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Signs of neglect:
play in a relict landscape

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

at
Lincoln University
by
John Clemens

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Abstract of a Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Landscape Architecture.

**Signs of neglect: play in a relict landscape**

by John Clemens

The title of this Dissertation relates to the observation that children worldwide delight in play opportunities on neglected pieces of land: those pieces of rough ground, wasteland, and abandonment that occur in many urban areas. This is a relict landscape in the sense that each piece has been left behind, temporarily forgotten after former use: they are the remnants, they are relictual. In that they are prized by those who like to wander in these wastes, they are also precious relics. Conversely, *de*-relict land is how council authorities, as representatives of adult society, tend to view the same examples of neglect. There is, therefore, a tension between those who appreciate these neglected relics but have little power in planning and design decisions affecting them, and the guardians of norms that would have neglect rehabilitated, reclaimed, and renewed. Convention would also have all signs of neglect purged from public open spaces where mown grass and lollipop trees predominate.

The literature relating to child development and environment is critically reviewed with special reference to behavioural studies of children exploring the world outside their home territories and beyond adult supervision. The behaviours of unsupervised children at play resemble those of wandering exploration more than sedentary absorption, the indeterminate journeys undertaken being more important than defined destinations. These findings are discussed in relation to adult behaviours in *terrains vagues* and other places of neglect. Based on the literature, a case is made for assessing the suitability of open spaces for children's play using criteria that can be evaluated by an adult observer.

Publicly available school zoning information was used to select three 400 ha study areas in Christchurch, New Zealand differing in the socioeconomic status of residents (centred on the suburbs of Merivale, Addington, and Hornby). Using the newly developed criteria for assessing play suitability, the open spaces designated as parks and reserves by council authorities were evaluated for the kinds of play opportunities
children prefer. Each of the three study areas was also surveyed to identify neglected areas of open space, whether in private or public ownership. These were similarly evaluated against the same play suitability criteria used for designated parks and reserves. Designated areas were generally of negligible suitability for play; newly identified areas often had high or excellent play suitability.

These findings are discussed in the context of crime prevention through environmental design and the conventional appearance of parks. Suggestions are made for the conservation and mapping of existing areas of neglect, and for how signs of neglect might be designed so that neglected places might gain acceptance in urban areas.

*Keywords*: neglect; signs; play; wandering; relict; landscape; derelict; abandoned; parks
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Preface

"I love all waste
And solitary places"
(Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1818, from Julian & Maddalo)

"[I]t is important that [children] have spaces where they can wander at
their own pace and not have to keep up with adults or be chastised for
dawdling. To wander through a diverse terrain is to feel the surroundings
pass through one's body as the body passes through the surroundings – at
one with each other. [O]ne experiences a floating state of mind, drugged by
a wealth of sounds, of smells, of sights and textures" (Moore, 1990, p. 57).

In his book on "childhood's domain", Moore (1990) describes how unsupervised
children explore their surroundings, what environments they find most attractive and
why, and how, as designers, we can help to provide the environments children need for
play. We are transported back to a time when we wandered through diverse terrain at
our own pace and became one with our surroundings.

Are Moore's and our own memories of childhood's domain so vivid and appealing that
we have preserved them for decades only to indulge in nostalgia? It seems improbable
that factors thoughtfully considered by Lynch & Lukashok (1990) have mired or
massaged what are persistent memories of childhood. On the contrary, the ability to take
delight in such memories suggests a need for adults to indulge in a lifelong practice of
wandering this insubstantial domain. The 26 year-old Shelley might have been
experiencing the exhilaration of play when he wrote of waste and solitary places.

This dissertation will trace the development of design ideas and environments for
children at play in the public domain, from playgrounds to wastes. It will explore the
suggestion that there is a strong link between the behaviours of children at play and of
adults engaged in unsupervised "leisure activity". It will propose ways in which we can
design our living environments to permit playful exploration, and attempt a first
mapping of these loose environments within the Cartesian fabric of urban living.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Beginnings

The topic of this dissertation was suggested by the collision that occurred some months ago of two seemingly unrelated lines of thought. In fact, the study had started before it had been formally begun, which is appropriate for a topic that has held a lifelong fascination.

The first impact was the hypothetical challenge of designing a play environment for children in a botanic garden: Was this to be a children’s garden, a playground in a garden setting, or a design with a less predictable outcome? What would children want, and what would be acceptable to park administrators? There were theoretical works on child development and environment, a voluminous literature on playground design, and numerous examples of children’s gardens to call upon from the world’s most prestigious botanical establishments. However, initial reading suggested a gap existed between expert opinion as given expression in built works for children, and what children said they wanted, which was to explore the unknown beyond the designed play environment.

The second event was the delivery of a paper by Helen Armstrong at the 2006 IFLA Conference in Sydney, Australia (Armstrong, 2006). Armstrong’s paper on “landscapes of contempt” was both a delight and a shock: here were ideas and images of dereliction and neglect, former occupation, and peaceful decay that transported me to the places I had played and taken delight in as a child, even though I had never regarded myself as being a denizen of wastelands. The shock was made more complete by the apparent disjunction between the adult appreciation of urban and industrial scenes of neglect presented by Armstrong and the rural setting for the play of my own childhood. I was also reminded of the more recent enjoyment of carrying out floristic research on Victorian housing plots that had been cleared and left to be colonised by weeds in Sheffield, England (Clemens et al., 1984), and, in the once affluent parts of the same city, of the tennis courts and lawns that had become overgrown and overrun with invading trees.
Putting these impacts together, it was as if “play” in the sense of the unsupervised wandering and unhurried exploration of areas once occupied, but currently peacefully neglected, was a pastime that can be enjoyed throughout life. We would then not cease to play when we are no longer children. However, since professionals, mirroring societal norms, appear to be contemptuous of dereliction and decay, failing to see the value of the unplanned and unfinished (Armstrong, 2006), it is not surprising that there is a mismatch between designs for children’s play places and children’s preferences for wilder and secret places. If this contempt and blindness to the needs of people, young and old, could be understood, it might be possible to retrieve the elements of a play environment and use these in the design of new play spaces that transcend the playground boundary.

1.2 Personal experiences

I have not forgotten my early play worlds, but I cannot touch them today, nor taste, smell, see, hear, or be enfolded by them as I could be as a child. And yet I can experience the same, or at least a related, frisson today when walking through quiet, once inhabited, and now forgotten spaces of neglect, suggesting that not all of the brilliance of first experience of the world described so poetically by Bachelard (1994) has been lost. As Ward (1978) in The Child in the City, sought to “entice the reader to stand in the footprints of the contemporary urban child”, so I will attempt a description of my own places of delight. As I conjure up the past, it must be remembered, as eloquently explained from a phenomenological perspective by Graumann and Kruse (1998), that there is a difference between an environment as an adult thinks a child experiences it, and the environment as experienced by the child at any point in time. Nevertheless, we should not discount the place of memory of childhood from an adult perspective.

My parents lived in a succession of houses. In the new gardens that were made, or in those that were already established, all areas were targets for cultivation. My father would mow grass neatly, and my mother would tend the flowers, separated by the contested boundary of sharply clipped lawn edge. But in this succession of gardens, each arrested in a perpetual patchwork of turf and prettiness, one stands out as being particularly memorable. This is not so much because of the glory of the ant infested
peonies, or the velvety touch of the grass, or even to me the astonishingly enormous size of the cattle that would occasionally break into this paradise, but because of the obscure parts that could not be gardened, but could be explored, unsupervised: the steep bank at the bottom of an old grass tennis court where, unseen from our house, robins nested, the labyrinthine hawthorn and elderberry hedge overlooking a stream that flooded after rain, and beyond that, the fields, woods, and orchards with their networks of footpaths and tracks (Fig. 1.1). Further a field, it was possible to explore commons — large tracts of overgrown grass and scrubland once used in common by villagers for grazing — where bracken fern that grew over a child’s head could be tunnelled and used for harmless weapons, and where blackberries could be plundered in summer.

I had not pondered if it was the intrinsic qualities of these places that were important, or the process of exploration itself that made this play so exciting. There was the security of having left a familiar point behind, with the prospect of returning to that point in the indeterminate future. Being between the points was the important thing. And there was the sense of being alone where others had been before, not an exploration of uncharted space at all. In fact, the most exciting wanderings were to places of historical or prehistoric interest, shown on maps in Gothic script or traceable in earthworks on the ground, or divined from the vegetation. An important aspect was to have escaped into the mysterious past while existing thrillingly in the present, to travel in time.

Figure 1.1. A neglected place with a history. A pollarded hornbeam forest in Kent, once part of a royal deer park, and now quietly persisting in decay.
It was with some hesitation that I recently admitted to being a blissfully lonely child (Clemens, 2006), but this loneliness allowed me plenty of time to explore my surroundings without interference. However, as I continue to read, I discover that acting alone, or with perhaps one other friend, is a common experience for a child, and one that is a prerequisite for some forms of play. I am far from being unique in finding delight in the exploration of neglect, in land once occupied and now resting, temporarily forgotten.

For example, Edensor (2005) recounted how he had been attracted to derelict and abandoned buildings since his childhood, but in so doing, acknowledged the delights and mysteries of exploring the spaces around these ruins: “the promise of extraordinary sights and mysterious experiences is built into the popular culture of children with its myriad tales of adventure in secret gardens, magical labyrinths, and dense enchanted forests” (Edensor, 2005, p. 3). Moore (1990, p. xviii) wrote lovingly of “a landscape...where once we dug, climbed trees, played cops-and-robbers, went bird-nesting, rolled in the bracken, built camps, dammed streams and caught tiddlers”. And Bengtsson (1970, p. 155) realised the excitement of neglect, in this case expressed as a relaxation of mowing pressure, when he wrote “long grass and small children – just sit down and you are in a world of your own”.

There are a number of themes common to these and other memories of childhood delight. First is the necessity for unhurried exploration, a dwelling in, and wandering through terrain away from supervision and clear public visibility. A second is the neglect or dereliction of the terrain, a sense of former occupation that has subsided but is still traceable in the ground or the vegetation structure and composition. And lastly, there is a relaxation of care so that grass grows tall, shrubs emerge, and trees branch to the ground or slowly collapse (Fig. 1.2).

These requirements for play do not sit well in the context of contempt and blindness to the needs of children for an explorative play environment, seemingly at odds with the conventions of neatness and order expected by landowners in residential areas and cities, and commonly enforced by councils. Clearly, there is a need to examine more closely if play in areas such as waste, vacant, or derelict land has value or is needed, and if so, how best to plan for its provision and design in a way that it can be accommodated within the strictures of the conventional city.
Figure 1.2. Early play on maps, across the land, and in the imagination. Map, scenes and notes from an English hill fort. Route map adapted from *Short walks from pubs in the Chilterns* by Charles (1995, p. 30).

1.3 Christchurch City as a study area

It would be instructive to suggest ways in which play can be accommodated within the conventions of an established western city. Three factors suggest Christchurch as a useful case study.

The first relates to the strategic planning exercise currently being undertaken in the Greater Christchurch Urban Area (Greater Christchurch Urban Development Forum, 2006). Increasing the population density of existing settlements seems a likely outcome to reduce the spread of the city into the surrounding countryside. This would potentially threaten the existence of vacant lots, wastelands, and open spaces in general, as observed by several authors (e.g. Rogers, 1997; Simeoforidis, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Whatmore & Hinchliffe, 2003; Pauleit et al., 2004). Urban sprawl and the reaction of urban densification are not new phenomena. Writing thirty years ago, Lynch and
Appleyard (1990)\(^1\) recognised the actual and potentially undesirable effects urban and suburban sprawl had on the landscape of San Diego. Lynch also wrote that while a strategy of densification could help to reduce urban sprawl, it threatened the existence of "waste lands" which he saw as having a necessary place in his vision of a utopian city:

"There are strips and pieces of "waste" land, under no group's direct control, and so open to spontaneous (or deviant) use. They are a reservoir of species (including pests, of course), a balancing divide, a living museum, and yet also a place where new ways of life can easily be started up. Clearly, they must be so located and insulated that the relatively uncontrolled activity within them does not disturb the even tenor of life within the residential areas. They carry out a function once performed by the abandoned farms of declining rural areas, and by the decaying "gray areas" of the inner cities" (Lynch, 1990, p. 796).

We should be particularly concerned to study the effects of urban densification on residential areas because it is here that the greatest densities of open spaces are to be found, and where the greatest loss from more intense urban settlement would occur. Moreover, while affluent areas might lose open green space, it is "deprived" areas that are more affected owing to the loss of derelict or "waste" land (Pauleit et al., 2004, p.1). Areas of different household socioeconomic status can be identified in Christchurch from statistical information, e.g. school zoning data, allowing an evaluation of the provision of open spaces of different kinds and the likely effects of densification.

The second factor making Christchurch an important study area is that the city sees and promotes itself as the Garden City, priding itself on the high standard of horticultural care lavished on its parks since European colonisation. The more affluent parts of the city with larger home sections also have a tradition of gardening (Barnett et al., 1963). Christchurch is a city where play in untidy environments might be seen as coming into conflict with the neatness and control associated with a traditional high standard of horticultural parks maintenance. Initial enquiries suggested Christchurch might have only one piece of derelict land (the site of the former Canterbury Sale Yards), and no formal register of land that could be described in this way (Fig. 1.3).

\(^1\) A paper originally published in 1974 contained in a volume of collected works by Kevin Lynch and co-workers published in 1990.
Thirdly, some acceptance has been gained over the last decade for the use of native plants in parks, gardens, riversides and green corridors to enhance native biodiversity in the city. Adopted with fervour, this has resulted in areas that had not previously been gardened, e.g. ditches, streams, waste ground, and vacant lots, being reclaimed under an alternative planting ethos (Christchurch City Council 2004; Spellerberg & Given 2004). An enhancement of native biodiversity might be another way in which a new convention will gradually supplant the current manicured one without adequate consideration being given to the “unfinished” and neglected areas for play.

1.4 Definition of terms

As will be shown below, play and the places where play happens do not lend themselves to precise definition. Children “play” all the time (Hart, 1979; Moore, 1990; Vanderbilt, 1999), and play environments in cities are, therefore, as diverse and dispersed as the territories children explore. Public play environments, therefore, form a continuum from the home territory, through alleys, streets, playgrounds, and parks to prohibited zones not normally thought of as suitable for children.
However, for the purposes of discussion in this Dissertation, two broad categories of play environment can be regarded as occupying opposite ends on this continuum: the designated play environment, and a more diffuse category for places where children play that were never designed for this purpose, the undesignated play environment.

