



CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY





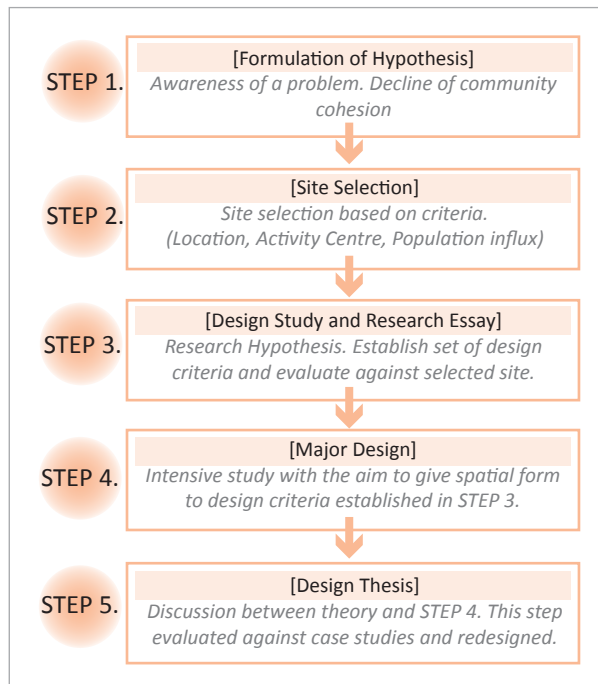
[INTRODUCTION]

This chapter introduces the methods used throughout this thesis by design process. It also provides a brief description and evaluation of the research essay and major design stages that preceded this thesis and describes how information drawn from these stages was used to form the scope of this thesis.

An evaluation of the design as critique method is also provided.

2.1 METHODOLOGY

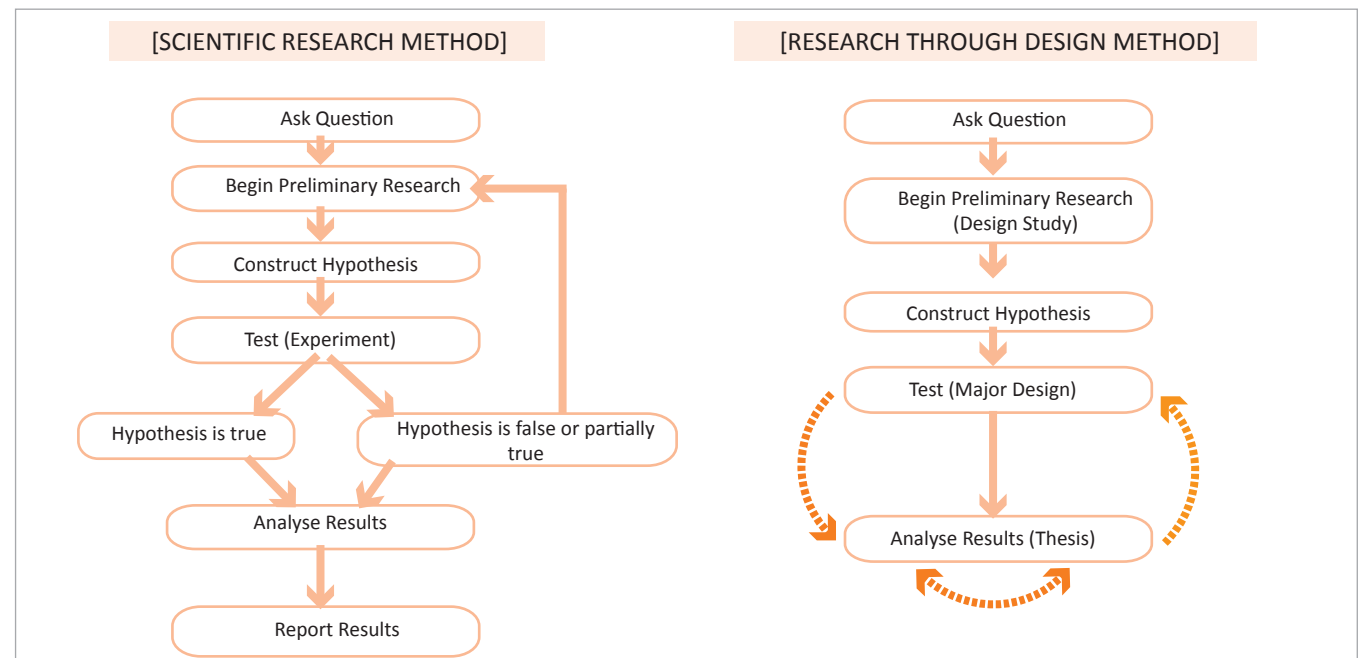
The predominant method used throughout this thesis is the research through design process. Through this method a five step process was adopted involving; formulation of hypothesis, Site Selection, Design Study, Major Design and Thesis (Fig 2-1).



