abertawe

NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Universidade do Minho

UCC University College Cork, Ireland Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

TARTU ÜLIKOOL UNIVERSITAS TARTUENSIS 1632

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

EnJeuX PÔLE UNIVERSITAIRE LIGÉRIEN D'ÉTUDES SUR L'ENFANCE-JEUNESSE

Stockholm University

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

LUDWIG BOLTZMANN INSTITUTE Fundamental and Human Rights

KEKI CHILDREN'S RIGHTS KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

UCL

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Université Paris Nanterre

History of Children's Rights European Academic Network

- **2004**: Founded at the Free University of Berlin
  - Initiated to promote and support academic research in children's rights across Europe.

- **2017**: Coordination office transferred to the University of Geneva
  - A significant step in expanding the network's reach and influence.

- **2024**: Fully integrated as part of the University of Geneva
  - The network achieved full stabilisation.
  - Became a permanent feature within the academic and administrative structure of the University of Geneva.

Promoting Children's Rights through CREAN Mission & Mandate

Establishing	Fostering	Promoting	Facilitating
Establishing a collaborative platform among diverse European academic institutions	Fostering interdisciplinary studies in children's rights	Promoting research dissemination and training programs	Facilitating collaboration between research and policy development

CREAN
Children's Rights European Academic Network

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS STUDIES

CREAN: Objectives

- Promote attitudes that **recognise children as subjects of rights** principally as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Support **professional ethics that respect children** as competent subjects.

- Endorse **children's rights to resources and participation** in decision-making.

- Foster **learning between advanced programmes** on children's rights across European universities.

- Produce **innovative knowledge and meet the need to form human resources** within Europe and on an international level.

- **Foster cooperation** between **universities**, **public institutions** and **NGOs** working in the field of children's rights.

CREAN Activities: 2024-2025

Biannual Conferences

- April 25-26, 2024 : CREAN Conference "Collaborative Research in Children's Rights: Fostering Dialogue Between Academia and Society", University of Geneva

Seminars & Webinars

- April 15, 2024 : Seminar "The Contributions of Scientific Research for Children's Rights", University of Bologna, Italy
- November 7, 2024: Webinar "Young Children's Participative Rights in Schools: Messages from Research in Wales", Swansea University, United-Kingdom
- December 5, 2024: Seminar "Children's Rights Research with Young Children: the Potential and Challenge of Participatory Methods", University of Edinburgh, Scotland
- **January 13, 2025**: Webinar "Children's Challenging their Detention Under the Mental Health Act 1983: the Right to Receive Child-Friendly Information as a Core Feature of their Participation Rights", Northumbria University, United-Kingdom

Children's Rights Research Symposium

- June 13-14, 2024, 10th PhD Symposium "Looking back and moving forward - challenges and opportunities for children's rights research", University of Stockholm, Sweden
- **October 2025**, 11th PhD Symposium, theme TBC, University of Leiden

Bi-annual Children's Rights Moot Court

- **April 2025**, theme TBD, Leiden University, Netherlands

CREAN PhD Symposium

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS STUDIES

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1st Children's Rights Research Symposium

January 2013 - University of Liverpool

2nd Children's Rights Research Symposium

October 2014 - University College Cork

3rd Children's Rights Research Symposium

October 2015 - University of Antwerp

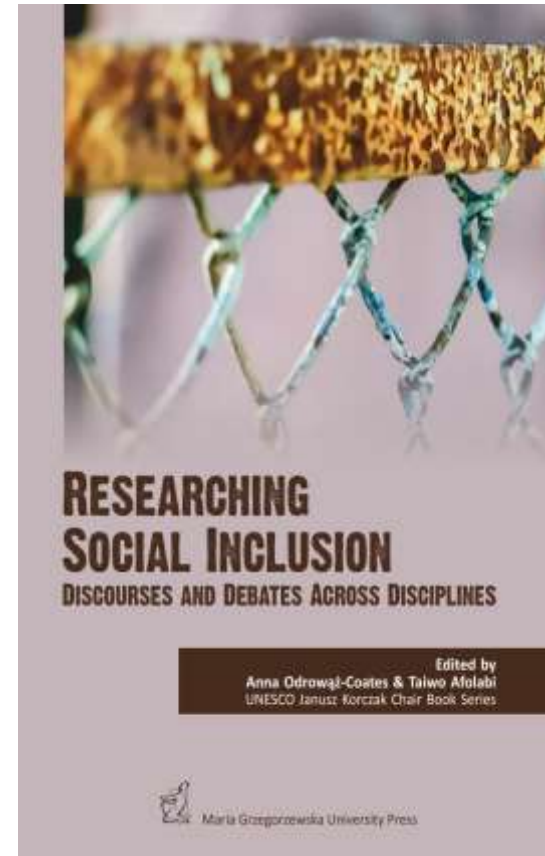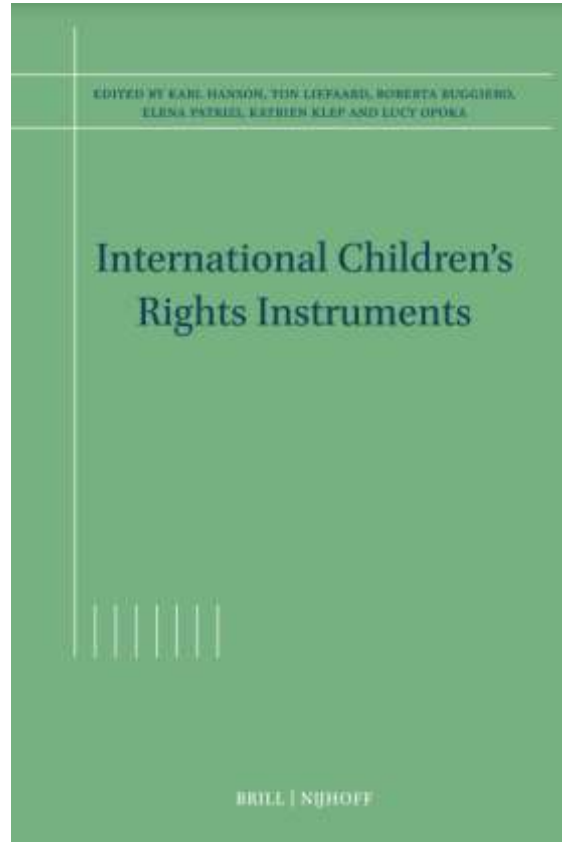### 4th Children's Rights Research Symposium