**Designated play environments** are those places in the public domain that are predominantly designed and built by adults specifically for the use of children, and that are under informal adult surveillance. They are contained or demarcated within facilities predominantly intended for children’s use, and they typically reflect the norms of neatness, safety, and rational utility. For example, what is commonly termed a playground, with impact absorbing surfaces and neatly mown grass, play equipment designed transparently for specific purposes, and conforming to national safety standards, is an environment designated for play. Playgrounds are typically built in parks, which, with their mown grass for organised sport and standard trees, are also regarded as designated play environments, although typically shared with older users. Other examples of designated play environments, but with a more educational intent than physical education, include many children’s gardens and nature parks.

A number of descriptive terms have already been used in connection with **undesignated play environments**, which hint at their characteristics of indeterminacy and absence of any use intended for children on the part of adults: neglected, derelict, waste, vacant, insubstantial, unconventional, loose, unplanned, unfinished, and abandoned. Derelict land, wasteland, quarries, ditches, spoil heaps, overgrown gardens, neglected paddocks, and out of the way places beyond the surveillance of adults, and ruins within them, are undesignated places for play. They have probably had former uses, or they might be forgotten corners awaiting use, but they bear no sign or design that denotes play. These terms are discussed further in this Dissertation, particularly the word **neglect**, which is taken to apply to all types of places of dereliction and abandonment mentioned above.

This study does not define **play**, relying instead on the commonsense descriptions given by Hart (1979) and Moore (1990) in their studies of children. Play can be loosely qualified by the place in which it occurs. Terms such as “exploratory” and “unconventional” have been used in connection with play occurring predominantly in undesignated play environments, whilst acknowledging that formal (Opie & Opie, 1969) and spontaneous games played by children can happen anywhere.
Play and assessments made of the suitability of open spaces for play in this Dissertation do not include organised sports for which many open spaces are also suitable. Bounded playgrounds tend to be the focus for children under the age of 5, while land beyond the home, school, and playground is actively used by most children over the age of 7-8 (Matthews, 1992). No attempt has been made to segment play activities by age; further study would doubtless be able to identify age related differences (Walsh, 2001).

1.5 Goal and objectives

The goal of this Dissertation is to demonstrate novel insight into our understanding of play environments that best suit children's needs, and to suggest ways in which these needs might be satisfied with reference to the City of Christchurch, New Zealand. Specifically, the study will evaluate the importance of undesignated play environments for children's healthy development, and, if of sufficient importance, will propose ways in which these places might be accommodated within existing urban networks, or incorporated within designated play environments. This will be achieved by fulfilling the following four objectives:

1) To carry out a review of the literature on child development and play, with special emphasis on the evolution of design ideas and practices, including the use of undesignated play spaces.

2) To assess from the literature if play in undesignated play environments, in the form of the exploration of derelict land, is practiced by young and old, and for similar reasons, such that it might reasonably be expected that the author of this study could identify and evaluate such play environments in a field investigation.

3) To identify and evaluate designated and undesignated play environments in three areas of the City of Christchurch contrasting in household socioeconomic status, and to examine if increasing population density in these areas would be likely to result in differential loss of play opportunities.

4) To propose ways to address the paradox of planning and designing for neglect, both to permit undesignated play environments to exist within the strictures of a conventional city layout and mindset, and to incorporate elements of neglect in designated play environments.
Chapter 2  Review of literature

2.1  Play environments and child development

Many authors have written on the link between play environment and cognitive development (e.g. Phelps, 1986; Saracho, 1986; Cotterill, 1998), drawing upon the foundational work of cognitive theorists, such as Jean Piaget (1962). Others (e.g. Bartlett et al., 1999) point to the complex social and economic factors that affect development.

Trying to synthesise thought on the place of children in cities, Cotterill (1998) examined the theory of “behaviour settings”, the bounded human ecological regions that encompass each person’s activities, and linked this with other relevant concepts to inform those working on planning and design of public environments in the city. Behaviour settings occur in clusters, or macroenvironments, which have been analysed and applied in the planning and design of education and entertainment habitats (Cotterill, 1998). Such studies have apparently not been extended to play environments, although Cotterill (1998) refers to the work of Hart (1979) as a useful study of children’s behaviour in a range of settings.

Cotterill (1998) points out that theory has tended to overlook the preferences of different “sub-species” of people, e.g. children and adolescents, who might exploit (and take delight in) a habitat to different degrees: children might prefer a park, adolescents “a vacant piece of land” (Cotterill, 1998, p. 389). There are few studies that relate the habitat of children to their behaviour and experiences across a range of settings, suggesting that we still require an answer to the question posed by Lynch (1977, p. 1): “What interchange between people and their environment encourages them to grow into fully realised persons?”

While each person, of any “sub-species”, might experience a setting differently from the next, the environment that helps a child to become fully realised, is regarded by Graumann & Kruse (1998) as one that is essential for people of any age. All of us need an environment that can be “appropriated”, not merely consumed or passively experienced. It should be one that challenges our engagement. Despite an appreciation
of the settings that encourage child development, these authors believed that professional planners and designers rarely provide such environments, even when bearing the child in mind. The telling example is given of post-World War II Germany when the limitless opportunities for exploration and adventure in rubble and destruction were progressively eroded, to be replaced by sterile playgrounds, which the children tended to “reinterpret” or “reconstruct” to their taste. “Personal preferences for an unconventional landscape structure exist, [but] they tend to be subsumed by the power of convention” (Nassauer, 1995, p. 233). In considering the world of the child in the city, Bartlett et al. (1999) similarly stressed the importance of providing children with an engaging environment that can be manipulated. They caution against the segregation of children into custom-made playgrounds, these “improvements” often negating spontaneous opportunities for play, especially in poorer neighbourhoods. Phelps (1986) lists how Piaget’s sensori-motor play and representational play needs (including construction and symbolic play) can be served better by the use of a range of inexpensive, informal, somewhat unsightly equipment than by “clean pre-made equipment” Phelps (1986, p. 69). Although children have different cognitive styles that are reflected in the way they play, e.g. make believe or symbolic play and social activities compared to construction and manipulative play, Saracho (1986) thought it wise to provide children with a range of opportunities to develop “cognitive flexibility”. For an increasing proportion of children worldwide, the urban environment is the place where their development and self-realisation almost exclusively takes place (Gunther & Gunther, 1998). Yet, if public spaces are perceived as too dangerous for children, they will not be allowed to experience spaces that allow the freedoms they possibly need. Even public streets can be considered by “upper-class parents” too dangerous to allow children to play unsupervised (Gunther & Gunther, 1998, p. 245). This is all the more worrying because independent exploration is important for development. Perceived or actual danger in public or semi-public areas may prevent “the positive developmental function of those spaces because the independent, ludic, and self-responsible exploration and appropriation of objects and spaces is absolutely central to development”. However, experts have been unable to recommend detailed planning advice on how to achieve this goal, and acknowledge that such recommendations need to be defined (Koböck, 1998). This is not just a problem for the world’s largest cities. In
large cities and small, people tend to behave in "village" patterns of exploitation (Koböck, 1998, p. 635).

Literature on child development and play, therefore, strongly indicates the importance of challenge and appropriation (rather than the provision of the finished environment for consumption). However, agreement as to how this could best be achieved has not been reached.

2.2 Play within bounds: the playground

It comes as a surprise to be reminded that the designated play environment called the playground has existed for only a little over a century, being an unsophisticated invention for the physical exercise of young children freed from employment in city factories. Originally intended for the economically and environmentally deprived, the first playgrounds were built to a pattern: swings, slides and roundabouts (Nash, 1990), like a miniature fair ground in a pleasure park (Fig. 2.1).

Figure 2.1. A mélange of traditional playground equipment.
Adapted from http://www.dnr.state.md.us/grantsandloans/cppintro.html (12 Feb. 2007)

However, the traditional playground, typified by localised collections of equipment – whether tubular steel, concrete, wooden or modular equipment – was recognised through the latter half of the 20th Century as unrewarding for children, at least for those over the age of about five. Playgrounds containing manipulative play, overgrown areas, and varied topography, were used for longer and more frequently by children than traditional playgrounds as shown in the studies reviewed by Matthews (1992).
Adventure playgrounds were applauded by many as a revolutionary and positive way to allow children to develop constructive and exploratory skills as well as physical prowess. Evolving in Europe in the 1950s, these initiatives featured a strong emphasis on children shaping their physical environment using waste building materials, augmented with soil, pipes, landforms, and domestic animals. The children were given a link to the natural world, opportunities to develop personal and social responsibility, and freedom to feed their imagination and initiative (Bengtsson, 1970).

The fact adventure playgrounds emerged at all was seen as a failure of more conventional urban planning and design practice to deliver to the needs of children, attempting to confine them to a play ghetto (Westland & Knight, 1982; Matthews, 1992). Westland & Knight (1982) noted that adventure playgrounds tended to be shielded from public view, not so much to give children freedom from scrutiny, but because they did not conform to the aesthetics at the time.

The 1960s was a time when modern ideas on child development were being put into effect, with the transition of the contents of playgrounds from the conventional tubular or otherwise finished play equipment to more “continuous play” structures. The strictures that saw children herded to playgrounds and tethered to such bounded play zones were starting to be broken down as these places emerged into the public domain (Hogan, 1969; Litton, 1969; Spivack, 1969). At the time, planners and designers tried to effect a change in public places for children, often with children’s involvement and support, only to have their efforts thwarted. On an extreme level, Spivack (1969) described children’s rapture and enthusiasm for a new play space (somewhat like a European adventure playground) that they built to replace a tired conventional playground in Boston. The new place was popular with the children, but local adults and parents could see only a mess, and exerted pressure to have the new works flattened, all in the space of one year.

On a grander scale and longer timeframe, Bennett (2004) writes of the work of Paul Friedberg who in the 1960s took a conventional public open space at Riis Plaza, New York and made an area of “continuous play”. This was revolutionary for the time, and successful with children, but institutional neglect, adult pressure for more flowers, and an obsession with safety saw the park returned to a “landscape of fear”, a phrase that Bennett (2004, p. 36) ascribed to Yi-Fu Tuan. Similarly, founding his advice on years of
behavioural research, Robin Moore helped shape the Washington Environmental Yard from an acre of asphalt in the 1970s. However, after 20 years, the richness had been fenced or transformed into sports pitches (Hines, 2005).

The struggle continued between those who understood the developmental needs of children, supporting their wishes for less structured environments, and authorities who placed greater emphasis on the avoidance of injuries and the desire of ratepayers for neatness and conformity. William Whyte (1968) bemoaned the lack of attention to the un-designed and underdeveloped in the layout of spaces for children, suggesting that administrators of play areas disliked children and sought to minimise maintenance. Whyte (1968) and Opie & Opie (1969) thought it was as if children’s culture was of no significance to the authorities, or was seen as a nuisance and threat to decorum, since children’s favourite places were frequently tidied up or destroyed. Matthews (1992) believed that the adult professional generally had little empathy for children, seeing them merely as diminutive adults: “children are seemingly invisible on the landscape” (Matthews, 1992, p. 221).

By the end of the 20th Century, the public playground had not departed greatly from its original concept of a sanitised, bounded space, neat by adult tastes, and localised so that parks could stay pretty and uncluttered by young people, except during organised sports events. Adventure playgrounds had been compromised (Munro, 1998) and conventional playgrounds made safe and colourful (Jackson, 1998), or translated into indoor commercial “playscapes” (McKendrick, 2002). However, significant improvements to allow children to participate in the exploration and manipulation of their environment had been introduced to playgrounds in private or designated public facilities, such as in child care centres, schools (Carter, 2001; Burn, 2003) and “outdoor classrooms” (Leccese, 1994, p. 73), community centres, botanic gardens, and zoos (Cooper Marcus, 2001; Johnson & Hurley, 2002; Jeavons, 2003; Cooper Marcus, 2005; Hines, 2005). Guidelines for providing a challenging yet safe environment were developed, and the needs of children of different ages, mobility, and gender were being recognised (Cunningham & Jones, 1991; Walsh, 2001).

A good example of guidance for the layout of modern designated playgrounds is given by Tai et al. (2006), who focus on what they see as the bond formed between children and “nature” in the playground. To these authors nature, in the controlled provision of
carefully restored native plant communities, is a panacea to cure the ills resulting from “undeveloped green space” or the “void of a desolate landscape” (Tai et al., 2006, p. 2-3), echoing calls for greater acceptance of nature in cities that began to gain support in the 1970s (Laurie, 1974). The authors stress the value of “well-designed outdoor environments” in an urban or suburban environment they assume is characterised by “sprawl” and devoid of other interest for children (Tai et al., 2006, p. 321).

2.3 Play outward bound: towards undesignated play

The greatest insight into outdoor environments preferred by children, the reasons they like them, and how design interventions might be used to provide these opportunities is provided by the detailed studies conducted at three contrasting locations in England by Robin Moore (1990). Moore acknowledged Ward’s *Child in the City* (1978) for its erudition and photographically moving account of children in cities. However, it was Moore’s book, first published in 1986, that provided the detail and guidance for planners and designers, based largely on extensive and intrepid field explorations made by the author with the children.

From the outset, the primacy of the children was recognised rather than his expert (planner’s) opinion, or those of “community leaders”. The objective was to discover characteristics that would reveal what Moore (1990, p. 19) described as Tuan’s “topophilia”, Kevin Lynch’s “rootedness”, or Relph’s “placeness”. Matthews (1992, p. 201) described this as “sense of place” or a “sense of belonging”. It was asserted by Moore that places that evinced strong memories and attachment, a strong sense of place, enhanced children's development. Conversely, absence of a sense of place inhibited development.

Many of the places explored by the children in Moore’s study were given place names, indicating a strong attachment to place and feelings of empowerment (Herrington & Studtmann, 1998). Like Moore, Hart (1979) recognised that the ways in which place names were used by children included the activity to which places could be put as well as descriptors of the items on the ground, e.g. “dirt-for-building”, “climbing trees”, and “long grass for hiding” (Hart, 1979, p. 348).
Moore examined every category of space outside the home. Public parks and playgrounds were important areas for his attention since these were the places children were allowed to spend the most time. Many parks held little interest for the children, but some contained features that made them attractive, and one example demonstrated how successful a park could be. Little Park (0.75 ha) was seemingly “nothing more than an open field with a few items of play equipment plonked down in the middle”. However, close examination showed that its success for the children depended on the bringing together of several important elements:

- Topography (dish-shaped) that allowed for rolling and sliding towards the centre.
- Perimeter hedges (not continuous, and low enough in places for children to dive through and over), which with topography made for a sheltered microclimate and a sense of enclosure.
- Diverse informal play opportunities including many places with long grass, bushes (to hide, camp in, chase in, and spy from, and bird’s-nest in), trees to climb (low branches), a small, shallow stream (in places channelled), a 5 m diameter sandy hollow to dig in, which had rivulets of water after rain, and an open area just big enough to kick a ball informally.
- Easy access from surrounding homes, and centrally placed, formal playground equipment, signalling to parents that this was a legitimate children’s place, and serving as a meeting and socialising place for children.