[Figure 2 - 1] The 5 step process of Research through design

2.2 RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN - AN ARCHETYPAL RESEARCH METHOD?

My pathway into Landscape Architecture was Criminology, a science based programme where research is based around observation, explanation and experimentation. Because of which, for me one of the most testing aspects of this research through design approach was the use of the design process as a medium to research. My previous knowledge of research was through an entirely scientific method, focussing on observation, explanation (forming a hypothesis), measurement, and repetition, that in turn would create new evidence. This new evidence could be seen as a solid body of research that would be deemed as sufficient ‘proof’ resulting in ‘new knowledge’.



[Figure 2-2] (Below) Scientific research method ‘Vs’ Research through design method

I saw the similarities between this design as research and the science based method in that we observe, we analyse observations and we seek to explain them however at the same time there appeared fundamental differences.

The most challenging aspect of this research through design was that I was not required to prove or disprove a hypothesis. The Design process allowed simply richer knowledge of a specific topic to be unearthed. This resulted in no fixed ‘end’ to the research in my view. There seemed an endless system of design, research and redesign that would produce ever-differing results (Fig 2-2).

Furthermore the scientific method requires that research carried out by any student or researcher would achieve the same results or conclusions, providing robustness to the research. This concept of replicability is what differs with design research, as design research projects new configurations, relationships, possibilities, and, thus, new “realities” (Swaffield and Demming: 2012: Pg 51). If the design method was adopted by any group of researchers or students, with the same hypothesis, inevitably a different outcome will be produced. This is due to the fact that results will be subject to the individual as design is a personal response.

Therefore if this research is not replicable *how can we measure robustness? And how can we judge the success of our research?* Flanagan (2011) concluded that theory and critique are the two inter-related instruments that fill the void and provide a gauge against which you can measure if a design is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. This is further supported by Bowring (2000) who suggests that critique is “an integral part of the design process” (Pg 42) and that design and critique are so codependent that “you cannot have one without the other and expect any improvement” (Pg 45).

It is this critical inquiry process that will allow me to develop an understanding of the form, function and success of Third Places of Riccarton.

[THE FIVE STEP PROCESS]

2.3 [STEPS - 1. 2. & 3. - FORMULATION OF ‘HYPOTHESIS’, RESEARCH ESSAY AND SITE SELECTION]

In and around the Third Place – The application of spatial design theories to strengthen community wellbeing.

“Whether it appears in the form of a need or an opportunity, all research and design projects share the same beginning – an awareness, articulation, and acceptance of a problem” (Koberg and Bagnall: 1976 in Swaffield: 2012: Pg 48).

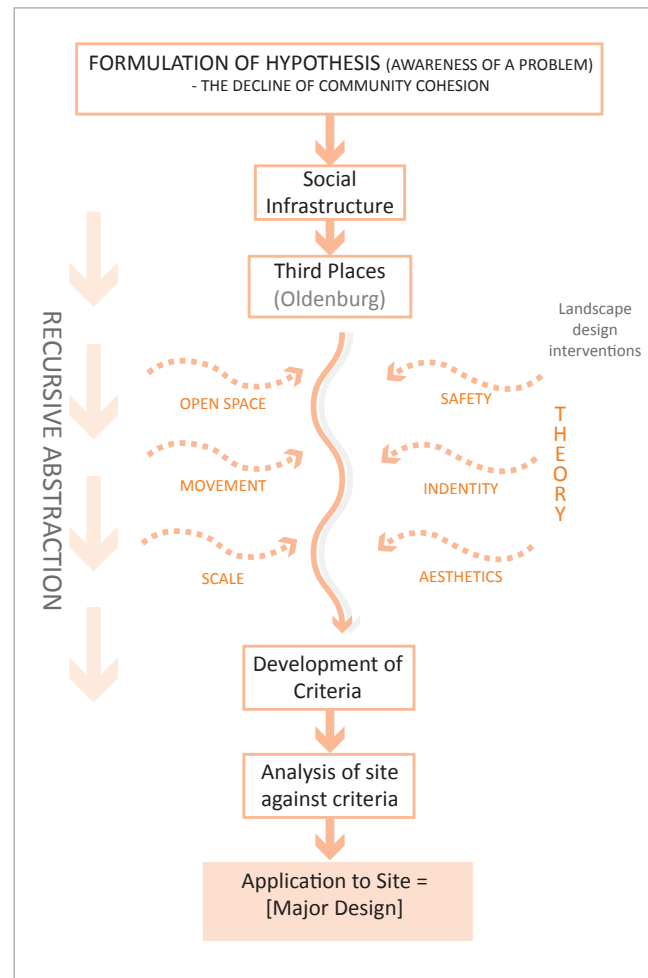
When I embarked on this design through research process my initial interest rested in psychology and people’s use of space. There was a body of research in the field of urban design, setting out how to design a sustainable city, in terms of production and building to reduce waste. However less research had been done on how the built environment impacts on social wellness, and in particular on the relationship between space, social life and the impact this had on community wellbeing, and it was this that I began to focus on.