December 2016 - University of Leiden

5th Children's Rights Research Symposium

August 2017 - University of Geneva

6th Children's Rights Research Symposium

October 2018 - Queen's University Belfast

7th Children's Rights Research Symposium

December 2019 - University of Liverpool

8th Children's Rights Research Symposium

December 2022 - University College Cork

9th Children's Rights Research Symposium

December 2023 - University of Antwerp

10th Edition
PHD SYMPOSIUM
CREAN
Children's Rights European Academic Network

10th CREAN PhD Symposium Stockholm University - June 13-24, 2024

to know more

CREAN Publications
2023-2024

Stay up to date on the latest child rights developments by following
Children's Rights European Academic Network on
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Children's Rights European Academic Network

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THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EUROPEAN ACADEMIC NETWORK|

CREAN is an academic network of higher education institutions in Europe. Its mandate is to enhance exchange and collaboration amongst academic institutions of children's rights in Europe.

ABOUT

CREAN is a network of more than 30 European universities that aims to enhance the academic field of children's rights as an interdisciplinary field of studies and to reinforce the already existing ties between academic research and policies development.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Join us for a series of though-provoking webinars and seminars organised in collaboration with CREAN member institutions. More information will be provided soon. Please save the dates and stay tuned for updates.

https://crean-network.org

Thank you !

THE VOICE OF THE BABY PROJECT: RESEARCHING WITH BABIES IN THE PARTICIPATORY ARTS

Rhona Matheson (Starcatchers)

Dr Rachel Drury (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)

Dr Cara Blaisdell (Queen Margaret University)

Observatory of **CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS** Scotland

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The Voice of the Baby: Researching with Babies in the Participatory Arts

Rhona Matheson (Starcatchers)
Rachel Drury (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)
Cara Blaisdell (Queen Margaret University)

Background to the project

- Starcatchers: Scotland's arts and early years organisation – using arts and creativity to inspire our youngest children and enable them to access their rights

- Developing a broader understanding of Children's Rights and what this means for babies and young children and the realisation of their rights.

- Increasing interest in the 'voice' of younger children – 'how do you do participation with babies?'

Phase 1

Review of the research literature

National survey (artists and arts companies)

Group interviews with Starcatchers Artists

Majority of studies across the literature are situated within an education or care context

Artists seems to have a common and intuitive understanding of rights-based approaches for babies in and through their work.

The importance of babies' adults was also acknowledged in access to artistic experience and in relation to babies' voices being heard.

Phase 2: Towards a framework

Observations of visits to 3 Starcatchers projects (7 sessions in total)

Rachel and Cara coded all 7 observations sessions individually …

Transcribed rich descriptive observation data

… before collaborating to discuss developing themes

Artist Play Day to discuss findings / seek feedback

Data was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (as described by Braun and Clarke 2022)

The 5 Areas

Curating the Space
creating permission for play and creativity

Building Sensitive, Informed Relationships
warm, affectionate interpersonal interactions

Navigating Identity
of yourself as the artist, the space, and the people within it

Respecting and Validating
the complex communication of babies

Making Time
for young children to be heard

QR code for Reflective Guide

QR code to give feedback on the Guide

Building Sensitive, Informed Relationships

warm, affectionate interpersonal interactions

This area relates to an affectionate 'hosting' approach to children and families, warm relationships, and navigating tensions around expectations

An arts context allows for an approach that is tangibly different from other 'services' that babies and adults encounter (such as education, healthcare etc). As such, the relationships with babies and adults are crucial in facilitating participation.

How does your approach encourage the building of relationships within the space?

How does the arts experience you have created facilitate the process of building relationships for everyone in the space?

How might relationships differ in the space?

How do the relationships inform the arts experience?

"For example, one child walked across the bamboo tracks several times in a row quite purposefully (no shoes on) and seemed to be absorbing the sensation on his feet"

"[Mum] seems quite grateful to be offered a coffee and not like this is something which is offered to her very often"

Navigating Identity

of yourself as the artist, the space, and the people within it

This area relates to questions about gender stereotypes, formation of in-groups/ out-groups, maintaining the space for babies, and artists helping with care routines

We encourage you to think about identity in a variety of ways: for example, your own identity in the space, the identity of others in the space, and also the identity of the space itself. Often, we have multiple identities that are in play at any given time.