As this example showed, apart from the ready access to a diversity of opportunities, informality was important. The park was not manicured or over-maintained. Other authors had noted the importance of less finished environments to enhance play opportunities, those that would allow choice and manipulation, the unexpected and the serendipitous (Cunningham & Jones, 1991; Spray, 1992).

However, the children ranged far beyond the parks and playgrounds. Given their liking for the unmanicured and unexpected, the children found what Moore described as “rough ground” attractive and often used by the children as part of the mix of habitats in their territories. The qualities and descriptors of rough ground that were seen as desirable by children included unkempt, un-ordered, weedy, unmown, unpruned, holey, old, mixed open woods and scrub, and the presence of water. The children engaged in
excavating, manipulating water courses, throwing things at targets, collecting and hoarding things, playing with the vegetation, climbing, sliding on banks, camping in dens and hideouts, blackberrying, and “messing about”.

The vegetation was crucial to the success of the rough ground places described by Moore: long, even unkempt and weedy grass areas were very popular; isolated shrubs and low small trees were excellent for running between, chasing and camping in or underneath; densely planted shrubby trees were favoured for using as tunnels and for hideouts from which to spy; trees, shrubs, and bushes with fruit to eat or for playing were popular, such as crab apples, blackberries, hazels, and horse chestnuts; and trees, which needed to have low branches (not standards) so children could climb (Fig .2.2). Repeatedly mentioned species for their branch structure (also their common occurrence in neglected places) were hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), rhododendron, and sycamore (*Acer platanoides*). The attributes of individual species were put to use by the children, and not merely (apart from fruit) consumed.

Figure 2.2. Play vegetation on an abandoned grass tennis court. A diversity of plants characteristic of Moore’s “rough ground” has grown up and been colonised from the nearby woodland behind.

Moore’s research lent support and respectability to the views expressed by observers decades earlier. For the adults studied by Ward (1978, p. 87), when asked about “their happiest and most vivid recollections of city childhood they will seldom talk about the park or playground, but they will recall the vacant lot, the secret places behind billboards and hoardings”. As early as the 1950s, Kevin Lynch and co-workers (Lynch
& Carr, 1990; Lynch & Lukashok, 1990) had recorded the value children accorded untidy areas. Children preferred to play in much more dangerous and secretive places than the local, formal playground. They wanted to dig, “do idiotic things”, and hide without adult interference (Lynch & Lukashok, 1990, p.159-160). Similarly, Litton (1969) recognised the value of rough ground and the vegetation that went with it for its play potential: “Let’s take the matter of grass...For group action, grass fights are the thing. Technically, the projectile is root mass with dirt attached; the stems are the handle, a humane weapon with high trajectory and low speed. Attacks are best mounted from grass tunnels or similar camouflaged positions...Should the empty lot have a grove of trees on it, so much the better” (Litton, 1969, p. 293). Unfortunately, rough ground had often been singled out for cleaning up (Whyte, 1968; Opie & Opie, 1969).

Exploring still further, abandoned places (as distinct from rough ground), were seen as another kind of habitat by the children in Moore’s study. These often included derelict buildings and dumping grounds. The author described these precincts as “haunted by a residual human presence that stimulated the imagination”; they had a visually readable “archaeological element” (Moore, 1990, p. 162). The children found them open to interpretation, without purpose (a desirable characteristic), available for them and wild plants and animals to colonise, and a rich source of myths, musings, and storytelling. The landscape was particularly rich in such abandoned areas because of a combination of social, industrial, and economic factors against a backdrop of political upheaval, coupled with a rapid spread of suburban areas into former industrial land, later graphically captured by Oswalt & Rieniets (2006).

Such findings give hints and principles as to the ways in which environments could be designed for children. For instance, the scale of intervention needed to recognise the very limited ranges some children can exploit, and yet the richness that can be accommodated within a small space. Hart called this the creation or preservation of environments with “finer grains” rather than the blanket solutions typical of new residential areas (Hart, 1979, p. 348). As observed above, Hart thought the overwhelming point was that adults, parents or planners, appeared to systematically ignore and override the very qualities in the environment that children valued. “[T]he most important qualities to the children of this town – sand/dirt, small shallow ponds of brooks of water, slight elevations of topography, low trees and bushes, and tall unmanicured grass – are systematically removed from all new residential areas” (Hart,
1979, p. 349). Hart referred to Kevin Lynch's study of children's and young adolescents' behaviours in several countries undertaken for UNESCO (Lynch, 1975), which also reported the explorations of rough and abandoned land.

It should be noted that the views expressed by Lynch, Hart and Moore contrast markedly with those of other authors focussed on the provision of designated play environments within the bounds of schoolyards, gardens and playgrounds (e.g. Tai et al., 2006). In fact, while Moore is portrayed as an advocate of the provision of nature for children by Hines (2005), she makes no mention of the wider implications of Moore's work, e.g. children's need for escape beyond supervised confines and their appreciation of the neglected.

2.4 Play out of bounds: neglect and ruin

Thanks to studies by authors such as Hart (1979), Moore (1990), and Matthews (1992), we know that neglected land – which could be regarded as comprising the spectrum from rough ground through overgrown vacant lots and abandoned land to wastelands - is attractive for children. It is not only attractive. Children actually visit these places given the opportunity. Having jumped the bounds of the playground fence, or squeezed through the gap in the hedge, children share experiences similar to those of adult members of the community who do not view these places at all as "ugly or unpleasant – empty spaces waiting for a better use" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 1).

The value of these neglected places for both children and adults was also recognised by Thompson (2002), who applied the descriptors “shifting”, “indeterminate”, “ambiguous”, “loose”, and “loosely-fit” to deliberately hint at the importance of these places for those seeking solace from the rigid, bounded world of most urban spaces. Baines (1999) added further weight to calls for neglect, or at least places where maintenance is relaxed and plant life can be used, not viewed, to be recognised as an important part of open space provision for all members of urban society.

Edensor (2005) has written extensively on the subject of industrial ruins and the lands in which they can be found, amassing an array of uses for people of all ages, from satisfying urges to fracture and pound artefacts decayed beyond re-use for their original purposes, through picnicking and gardening, to nature study, and child's play. Koolhaas
et al. (2000) also described some of the many uses of dereliction, from rave parties at night to “nostalgia-free” recreation of family parties during the day.

The qualities that make neglected land special were seen by Edensor (2005) as a critique of the ways in which cities are physically constituted, and the norms and customs that keep urban behaviours in conformity with planned spaces. The urban fabric, which is intended by modern planners to be seamless, is informed by the Apollonian ethic, represented and reinforced by regulation, zoning, “aesthetic monitoring”, and bounded spaces. This is challenged by the interstitial spaces of neglect found in derelict land, which exposes a Dionysian desire for a relaxation and escape from such strictures. Edensor labels these the forces of spatial ordering and disordering, respectively (Edensor, 2005, p. 53). In an ordered city, different “species” of people and uses are clearly delineated on the ground, with derelict land regarded as a negative space. A thesis was developed in which the “weakly classified spaces”, such as derelict land, are seen as paradoxically attractive, even seductive “realms of desire” (Edensor, 2005, p. 55).

Edensor (2005, p. 168) suggested that we need to recognise the benefit of empty space in city plans: “Besides ruins, cities also contain scruffy areas behind advertising hoardings, rubbish dumps, undeveloped brownfield sites, culverts and canals, land underneath motorway flyovers, the surroundings of railyards, junk and scrap yards, and many species of scrubland”. These spaces are attractive and lead to a phenomenological exploration of our environment, redolent with the smells of decay and rampant growth (Fig 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Dereliction on a site formerly covered with terraces houses and neat back yard gardens in Sheffield, England. Earth banks heaped up to stop dumping and weeds running rampant in the rubble.
The word “derelict” literally means that which has been completely left behind, presumably after former use; forsaken. It is a word that resonates in its origins and current usage with delinquent (having left, or departed from the norm) and relinquished (given up). And yet, a relic, something that is relict, also in the sense of left behind, is something surviving from an earlier time that is revered, such as a precious artefact or part of a saintly person’s body. The two adjectival labels, derelict and relict, stand in complete opposition. The former identifies the undeveloped, unkempt, unwanted, and unloved; the latter is precious and of the past.

It is perhaps appropriate that derelict land should be labelled in such an ambivalent way — relict and valued by some, yet de-relict (completely left behind, not “un-relict” or “rehabilitated”) and treated with what Armstrong (2006) described as contempt by the conventional. This ambivalence, even binary existence, is captured in the French phrase *terrain vague* - urban “empty and abandoned space” - which also shares an indeterminate etymology (de Sola-Morales Rubió, 1995). This author saw the attraction of the *terrain vague* as deriving from a reaction to order and control: a sedentary existence inciting nomadism; safety inviting risk; power demanding escape. If all were derelict and unordered, the ordered city would need to be made for the cracks to appear.

De Solà-Morales Rubió (1995) also noticed the palpable presence of the past in *terrains vagues*. Simeoforidis (2000, p. 415) hinted at a tension between a now useless former occupation and potential for current use of *terrains vagues* when he described them as “void, unproductive, obsolete territories in the contemporary city, territories which are also imprecise, undefined, without fixed limits” [my italics].

In the arts, the *terrains vagues* from the adult work of the photographer and sculptor Hans Scholten have been compared with the derelict lands and empty places where children play free from the constraints of adult intervention (Scholten & Bloem, 1999). Again, these authors stress the signs of past occupation as important elements of the mystery of these places: they are not untouched, not wild, and not natural in the sense of representing what once existed before human intervention. “The once human presence is always visible. Because of the things left behind, or the changes made in the landscape, these traces often suggest a story or an event” (Scholten & Bloem, 1999, p. 53).
In poetry, Patrick McGuinness (2004, p. 26) captured something of the “things left behind” in his verses *Vague Terrain*:

>This was always nether-country: a border-land of empty paint cans, burned-out cars, dumped fridges cooling in the shade. A Stonehenge of yellowing white goods, its mysterious circles were understood only by fly-tippers and their drive-by gods: Currys, Homebase, Argos.

Their acts of worship were secretive. They were persecuted but undeterred. The soil was slow to claim their offerings: their libations stained the ground, their breath took breath from the earth around. They left skeletal metal, statueless plinths, and beyond them, city walls that gleamed like teeth.

While the word “derelict” has been used to embrace rough ground, overgrown vacant lots, abandoned land, and wastelands, it cannot be applied satisfactorily to *terrain vague*, or the droll vague terrain. To do this would dismiss the richness of association and the fascination it holds for those wanting to play, or to indulge in other pleasures of exploration. Derelict is how rough, waste, and abandoned land is regarded by spatial ordering convention (Edensor, 2005). It is a phrase that by convention denotes negativity, delinquency. If derelict is derogatory and contemptuous, and invites the ordering forces of reclamation or rehabilitation, then a different, positive phrase needs to be applied to these precious lands that can capture the strength of their disorder, and preferably signal to ordering conventional sensibilities that these interstitial places need to be acknowledged for their values. They are relictual in the sense of being left behind, but to treat them as relics would be too precious. They have also been retired from former use, or simply resting. Yet, they do not sleep. They could be named latent
places, commonly hidden from view, and hidden in a way that causes planners and designers to exhibit blindness to their possibilities. However, latent also suggests shame and dissembling. In the absence of a phrase with an ability to capture the essence of the wandering terrain, neglect is suggested in the sense of not being chosen: not chosen for development and for use by normal convention, and therefore able to be taken up by other sections of the community.

2.5 Playing with the boundaries: wandering, not arriving

Derelict places have a special appeal, therefore, for people of all ages, and contrast with the order, neatness and safety of conventional open and built spaces. However, pigeonholed in this way merely as parcels of land used for the unconventional, they become no more than out-of-the-way areas, large or small, that can be arrived at by those seeking out this particular kind of destination, the adventurous, exploratory, those wanting to escape. However, to describe them in this way as destinations, much in the way people not interested in escape might describe the shopping centre, the bus station, or the office, is to underestimate their intrinsically indeterminate nature. More importantly, those seemingly travelling to derelict places might gain as much delight in the journey as in the arriving, engaging in walking-not-arriving, or wandering.

Wandering happens in the cracks between other land uses. In wandering, there is great solitude, even in populated areas, as expressed in *Wandering through the Fringes*, by the 20th Century Dutch poet Simon Vestdijk, quoted in Scholten & Bloem (1999, p. 54):

> What I like best is the semi-rural
> Where vague pasture winds are playing
> With washing lines; on factory
> Sites, between meagre grass, a lorry's riding,

> Carrying the secrets of the docklands' rails.
> For I'm aware, that where one's passing
> The days and is not living, though, wandering
> There, more solitude is found than in mountains or ravines.
The smoulder of steam trams and bleaching plant
Or ovens for burning shells, is, more
Than the smell of thyme, able to arouse dreams,

And the black calf in the meadow at
The edge is freed by an unforeseen poem and
Is included, with cinders, in a single image.

Since at least some older people also enjoy derelict land, it is not surprising that the practice of wandering to and through these places is well recorded in adult literature and philosophy. Edensor (2005) hints at the way the normative, machinic characteristics of cities reinforce the ways people move within their habitat, making journeys both a means to arrive at a destination and a means of instilling the mundane, unconscious nature of being. The places left and arrived at each have a sense of dwelling (Seamon, 1979; cited in Edensor, 2005, p. 80) but the movements in between these places are increasingly tunnels without points of potential divergence, and lack dwelling characteristics. Nonetheless, children develop independent routes between places, and some adults can develop a “rhetoric of walking”, perhaps in reaction to ordering forces expressed in footpaths, roads and motorways. “Alternative spatial networks evolve in ‘the interstitial spaces between dominant orderings’ (Stanley, 1996), along the cracks between regulated spaces” (Edensor, 2005, p. 83). As Deleuze & Guattari (1986, p. 50) aptly put it, although points of departure and arrival “determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine….A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency, and enjoys both an autonomy and direction of its own”.

