Title: I want to do real things: Explorations of children’s active community participation

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Brief biography: Louise is a lecturer in literacy education in the School of Education at University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, with twenty years of experience as a professional storyteller and early childhood teacher. Sustainability principles have been (and continue to be) at the core of her work with storytelling and early childhood education. Her current research focuses on explorations of young children’s active citizenship, foregrounding young children’s participation in society, and cultivating social responsibility.

Abstract: Framed within communitarianism, this chapter explores possibilities for young children’s active participation in the sustainability of Earth and its inhabitants, via attention to the interdependence of natural, social, economic and political systems. How embedded social and political structures limit and control the scope of children’s participation is brought to the fore, with insights from two studies offering possibilities for adult practices to work with children to circumnavigate barriers to children’s participation. In particular, possibilities for innovations in pedagogy in early childhood education for sustainability are discussed. One study explored a living theory of storytelling pedagogy, whilst another study investigated the scope of public pedagogy to cultivate shifts in social perceptions of children and citizenship. Data from both studies demonstrate that children want to be active citizens. They want to do ‘real things’, which challenges the metanarrative of young children existing in worlds of play, domesticity, and school. The ideas discussed alert educators, policy makers and community workers to the complexities that surround notions of young children’s active citizenship and provide guidelines for practice to open doors to the breadth of possibilities for young children’s inclusion in civic participation for sustainability.
Introduction

Stephen Sterling states that ‘education for sustainability relates to just about every- thing’ (2012) to which I fully agree. The UNESCO (2010) definition of the four interdependent pillars of sustainability provides a useful frame of the interdependent systems that humans exist within: natural/biophysical, economic; social and cultural; and political. We live on planet Earth, which is a complex ecosystem that supports life. To manage co-existence, humans have constructed social and cultural systems. Humans have also constructed economic systems, with the advancement of division of labour, ownership and trading. Political systems are enacted to make policies and decisions about the way social and economic systems use resources in the natural environment. We are all embedded in these interdependent systems. To consolidate recognition that sustainability relates to everything, consider an issue and assess how it fits into these interdependent systems. For example, reduced government funding for public transport services, are evidence of a political system restricting an economic system, the impact of which would see people increasing motor vehicle usage placing greater strains on road infrastructure, and increasing use of natural resources (e.g. petroleum, copper, rubber, iron ore) thereby placing further stress on Earth’s biophysical systems.

Sustainability is a problematic term due to its ambiguous nature thus producing somewhat diverse interpretations (Garrard 2007). Interpretations that have most conflict with the call for urgent action to sustain the planet are those that take a ‘business as usual’ view generally acknowledged as embedded in an individualist view of sustaining personal life styles (Mayall 2000). The reality is that Earth cannot sustain exponential use of resources (made alarmingly visible through ecological footprint calculators),1 what John De Graaf et al. (2005) refers to as ‘affluenza’, the Global North’s epidemic of overconsumption. Rather than sustaining current practices, we should be reducing consumption and the environmental impacts of everyday decisions. A radical shift from attitudes of complacency, comfort and egocentricism is vital. Humans must take action with consideration for others by questioning how our actions impact other people, animals, living things, ecosystems and future generations.

Children’s participation in sustainability

Such a transformational shift can be cultivated through a communitarian approach to citizenship, which views citizenship participation as purposeful group action to create a cohesive, just society
and a strong sense of community responsibility (Delanty 2002, Etzioni 1993, Janoski 1998). The human population of Earth currently exceeds 7 billion, yet Earth can only sustain 2 billion people, at an equivalent consumption rate to the average European (World Population Balance 2013). Given such alarming statistics, I see environmental, social, political and economic responsibility as necessitated shared responsibility for all inhabitants of Earth. Communitarian citizenship as shared responsibility provides an approach that can be possible for, and inclusive of, children. Recent theorizing of children’s citizenship builds on communitarian understandings of citizenship, making a case for children’s agency in the wider community (e.g. Kulynych 2001, Lister 2007, 2008, Phillips 2010a, 2011). This is not to say that communitarian citizenship is an easy fit for children’s citizenship. Millei and Imre (2009) argued that the idea of children acting as citizens based on a communitarian version of citizenship is problematic due to their limited access to civic institutions and full participation in political life.