What role(s) do you occupy within the space, and in any given activity? What roles do others play?

How does your role, and the role of others, influence the space and the people within it?

How do you maintain the integrity of identity of the space? (for example, when challenged by older children being present)

How might the arts experience encourage in-groups or out-groups to evolve?

"There were tutus available for the adults to dress babies in. There was a very interesting comment from one adult when she put the tutu on her (male) baby—she said: *'It's a good job your dad isn't here—he'd have said 'get it off'*!"

Curating the Space

Building sensitive, informed relationships

Respecting and Validating

Making Time

Navigating Identity
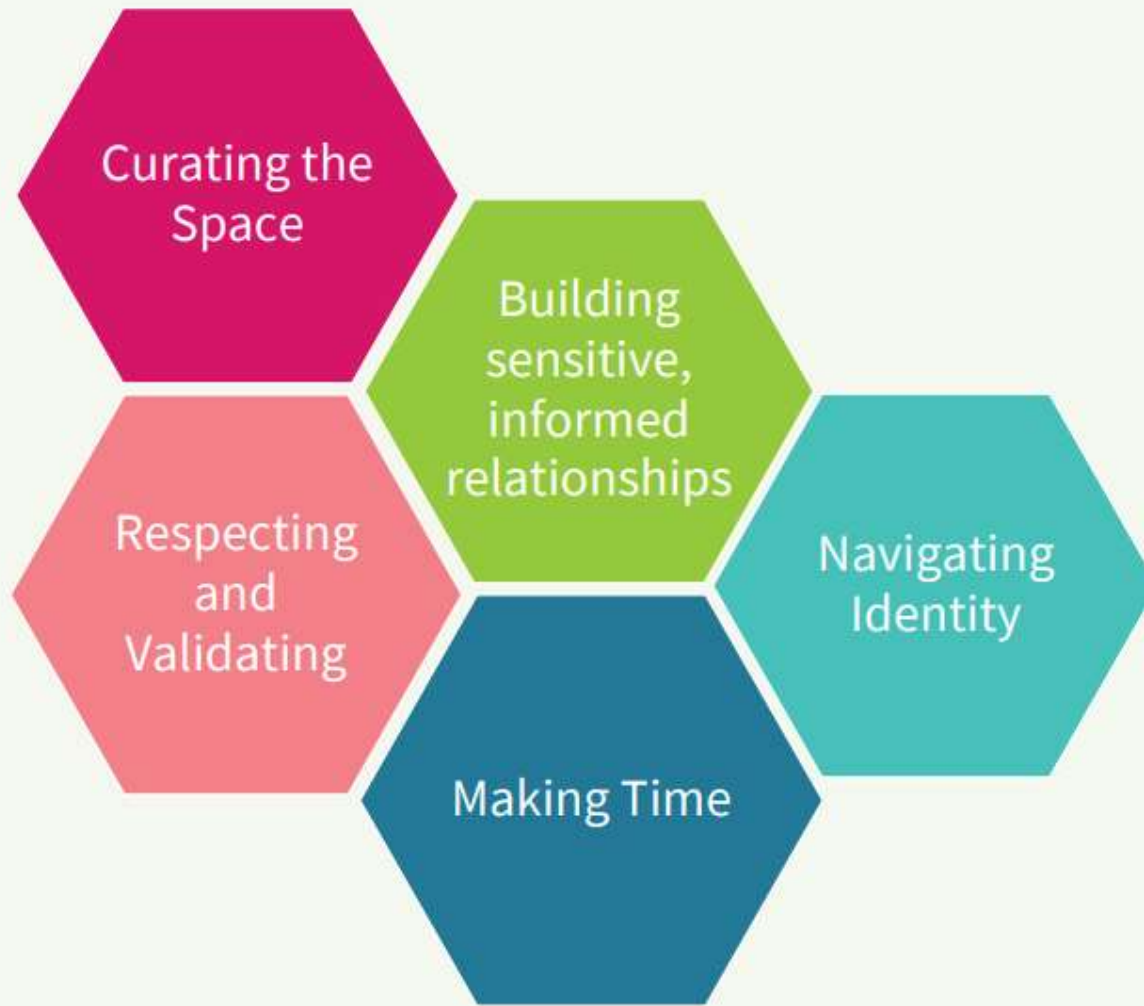
Bringing it all Together

How do all the areas intersect with one another when we consider the participatory rights of the child?

Kite Model

Relational, holistic, slow (Horgan 2024)

Interdependence: Resists dichotomy between children and adults (e.g. Tisdall 2015, Lundy et al 2024)

Deep recognition of babies' voices, contributions, influence and agency (e.g. Hulgren & Johannson 2019)

Tensions are generative for deeper, ongoing reflection

Baby or young child

Caregiver

Creative Arts Experience

Artist

Others

STARCATCHERS

VOICE OF THE BABY IN PRACTICE

Resources to guide the practical application of
The Voice of the Baby: A Reflective Guide for the Arts.