Kofman & Lebas (1996) regard the philosophy of LeFebvre as ideally suited to the consideration of cities undergoing change. Both LeFebvre and the Situationists held the view that play was an important element of city life. They imagined that when many menial tasks were performed by technological advances, people would be freed to play and enjoy city environments as nomads in utopia, there would be an evolution of Homo ludens (Kofman & Lebas, 1996, p. 12). Unlike more radical or revolutionary
movements, such as the Situationists, who saw a future in continual revolution and a life of “wandering” (Sadler, 1999), LeFebvre started with the everyday urban existence as it is lived in cities throughout the world, which, through gradual and slow change, has the prospect of exploring possible futures. LeFebvre (1996, p. 92) wrote of dwelling and wandering as being opposing themes.

The personification in literature of the person with enough time and leisure to indulge in a life of wandering is found in the \textit{flâneur}. The \textit{flâneur} is a man who can wander off the highways, and immerse himself in the obscure, the sinister, and, what Edensor (2005) would call, the “carnavalesque”. He is expressed in the indeterminate trajectory of the character Bloom in James Joyce’s \textit{Ulysses} (Lechte, 1995). In exposing the sexism underlying the portrayal of the \textit{flâneur} in literature, Gibson & Watson (1995) nonetheless acknowledged that the \textit{flâneur} is a walker “whose pace and dalliances would allow the observation of lingering detail”, much in the way a child might appreciate his or her surroundings. Similarly, Wilson (1995) described the principal attribute of the \textit{flâneur} as ambivalence, a feature of the spaces occupied preferentially by children and of their seemingly aimless wandering and exploration. The parallel between the adult (male) \textit{flâneur} and the child exploring derelict land can possibly be taken too far, since the former is seen as predominantly as an indolent, voyeuristic wastrel of time, whereas the child is an adventurous user of space. And while, Wilson (1995) argued, there cannot be a female “\textit{flâneuse}”, there are certainly girls as well as boys who engage in wandering (Moore (1990). Perhaps Carmona et al. (2003, p. 165, citing Bacon, 1974) capture something of the absorption that can characterise the urban wanderer when they observe that “only through ‘endless walking’ could designers ‘absorb into their being’ the true experience of urban space”.

These considerations are grounded by Moore (1990), who reported that each of the children’s habitats in his study, the abandoned places, rough ground, parks and playgrounds, back streets, and grassed areas and gardens close to home, were linked by intricate networks of alleys, tunnels, short cuts, climbs, and scrambles. The paths trodden could be unplanned, tortuous, tunnelled, and unofficial as if the children were animals. Wandering meant children needed to invoke phrases that included “getting through” (narrow holes, gaps, and breaks), “squeeze through”, and using a “quick way”, often involving gymnastic feats, largely unknown to parents. Moore’s descriptions are reminiscent of the extreme forms of gymnastic wandering on the part of the young and
the not so young indulging in skateboarding city routes (Johns, 2001; Palmer, 2001) or in the “art of movement (l'art du déplacement)” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkour), walking the rooftops, walls, and spaces above alleyways in the arcane urban sport of parkour, which is humorously showcased at http://www.koreus.com/media/pere-noel-parkour.html.

Children (typically alone or in pairs) wandered all the better to “make their most intimate and prolonged contact with the social and physical places around them” (Moore, 1990, p. 57). For the 8-12 year-olds in Moore’s study there was what appeared to be “a wonderfully rich childhood culture lurking in the interstices of every neighbourhood” (Moore, 1990, p. xiv). The children valued wandering this network, walking-not-arriving, in its own right. The journey, with its innumerable diversions and halts, was as important as the destination. Trying to capture the sensation of wandering, Moore used the term “flowing terrain” to describe both the places and the explorations undertaken by the children in his study.

Hart (1979) also found that children developed their own path network, which might be quite independent of that used by adults, and might involve trespass onto private property. These children’s routes were not chosen because they were “short cuts”: “Routes described by children as ‘short cuts’ are valued by children even when they are more truly long-cuts. The primary value of a large number of children’s paths, unlike the majority of adult routes, is not for getting from Place A to Place B; the journey itself is frequently the purpose of a trip. This is an extremely important point for the environmental planners of new residential areas to note” (Hart, 1979, pp. 331-332). The importance to children of the journey rather than the destination (if it existed at all) was also suggested by Lady Allen of Hurtwood (Hogan, 1969).

2.6 Mapping wandering networks of neglect

Areas of neglect in undesignated play environments, neglect in designated play environments and the residual fabric of playgrounds, parks, streets and precincts are wandered by children and others in ways that cannot be readily captured in a plan we might think of as being used by planners or anyone concerned for Cartesian rationality. Whilst there are definitely places that are delimited on the ground where designated
play occurs, there are also other “places” that children visit, and these places might be journeys more than entities on a plan; more processes than destinations. To call these “networks of neglect” is not entirely satisfactory, but the phrase will serve in this Dissertation as a working label for these operations of exploration.

Advances in geographical information systems (GIS) suggest that it might no longer be accurate to regard this technology disparagingly as “an abstract accumulation of data” (Weller, 2001a). It might well be possible to map the indeterminacy that characterises networks of neglect using less precise mapping techniques. As Elmes et al. (2005) and Hwang & Thill (2005) have shown, GIS technology increasingly allows the mapping of “unscientific” community information, and the vague and indeterminate ways in which people actually regard boundaries between different areas. Similarly, GIS can accommodate the ways in which people prefer to wander rather than take the shortest path to a destination (Hochmair, 2005).

However, how best to capture such a network graphically still needs to be considered as this would help those who use the network to make their case to planners and designers. In addition, such a graphic exercise is a challenge in its own right, being something more than, or different from, an extension or embellishment of an existing city plan. Corner (1999) argued that whereas many aspects of cities could be shown in objectively constructed plans, new cities needed to be mapped using vision and techniques that were not accurate reflections of reality as much as optimistic possibilities for future behaviours.

Using Charles Minard’s famous map of Napoleon’s 1812-1813 Russian campaign with its multiple layers of information and other examples, Corner (1999) showed how making a map is much more than making a plan. The operations of mapping are said to be threefold. First, there is the “field”, the ground, canvas, sheet, medium on which the map will be portrayed, a graphic system for organising the contents, along with other attributes, e.g. scale, orientation, method of projection, a frame, and coordinates. The “extracts” are the things extracted from the environment, “de-territorialized” objects and their qualities and quantities. Lastly, the extracts are made evident through “plottings”. “Plotting is not simply the indiscriminate listing and inventorying of conditions, as in a tracing, a table of a chart, but rather a strategic and imaginative drawing-out of relational structures. To plot is to track,...to set in-relation, to find and to found. In this
sense, plotting produces a ‘re-territorialization’ of sites” (Corner, 1999, p. 230). Viewed in this way, elements of a network of neglect could find new territorial relationships on a map to reflect sensed relationships on the ground, relationships that a city plan would not contain owing to the rationalities of geographical separation.

![Discours sur les passions de l'amour by G. Debord](http://www.arikah.com/encyclopedia/Situationist 10 Feb. 2007).

The novel Situationist maps of Guy Debord, which depict cut-and-paste rearrangements of Paris streets to reflect wanderings undertaken by the author instead of a plan of streets and city blocks, spring to mind. These maps were produced folded, a pocket guide for a psychogeographical experience (Fig. 2.4).

Corner (1999, p. 232) captured the way in which Situationist maps such as this one dislocated not just the city’s avenues and axes but achieved the “valorization of individual participation within a seemingly repressive apparatus of state or bureaucratic power.” Users of the network of neglect might be similarly fortified by a map that could bring their needs to the notice of an indifferent if not actively repressive planning apparatus. However, an advance on Debord’s map could be achieved if the destinations, the city blocks, were less evident than the wanderings between them. To adapt the language of Deleuze & Guattari (1986), the blocks appear far from subordinated to the paths, which have not developed their own autonomy.
Deleuze & Guattari (1986, p. 53) made a distinction between “sedentary” space, which is formed up in properties, property boundaries, and the roads that service them, and “nomad” or “smooth” space, which sounds in the descriptions of these authors albeit for nomads in sand or ice deserts, very much akin to the rich journeys of wandering in the flowing terrain of Moore (1990):

“...there is no line separating earth and sky; there is no intermediate distance, no perspective or contour, visibility is limited; and yet there is an extraordinarily fine topology that does not rely on points or objects, but on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of the ice, the tactile qualities of both); it is a tactile space, or rather a ‘haptic’, a sonorous much more than a visual space...The variability, the polyvocity of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography.”

Sedentary space is evident in limiting street and property layouts of western cities, whereas the network of neglect is more smooth and sensual. This sensuality and richness would ideally be captured in mapping such a network, the blocks in striated space having lesser dominance than the processes and operations of wandering. A persistent difficulty in doing this, however, would be the re-territorialization on a map of wanderings that are inherently not able to be de-territorialized in the first place, and would cease to exist if re-territorialized in this way. Deleuze & Guattari (1986, p. 52) recognised the occupier of smooth space as the ultimate in deterritorialization.

Corner (1999) identified four ways in which the operations of map making are taken up in the services of design and planning: “drift”, “layering”, “game-board”, and “rhizome”. These were further explained by Weller (2001a). Debord’s wanderings came to be known as dérive, or drift. Minard’s map had elements of rhizomatic mapping, although like other maps drawn by this cartographer, such as the flows of traffic around Dijon or of migrants around the world, the content is quantitative rather than affective. The four themes are closely related, but a rhizomatic approach, as hinted in the quotation above by Deleuze & Guattari, might best allow wandering in the network of
neglect to be mapped. "Instead of designing relatively closed systems of order, rhizomatic mappings provide an infinite series of connections, switches, relays and circuits for activating matter and information" (Corner, 1999, p. 250). A small image of a very un-map-like Windmill Topography (Los Angeles, CA) 1994 by James Corner, is offered as an example of such a mapping activity (Corner, 1999).

2.7 The paradox of designing for neglect

Children left to their own devices (and an unknown but significant proportion of older members of society) delight in the places that once were occupied and now lie peacefully neglected, the derelict, the left-behind. They delight in the journeys to and through these places, through gaps, under fences and over roofs. These places have a history that can be sensed, or might be places that were forgotten by the wayside of history; they are relics of a past existence, remnants in an otherwise ordered landscape. They pass, with their associations, through the receptive wanderer as the wanderer passes, unsupervised, through them.

If neglected places and their wandering networks were continually being generated by disuse as fast as they were being consumed by the ordering forces of redevelopment, there might be no need to plan for their future. However, such a favourable balance seems unlikely, especially if, as several authors have suggested (Rogers, 1997; Simeoforidis, 2000; Thompson, 2002; Pauleit et al., 2004), cities are to become more densely settled. Given the evidence for the use of neglected places in cities, a strong case can be made for perpetuating the continuing neglect of undeveloped places that already exist in public ownership, and for acquiring additional lands and sections that might enhance wandering network opportunities.

As Moore (1990) watched the children in his study, he was aware of the value of the neglected land and thought it would be impossible to recreate it once it was lost. The history, materials, and treasures of the industrial wastes explored by the children were accumulated over more than a century of dumping and abuse. However, it should be possible to achieve neglect for sites with a shorter history of accumulation and a less well developed industrial stratigraphy.
However, there is a paradox in needing to plan and design for a suite of land uses associated with play that defy definition, and which depend for their special qualities on being unplanned and un-designed, existing in a loosely linked network in the cracks between ordered spaces. This is especially important for a design profession whose design interventions, as Weller (2001a) jokingly but tellingly recounts, tend to result in picturesque outcomes.

To design for neglect is a puzzle addressed by Florian Beigel, who is quoted in an article by Abalos & Herreros (2003):

"Perhaps the key issue is to do with designing emptiness, to decide where nothing will go. This word emptiness is enigmatic, has a sense of wonder and an almost inbuilt potential for getting one's imagination going and provoking involvement, I feel such an 'emptiness' is inherent in certain landscapes. It can also be found in cracks, or holes in the city, where there cease to be rules, leaving the spaces to grow wild. Such places spark not only my imagination, but also the imaginations of people who come to inhabit them. Nonetheless, designing in these situations is a very delicate thing because such wildness is so fragile and can all too easily be destroyed. Even a successful intervention can only briefly sustain a lawless environment. The key is to do 'almost nothing', as Mies once said. I find this to be a very provocative statement and a good starting point."

Such reverence for the wild and empty space and the need to avoid designing it out of existence was also expressed by Lucius Burckhardt in his critiques of landscape architecture practised in the 1960s. He bemoaned the regimentation of open spaces in the urban environment and advocated “that any intervention should be as small as possible”, as quoted by Wirz (2004, p. 7). In the same volume, Ingersoll (2004) introduced five public gardens designed by landscape architect Christophe Girot for the terrains vagues of Paris. These are the flowing terrains that gain their strength from their very neglect. It is a disappointment to find that, far from doing as little as possible, Girot is seen to have unsympathetically reclaimed these sites by clearing open areas for visual control, planting banks of impenetrable plants, and inserting major pathways to
avoid disorientation (Ingersoll, 2004). These treatments are not consistent with the views of Beigel, Wirz, and Burckhardt, indicating how hard it might be to design in neglected places without their seeming to be cleaned up and regimented, in short, made conventional.

Others have considered the design of what might be termed wild gardens, although the focus of these was more the aesthetic benefits to adult gardeners than those that might be had by children exploring neglected places. Robinson (1983) championed the cause of naturalistic planting in his *Wild Garden* originally published in 1870, the paradoxical title (wild, yet gardened) not lost on the writer of its introduction, Richard Mabey. In this context, letting gardens go wild makes them more “another piece of fashionable whimsy” (Mabey, 1983, xv) than places of neglect. Robinson’s ideas are little different from those given a more modern treatment in the planting and natural gardening of, for example, Oudolf & Gerritsen (2003).

What can be experienced and achieved by children in gardens, or rather in extensive grounds with diverse water bodies and landforms, was revealed by Gertrude Jekyll at the beginning of last century (Jekyll, 1982). Here, almost obscured by the detailed descriptions of a most industrious young gardener, we read of the delights that young people enjoyed at that time when allowed the freedom: “dreadful deeds with gunpowder”, using a makeshift boat against express instructions to reach an “enchanted” island, and being alone to wander away and explore. The garden itself was apparently a source of hard work and satisfaction, not of neglect at all, nor a place of wild excitement. No different from children in recent times, children such as Jekyll sought solace and escape in neglected and unsupervised places.