Though the social demarcation between adulthood and childhood is clearly delineated through legislation, regulations, social infrastructures and metanarratives of children as developing, innocent, and protected, there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates children’s desires to be active contributors in society (e.g. Hayward 2012, Holden 2006, Nichols 2007, Phillips 2010a, 2011). Hence, the title for this chapter ‘I want to do real things’: words spoken by six year old Denmark (a self-selected pseudonym) during a study (see Phillips 2010b) that investigated how social justice stories might provoke young children’s active citizenship. Denmark voiced this rebuke when I (as researcher) had been listening to Denmark and a group of his peers’ responses to hearing stories of children’s experiences of working in carpet factories in Pakistan, which included suggestions from the children to address child exploitation, such as gathering supplies to build schools. I suggested we could build a model of a school to which Denmark replied, ‘I want to do real things’ (Week 8 workshop 10/09/2008). This assertion of a genuine desire to engage as a citizen in the wider community alerted me to how young children today are typically ascribed pretend or play situations rather than participation in real life, an observation noted generally by sociologists (e.g. Roche, 1999) and educators (e.g. Nimmo 2008).

Denmark’s comment signalled how patronizing my suggestion to build a model school had been for him. Though my suggestion was in alignment with the typical practices of an early years setting, Denmark had the confidence to assert motivation for real action with real impact. The romance of play as advocated by Froebel (1887) and Rousseau (Rousseau 1762/2007) continues
to be a core principle of early childhood pedagogy, that shelters children from the ‘corrupting influence’ of society. An assertion for ‘real things’ challenges the metanarrative of young children existing in worlds of play, domesticity, and school (Roche 1999). It also emphasizes the limitations young children can experience when opportunities for meaning-making are consistently restricted to the world of play.

Denmark’s comment signalled the marginalization that children often experience in regard to their active community participation. Such a marginalized and deficit experience of citizenship is acknowledged by Arvanitakis (2008) in his typology of four citizenship spaces. In the marginalized and deficit experience category, citizens feel they are not listened to or represented by civic institutions; they consider participation pointless because they claim their opinions will not be heard. The other spaces Arvanitakis refers to are: privatization and citizenship deficit (citizens look to the private sector for action as they feel civic institutions do not meet their needs); citizenship surplus – empowered not engaged; and insurgent citizenship – empowered and engaged. Citizenship in this typology is understood as fluid and diversified lived experiences. Denmark’s declaration of wishing to perform actions in the real world, demonstrates that he was empowered and engaged (insurgent citizenship) in that moment. He was not satisfied with the conventional experiences offered to children aged five to six years where real world contexts may be played with, drawn, built, talked about, but rarely engaged with directly through participation as communitarian citizens. These six words spoken by Denmark make visible how children’s experiences of citizenship (environmental, social, political and economic responsibility) may have moments of ignition for action (insurgence) that then collide with deficit spaces due to social, political, and civic demarcations that restrict children’s access to participation and action.

Early childhood education for sustainability can provide children with the opportunity to be active communitarian citizens, and build their capacities to negotiate access to the public sphere (e.g. civic institutions, public spaces, media), especially if early childhood education for sustainability is understood as ‘the enactment of transformative, empowering and participative education around sustainability issues, topics and experiences within early education contexts’ (Davis 2010: 28). Such an approach to early childhood education enables participation in ‘real action’ with ‘real things’, equipping children with capacities, knowledge, skills and dispositions to be active local and global community contributors. This is not about burdening children with the world’s problems, but rather cultivating care, empathy, and questioning minds, and
empowering children with knowledge and possibilities for action. If children are sheltered from sustainability issues and from active citizenship participation in addressing such issues, children remain in a marginalized and deficit space. In short, young children are aware and concerned about many issues pertaining to sustainability, and have the capability to understand the complexities, problem-solve and act for the environment.

Based on the provocations and principles pertaining to children’s active participation in sustainability discussed above, the following section discusses pedagogical possibilities for early childhood education for sustainability drawn from two empirical studies. Though the studies involved young primary-school-aged children, the core ideas of the pedagogies discussed have applicability across all sectors of education.