Next Steps – Implementation and Dissemination

- Testing the Guide – it is an evolving resource: we want to understand how people use it, what works, what needs clarification

- Making it accessible:
- The creation of the In Practice Resource - https://starcatchers.org.uk/work/the-voice-of-the-baby/
- Suite of Films
- Training and support

- Starcatchers' implementation of the methodology across our work
  - § Love Letham
  - § Let's Be Heard (Scottish Covid 19 Inquiry)
  - § New projects

Voice of the Baby: A Strategic View

Short term: in the moment, responsive planning

Medium term: shaping delivery of session, intentional planning

Long term: shaping strategic planning, consultation
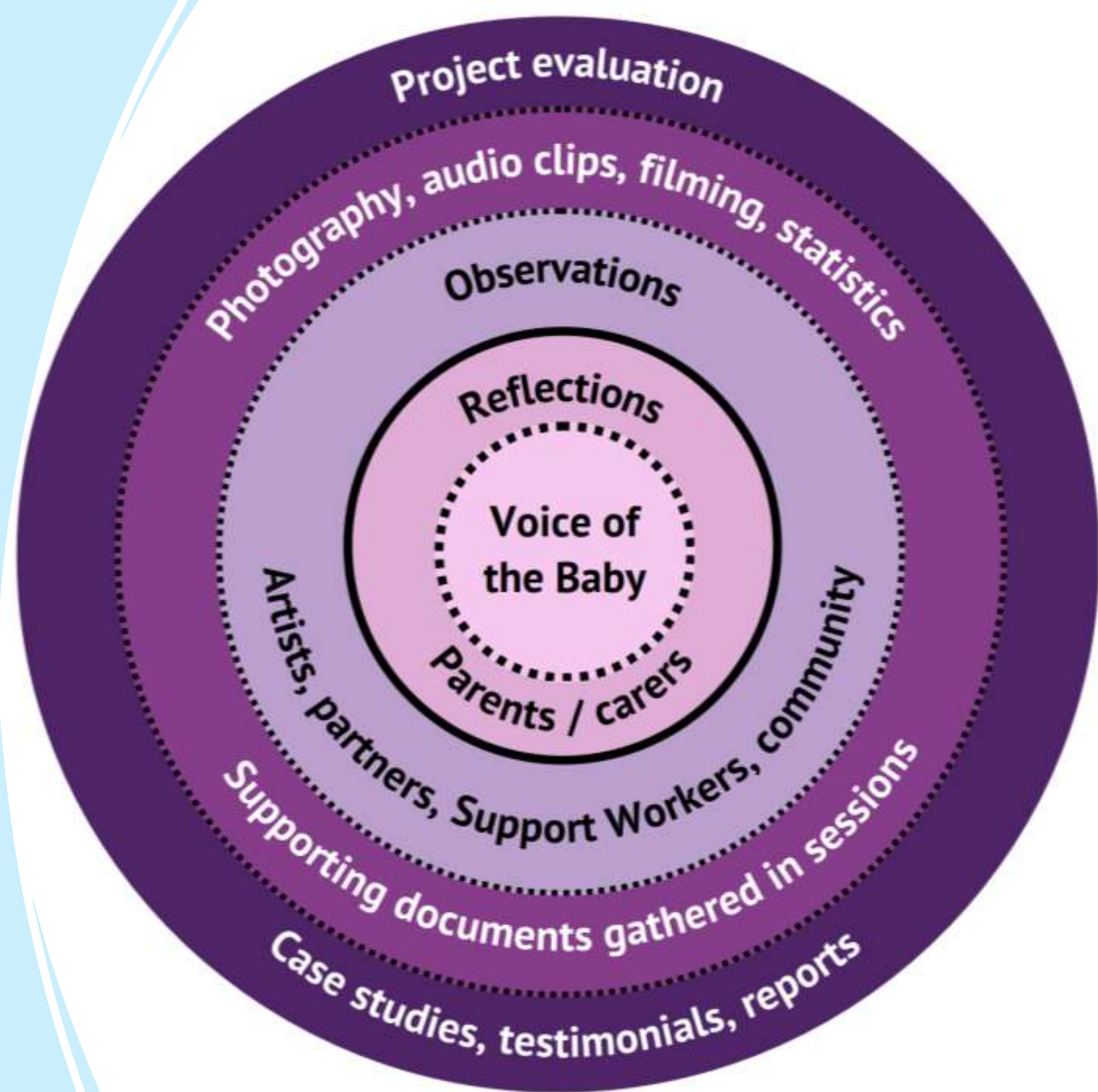
Sharing the Work

- Sharing and disseminating – this is an important opportunity for considering the rights of babies and very young children and we want to share this work widely as part of the developing discourse on babies' rights
  - o The Right Start Conference: Babies Rights, Voice and the Arts – Thursday 6th March 2025

- Preparing journal papers – exploring the dialogue with theory and practice

- Rhona.matheson@starcatchers.org.uk
- r.drury@rcs.ac.uk
- Cblaisdell@qmu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

The development of this Reflective Guide has been made possible through our interactions with a number of key people whose expertise, willingness to collaborate, and generosity have been invaluable.