The original aim of my research essay was to look at current thinking and policy drivers regarding landscape design in the area of social change and community cohesion.

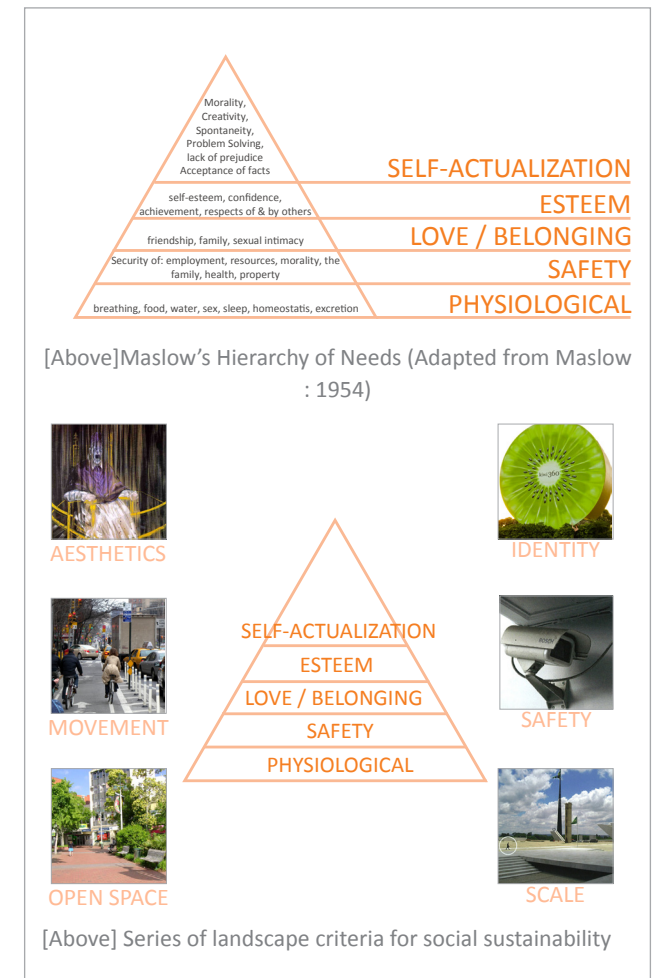
To consider basic human needs and behaviours in the context of landscape design and develop a cohesive list of design interventions that when applied to a site will help create greater social wellbeing and community cohesion. Oldenburg’s theory of Third Place and the provision of social infrastructure underpinned this thinking.

In order ‘to find out how we measure if a place is successful or not and why some Third Places work well and why others are abject failures’, I needed to look at the role landscape architecture plays in increasing the levels of community cohesion and wellbeing. I wanted to see how design could bring together Third Places and social infrastructure, focusing on what I described as the area in between - “in and around the Third Place”. This was the title of the research essay component to this design as research process (see figure 2-3). The research allowed me to define and redevelop a series of landscape criteria so designs would consider in more detail community and social sustainability. These criteria looked at open space, safety, mobility, identity, aesthetics and scale (See figure 2-4).

This set of criteria was then implemented and ‘tested’ in the design study stage of the research essay.



[Figure 2 - 3] Flowchart - Research Essay process. “In and around the Third Place”



[Above] Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Adapted from Maslow : 1954)

[Above] Series of landscape criteria for social sustainability

[Figure 2 - 4] Research Essay saw the development of a series of criteria. These criteria could be implemented and ‘tested’ in the design study and major design stages.