**Pedagogical foundations**

Attention to discussion of pedagogy, as the art (Eisner 1979) and science of teaching (Simon 1981) and learning, has been a largely neglected component of education discourse in the English-speaking west, as attention to curriculum and assessment dominate (Alexander 2004). An emphasis on pedagogy in education for sustainability has been advocated for and prioritized by key education for sustainability authors (e.g. Grunewald 2003, Sterling 1996, Tilbury 1995). Pedagogy is signalled in Davis’ (2010) definition of early childhood education for sustainability through her use of words such as ‘transformative’, ‘empowering’ and ‘participative education’. These are critical pedagogy elements that support and cultivate communitarian citizenship participation. Critical pedagogues, such as Freire (1974), and Greene (1995), support communitarian citizenship through education for social change by cultivating critical awareness of unjust practices and taking action to address these. For Freire (1974), the awakening of critical awareness, or what he called *conscientização*, was necessary for education to provoke social change. He explained that critical awareness could only occur in ‘active dialogical educational programs concerned with social and political responsibility and [that are] prepared to avoid the danger of massification’ (p. 19). The concept of massification defines the process in which people remain susceptible to the magical, mythical, illogical, and irrational practices of power by blindly following such practices. To reduce overuse of natural resources, Shove (2003) argues that we need to question and reassess our ‘illogical’ practices for example taking a shower every day when we know that water is a precious and limited resource. Critical awareness is, thus, necessary for
education for sustainability to engage children in critical dialogue that questions blind practices and enables social action to change these practices.

Maxine Greene (1995) also advocated for critical awareness by asking us to treat the world as more than simply ‘there’, by stirring ‘wide-awakeness that leads to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility’ (p. 43). The sustainability agenda calls for a similar response to the Earth. For Greene, the experience of wide-awakening can occur when teachers teach to arouse vivid, reflective experiential responses by releasing imagination through the arts. She suggests that the motivation to act for social change can, in part, be created by stories. By stories Greene meant the voice of personal perspectives as well as listening to the stories of others in the spaces of dialogue. Greene saw that people could come together through spoken words and action to create something in common. From this understanding, Greene envisioned classrooms that valued multiple perspectives, democratic pluralism, life narratives and ongoing social change. Engagement in education for social change can relate and bind people together in the same way that communitarianism aims to create a cohesive and just society. The theoretical frames of critical pedagogy (or education for social change) provided by Freire and Greene therefore, offer a foundation for pedagogical possibilities for early childhood education for sustainability.

**Storytelling pedagogy for sustainability**

In 2007, I drew on the above theoretical foundations to inform a social justice storytelling program with a class of children aged five to six years, to explore possibilities for young children’s active citizenship. The study was inspired by previous encounters as a storytelling teacher of sharing stories of injustices, with young children who readily expressed concern about the injustices and were motivated to take action. I have come to appreciate storytelling as an aesthetic encounter that can provoke social change as advocated by contemporary thinkers such as Maxine Greene (1995) and Martha Nussbaum (1997), as they both recognize the capacity of story to captivate people to see and feel the perspective of others, which motivates changes in relations, possibilities and actions. A greater fullness of understanding can be achieved through story rather than through information-giving, because it is up to the listener to interpret the content of the story in the way she/he understands it (Benjamin 1955/1999).

The investigated program involved weekly visits to a prep2 class (for 13 weeks) with whom I led a 90-minute storytelling-based session. I began each session by telling a story, in the tradition
of oral storytelling, that is, being performative and interactive. Each story was purposefully crafted to provoke critique of social justice issues and to build knowledge about issues with current relevance for the children (e.g. an endangered local bird, sharing of resources). After the storytelling, the teacher and I co-facilitated a critical discussion of the story, based on a community of inquiry approach (Lipman 1988) in which children and adults dialogue to search out the problematic borders of pertinent issues. Further exploration of the story occurred in small group activities where the children employed modes such as drawing, sculpting/building and dancing. They also developed social actions to redress the injustices highlighted by the stories. These small group activities provided space for aesthetic engagement to help process affective responses (Greene 1995) to the stories, along with opportunities for the children to work on self-selected social actions to redress injustices. Two to three days after each story-telling workshop, I visited the class to gain feedback about that week’s storytelling session through separate follow-up conversations with the teacher and a group of five to six self-nominated children. My practice was investigated through a living theory approach to practitioner research (Whitehead and McNiff 2006), by questioning, reflecting and amending practice to form explanations of influence in practice, ‘in the learning of others, and in the learning of social formations’ (p. 68). In the context of this study, the practice of inquiry was my practice of social justice storytelling with a prep class. The ‘learning of others’ was the participation of young children as active citizens and the ‘learning of social formations’ was the exploration of possibilities for young children’s active citizenship.