We would like to thank:

The babies, children and families who welcomed us into their space
The Research Steering Group who informed Phase 1
The Starcatchers Artists and Staff Team
Prof Stephen Broad, Deborah Keogh, Claire Ruckert from Royal Conservatoire Scotland

BUILDING WEBS OF VOICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: PROVOCATIONS FOR LISTENING AND RESPONDING

Prof Kate Wall and **Dr Zinnia Mevawalla** (University of Strathclyde)
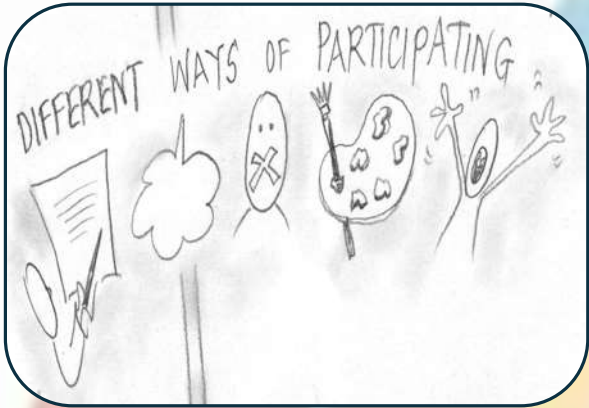
1. Voice
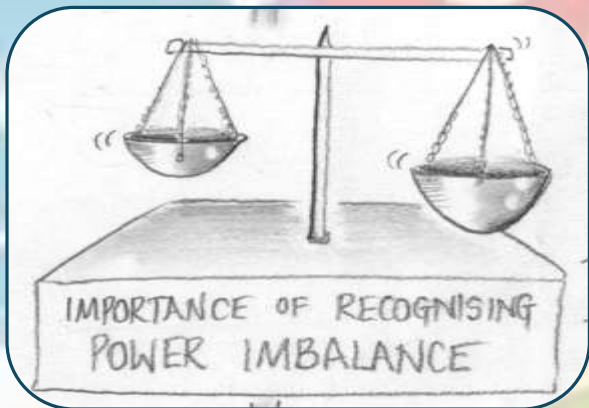
2. Power

3. Inclusivity

4. Listening
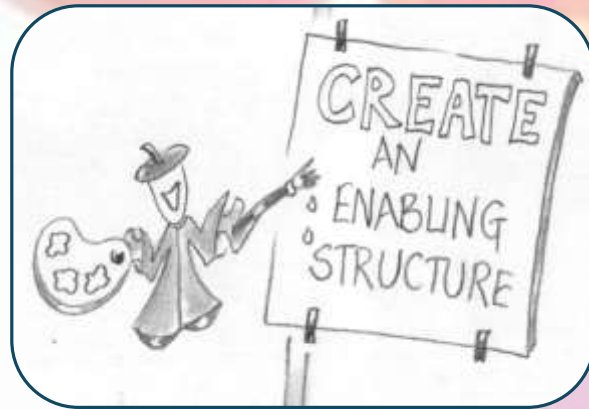
5. Time & Space
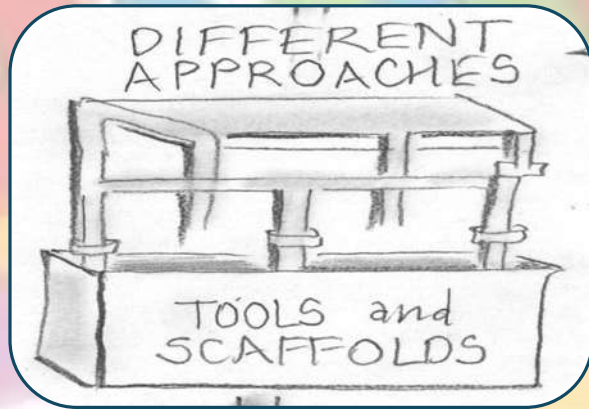
6. Approaches

7. Processes

8. Purposes

Web Concept

Factors as spokes of a web
Learning about one factor influences the learning about the others
Learning 'journey' is cumulative and ongoing without end. It builds over time and the echoes of the past will influence

Enactment of voice

Power

Purposes

Inclusivity

Processes

Approaches

Listening

Time & Space

Kate.Wall@strath.ac.uk
@kate_wall98

University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow

Using the Web

'Flies' will land (people, incidents, policies, etc.) that disrupt the web and make the learning jump.

Lines might be reinforced through activity (e.g. prof enquiry, tools, talk)

Lines might be evidenced and reinforced for the whole community

Enactment of Voice
What is voice? What is not voice? How does voice link to rights? When is voice not appropriate?

Purposes
What am I doing this for? What have I got to lose? How will I evaluate this? What are the children getting from this?

Power
Who owns what is said? What is the balance between collective and individual voices? Who is asking the questions?

Processes
How comfortable am I taking risks? How do I build trust with different groups? When is voice risky? How do I use voice to move things forward?