2.5 WHY CONSIDER APPLYING THESE CRITERIA TO REDESIGN A SUBURB OF CHRISTCHURCH AND WHY NOW?

Like many cities in the world, Christchurch faces issues of urban sprawl and disconnection. It is a classic example of design more focused on functionality and economic reasons and less on consideration of the community (Gehl: 2000). This had resulted in a reduction of the very social eco-communities that fostered diversity, mutualism and connectivity (Bookchin: 1992). There is a developing groundswell of opinion that there is a need to see a more functionalist approach to planning, moving to a position of designing less around the look, and more in consideration of the social role of design. Latest planning policy saw Christchurch developing as a polycentric city with the suburbs as key activity points. This eventually saw activity points competing against one another with the desire for each to be the most desirable it could be. There is a need to attract the most business and make it the most prosperous with a clear need to finance the future of communities, to harness local assets and build on them. Therefore application of my criteria to one of these activity centres would be beneficial.

Riccarton – why focus here?

The earthquakes, with their major damage, have thrown all planning for the future of Christchurch into disarray and consequently offer a key opportunity for a new research focus. As discussed in Chapter 1, new pressures, have been placed on the suburbs. This brings with it both threats and opportunities. These threats included the breakdown of social cohesion, whilst opportunities included the chance to step back and have a fresh look and approach to how areas of Christchurch can be redesigned to help improve wellbeing and to strengthen community development. The population movement to the western Suburbs as a result has seen many new businesses set up in this area and therefore the suburbs on the West were experiencing significant growth. These population influxes lead to increased pressure on infrastructure and episodes of social disorder in these over stretched suburbs.

Therefore it was evident that a suitable site for my research needed:

Selection Criteria:

- ✓ To be located on the West (limited) area of the City.
- ✓ To be identified as a Key Activity Centre of the Urban Development Strategy.
- ✓ To have evidence of population influx
- ✓ To be experiencing problems with this population influx
- ✓ To offer opportunities from the population influx

Analysis quickly showed that only a small selection of Christchurch suburbs met these selection criteria. Riccarton was selected as it met not only these criteria but was in a unique position in the city for access; it rested close to the original Christchurch Central Business District; and there were visual indications of changes already occurring to the form and function of Riccarton post earthquake, such as

new ‘anchor’ retail stores (Fig 2-5, Fig 2-6) and new housing developments (Fig 2-7).

Following the selection of Riccarton as the design site, I undertook the second half of the design study focusing on applying the criteria developed in the first part of the design study (Fig 2-4: Page 29) and analysing Riccarton. This followed a conventional research program of observation, analysis, explanation and development of design strategies.

This analysis was conducted at both a Macro scale analysing Riccarton in relation to other key activity centres, the population of Riccarton, and the community infrastructure (Fig 2-8) in the area and supporting area. The study was also conducted at a micro (local neighbourhood) scale examining the biophysical, cultural and social environment of the site focusing on design element that could be used to enhance the community identity.

This analysis identified a significant deficiency in open space and what I have since come to deem Third Places of landscape architecture (Fig 2-9). I then went on to explore this deficiency and to test out the criteria against the urban form of Riccarton through the major design process.



Figure [2-7] New housing developments post earthquake



Figure [2-5] Scorpio Books - boutique book retailer moved to Riccarton Road from central city.



Figure [2-8] Analysis of Community Infrastructure



Figure [2-6] Avanti Plus - large sports retail chain moved to Riccarton Road from central city.



Figure [2-9] Analysis of open space Third Places

2.6 [STEP 4 - MAJOR DESIGN]

The Major Design stage was the exploration stage of the thesis. Major Design is an intensive studio that takes a whole semester, typically undertaken at the end of the four year landscape course (for undergraduate students) and the end of the second year for (post graduate students).

Here I could test the hypothesis of my Design Study and Research Essay. This exploration involved taking the knowledge gained from the Design Study and giving it spatial form. This was represented through concepts and ideas for spaces, places supported by plans, cross sections and perspective renderings. The projected exploration of Riccarton was based on some key assumptions. These assumptions were based on the previous research already undertaken on the Christchurch suburb in that:

Christchurch Wide:

- The rapid population growth in the western suburbs as a result of the February 2011 earthquake, is acting as a catalyst for change for the area, with the potential to transform the key activity centres into vibrant inner urban centres for Christchurch.