One example of a design intervention that appears to go some way towards instilling a sense of neglect, abandonment, and unintended playful possibility is a work by Christophe Morin in rural France (Tortosa, 2000). Tortosa described it as a garden, and in other literature, a sculpture garden, but the designer gave the work no category, adding to the hallmarks of indeterminacy and mystery characteristic of neglect. The text suggests the garden is a work in progress, for playful exploration as a journey of discovery guided by instinct, “just for the fun of it” (Tortosa, 2000, p. 23). And although the garden has undeniably been built, it is also described as a “wasteland” where “the gardener has invented nothing, or almost nothing”, the same phrase
attributed to Mies by Abalos & Herreros (2003). It is a fairy tale source of memories, assisted by that other feature of the most powerful neglected places, the decaying past in the shape of old tools and agricultural buildings. Although there are bramble bushes and plants running to seed, it is clearly not intended to be, nor looks like, a "wild garden" in the Robinson (1983) tradition. The published images show rampant growth, roughly cut and twisting grass paths between unevenly trimmed, knobbly, child height hedges; primitive fences, holes in fences, and not too evenly delineated beds of vegetables and fruit trees (Fig. 2.5).

Figure 2.5. The garden designed by Christophe Morin in the northern Deux-Sèvres region, France. Scenes in summer and winter showing some of the unfinished qualities of this place for play (from Tortosa, 2000).
The Morin garden is therefore a place with a history: the land was once cultivated, became neglected, and has now been reborn to a new use that respects the past. A key to addressing the paradox of making design interventions in places that require the apparent absence of design for their strength, might rest in the irony surrounding the stark contrast of former and current uses of neglected places. By definition, neglected land has had a former use, often involving populations of hard working people who unwittingly helped to shape the ground, the vegetation, and the structures that today lie peacefully at rest. Their labours came to an end for whatever combinations of economic, social, environmental or other reasons, thereby allowing later generations to enjoy the peace that has descended on their former workplaces. Land acquired deliberately to be neglected would gain strength by a design intervention that was actually a matter of doing nothing. This would not be dereliction of responsibility. It would be a deliberate management decision to allow natural forces to work without being arrested. However, doing “almost nothing” in a way that reveals the secrets of the past while allowing the present to be enjoyed might further enrich the delight of places of neglect.

2.8 The ease of designing out neglect

Design interventions in neglected places that overlook their intrinsic values are most commonly those that seek to replace decay with new industry and housing, weediness with native biodiversity, or apparently run-down open space with more modern facilities. The assumption is frequently and almost arrogantly made that not only do neglected places have little value (Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2003), but they also have no occupants or users (Spirn, 1986). Similarly, neglected areas are commonly not even worthy of mention, such as in a series of articles in an issue of Landscape Design devoted to urban renewal, e.g. Rudlin (2001) writing on the importance of “urban good manners”.

Perhaps these are examples more of blindness and obliviousness than deliberate ill will towards neglect, although de Solà-Morales Rubió (1994) identified the imposition of neat and commercially productive order on disorder with the colonisation of land formerly free of tyranny by processes of organised violence. And landscape architects have been castigated by Weller (2001b, p. 20) for their collaboration in supporting the ideological status quo, with their “seemingly innocuous, ameliorative compositions of
commercial landscape design”. It has been said that “architecture is the art of how to waste space” (Johnson, 1964). In the context of urban renewal of neglected places, landscape architecture is seen too often to be the art of consuming waste.

The decline of extractive industry in the United Kingdom and other countries with a similar history of development, on top of many decades of indiscriminate waste dumping, laid the foundations of a burgeoning land reclamation industry in the latter half of the last century based on an ethic of cleaning up the mess of the past, described by Holden (1989, p. 50) as “one of the most successful achievements of the British landscape profession”. Former derelict land resulting from coal extraction in northern England is described as reclaimed for a range of active recreational and cultivation activities (Koolhaas et al., 2000), and Whatmore & Hinchliffe (2003) note the loss of brownfield sites to “urban renaissance” as urban compaction takes place.

It is difficult to judge how closely the cracks, holes, lawless places, and emptinesses of Beigel and Burckhardt correspond with the North American derelict lands described by Desvigne (Davoine, 2003). However, in a telling phrase reminiscent of the colonisation perspective of de Solà-Morales Rubió (1994), “powerful landscape” is said to result from the design interventions described by Davoine (2003), suggesting dereliction was viewed as lacking strength; dereliction is a “parasitic landscape” that should be absorbed into the urban fabric (Davoine, 2003, p. 82). This is surely a view that does not value dereliction for its inherent qualities of lawlessness and escape.

Davoine (2003) contrasts the European desire to introduce order with the North American goal of using “modest and pragmatic means” to effect a clean up by the means of restoring neglected land with assemblages of plants resembling those of former natural habitats. In fact, construction of these cameos of former habitats has become common practice worldwide, and has become a second important means of making design interventions that are incompatible with the values of neglected places. Unlike the reclamation of neglect for wealth generation, the enhanced provision of a “natural environment” is seen as fulfilling soil, water, and wildlife conservation goals, as well as purporting to assist child development.

The foundational work of keen observers of children, such as Hart and Moore, who both showed the delight children took in the indeterminate “flowing terrain”, has been translated and used by others to campaign for the provision of “nature”. For example,
the books by Hart (1979) and Moore (1990) were cited to substantiate that children prefer the unbuilt and unstructured in a research paper by Fjortoft & Sageie (2000). These authors showed how children’s motor development benefited from the provision of a diverse natural environment. The fact that the children in the former studies were observed in highly modified landscapes that afforded social and emotional as well as motor benefits was overlooked by Fjortoft & Sageie (2000). In other papers, including one by Moore & Wong (1997), although the provision of a rich natural environment is advocated for children, opportunities for habitat modification and the provision of some unfinished areas are also suggested (e.g. Johnson & Hurley, 2002).

Providing “nature” in urban areas suggests that natural forces stop at the fringes of the city, which is patently not the case. Hinchliffe (1999, p. 174) recognised that there is no distinction between the urban and the natural (“the whole of New York is natural”). The growing realisation that cities are no less “ecological” than rivers or forests, that they are dynamic “soft systems” capable of being designed to yield as yet unrealised futures, has also been enunciated by Corner (2003, p. 63).

Providing biodiversity formerly indigenous to the urban area is commonly seen as satisfying an educational need better than the plants and animals that have colonised these areas without human assistance. However, as several authors observed many years ago (e.g. Laurie, 1974; Spirn, 1986; Gilbert, 1989), nature permeates cities without human assistance. Moreover, the view that urban biodiversity should be “native only” (Spellerberg & Given, 2004) has led to the sweeping away of valuable ruderal ecosystems that spontaneously develop on waste ground (Ruff, 1974; Teagle, 1974; Clemens et al., 1984; Gyllin, 1999; Bradshaw, 2000). Too great a fervour for the reclamation of neglected, weedy areas for indigenous plantings has been exposed by Kendle & Rose (2000) as being too narrow and unhelpful.

In a thoughtful paper by Gyllin (1999, p. 5), a parallel is drawn between the imposition of “flashy” or “planner’s” biodiversity in urban areas, resulting in the loss of “unplanned” biodiversity in waste and abandoned ground, with pressure to confine children to playgrounds and other designated play environments instead of letting them play in the areas they prefer. The author advocates excluding neglected areas from the planning process so that children, like volunteer colonising plant species, can enjoy the “non-planned”.

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2.9 Signs of neglect: acceptable appearances and safety

Land acquired for its attributes of neglect, would not be land wasted. It would bear unmistakable signs of neglect that honour those who went before as well as satisfying disordering needs of today. If an ordering reason for relaxing forces of reclamation and renewal were needed, it could be for greater sustainability in open space management, e.g. for savings in machinery and non-renewable fossil fuels, reduced runoff and better filtration of stormwater. If neglect were too visible or affronting to public sensitivities, design interventions could be explored that would indicate “signs of neglect” acceptable to both those seeking the flowing terrain, and those who elect to not indulge in its pleasures: a code, like an oracle, ambiguous but bearing a truthful message to both parties.

In addition to setting aside areas for continuing neglect as undesignated areas for play, design interventions can also be contemplated that would allow open space that is currently not neglected to benefit from deliberately neglectful treatment. Robin Moore and others gave indications of how elements of neglect could be introduced to enhance play opportunities in designated play environments. Public parks and playgrounds are not typically places of neglect, although elements identified by Moore, e.g. long grass and bushes, accessible water and earth to dig in, could readily be introduced. These more visible introductions of neglect could potentially be in direct conflict with norms of order and tidiness, and with recommendations for maintaining a perception of safety.

Nassauer and co-workers believed that a semblance of ordered management was required in areas of high visibility at the edges of land planted or allowed to become overgrown to enhance ecological values, especially in riparian zones (Nassauer, 1995; Nassauer et al., 2001; Nassauer, 2002; 2004). Recognising that “unconventional” landscapes were proscribed by the power of convention, the catchphrase “cues to care” (Nassauer et al., 2001; Nassauer, 2004), or “cues for care” (Nassauer, 2002) was coined to denote vegetation maintenance treatments that signal order and respectability, and that permitted “cultural sustainability”. A similar focus on standards of care and appearance (“good quality space”, “worthwhile green spaces”) is apparent in an extensive study and classification of open space in the United Kingdom produced by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2003). Luther & Gruehn (2001) assumed a high
standard of maintenance in their study of parks and playgrounds in Berlin: land values increased the closer houses were to open space and playgrounds.

A parallel goal of cultural sustainability in the context of neglect places is not readily achievable. Firstly, educated property owners and town planners appreciate the ecological value of planted riparian (and other) zones, and know that their presence might enhance the land values. Neatening edge treatments help these plantings to conform to aesthetic norms, and serve to defend owners from what might be perceived as threats to property values should nature become too untidy. Secondly, there are no "users" internal to such planted natural zones, and native biodiversity in extensive areas is largely oblivious to peripheral treatments.

Application of a cosmetic "cues to care" treatment to places being deliberately neglected could render them more acceptable to those sections of the community not interested in neglect. Planners and politicians require at least a perception of a seamless, regulated city to attract tourists, middle-class families, and capital. Dereliction threatens this order unless it can be gentrified, interpreted, placed in the past, and used as a curiosity: "sites of ordered disorder" ( Featherstone, 1991, p. 82). However, such a treatment would risk alienating users of neglect: neglect would be Respectably packaged, and thereby debased, its very qualities of indeterminacy and looseness being fixed. Again, oracular "signs of neglect" need to be found that can signal to both ordering and dis ordering forces a message that satisfies both parties.

An additional concern when considering neglect is the need to satisfy requirements for safety, and the perception of safety. The design of public spaces has received a great deal of attention for several decades, resulting in a "crime prevention (or deterrence) through environmental design" (CPTED) literature covering theory, strategy, and guidelines for making cities safer (Crowe, 2000). Crime prevention is a complex issue, and includes consideration of the mind of the potential offender, the social environmental context, and the composition and design of the built environment. In practice, focus has tended to fall on the design of the environment and community involvement, rather than on the psychology of the offender, drawing heavily on the theory that safety is best served by informal surveillance, reinforced by control of access routes and a sense of public territory. These increase the perceived risk that an offence could be detected, and that arrest could result (Crowe, 2000).
Informal surveillance is enhanced in public areas by providing clear visibility and night lighting for legitimate users of open space, especially at entry points. Surprisingly, the presence of trees is thought to enhance safety. These guidelines are made in the context of public open spaces that have not been allowed to become neglected, i.e. conventional public places managed by authorities concerned for reinforcing norms of neatness and control. Not surprisingly, therefore, surveillance is thought to be well complemented by a maintenance regime that stresses ownership and respectability, with deterioration and damage being quickly repaired.

These prescriptions can result in a rise of gated communities, close surveillance, and a sense of loss of freedom. In parks, they typically give rise to the sterility of closely mown lawns, with pruned shrubs and standard trees set well back from play areas and paths. It has been argued that as safety can not be guaranteed, even in the most visible of public places, there has been too much emphasis placed on CPTED, leading to an inhospitable living environment (Anon., 2007).

In New Zealand, national guidelines for CPTED have been issued by the Ministry of Justice (2005). These form part of the Urban Design Protocol (Ministry for the Environment, 2005), and inform regional and district councils’ environmental design policies and practices, such as the safety strategy for Christchurch (Christchurch City Council, 2005) and the guidelines contained in Safer Canterbury: creating safer communities issued by the Canterbury Safety Working Party (2004). Recommendations, illustrated by barren riverside and roadside walkways edged with closely mown grass and lollipop trees, are similar to those made in the international safety literature, and include:

- enhancement of visibility and sight lines;
- not allowing plants to grow in a way that could hide potential attackers, e.g. no shrubs within 2 m of the path, and tree branches removed 0.7-2.0 m above the ground;
- routing paths to be heavily used and in sight of roads;
- avoidance of narrow alleyways to minimise entrapment; and
- high maintenance of facilities to stress ownership.
The Canterbury Safety Working Party (2004) pointed out that excessive attention to CPTED and other measures could be detrimental to our living environment, and that a sense of safety, and safety itself, cannot be guaranteed by any measures. The working party acknowledged that some areas are going to be less safe, and that people should be capable of choosing not to be there if safe alternatives are provided. Carmona et al. (2003, p. 125) also comment on the wisdom of providing some “marginal places” where extremely “free” behaviour can be accommodated with little resulting damage.

These considerations suggest two important conclusions. First, that neglected areas, which for the purposes of play and wandering needs to be less visible and less well maintained than closely mown lawns, could be allowed to co-exist to complement conventionally safe open spaces, provided the latter more public spaces conformed to reasonable CPTED requirements. And second, there is the possibility that existing conventional parks could be given elements of neglect without their safety being compromised, provided design allowed for clear visibility and informal surveillance, high use, and low risk of entrapment.
2.10 Summary

The first objective of this study was:

- To carry out a review of the literature on child development and play, with special emphasis on the evolution of design ideas and practices, including the use of undesignated play spaces.

This has been carried out and the importance of undesignated place spaces (variously termed those occurring in derelict land, *terrain vague*, flowing terrain) highlighted. These have properties of indeterminacy and neglect, a powerful presence of former occupation, and scope for unsupervised engagement that are hungrily exploited by children. Conversely, neglected land tends to be seen by planners and the general, adult public only as a negative space in need of reclamation. The properties that children appreciate in these places are latent to those concerned for civic order, making them all the more appealing to children (and to older people seeking escape from societal constraints). Features of play engaged in by children in these undesignated areas also occur in designated play areas, especially adventure playgrounds and more modern playgrounds designed for exploratory play. However, these facilities lack the sense of escape that children appear to seek by exploring territories and routes not sanctioned by those in authority.

The second objective of this study was:

- To assess from the literature if play in undesignated play environments, in the form of the exploration of derelict land, is practiced by young and old, and for similar reasons, such that it might reasonably be expected that the author of this study could identify and evaluate such play environments in a field investigation.