Inclusivity
Does everyone have an equal voice? How do I know when someone is excluded? Do I value some voices more than others? Is opting out a key part of inclusion?
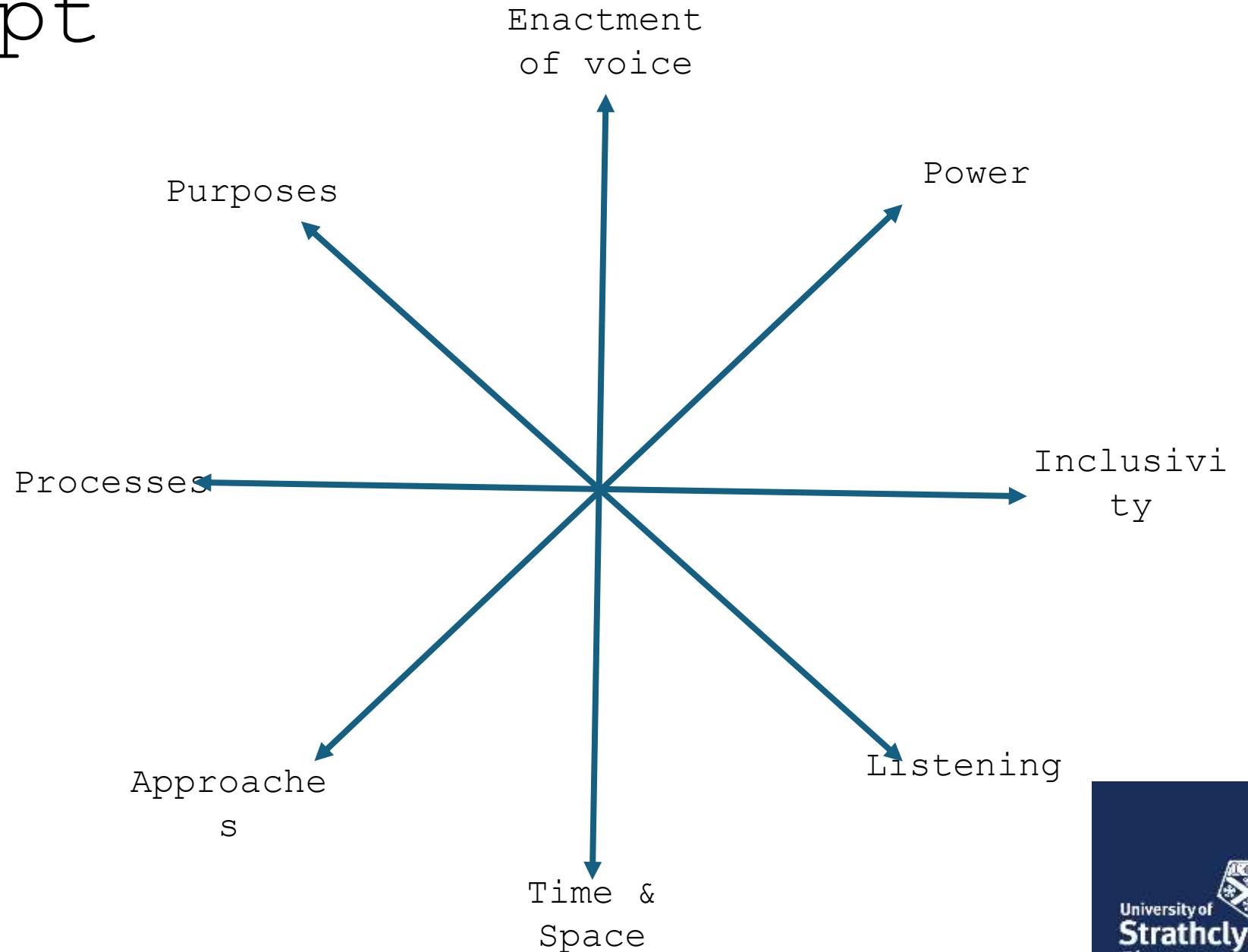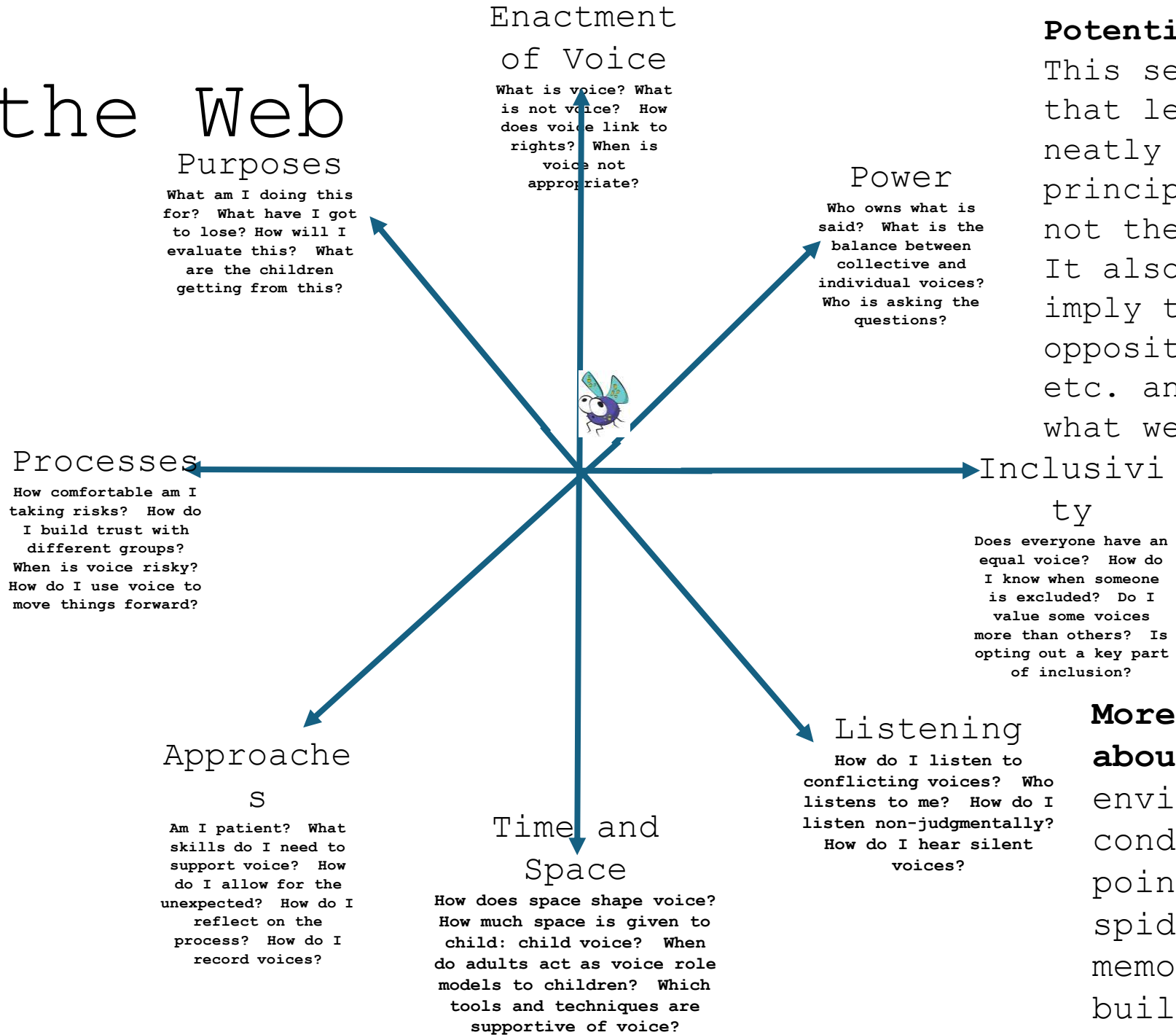
Approaches
Am I patient? What skills do I need to support voice? How do I allow for the unexpected? How do I reflect on the process? How do I record voices?