Local (Riccarton) assumption included:

- The spatial definition of Riccarton was not based on the national New Zealand census but on the idea of community and that communities can exist outside of physical boundaries. However, in spite of this, for the Major Design process a physical location for the site and edge was needed in order to be able to test the design through a variety of different scales. Therefore the boundary consisted of the major routes Blenheim Road, Wharenui / Clyde Road, Kotare Street and Deans Ave. These boundaries were established by placing Riccarton Road and Riccarton Mall at the centre of the community and considering walkable catchment areas from these focal points of 800m / 10 minutes. (See Figure 3-2: Page 43)
- That Riccarton will accommodate a population of 11,830 by the year 2031, based on census predictions (NZ Census: 2011). However it is quite possible that this number could be more than this, due to the after effects of the earthquake. Initial numbers were hard to predict due to people leaving Canterbury and as a result of the earthquakes no census was carried out at that time. It was evident that there was an increase in levels of transient population due to the damage in the eastern suburbs. This transient population occurred for a number of reasons. Firstly the damage resulted in many

businesses moving to Riccarton and a subsequent increase in numbers of people travelling to the centre for work. Secondly, infrastructure was damaged on the east so people would travel to the suburb to use the services. Thirdly, Riccarton provided a large number of motels. These motels saw an increase in the usage during Monday – Friday as labourers working on the Christchurch rebuild would use them during the week. This was often due to their proximity to the city centre and there being no accommodation in the city centre.

- That post earthquake current zonings in Christchurch City Plan are not fixed and can be amended to accommodate more openspace, high-density and mixed use environments.

Throughout the process of Major Design the main form of analysis and redesign was based on critique. Critique itself doesn't have to be negative and find fault in a design, but instead is a form of constructive criticism 'evaluating design in an informed manner, based on an understanding of the content and context of the work, and the design language on which it draws' (Bowring: 2000: Pg 42). Hopkins gives value to the method of design critique by suggesting that 'if done thoughtfully, criticism can be as much as creative act as design itself' (Hopkins: 1994: Pg 24).

The design for Riccarton went through several stages of critique before submission. Initially criticism occurred within the design study and site survey and analysis. This allowed me to develop different design scenarios for Riccarton, testing these through the findings of my design study to determine which would work successfully.

The second part of the critique process was self and peer critique. This was both a conscious and an unconscious process. Through my design study and I undertook research on case studies and social community driven designs that worked well, seeing if parts of these designs, the form and programmatic context, could be adapted and applied to Riccarton. My design was also subjected to peer critique in group focused sessions, semi-formal presentations and one on one desk critiques where the other students undertaking the studio would bounce ideas off one another.

Professional critique occurred throughout the process. At the beginning of major design we were assigned to tutors, who provided two critiques a week and we were also visited by a significant number of 'guest' lecturers who worked in various professional design fields (Fig 2-10). These professional critiques were particularly beneficial in the design process, as the vigorous interrogation from someone

who is not immersed in the design process allowed me to be clear and explicit in communicating my design intentions and interventions.

At the end of the Major Design phase I also undertook a formal presentation. This was a mid-thesis presentation to ensure that I attained the level of design skill required for the accreditation standards for the landscape architecture profession. This was 90 minutes in length and consisted of two half hour presentations on the theory behind my design and the design elements, followed by a half hour question and answer session. The presentation was to a panel of experts across the field, including two tutors from the Lincoln University School of Landscape, my own personal tutor who was familiar with my design and the process undertaken and an independent external 'guest' examiner.

CHAPTER 3 provides a full description and analysis of the Major Design project.



Figure [2-10] The studio critique process

2.6 [STEP 5 - DESIGN THESIS]

Through the professional critique several key questions were addressed that highlighted conflicting and inconsistent values in the Major Design stage, including the size of the Third Place; the relationship of this space to Riccarton Mall; the mall's role in the landscape and the constant reiteration of the question - *How do we as landscape architects measure the success of place?* This somewhat changed the focus and direction of the design research process. Although the concept and theory of Third Places and their ability to provide for community cohesion was still key to the question, the research took a slightly different path and focused more around the question of how do we as landscape architects measure the success of place, and in particular this 'space' was focused on the Mall environment.

The design thesis is the conclusion of this critical inquiry process. Its purpose is not to solve a problem or design a product but rather to begin a discussion on place making and how Third Places tie to landscape architecture. It drove the discussion between theory and eventual design, necessitated an in-depth exploration of the 'success' factors of Third Places, and allowed these factors to be honed to a local context of Riccarton, tried and tested in a redesign phase, ultimately rendering improvements on the design and contributing new knowledge to the discipline of Landscape Architecture.