There are clear parallels between the behaviours of children and older people of wandering between and within derelict places and aimlessly exploring the possibilities they present, and similarities between the verbal descriptions of appreciation of these places and behaviours made by children and adults. It is reasonable, therefore, that the adult author of this study could identify and evaluate such places for their play...
possibilities in a field investigation. Several indicators have been suggested by people researching the behaviour of children at play, which can be used to for such an evaluation.

There are a number of indications, although not strict criteria, for identifying these possibilities including:

- The presence of spaces once occupied for a purpose – open areas, corners, paths, enclosures – currently of indeterminate use: fields not cultivated, cleared land not built on, houses and sheds not occupied, routes not surfaced as if for passage.
- Ground where the vegetation has been allowed to grow without planting and unimpeded: bare ground to weeds, lawns to pasture, pasture to regenerating scrub, gardens to forests.
- Any place that can be discovered that allows divergence away from formal public thoroughfares of roads, rights of way, and footpaths.
- Places where children could travel without being seen, such as through hedge lines, could mould the ground, or alter water courses away from adult supervision.

There are pressing reasons why a network of neglect should be a goal of urban planning authorities. Networks of neglect could include modified designated play environments as well as undesignated areas. Design interventions need to be minimal, especially in areas already neglected, and need to satisfy safety criteria at least in areas where safety norms can be expected. Signs of neglect need to be designed that are recognised and appreciated by both potential users and non-users.

The remaining objectives – the evaluation of play environments in Christchurch, and the design and mapping of networks of neglected environments will be covered in Chapters 3 and 4, followed by a general discussion in Chapter 5.
Chapter 3  Places to play in Christchurch, New Zealand

The third objective of this study was to identify and evaluate designated and undesignated play environments in three areas of the City of Christchurch contrasting in household socioeconomic status, and to examine if increasing population density in these areas would be likely to result in differential loss of play opportunities.

3.1  Study areas

Three districts within urban Christchurch were chosen that differed in socioeconomic status. The selection was based on information produced by the Ministry of Education (http://www.schoolzones.co.nz/enrolmentzones/) to determine the level of government support appropriate for schools throughout the country on a decile scale (1-10, decile 10 being the highest). Within these districts, 400 ha study areas were centred on three state funded intermediate schools (generally for the education of 11-12 year-olds), approximating the catchments for pupils attending each school. Study area base maps were prepared using planning maps produced by the Christchurch City Council (http://www.ccc.govt.nz/CityPlan/), and areas zoned as open space and other features identified.

Study area boundaries were based on a circle approximately 1.13 km in radius (400 ha area) centred on the main entrance to each intermediate school, but were constrained within this limit by major inhibitors to foot traffic (railways and major roads), and extended correspondingly further when such constraints were not present, and to accommodate the dominant grid pattern of residential areas. Parks and open spaces on the periphery of boundaries were included in the study.

The study areas were named Merivale, Addington, and Hornby after the principal suburb of each study area, and were centred on Heaton, Addington, and Branston Intermediate Schools, respectively. These schools were decile 10, 7, and 3 (the lowest in Christchurch), reflecting catchments of highest, intermediate, and low socioeconomic status (Appendix 1 i-iii). Variation existed from neighbourhood to neighbourhood within each study area with respect to housing style and density, reflecting and reflected in the different residential planning zones (Figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3; Appendices 1 i-iii).
Despite this variation, Merivale, Addington, and Hornby study areas could usefully be labelled in the categories of Carmona et al. (2003) a “diverse suburban community”, an “inner city suburban community with gentrified enclaves”, and an “industrial suburb”, respectively.

The Merivale Study Area is located in an inner city residential environment containing or close to a number of private primary and high schools, hospitals and professional practices, and small shopping and business centres. It has land of high capital value, a mix of older and new houses, pockets of local and district businesses, leafy streets, a network of spring fed streams, and generally well maintained private properties (Fig. 3.1; Appendix 1 i).

The Addington Study Area is located in an inner city, mixed residential and industrial environment containing neighbourhood and mall-style shopping, light industry, and offices. It has land of moderately high capital value, occasional streams, occasional leafy streets, busy arterial roads, properties that range from the well maintained to the derelict, and new medium density apartments replacing older houses and industry (Fig. 3.2; Appendix 1 ii).
The Hornby Study Area is a mixed residential and industrial area located on the outer western fringe of metropolitan Christchurch containing predominantly low density housing and extensive suburban and general industry. Some areas to the south have new subdivisions being built. It has low land prices, no streams, few large trees, some major arterial roads, and moderately old properties that range from the well maintained to the neglected (Fig. 3.3; Appendix 1 iii). Absence of trees and single floor homes allow extensive views to the Port Hills and Southern Alps.

Figure 3.3. Housing in the Hornby study area. Low capital value homes, some being well maintained, others run down, with few fences, trees, and ornamental gardens; and new, higher value subdivisions with neat gardens. Left to right: Dunstan Crescent, Robinia Place, Skerten Avenue.

3.2 Survey methods

All streets, footpaths, sections open to inspection, designated open spaces, other parks, and areas not privately fenced were surveyed during 22-31 January 2007. Many streets were covered efficiently using motorised transport, but observations made from the road were frequently supplemented by thorough investigation made off-road using a bicycle or on foot.

Designated open spaces and parks in public areas, and any area of indeterminate ownership not currently occupied and not in the process of being developed for housing or other built use, were identified. Descriptive notes were made on site and a photographic record of principal features recorded using a Panasonic Lumix LX2 digital camera set to 3:2 or 16:9 aspect and automatic exposure.

Each open space was also evaluated for their existing opportunities for play. Nine assessment criteria for carrying out the evaluation were developed from the observations of Moore (1990), moderated by those of other authors (e.g. Whyte, 1968, Lynch, 1977; Hart, 1979; Cunningham & Jones, 1991), for children’s exploration of
parks, rough ground, and waste ground in the Americas, Europe, and Australia. These were the presence of:

1. unkempt, unmown, and unpruned plants;
2. diverse vegetation for climbing and hiding;
3. diverse, informal play opportunities;
4. rough ground, dirt, or bare ground;
5. land once occupied, but now neglected, with evidence of former occupation or history;
6. connectivity for wandering, linking children's habitats;
7. favourable topography for a sheltered microclimate;
8. special features, such as water, tunnels, slopes; and
9. unseen or secret places, or containing secret places.

Each assessment criterion was scored on a 0-4 scale: 0 = no presence; 1 = small presence; 2 = moderately good presence; 3 = very good presence; 4 = excellent, in keeping with most favourable recommendations of child behaviourists. Assessment criteria scores for each open space were summed and totals ranked on a scale divided arbitrarily into four equal bands. These were named to reflect the suitability of each area for play: 0-9 = “negligible”; 10-18 = “moderate”; 19-27 = “high”; 28-36 = “excellent”.

The presence of each of the nine assessment features was scored for each open space regardless of the area in which they occurred within that open space. Therefore an open space with extensive grassed areas for organised sport (which would count little towards suitability for play) might score highly because of a relatively small area of rough ground with overgrown grass, trees to climb, and a small stream. An exception was made in the case of Kyle Park in Hornby study area, which was divided into two areas for assessment. This park had been segmented by former use and in management by Christchurch City Council into an excavated western portion and a more level central and eastern portion (Christchurch City Council, 1993).

Evaluations made against the nine play assessment criteria for each existing park and reserve, and for each newly identified area, were tabulated for the three study areas (Appendices 2 i-iii).
3.3 Results

Over all three study areas, a total of 16 new places with potential for play were identified, and seven of these were moderately suitable for play, equalling the number of existing parks and reserves also evaluated as moderately suitable for play. In addition, a further five newly identified open spaces were of high or excellent suitability for play, compared to only one existing park in either of these categories (Fig. 3.4).

![Figure 3.4. Numbers of existing parks and reserves, and of newly identified open spaces, evaluated as being of negligible, moderate, or high/excellent suitability for play across all study areas.](image)

Out of the total of 41 existing parks and reserves over all three study areas, 33 (81%) were of negligible suitability for play. Although some of these parks and reserves were designated Sports Parks, requiring open grassed areas, over half were described in Christchurch City Council information as “Local Parks” for more informal neighbourhood use. Nearly all had playground equipment localised in one corner of the park. Although it was not the intention to quantify usage of areas such as these, rarely were there children using the playgrounds even though it was summer school holidays. Four new areas of open space, generally vacant house lots, were also evaluated as having negligible suitability for play (Fig. 3.4).
Open spaces evaluated as being of negligible suitability for play (0-9), scored poorly on most if not all criteria, e.g. low presence of unkempt areas, diverse vegetation, rough ground, or special features. In general, these open spaces were evaluated most highly for their scope for connectivity with other “habitats” through alleyways, multiple entrances, and streams (Fig. 3.5; Appendix 2).

Figure 3.5. Existing parks and reserves with negligible suitability for play: closely mown grass, standard trees on the perimeter, no bare ground, or other play features. Top to bottom: Branston Park (Hornby), Plymlimon Park (Merivale), Barrington Park (Addington).

Examining the provision of existing parks between the study areas, Merivale differed from Addington and Hornby in two important ways. Firstly, it had very few existing parks and reserves (only eight compared to 19 and 14 in the other two, respectively). And secondly, only half of its few parks had negligible play suitability. In Addington and Hornby, 84% and 93% of the existing parks and reserves were evaluated as of negligible play suitability. The provision of parks in Merivale was therefore the least generous, although the quality in terms of play was higher.

The total areas set aside for designated parks and reserves in Merivale and Addington were comparable (14.7 and 20.1 ha), as were the mean park areas (1.8 and 1.1 ha, respectively). Hornby had far more open space (38.6 ha), and a larger park mean area (2.8 ha). However, this was largely owing to the two large Sports Parks, Warren and Denton Parks, which were each larger than any other park in the study (Appendices 1 & 2). Discounting these two large parks, total and mean park areas in Hornby were 16.6 ha and 1.4 ha, respectively, and comparable with that in Merivale and Addington. In terms of the total area set aside for open space, therefore, the three study areas were similar except for two unusually large parks for organised sport in Hornby.
The one existing park evaluated as high in suitability for play was Kyle Park West in Hornby (Figs. 3.6 & 3.7). This former quarry and sump for stormwater was described as “dominated by visual clutter” over 10 years ago (Christchurch City Council, 1993). Much of its untidiness has been retained in a BMX track, piles of soil, weeds, long grass, and low branching trees, and a new stormwater reserve has been planted and paths introduced. It is interesting to note that much of the adjoining western and central parts of Kyle Park, which are now of negligible play suitability, were reclaimed from wastelands in the last 10 years.

Figure 3.6. Kyle Park West, Hornby study area. A good example of an existing park highly suitable for play owing to its rough ground and combination of multiple play features.

Many new open spaces were identified in Merivale, Addington, and Hornby, the numbers of these (2, 9, and 5, respectively) reflecting the numbers of existing parks and reserves in these areas (8, 19 and 14). And while almost half of the new open spaces identified in Addington had negligible play suitability, all study areas had at least some new places of moderate, high, or even excellent play suitability, 75% of all newly identified places (Figs. 3.4 & 3.7). As for designated parks and reserves, the largest total area of new open spaces were found in Hornby (10.8 ha compared to only 1.3 ha and 3.6 ha in Merivale and Addington, respectively). Hornby also had the highest mean area for newly identified open spaces (2.2 ha compared to <1 ha in the other study areas).
Figure 3.7. Suitability of existing parks and new identified places for exploratory play. Numbers of existing parks and reserves, and numbers of newly identified places, in Merivale, Addington, and Hornby study areas ranked as having negligible, moderate, high, or excellent suitability for play.
The two newly identified open space areas in Merivale contrast in their extent, origin, and usefulness. Wairarapa Stream is a small (0.2 ha) strip of steeply sloping land sandwiched between the stream and Wairarapa Terrace. To judge by the wear and tear evident on site, it is ideally suited to climbing the trees that overhang the water, digging in the river bank, hiding behind its loosely formed hedge next to the road, and travelling unseen parallel to the road. This is a small, but well used neglected place evaluated as excellent for play (Fig. 3.8).

Figure 3.8. Wairarapa Stream, Merivale study area. A newly identified linear open space next to a stream, with excellent suitability for play.

The second newly identified area in Merivale was Bethany Cottages (high play suitability), which has cottages only in name. This was once a nursing home (J. Jameson, pers. comm.) and is now a paddock with remnant paths and concrete house pads, flowing meadows of long grass, garden plants and weeds, with occasional big trees and shrubs next to a channelled stream. This is a good example of the kind of place that can result from neglect over an extensive area. Clearly people have been wandering the informal paths through the grass and making mounds of soil in a home made BMX circuit (Fig. 3.9).
Figure 3.9. Bethany Cottages, Merivale study area. A newly identified extensive open space with high grass and rhododendrons, highly suitable for play, including cycle jumps made by children (inset).

Contrasting new areas highly suitable for play were found in Addington and Hornby study areas. The vacant site of the former Sydenham Primary School in Addington offered opportunities for playing among ruins and lighting fires in a makeshift barbeque in addition to wandering the overgrown playgrounds (Fig. 3.10). Either side of Springs Road in Hornby study area, tall meadow grass in interesting topography is interspersed with quarry pits, and overgrown shrubs; and on railway reserve land off Halswell Junction Road in the same study area, old equipment rusts among the grass (Fig. 3.11).

Figure 3.10. Site of the former Sydenham Primary School, Addington study area. Abandoned materials, rocks, and weeds; and (insert) ruined walls & wanderers' art, and a rusty grate, with nails.
The study areas differed in their connectivity for the person on foot or bicycle. Careful searching in the Merivale study area revealed only one opportunity to move through a right of way from one street to another parallel to it. This was via the footpath in the Merivale Reserve. All other journeys from street to street needed to be made using the road and footpath grid. Contrastingly, there were numerous rights of way, short cuts, and strip reserves to assist cross suburb travel on foot in Addington, and some of these ran next to small streams. Rights of way were also present in the Hornby study area, although not as plentiful as in Addington, and generally narrow, paved alleys only.

Another network offering potential for linking play habitats, at least in Merivale and to a lesser extent in Addington, is the system of spring and stormwater fed streams. Most prominent are Dudley and Wairarapa Streams in the Merivale study area, and Jackson’s Creek in Addington, although there are numerous other unnamed rivulets that appear in cuttings and disappear under roads and into properties. When the stream banks are wide enough and next to public land, e.g. in Wairarapa Terrace, these make unrivalled places for play. Generally, the banks of streams on private property are carefully gardened and presumably under close surveillance by owners. Dudley Stream in Bethany Cottages remains in a vertically timbered channel.
3.4 Discussion of survey results

Contrary to expectations generated by the twin images of Christchurch as the horticultural Garden City and a haven for politically correct native biodiversity, areas of peaceful neglect rich in overgrown pasture, garden escapes, weeds, and exotic plants were identified in every study area. Together with the other criteria that were evaluated, this made for a potentially rich play environment for children, similar to the rough ground, abandoned places, and derelict industry described as so rewarding for the children in several overseas studies (e.g. Lynch, 1977; Hart, 1979; Moore, 1990).