Time and Space
How does space shape voice? How much space is given to child: child voice? When do adults act as voice role models to children? Which tools and techniques are supportive of voice?

Listening
How do I listen to conflicting voices? Who listens to me? How do I listen non-judgmentally? How do I hear silent voices?

Potential issues:
This seems to imply that learning goes neatly round the principles but that is not the case...
It also appears to imply that power is opposite approaches etc. and that's not what we think

More to think about:
environmental conditions, anchor points, who is the spider? Historical memory of webs built before?

Provocation

A four-year-old boy with an Autism diagnosis sits at a separate table from his peers during lunch time… a child with a disability has the right to lead a full life with dignity and be an accepted member of the community. By sitting Jack alone at lunch this contradicts this right…

I decided to invite 3 other children to sit at the smaller table with Jack. These children were happy to oblige. All four children were spread out with lots of space between them to allow for Jack to feel relaxed.

Some questions arose from the other children at the table such as "Jack's a baby, isn't he?" and "why does Jack not speak?" and I found this an ideal opportunity to initiate some conversation ... I explained to the children that Jack is the same age as them, and that although he doesn't speak words, Jack is very good at communicating through our picture cards and visual prompts which we have aro̶u̶n̶d̶ ̶s̶o̶ ̶t̶h̶e̶n̶ that this is why we practice our Maka̶ and word

Power and Active Listening: How is children's agency and choice reflected in voice practices? How is Jack's voice respected, valued, and having an influence on the web of voice practices used (Lundy, 2007)?

Purpose, Processes and Approaches: What do children's questions and views about voice reveal about the "hidden" cultures and curricular around voice in our setting? What are the impacts of speaking *for* and *about* children? How can we support children to appreciate diverse forms of communication as equally valid?

Heather

Provocation 2

It made me more aware of the way in which we use [Augmentative and Alternative Communication] AAC devices and how it can lead to children being unintentionally discriminated against. This led me to reflect on the use of AAC in our setting and how it can unintentionally become a tool that we are not using the most effectively.

The children who use them do not always have access to them, only when the one-to-one support is available for them. This is due to fear of them being broken, but it means that the adults have the power of when the child can use them. This

Inclusivity, Power, Purpose, Time and Space: What do [...] e are working children and adults learn about voice if access to tools is only available at times where micro-exclusion occurs (i.e., one-on-one practices)? How does this curtail children's attempts to express themselves? Whose agenda for 'listening' is being centred in the web?

Anna

Provocation

Definition, Approaches and Inclusivity: How can redefining our understandings of voice, challenge deeply engrained social oppressions like ableism? What informs our assumptions and expectations about the ways in which children might communicate?

Alex is a child who attends my nursery and is in my group, they are Deaf and use BSL (British Sign Language) as their means of communication… She has a teacher from the Deaf school who comes out once a week to work closely with Alex, [and] during the last few visits she has made comments which I believe to be ableist…

She also states that the more "Verbal language" Alex is exposed to the better her chances are of [her] becoming "Verbal like her sister", she is therefore stating that language only consists of the spoken word and is devaluating BSL as a language in its own regard.

I reflected on this and stated that Alex was fortunate in that she [...] e daily. In [...] evelop her [...] d meets her [...]