By questioning, reflecting and amending my practice I came to form a ‘living theory of social justice storytelling as pedagogy’ by identifying key elements of my practice, which, I believe, offer pedagogical possibilities for early childhood education for sustainability. I refer to these elements as motifs, which are understood in storytelling as recurring themes with underlying meanings (MacDonald 1982), such as the wolf motif being equated with danger and destruction. The four motifs that explain social justice storytelling as pedagogy are: story-tailoring, ‘walk in the shoes of another’, spinning and weaving, and freedom of expression. These motifs are metaphors for how I crafted the stories, and facilitated the workshops as endeavours to provoke and promote young children’s active citizenship (see Phillips 2010b). A motif of story-tailoring highlights a need for responsiveness to build community and meaning with listeners, by tailoring subsequent stories based on children’s responses to preceding stories; the key issues that the children discussed were further explored in the subsequent story offering a different angle or
counter perspective. A motif of ‘walk in the shoes of another’ encapsulates storytelling qualities that cultivate the lived experience and empathy for another, such as biographic material of tragedy, aesthetic qualities (e.g. eloquent, descriptive language), active participation of children in the story, and opportunities for the children to express opinions and feelings about the stories. A motif of spinning and weaving acknowledges attention to the interconnectivity between stories, issues (environmental, social and cultural, political, economic) and social actions set in motion for children’s meaning-making. A motif of freedom of expression emphasizes the requirement for ongoing critical reflection of endeavours to support agency and multiplicity in young children’s free expression of contributions, opinions, choices, and decisions. Collectively, these four motifs form a living theory of social justice storytelling as pedagogy that provokes and promotes young children’s active citizenship. It is important to note, however, that this living theory was formed through my reflection of practice in a particular time period; it is not fixed, nor replicable; rather it is alive and open to ongoing intersections and experiences with others.

To provide insight to the workings of social justice storytelling as pedagogy, the following is a brief synopsis of the first three storytelling sessions in the study. The first story I told was a metaphorical Thai folktale The Freedom Bird (see Livo 1988), selected from my existing repertoire for its humorous yet provocative nature to incite deep thinking about freedom, tolerance, and survival. In this story, the song of the freedom bird annoys a hunter who employs numerous methods such as bagging, chopping, burying and drowning to stop the song, yet the bird continues to sing. Young audiences are readily engaged as they laugh and participate in the ‘na-na-nana-na’ and raspberry blowing.3 I read the significance of this story as the injustice of being silenced and the enduring pursuit of freedom, and as such bears relevance to the social and political systems in which the concept of sustainability is embedded. The children’s responses mostly focused on the harming of the bird, as exemplified in the following comment from Max.

Max: Because if we have no animals it will be s-o-o quiet. A little bit Noise … If people kill them and tie them down and so we have to help to save the animals.

(Week 1 workshop 16/07/2007)

Later, Max asked, ‘Who protects the animals from the hunters?’ (Week 1 conversation 18/07/2007). I explained about recovery programs for endangered animals, and Denmark suggested a plan for creating an enclosure for the birds to protect them, with no gate so the hunters could not get in. The children’s attention was on stopping the practice of hunting. They were
expressing care and concern for others and motivation to take action to stop the harmful practices of hunters. The children’s disapproval of cruel hunting was what I heard as a teacher and storyteller and provided the inspiration for the next story.

To craft the second story, I looked at what aspects of the story were not worn out, that is, they still had presence for the children, to shape another story (motif: story-tailoring). I chose to present an alternative view to hunting, guided by the concept of counter narratives (Lankshear and Peters 1996) and counter stories (Solarzano and Yosso 2001, 2002). It was a worldview in which humans do not aim to dominate nature, but rather are embedded with nature. Keeping balance and harmony with nature (Raley 1998) was fostered through selection of the Cherokee story Awi Usdi (see Caduto and Bruchac 1997), in which hunters sought guidance and forgiveness from the spirits of animals.

The children’s energy and interest in stopping the hunters continued into this second story, to which I listened and responded, and considered Hart’s plea (1997) for adults to support children’s participation in matters that interest them within their local environments. According to Hart (1997), a local focus enables children to be involved directly, and in turn deepens their understandings and connections with the issue. This informed my decision to source a story that could motivate citizenship participation in the children’s local environment. I realized that if I wanted to present storytelling that provoked meaningful local social action, a story based on an animal that needed support in our local environment was required (motif: spinning and weaving). This was a conscious decision to build real world connections; these needed to be orchestrated because I was not the children’s usual class teacher with the breadth of insight and knowledge of the children’s social and environmental awareness and interests, or the school and community’s sustainability issues.