Time and other resources did not allow the study of children in these neglected places, but evidence on the ground in the form of excavations, mound building, BMX cycle tracks, trees worn by climbing, and other paraphernalia of play show the traces of use. Use seemingly resembled an operation of wandering in more rural and artefact-poor fields. Fire lighting, wall art, and breaking things no longer needed – but also resting in the long grass - were expressions of play similar to those described by Edensor (2005) more commonly found in ruined inner city sites. The extent to which fires had not been lit in the long grass in either inner city or more far flung areas can perhaps be taken as an indication of the responsibility with which young people behave when not stood over by adults.

The observation that these sites exist and that they are used, probably by children and young adults, but maybe also by older people strolling, jogging, or walking the dog, shows that the Garden City has many parallels with other urban areas where neglect is appreciated. Accordingly, in addition to the loss of neglected sites through entrepreneurial development, one would expect pressure on their continuing existence resulting from institutional blindness to their value. As in the United Kingdom (Featherstone, 1991; Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2003) and other post-industrial countries, there is a fascination with cleaning and tidying up to obliterate or to gentrify the past (Ministry for the Environment, 2005). This could result, amongst other things, in the replacement of volunteer exotic biology with indigenous assemblages (Spellerberg & Given, 2004), or continual grass mowing necessary to give a conventional sense of care (Nassauer, 2004). However, due consideration should be given to the arguments of experts such Gilbert (1989), Gyllin (1999), and Kendle &
Rose (2000) for an enhanced institutional appreciation of neglected places at the very least for their ecological value.

As several studies have shown, the positive social value of play in areas allowed to be neglected is often also overlooked by those in power (Matthews, 1992). The children in the three study areas are spoken for by parents and landowners and can expect to be treated no differently from other children who have risked losing control over their domain, as shown in the early examples described by Spivack (1969) and Bennett (2004). They are the ones described by Carmona et al. (2003, p. 19) as “non-paying clients of urban design” who have little say in urban planning and design. They are overlooked by the public sector agencies and the politicians, and the private sector developers and bankers. Public servants and their professional advisors try to negotiate between conflicting interests, but the less vocal and the unconventional (such as the young) are less well served (Carmona et al., 2003).

The ownership of all land identified as having high play suitability was not established in the current study. However, in the interests of the less articulate and vocal in society, consideration should be given to the purchase or negotiated covenancing of land in private ownership for the purpose of permitting continuing neglect. This could be prohibitively costly in places such as the high capital value Merivale study area, or appreciating Addington, where properties with older houses are being cleared, fenced, land banked for future development.

Some places identified in this study are already in the public realm, and are in limbo, awaiting “development”. An example is the Disraeli Street Reserve in Addington. This is a closely mown park that was rated as having negligible play suitability at the moment. It could easily gain in value for play with a more sustainable reduction in mowing alone. Similarly, parts of the Local Parks and Sports Parks currently managed by Christchurch City Council, and others like them around the world, could increase in value for play by designed reduction in the intensity or presence of detectable maintenance regimes. This, coupled with the introduction of other modifications similar to those identified by Moore (1990) in his Little Park example (Section 2.3), could see much greater use of parks by children. Features of Abberley Park in Merivale already contribute to a moderate play suitability, and Bradford Park in Addington, which is a designated Sports Park with extensive playing fields, has interesting contributions to
play and wandering from its meandering stream, and numerous paths along the stream and to the neighbouring streets (Appendix 2). There are some features of the existing open space network for which improvements in safety could be made, e.g. densely planted linking reserves that lack clear visibility and high risk of entrapment, e.g. Southey-Wembley Reserve in Addington.

Because of the high cost of purchase of areas of land for children's play to add to those already in the public open space system, there might be greater merit in a less expensive and ultimately more successful policy of building a network of neglect rather than investing in isolated neglected patches. After all, consistent with the writings of Deleuze & Guattari (1986) and Edensor (2005), it was the journey not the destination that was important for children wandering urban areas (Hart, 1979; Moore, 1990). The challenge would be to purchase small, linked properties, or portions of properties, or to institute planning regulations that would see parts of development sites set aside, so that children could wander more freely.

Currently, the two pieces of land with high play suitability in the Merivale study area are separated by over 1 km of blocked and blocking settlement. Fortunately, each has wandering possibilities within its own bounds (Bethany Cottages being large enough, and the Wairarapa Stream site being stretched along its stream) (Appendix 1 i). However, greater connectivity would be an advantage for those wanting to experience enhanced wandering. If there are other places where streams run next to public land (as in Wairarapa Terrace), these should be reserved for play.

In Addington, steps are currently being taken to extend the reserve in Ruskin Street to link with other small parks, and there are numerous vacant lots, some of which were evaluated in the current study (Appendix 2 ii). In addition, perhaps reflecting a planning decision to allow the first residents of this once working class suburb to travel to work in the city or to a bus route on foot or bicycle, there are far more walkways and reserves linking streets and other parks. Together with the local streams, such as Jackson’s Creek, this makes for a more suitable play environment than that of the Merivale study area.

The beneficiaries of greater connectivity would be children in cities. A whole science has grown around the theory, design, and provision of corridors for wildlife conservation in fragmented habitats as revealed by Hess & Fischer (2001). Perhaps we
should value young people more highly and develop networks for the "conservation" of their fragmented play worlds.

The three selected areas of Christchurch shared a common expression of the sedentary space of Deleuze & Guattari (1986) with its striated blocks of houses, property boundaries, roads and their almost unwaveringly adherent footpaths. Very little of the opposing nomad or smooth space was evident. The sedentary/nomad space contrast has similarities with the binary contrasts of LeFebvre (1996), such as dwelling/wandering, isolation/encounter, and predictable/unpredictable. LeFebvre thought people needed these contrasts, inventing the detached house with its delimited property to satisfy the inside/outside contrast most satisfactorily.

In the current study, all but the newest inner city dwellings conformed to the detached dwelling model, but there appeared to be a gradation in the severity with which a distinction was maintained between private and public space. Although not quantified in this study, fences tended to be higher and better maintained in Merivale than in Addington, and these were generally no more than token boundaries in much of Hornby. Similarly, the more expensive houses with bigger gardens in Merivale had masonry walls and solid timber fences; the less expensive had shrubs and low fences (Fig. 3.1).

Coupled with the finding that there were relatively few public parks and reserves covering a small area overall in Merivale and almost no footpaths and shortcuts through the street grid for the pedestrian or cyclist, these observations are consistent with a practice of internalising smooth space within the property boundary in this study area. Properties are large enough, and houses sound enough in the more affluent suburbs for people to satisfy LeFebvre's dwelling/wandering or inside/outside contrast within the confines of their own properties. Or to use the terminology of Deleuze & Guattari (1986), people have reduced the world of smooth space to their gardens and taken up sedentary existences in their dwellings.

To reconnect their children to wider expanses of open space, adults in affluent areas are presumably more prepared to resort to motorised transport, although this rather disjointed means of escape from the sedentary lacks the tactility and immediacy that would result from a nomadic wandering of lanes and byways over the back fence, such as that demonstrated by Robin Moore's children (1990). Seen in this light, the outer
industrial suburb of Hornby with its pathways, plentiful designated open space, and areas of neglect, has unsuspected benefits. These might result in a greater sense of community resulting from casual contact between neighbours, or talking across a property boundary. However, the disadvantages remain of having numerous designated play environments of negligible interest, and isolation from more central city amenities.

Testing the ability of a fenced garden to substitute in microcosm for a child’s need for flowing terrain was not an objective of this Dissertation. It would be interesting to track how changing gardening practices are impacting on children, especially in affluent suburbs such as Merivale, where the public domain is relatively hostile to the wanderer.

There is anecdotal evidence from the real estate industry and other sources, supported by observations made over several years of contact with nursery businesses and garden centres by the author, that New Zealanders are prepared to spend a decreasing length of time on the cultivation of their gardens. The rarity of the cultivated ornamental or productive garden was substantiated by Kirkpatrick et al. (2007) in their study of suburban gardens in Hobart, Tasmania, which also supported the commonly held belief that garden layouts are closely linked to the socioeconomic status of the owners. Less gardening is all the more surprising in the Garden City of Christchurch, which has a strong horticultural tradition (Barnett et al., 1963) exhibited by the show gardens that are still groomed for competition.

As the myth of the cultivated paradise has thinned, and gardens have become more stylised to enable maintenance to be carried out efficiently, built for adult entertaining or formalised play equipment, it is possible that gardens will be diminishingly able to satisfy children. The sort of unconventional garden described by Tortosa (2000), where children can experience the unexpected, hide, and experiment, seems unlikely to blossom where capital value might be affected by untidiness (Kirkpatrick et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the idea that a garden can be a nomad’s terrain, or rather a neglected work in progress instead of a finished paradise, has been approached by Larkin (2007) in lawn-less Melbourne gardens.

The evaluations of open space made in this Dissertation can be criticised for being made quickly with limited resources, and by only one person, an adult. Moreover, the definition of play did not include organised sport, for which most sports parks were designed. An assessment that included organised sport would clearly have reversed the
play suitability rankings of the open spaces examined. In defence of the findings, it was not intended to test a hypothesis statistically or to sample the views of the public, which would have been beyond the scope of the research, and might still have left many questions unanswered. Instead, the current study draws upon more extensive studies into child preference already carried out over many years by others. Local consultation with the public would shed further light on the usefulness of the suggestions made in the current study provided the opinions of children and young adults, the principal users of neglect, were afforded primary consideration. The current study endorses suggestions that we have inadequate policy to cater for children’s needs from a child’s perspective. It points to the need to address the paradox to design with subtlety for neglect, albeit in a way generally unfamiliar to the landscape architecture profession.

The third objective of this study was:

- To identify and evaluate designated and undesignated play environments in three areas of the City of Christchurch contrasting in household socioeconomic status, and to examine if increasing population density in these areas would be likely to result in differential loss of play opportunities.

In conclusion, this objective has been achieved for the selected sample, and probably accurately reflects the kinds of sites, opportunities, and challenges that might be found elsewhere in Christchurch or in cities with a similar settlement history. Socioeconomic status is but one determinant, or possibly a result, of the pattern and detail of urban settlement (Carmona et al., 2003), but it has probably contributed to the differences in play suitability between the study areas. For instance, the relative absence of neglected places in Merivale (although of high suitability) and low connectivity may result directly from the high land value.

With increasing density of living, intense pressure for the renewal, reclamation, and rehabilitation of neglected places would intensify. Given the institutional blindness or complacency described above, the few existing neglected places would most likely be lost where there was the greatest demand for housing, as foreseen by Lynch (1990). Demand for greater areas of open space of the kind currently of negligible suitability for
play would also increase to maintain population to sports park area ratios. Out of the areas studied, those most under threat would be in Merivale and Addington, with Hornby less so because of its less sought after location.

The notion that “deprived” areas would be more seriously affected by densification because of their relatively greater initial areas of derelict land suggested by Pauleit et al. (2004) is not supported by the current study, but nor can it be refuted. Firstly, although people in the Hornby study area are on average of lower socioeconomic status based on school enrolment information, it is doubtful that they regard themselves as “deprived”. Many people in Hornby live in detached houses similar to some of the older ones that still grace the streets of Merivale (Figs. 3.1 & 3.3). And, the freedoms Hornby people enjoy, such as those suggested above of a greater sense of community and connectivity within their suburb, might make the relatively wealthy living in Merivale, isolated behind high fences and obliged to use a car to go shopping, look deprived.

Secondly, all study areas were comparable with respect to the provision of designated open space, but Hornby also has two larger sports parks. Hornby has the greatest amount of what Pauleit et al. (2004) call wasteland and it is conceivable that an increasing densification applied equally to all areas of Christchurch could see this area of lower socioeconomic status disproportionately affected. Probably, any effect of densification would depend on which areas were increased in density compared to others. If the people of Merivale were able to exert sufficient political pressure, they might find their residential areas relatively unaffected, whereas increasing density of housing in Hornby might be more politically difficult to resist.

Whatever the relative effect of densification across a city, the pressure on networks of neglect could be expected to intensify unless there were greater advocacy for the needs of children, and greater imagination on the part of designers and planners to accommodate and gain acceptance for the neglected part of the urban fabric.
Chapter 4 Designing for neglect in Christchurch, New Zealand

This chapter addresses most specifically the last of the four objectives of this Dissertation, namely:

- To propose ways to address the paradox of planning and designing for neglect, both to permit undesignated play environments to exist within the strictures of a conventional city layout and mindset, and to incorporate elements of neglect in designated play environments.

Sketches and diagrams have been proposed to give an indication of how the task of making signs of neglect might be addressed. These are indicative only, and could be taken up and developed in a research and practice thesis in landscape architecture.

Figures 4.1-4.3 address the challenge of mapping a network of neglect in the sense used by Corner (1999). These progress from a pedestrian rendition, through a playful harking back to Situationist fragmentation, to a rhizomatic notation that tries to convey a range of information types. Figures 4.4-4.6 address ways in which elements of neglect could be introduced to existing parks and reserves to increase their appeal to children. The question of how neglect can abut care is addressed in Figure 4.6, which explores the edge treatments that might entice and not alienate the user of neglect, and still satisfy norms of care and order.
Local roads, leading to suburban roads, leading to arterial road, leading to suburban road, leading to local road, all set at right angles with no possible short cuts, cut throughs, or soft surfaces; then reversed. Movement in a predominantly sedentary habitat (after Deleuze & Guattari, 1986) accomplished by motor vehicle or, if on foot or bicycle, according to the grid framework.

Figure 4.1. Plan of journey A to B, and B to A: Between Wairarapa Stream and Bethany Cottages in Merivale study area.
Each "city block" of Merivale lacks the magic of the quartiers of Paris, and the wanderings, as in Debord, lack affective substance, seeming to deny peripatetic behaviour.

But, the dislocation does allow the possibility of seeing cracks emerge in the interstices of the urban grid that beckon a link between the two newly found places of neglect.

