

PARTICIPATION AND POSTPATERNALISM: CHILD/YOUTH CLIMATE ACTION AND THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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This article examines **child/youth climate action** through the lens of **participation** and **postpaternalism** (global child-led climate action). Children's participation rights are enshrined in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC), and are an essential aspect of children's right to a healthy environment. The authors apply the **Lundy Model** concepts of space, voice, audience and influence to different forms of child/youth climate action, and reflect on how children's rights is in a postpaternalist era.



Postpaternalism is the phenomenon of children/youth taking action, on a global scale, rather than waiting for adults to 'give' children their rights. An example of postpaternalism is children/youth taking action without prompts from adults.



Youth climate justice movement

- For a long time, children/youth have been taking action on many social justice issues, such as the fight against apartheid in South Africa.
- More recently, children/youth have been taking climate action, especially those from Indigenous communities and the Global South. In 2018, Greta Thunberg's protest started a large global climate movement.
- Children/youth often have many skills, such as online skills and knowledge about climate change, which make them good at climate action.
- The climate crisis has led to new areas for child/youth participation, such as child/youth climate cases and citizens assemblies (where people can advise the government on important things).



Right to a healthy environment

Children/youth are very affected by the climate crisis, which has been one thing that has motivated them to take climate action. Through this, they are showing that participation is an important part of the **right to a healthy environment (R2HE)**. The R2HE means that everyone should have access to clean air and water, healthy food, a safe climate and healthy ecosystems. As part of their R2HE, children/youth have the **right to access environmental information**, the **right to participate in decisions about the environment**, and the **right to access justice**.





Children's participation rights

In the CRC, **Article 12** says that children have the right to express their views and to have them heard in decisions that affect their lives. Article 12, the **right to be heard**, is also one of the four general principles of the CRC. In other words, this right is very important to ensure that all children's rights can be realised. Children's participation can take many different forms, including simple consultation on their needs, collaborating with government to shape policies, or even taking their own initiatives.

The Lundy Model

The **Lundy Model** is a well-known participation framework that was developed to help adults understand how to make sure children/youth have their voices heard. The model has four components. Children/youth must have a safe and inclusive **SPACE** to participate, and they must be supported to use and express their **VOICE**. In order for these views to be heard, they must have an **AUDIENCE** and adults to support them in ensuring their voice has **INFLUENCE**. This model is a useful tool to examine child/youth climate action as a feature of CRC participation rights.

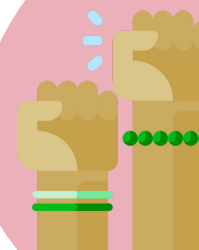
Child/Youth Climate Action & the Lundy Model

Children/youth are creating their own **SPACE**, and showing up in spaces that are usually adult-only. An example is the #FridaysforFuture movement which inspired children/youth around the world to protest in the streets.

The **VOICE** of children/youth are being heard more strongly. For example, many children/youth are going to court and sharing their stories about how the climate crisis is impacting them.

The **AUDIENCE** children/youth are reaching has been transformative. They are speaking to powerful politicians and leaders, for example, through youth assemblies like Ireland's Youth Assembly on Climate.

Children/youth are having an **INFLUENCE** through their climate actions, both locally and globally. They are having a significant impact through their climate applications and cases, for example, by stopping fossil fuel projects to happen.



Conclusion

The Lundy Model can help to understand how to give children/youth space for climate action in a way that helps their rights and interests. It puts attention on the way children are heard, which children are heard, who is hearing them, and what influences their voices have. In the article, the authors conclude that there is postpaternalism evident. Children/youth are accessing spaces in a way they have not before, and are now participating at high level UN meetings. However, there are still elements that need to be considered such as ensuring there are adult allies available to support children/youth, and that participation is not tokenistic. Overall, it seems that the voices of children are now expected to be heard more. It is an exciting time for children's participation!

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