I sourced information on a critically endangered bird in South-East Queensland, the Coxen’s fig-parrot to craft the next story. A bird was chosen, as opposed to any other animal, to follow the children’s attention to the vulnerability of a bird first aroused in The Freedom Bird story (motif: spinning and weaving). I wrote the story, The Lonely Coxen’s Fig-parrot, as if colonization and urban development had occurred across the lifetime of just one parrot, so that the children could come to understand the environmental and social changes that have caused drastic reduction in the parrot population, whilst also enabling them to empathize with a central character (motif: walk in the shoes of another). The children did connect and empathize with the fig-parrot, as
evidenced by their self-initiated petition to seek greater support for the recovery of the Coxen’s fig-parrot population, and the nurturing of fig tree seedlings for reforestation of a local habitat area (see Figure 12.1).

![Figure 12.1 Class display of signs children made to plead for support for the recovery of the Coxens’ fig-parrot population](image)

Although the children readily became engaged and empowered to take action (insurgent citizenship), enacting their social action initiatives were fraught with barriers. For example, the prep class wanted to walk around the school to collect signatures from students and teachers of other grades; however, the school principal did not support this initiative. When the teacher informed the class, the children decided to collect signatures from their other available networks – their parents and visiting teachers (motif: freedom of expression). (For further discussion of enablers and constrainers of young children’s active citizenship from this study see Phillips 2010a.) This is the challenging, yet perhaps the most important work of early childhood education for sustainability: negotiating barriers to children’s social, political and civic access. Deficit views of children and social, political, and civic restrictions for children invariably present barriers to enabling child-initiated social actions. To support children’s engagement, educators and other supportive adults need to work with children to navigate circumventing these barriers. If we do
not, we are at risk of sending messages to children that their ideas and actions do not matter. Once this message is entrenched, it can be difficult to reignite motivation to action into the future.

Such barriers to children’s participation have been constructed with a view of children as welfare dependents – incompetent, vulnerable, needing protection and their childhoods primarily determined by adults (Neale 2002). Further, Neale (2004) argues that a view of children as citizens, given their dependence on adults, fits with a definition of citizenship as an entitlement of recognition, respect and participation. Adult insistences on child restrictions to social, political and civic access (or neglect to navigate these restrictions) do not honour children’s entitlement to recognition, respect and participation. Neale (2004: 9) warns that

without due recognition and respect, participation may become an empty exercise, at best a token gesture or, at worst, a manipulative or exploitative exercise. “Real” citizenship, then, involves a search for ways to alter the culture of adult practices and attitudes in order to include children in meaningful ways and to listen and respond to them effectively.

In recent decades, fortunately, early childhood education has shifted from a central view of children as developing, to children as competent and capable social actors. This shift has largely been cultivated by international interest in the teaching and learning practices applied in the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy (e.g. Cadwell and Rinaldi 2003, Edwards et al. 1993, 1998) that are based on a view of children as competent and having rights forged by the work of sociology of childhood (e.g. see Corsaro 2005, James et al. 1998). Early childhood educators thus hold a pivotal role in furthering views of children as competent and capable social actors across society through education for sustainability.

**Public pedagogy for sustainability**

Challenging the constructions of children as vulnerable and incompetent that are embedded in legislation, social infrastructure and civic institutions is a necessary requirement to opening up more avenues for young children’s active participation in ‘real things’ in early childhood education for sustainability. In response to this dilemma, a community cultural development project, ‘Walking Neighbourhood’ emerged in collaboration with Contact Inc., community cultural development artists. The project was hosted by children who curated and led walks of the local neighbourhoods to provoke shifts in perceptions of children’s place in the public sphere. The aim of the project was to counter the metanarrative of children as vulnerable and incompetent, and to cultivate civic learning and changes in roles and perceptions for both children and adults through
co-negotiation of public spaces. To date this project has taken place in the Brisbane neighbourhood of Fortitude Valley, Queensland, Australia, the old city region of Chiang Mai, Thailand (as part of revitalization and sustainability initiatives for this region), and the Indigenous community of Bagot as part of the Darwin Festival. There are plans for further Australian and international communities currently being confirmed.

The Fortitude Valley venture of ‘Walking Neighbourhood’ involved a series of eight workshops with 12 children aged 8–12 years to develop the child-curated walks for a public event of walks across two sessions each on a Saturday and Sunday. Over 330 audience members attended the event including professionals working in community development, urban planning, arts and education sectors. Critical ethnographic analysis of pre and post interviews and workshop recordings identified multiple accounts of civic learning for both the child hosts and adult audience members. The child hosts and their parents commonly spoke of gains in confidence in negotiating public spaces (e.g. sibling participants now independently walk home from school and shop at local shops). For adult audience members, a key theme was how the experience provoked them to engage differently with children, letting go of their adult caregiver behaviours (e.g. managing conversation), seeing the urban space through the eyes of a child, and sharing concepts as equals.