Figure 4.2. An impression of psychogeographical mapping in the Merivale study area after Guy Debord. Neglected sites at Wairarapa Stream and Bethany Cottages seeking multisensory link.
Figure 4.3. Rhizomatic possibilities for mapping children wandering in a network of neglect. Left to right: Fingers of street network (sensed by a child but not not greatly distracting); tracking a child’s path in xy coordinates, temporal-pictorial impression of time spent doing what, and the changing focus of attention at each place wandered through.
neat grass and shrubs - keep off
no distraction from target at path's end

dense bushes - safety hazard
entrapment threat hastens pace

grass allowed to grow, with volunteer herbaceous plants (not a pretty meadow as such); more sun, a few child-sized shrubs or climbable trees haphazardly introduced or allowed to grow, in time.

greater visibility and safety
unkempt grass - please use
lots of meandering reasons to be distracted and play (or not, if in a hurry)

Figure 4.4. Southey Street-Wembley Street Reserve, Addington, as it merely exists today as a corridor (above trajectory), and with signs of neglect (below, with a wandering meander).
long, unmown grass with random, low density, regenerating small trees and bushes to 1-2 m; not apparently planted; not pruned; preferably naturalised exotic species, but could be indigenous if not regarded as precious

medium to long grass and herbland, mown once annually and free of debris, and dumped rubbish, especially close to playground; not apparently tended, children able to tunnel the grass, flatten it, and dig holes

sports turf for active sports over the bulk of the park's area, unaffected functionally by signs of neglect around and beyond the playground,

Figure 4.5. Elmwood Park, Merivale with signs of neglect introduced selectively. Left to right: bank sloping down to stream on western margin of park; level ground surrounding designated playground; sport park in the central parts of the park.
Figure 4.6. Oracular signs of neglect at the meeting of the “disordering” (rough grass) and the “ordering” (mown grass) domains (in the sense used by Edensor, 2005). Edge treatments A-E tested for ability to send desired messages to users on both sides of the edge, C and D being most suitable for children playing.
Chapter 5  General discussion and conclusions

Several discussion points relating most directly to the survey and evaluation of open spaces in Christchurch have already been canvassed (Section 3.4). However, there are several broad issues that remain to be covered. A fundamental question is whether the topic of this Dissertation has relevance to child’s play and the planning for its provision. In Christchurch and other cities in New Zealand, as elsewhere in the world, there are standards, rules and guidelines for the provision of play opportunities for children. These spring from concerns for children’s safety, which is seen as a fundamental requirement for the rights and wellbeing of children (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2003; Christchurch City Council, 2005; Ministry for the Environment, 2005; Ministry of Justice of New Zealand, 2005). Set against this backdrop of concern and sterile but neat scenes of preferred safe “landscaping” (Canterbury Safety Working Party, 2004), to propose a more neglected plant cover with less informal surveillance might appear to be both inane and dangerous.

In positive support of the proposal to plan and design for neglect, however, is the wealth of information to indicate that children prefer to play where they are not seen, where the environment is not so precious that they risk being apprehended for damaging trees and shrubs, and where they can dig, mess about, climb, hide, and seemingly do nothing (Lynch, 1977; Hart, 1979; Moore, 1990; Cunningham & Jones, 1991; Spray, 1992). In addition to being fun, these things are good for children ( Cotterill, 1998; Graumann & Kruse, 1998; Bartlett et al., 1999), contributing towards their healthy development along with other social and environmental factors (Bartlett et al., 1999).

Also in positive support for the managed provision of places of neglect is the fact acknowledged by a high proportion of parents (perhaps after the event) that children go where they are not supposed to go, explore places parents would never imagine they could reach, and do things they are told not to do. The study of Moore (1990) in particular reveals the lengths children go to in their quest to be alone or with a friend in a place where parents are not watching. Moore also talks of the surprise of some parents when the exploits of their children are revealed. It is unlikely children have changed greatly in their behaviour since the time of Moore’s foundational work, despite restrictions on their movement being increased. Observations made during the course of
the current study strongly indicate that children still escape to neglected places, in which case it would be prudent to plan for this use. Children might not cast votes or pay taxes, but they have needs that ought to be positively addressed. On these grounds alone, it would be inane and dangerous not to acknowledge children’s needs and behaviours.

On a more negative note, it is unfortunately the case that people, including children, are the victims of crime in public places. But these crimes occur despite the protocols, planning rules, and landscape design guidelines of councils. Moreover, it is acknowledged that no place can be completely safe, whatever the care of parks and reserves (Anon., 2007). As observed by the writer of this article on crime prevention through environmental design, too much attention to the control of vegetation in the landscape can lead to loss of traditional freedoms and pleasure. It is perhaps time to realise that we maintain some areas for no reason other than because of a fixed mindset of order and control. Several authors have highlighted the essentially repressive regimes of local authorities that ensure this order is maintained (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari, 1986; Koolhaas et al., 1990; De Solà-Morales Rubió, 1994).

But one person’s oppression is another’s necessary care. And cues to that care have become popular amongst ecologists and supporters of urban and suburban biodiversity. To parody the well founded ecological and social science of Nassauer and co-workers (1995; 2002; 2004), we are prepared to pay for messy ecosystems provided they are framed (wrapped?) with a mowing strip border and ornamental trees with “nice” clean trunks. “Cues to/for care” (Nassauer, 1995; 2002) is a catch phrase that presupposes that the “care” is needed to hide something that is not attractive or directly used. In the context in which this phrase is used, this could be a piece of engineered wetland where plants grow wild. The “cues” are supposed to tell us that the norms of society are not being disrespected. “Cues to care” is a clever way to appeal to those things that matter to many adults, e.g. property values and a sense of safety and order.

Cues to care is a completely inappropriate phrase to use in connection with places of neglect because the areas concerned are indeed of direct use, at least to the younger members of society. For users who appreciate the haptic delights away from the sedentary world of gridded streets, these places are very attractive. Rather than cues to care, users might rather need “signs of neglect” to entice them to, rather than to
protect them from, unexplored places. A danger to places of neglect as threatening as complete redevelopment for another use would be the gentrification of neglect, a “cues to care” applied so successfully that the indeterminacy, looseness, vagueness, and solitude would become fixed and finished.

As discussed above (Section 3.4), another major threat to neglect is its clearance for the introduction of carefully maintained native plantings. The very care with which this work is done is inimical to neglect, not only because of the loss of wild vegetation, but also because of continual cleaning and tidying to prevent the recolonisation of weedy plants of the wasteland. Debate needs to be reopened on the issue of the introduction of biodiversity that was indigenous to a place before urban settlement at the expense of largely exotic plants that have become naturalised. Gyllin (1999) and Kendle & Rose (2000) argue strongly for viewing naturalised plants as being “at home”, a proposition that would see greater tolerance of neglected places and benefits for children.

The biologists Lesica & Allendorf (1999) showed a restrained approach to ecological restoration when they proposed a gradation in the severity with which what we have come to call eco-sourcing is applied. However, their opening sentence refers to “efforts to restore habitats degraded by human activity”, ignoring the possibility that some “degradation” in the form of neglect might be used (Lesica & Allendorf, 1999, p. 145). Between institutionalised care of the urban park and the ecological idyll, we have lost sight of the habitat of the human spirit released in the neglect, as the poet Shelley recognised so well (referred to in the Preface).

It was with shock that I read ten years ago Johnson’s (1997) manifesto for the celebration of New Zealand’s romantic weediness. This was a wonderful pictorial essay, but surely it was also a call to stand back while the country’s flora is overrun with exotic blight? With hindsight, however, it seems this ex-DSIR botanist might have touched on the benefits of the places where neglected plants thrive. Clearly, notifiable environmental weeds posing a widespread threat to native wildlife or plant cover (Williams & West, 2000) would need to be controlled or eradicated if these occurred in neglected places. However, the whole issue of what is native to an area is cast into insignificance by the realisation that a flora is never static. A constant state of flux, with extinction, reintroduction and evolution, has been in progress in New Zealand without any human intervention, and is still in progress (Johnson, 1997). These considerations
mean that a more relaxed approach to the weediness of neglect, in urban areas at least, can and should be tolerated. With a mandate to use some plants typically associated with wastelands, such as the sappy elderberry growing in the Canterbury Stock Yards (Fig. 1.3), the scented rhododendrons of Bethany Cottages (Fig. 3.9), and the seedling apple and pear trees from the roadside, a significant multisensory message could be conveyed to those seeking neglect: here is a place where you can climb the trees, get dirty, pick the flowers, and run through the long grass – and not get told off.

Concluding this Dissertation, several lines of investigation flow from the work covered. Some of these relate to observations and conclusions that were tentatively drawn from this study, and which require testing. For instance, it would be useful to conduct observations of people using the neglected places identified in this study, or similar places in urban areas. Do these users behave in the ways observed by other researchers, such as Hart and Moore, or have play behaviours really changed in the last 50 years as children spend more time in an electronic world? Local consultation with the public would shed further light on the usefulness of the suggestions made in the current study provided the opinions of children and young adults, the principal users of neglect, were afforded primary consideration. How to elicit children’s input effectively, and to meld that with an adult view would be another interesting study in its own right.

There are many other matters worthy of further investigation. Consideration should be given to how to build “corridors” for people, children and adults, wanting to “wander” or to be nomads if only for an hour or a day (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). For instance, these might not need to be physically continuous, or designed like wildlife corridors Hess & Fischer (2001), but mentally connected corridors. Cemeteries might have a useful role to play when considering the design of networks of neglect. They are intensely personal spaces and need to be tended, but there might be areas where not mowing the grass would be apt. Not a pretty meadow, needing upkeep (Gilles, 1998), just a letting go of the plants under our feet (Fig. 5.1).

It is important to explore ways to map networks of neglect in ways that make sense to users, urban planners, GIS technologists. To this end, is the rhizome (Corner, 1999) a suitable metaphor to capture the flowing terrain, or do we need to strive for a better way
to express in words and graphically the ideas that need to be communicated, as assayed in the first diagrams of Chapter 4?

Figure 5.1. A neglected cemetery, Penrith, New South Wales, Australia. Kangaroo grass, early autumn.

On the subject of theory in landscape architecture, further contributions could be made towards our understanding of the gardens/streets, public/private, inside/outside contrasts in relation to the nomadic tendencies in children. Do we really internalise smooth space within the property boundary as a desert-like expanse before the rest of the world continues over the fence?

Changes to portions of sports parks and local reserves to allow more neglected patches to exist need to be thoroughly studied and design proposals tested progressively in the field, with due care to public safety and sensibility. Some indications of what might be possible by way of doing “almost nothing” (Abalos & Herreros, 2003) have been made (Chapter 4). Some proposals might lead to an enhancement of perceived and actual safety (Fig. 4.4), and all should enhance environmental sustainability by reducing maintenance inputs and aiding infiltration of rainfall. As has been noted (Chapter 3), the occurrence of fire in neglected places was not observed, except in a bare patch on a hard surface posing no risk of spread.

The public (children included) will have an opinion, but so will the professional critique be challenging and useful. If we build portions of public parks like the unconventional garden referred to above by Christophe Morin (Tortosa, 2000) and suggested in this
Dissertation we should be satisfying children's needs without undue risk of depreciation of capital value as a result of increasing untidiness (Kirkpatrick et al., 2006).

By fulfilling the four objectives listed in Chapter 1, a novel insight has been gained of play environments that best suit children’s needs and how these might be satisfied with reference to the City of Christchurch, New Zealand. Undesignated play environments as simple as rough ground are important for children’s healthy development. Moreover, these places might be accommodated within existing urban networks, or incorporated within designated play environments.

Returning to the collision in my mind between Armstrong’s (2006) “landscapes of contempt” and a need to design a place for children to play (Chapter 1), the fact that this juxtaposition was a surprise reveals how easy it is to forget what children like, and continue to like as they get older. Clients and designers are needed with enough courage and strength to champion the cause of a more tolerant approach to the way we plan and manage our open spaces so that young people can enjoy the freedom they crave.
References


Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2003). Sustainable development for New Zealand: programme of action. Wellington: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.


European Research Network – Urban Density and Green Structure.


Hines, S. (2005). Go out and play: on Robin Moore’s playgrounds, nature is the attraction. Landscape Architecture, 95(3), 128-134.


Appendix 1i. Merivale Study Area showing designated parks and reserves, and neglected land with play potential identified in this study.

Base map adapted from Christchurch City Council planning maps at http://www.ccc.govt.nz/CityPlan/ (10 Dec. 2006)
Appendix 1 ii. Addington Study Area showing designated parks and reserves, and neglected land with play potential identified in this study. Base map adapted from Christchurch City Council maps at http://www.ccc.govt.nz/CityPlan/
Appendix 1 iii Hornby Study Area showing designated parks and reserves, and neglected land with play potential identified in this study. Base map adapted from Christchurch City Council planning maps at http://www.ccc.govt.nz/CityPlan/
Appendix 2 i. Evaluation of suitability for play of existing designated parks and reserves and newly identified places in the Merivale Study Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Christchurch City Council park type</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Uninterrupted plants, unmown, unpaved pathways</th>
<th>Diverse vegetation for climbing, etc.</th>
<th>Diverse, informal play opportunities</th>
<th>Rough ground, dirt, bare ground</th>
<th>Once occupied now abandoned</th>
<th>Wandering connections, habitat links</th>
<th>Topography, good microclimate</th>
<th>Special, e.g., water, tunnels, slopes</th>
<th>Secret or containing secret places</th>
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1. 0 = no presence; 1 = small presence; 2 = moderately good presence; 3 = very good presence; 4 = excellent presence, in keeping with recommendations. Refer to Chapter 3 for details.
Appendix 2 ii (Part one) Evaluation of suitability for play of existing designated parks and reserves and newly identified places in the Addington Study Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Christchurch City Council park type</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Untempt plants, unused, unopened</th>
<th>Diverse vegetation for climbing, etc.</th>
<th>Diverse, informal play opportunities</th>
<th>Rough ground, dirt, bare ground</th>
<th>Once occupied now abandoned</th>
<th>Wandering connections, habitat links</th>
<th>Topography, good microclimate</th>
<th>Special, e.g. water, tunnels, slopes</th>
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**Appendix 2 ii (Part two)** Evaluation of suitability for play of existing designated parks and reserves and newly identified places in the Addington Study Area.

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<th>Assessment criteria</th>
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### Appendix 2 iii. Evaluation of suitability for play of existing designated parks and reserves and newly identified places in the Hornby Study Area.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvins Reserve</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bermuda Reserve</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newly identified places</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springs Road</td>
<td>paddock, quarry, dump</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4 3 4 3 2 3 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail reserve off Halswell Jn Road</td>
<td>rail reserve</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4 2 3 4 2 3 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branston Street</td>
<td>private land</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3 1 3 3 1 1 1 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shands Road opp. Seymour Street</td>
<td>private land</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3 1 3 2 1 1 1 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sioux Avenue</td>
<td>airfield land</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2 1 2 1 1 2 0 1</td>
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**TOTAL**