Alex

Active Listening, Power, Process and Purpose: How do adult power relations influence webs of voice practices? How do formal and informal structures impact on inclusive approaches to voice? How are shared understandings and goals negotiated, and 'co-owned' when there are differing or conflicting views, and when multiple webs are being woven, and inter-woven, simultaneously?

Reflection and Review

- Webs of voice are woven in broader socio-political contexts that normalise ableism. Resisting ableism and advocating for the valuing of all forms of communication is key to upholding ALL children's rights, and to creating cultures or ecologies of voice that foster belonging and equity.

- Accessibility and dignity are inherently interwoven within both hidden and visible webs of voice. Inaccessibility creates hierarchies of voice that privilege some children's opportunities to communicate, whilst curtailing the voices of "others" – thus inadvertently creating an "us" and "them".

- Children's questions and views about human difference (e.g., about the many ways of thinking, being and doing), offer insights and provocations for reflecting on identity, diversity, and voice. These can help us, as pedagogues, learn and reflect on how our values, beliefs, understandings, and underpinning images of children are actualised in practice. Thus, to listen to children is to learn where we might better uphold children's rights, and where our powers are – as weavers of voice.

Web of Webs

- Some webs are more visible than others

- Some individuals more likely to weave (successful/ beautiful/ robust) webs than others

- Some webs exist in parallel with each other

- Webs are unlikely to be made in isolation

- In a group then we might have a collective web alongside individual webs

- Are some webs more important than others?

- Are there different types of webs depending on intent?
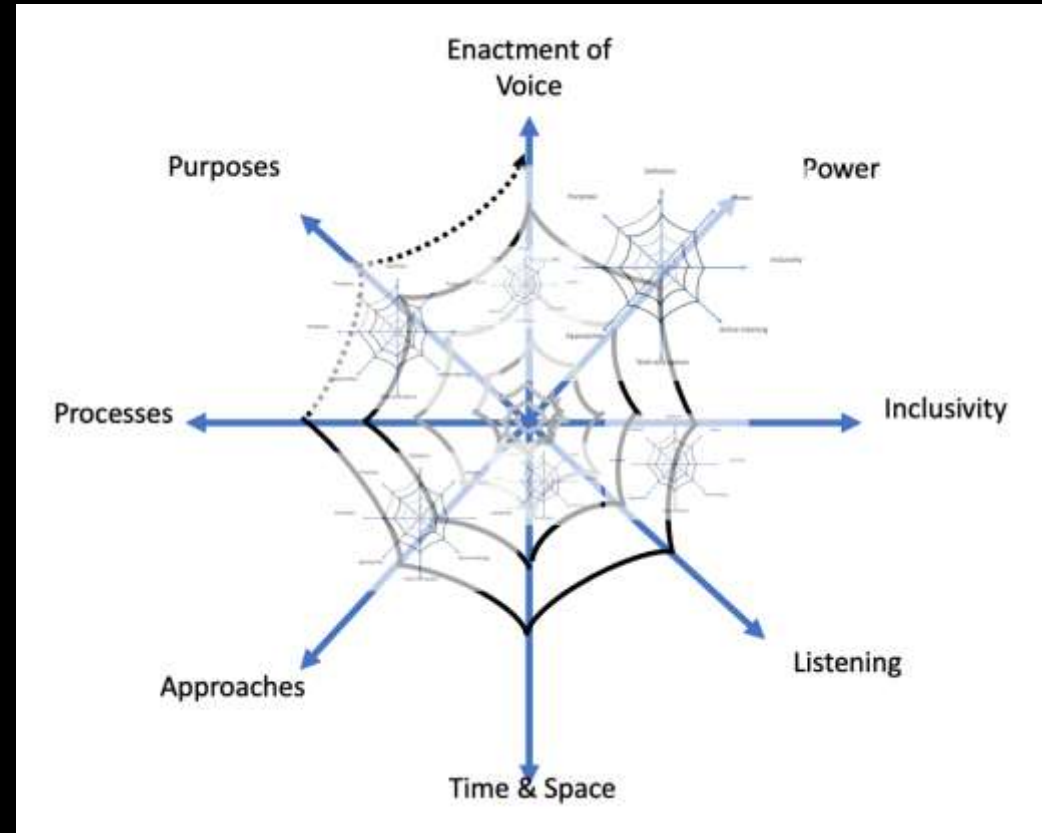
Follow up references

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Robinson, C., Wall, K., Murray, J., Evans, E., Grogan, D., and Bowes, C. (2024) An Exploration of Rights Based Education Through Promoting Voice in the Early Years: building a spider's web. In Beaton, M.C., Burke, A., Keskitalo, P. and Turunen, T. (Eds.) Children's Voice and Agency in Diverse Settings: International Research and Perspectives. Routledge: 24-47

BREAK

WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1: *The use of Persona dolls as a research tool to engage with young children*; Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa – 5.15

Workshop 2: *Developing young people's skills in play-based research with young children*; CIESPI (the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro), Brazil – 5.11

Workshop 3: *Co-creating and storybook-ing with very young children: Research, Innovation and Impact through Being, Learning, Sharing, Doing praxis*; Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, UK – 5.04

CLOSE

Dr Kristina Konstantoni

Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies, Moray House School of Education and Sport University of Edinburgh

THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THIS SEMINAR!

CONTACT EMAIL: **CHILDRENS.RIGHTS@ED.AC.UK**

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