Though this project was not located in a formally recognized early childhood educational setting, there is growing recognition and interest in learning and teaching that takes places outside formal educational settings, often referred to as public pedagogy (Sandlin et al. 2011). Recognition of the learning that takes place in the public sphere investigates the development of identities and social formations in the public sphere, and the relationships that play out between pedagogy, democracy and social action (Sandlin et al. 2010). Public spaces, as informal sites, can cultivate a more subtle, embodied mode of learning that moves ‘towards notions of affect, aesthetics and presence’ (Sandlin et al. 2011). Walking the streets of Fortitude Valley provided the opportunity to partake in embodied learning, connecting with the real world, which in this case included local businesses, road crossing, pedestrians, street art, street signage and unknown adult audience members. There are multiple stories to tell of the children’s experiences in this project, however, the most pertinent point to this chapter is the kind of learning noted by the adult audience members. This was best exemplified by Brian’s comment:

I had a preconception that we’d talk about childish things, whereas actually we talked about shared concepts.
In summary, the experiences challenged adult perceptions of children. Adult audience members explicitly noted how the experience of child-curated walks altered their perceptions of children, hence widening the possibilities for children’s future participation and contributions to the public sphere. For example, urban planners realized how consultation with children has been typically neglected in their field and proposed to proactively consult children in future planning decision-making. Further, the project has growing recognition of its potential to make valuable contributions to each of the areas of community development, urban planning, arts and education sectors by opening possibilities for children’s active participation, agency, decision-making and voice on what matters to them in their local communities.

**What can you do with what remains?**

A range of rationales for early childhood education for sustainability resounds throughout this book, but the core lies in acknowledging and exemplifying children as agents of change for sustainability. Children are interested in the world in which they live and want to take part in decision-making and actions that affect them and other inhabitants of Earth. To achieve this requires engagement with the real world. The lesson for early childhood teachers is, first, to critically examine the everyday practices of the early learning setting, for example, use of water, energy, distribution, access and manufacturing factors of the resources used. Important, too, is to actively listen and genuinely respond to children’s concerns, ideas and choices and to welcome collective decision-making and action-taking for the sustainability of Earth and its inhabitants.

As this chapter demonstrates, one way to open dialogue about sustainability issues is through story. Teachers can share stories of lived experiences from the perspective of animals, people, plants, water, or planet Earth as a whole. They can take the listener for a walk in the shoes of another, as if the story is happening to them. From such lived experience, empathy sprouts along with unsettledness that only action can appease. Early childhood teachers can work with children on their ideas for taking action. In our practices with children, it is imperative that we honour children’s entitlement to recognition, respect and participation and, also, to continually question whether children’s opinions, choices and participation are supported and responsively interconnected with those of others. We can cultivate meaning-making like an artisan spinning and weaving stories, ideas, thoughts, questions and actions. We can tailor content/issues to fit the children, their cultures, their communities, their socio-political contexts with attention to recycling.
content, just like the tailor in the folktale The Tailor (see Schimmel, 2002). The tailor wore garments until they were all worn out and then, from close examination of the tattered garment, assessed what was salvageable and crafted a new garment. We need, though, to take care to closely listen and notice what resonates with the children (the remnants) to shape and craft the next story so that a part of the previous story remains. Such remnants sustain continuity of meanings. The real skill in this recycling practice of story-tailoring is calculating which parts to cut off and which to retain. Such practice of recycled tailoring offers a pertinent message for education for sustainability: to look to the resources that are salvageable and craft anew for current and future needs.

As discussed, children have reduced access to social structures (Kulynych 2001), are economically dependent (Lister 2007), and endure a strong emphasis on care and protection in policy and practices (James et al. 2008). Thus adults – in whatever their role, be it educator, community worker, parent, politician, artist, policy maker, councillor or … – should use their greater access to resources to bring young children’s initiatives on sustainability issues into the public sphere. We have the capacity to open doors to the breadth of possibilities for young children’s inclusion in civic participation for sustainability; to enable children’s participation in ‘doing real things’.

Notes
1. Ecological footprint calculators measure human consumption of Earth’s ecosystems, based on individual everyday living practices.
2. Prep is the first year of schooling in Queensland, Australia.
3. Raspberry blowing is a noise of feigned or real derision made by placing tongue between lips and blowing.
4. An adult entertainment district, commonly perceived as child-unfriendly.

References