2.7 [CRITIQUE]

Critique, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is to 'evaluate (a theory or practice) in a detailed and analytical way' (Oxford English Dictionary: 2012). It is linked to the Greek *kritikē tekhnē* meaning to judge or decide linked to a criteria (Bowring:2012). However for the use in design critique and application to the field of landscape architecture, this definition does not prove useful in that there is always emphasis on the negative, to find fault with something. Critique itself does not have to be a negative practice (Hopkins: 1994) it is a creative act that "is necessary in order to generate effective, forceful, spirited forms, ideas and proposals for creating a more humane living environment" (McAvin: 1991: P 163).

How often critique is performed, the interpretation of critique and who should perform critique is on a sliding scale. Some believe that critique should only be undertaken by arcane or highly specialised experts, while other argue that virtually everything people do in the built environment is a form of criticism (Attoe: 1978). As identified earlier, the importance of design critique as a method cannot be overlooked. Trieb emphasises that critique is the 'crucial link between theory and practice' (in Berrizbeitia: 1998: Pg 10)

In the major design phase of this research, critique was employed through the studio environment and as indicated previously through self, peer and professional critique. Attoe

(1978) identified three orientations of criticism; descriptive, normative and interpretive. Each of these was adapted and applied to Riccarton to enable me to evaluate an holistic view of Third Places and their levels of success.

[DESCRIPTIVE]

Non judgemental, focusing on unfolding the context of the work. It is based on fact and helps to see “what is actually there” (Attoe: 1978: Pg 85).

Descriptive critique was used in this thesis as a contextual, framing process, explaining Riccarton, its components and the physical form of the site. I also employ some descriptive critique in describing the key design elements and intent of the mall environments. This all aids in understanding the baseline of my common thoughts and themes in the research.

[NORMATIVE]

Standard doctrine system adopting a type or measure.

This method of critique typically involves the evaluation of the design against a standard set of norms, (Attoe: 1978) and comparison with an external ideal. This method was adopted in the case study section of this thesis (Chapter 6). Through research and exploration of the theoretical context a set of design ‘criteria’ were adopted that could be applied to site. These criteria were then used to test the site and see if it ‘conformed’. The benefits of this method were that it provided an objective yet transparent framework for analysis.

However the objectivity of this method was tested in that ‘criteria’ was ultimately determined by the critic (in this

case myself) and their selection of norms. The design may well tick all the boxes suggesting success – yet still have a design that is poor overall. Furthermore this method failed to acknowledge less tangible aspects of the landscape such as sensory and experiential dimensions, which on the whole were key to the theoretical underpinning of successful Third Places. Therefore this method measured the criteria and their degree of ‘success’ on a continuum, taking into account experiences and descriptive critique consequently providing a level of subjectivity.

In addition these normative qualities are only analysed against case study sites and the results for Riccarton are only realised through the design process. This design will not be realised in form or function and therefore the process was not subject to ‘real world’ external pressures such as being tied by funding and planning legislation, climate, advances in technology, further natural disasters and any long term unexpected change in the demographic of Riccarton. Consequently these issues are not addressed in this thesis process.

[INTERPRETIVE]

Not concerned with evaluation and judgement but attempts to reveal the environment in an impressionistic, evocative or advocacy way.

Interpretive criticism in this thesis attempts to provide a new way of looking at Riccarton Mall, the surrounding environment and how these two can successfully act as Third Places. Rather than seeing the space as a primarily consumerist environment, attempts are made to address the role the mall environment can have in acting as a Third Place. I also emphasise the significant role Third Places play in the greater urban fabric, and how they are a key driver to the success of Riccarton. Therefore the interpretation is framed around this concept of Third Places.

2.8 [SUMMARY]

This method outlines the process of evaluation into the Third Places of landscape architecture. How the characteristics of a ‘successful’ Third Place will be determined and how these characteristics can be applied to the localised context of Riccarton.

The next chapter will therefore look at the Major Design phase of the research by design process and how Riccarton was originally designed as a Third Place of Landscape Architecture. From here, in Chapters 4 and 5, more theoretical foundations will be developed, including criteria for the design of ‘successful’ Third Places. In chapter 6 these criteria are applied to a set of case studies and a critique of theory is offered.

As a final stage, in chapter 7 and 8, results and a redesign of ‘Riccarton – the Third Place’ are undertaken to evaluate the design.