

PLAYCE

by

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A THESIS

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Major Professor  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Urban play is a type of play: it is an emotionally engaging act where players take part in fun within definable spatial parameters (Huizinga, 1944; Caillois, 1961). Urban play is unusual, though, because it occurs at the human scale, and uses the city fabric as the setting. As atypical reappropriations of space, urban play activities like parkour, flash mobs, and geocaching layer diverse experiences at specific city sites. This layering may ultimately develop place phenomena such as insideness. It is also possible that pre-existing concepts of place may influence where people choose to play. The subject of this investigation was to understand the relationship between urban play and place for players. Understanding this relationship can inform landscape architects and urban designers about urban play and how to design for playability.

I used informed grounded theory (Thornberg, 2012) and autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2012) to structure a mixed-methods study of urban play and place. I myself engaged in play and wrote field notes to gather data and inform my other data collection and analysis. I played with many other players, and conducted on-site, walk-along interviews with six of them. Recordings of the verbal exchanges, maps of the paths of the interviews, and photographs of landscape conditions identified as salient to play or place were collected during the interviews.

This variety of data was understood through several memoing strategies, including note-taking, mapping, and sketching. Memoing and reflective “memoing-on-memos” abstracted the data enough for me to construct overarching themes, or findings (Thornberg, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Data collection and analysis were situated within an extensive literature review.

Four primary findings resulted from my investigation. First, that the physical landscape influences play. Second, that play influences the social landscape. Third, that play develops sense of neighborhood. And fourth, that play relates to the physical and social landscapes at multiple scales. My findings can help designers understand what playability is and design for urban play.

To the players who made this research possible

To my friends in Vienna who helped me start

To my friends in 106 who helped me finish, and helped me through just  
about everything else, too

To my committee, who helped make this project amazing, and made  
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Spielen wir für immer!



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Master's Thesis

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A photograph of a graffiti-covered tunnel. The walls are covered in colorful graffiti, including a large, stylized face with a wide, toothy grin. The floor is also covered in graffiti, with a prominent red and yellow design. A man in a blue jacket and dark pants stands on the right side of the frame, looking towards the camera. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

# PLAYCE

BETSY HADDOX

2015



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Cover Image An urban explorer, Tasmania

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**Figure 1.1** Urban exploration: climbing on cranes. This is an example of physical play.

A black and white photograph of a boat's deck. The image shows various pieces of equipment, including a net hanging from a wooden structure, ropes, and a wooden frame. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the foreground elements.

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

# Where it began.

In the fall of 2011, I began performing improvisational comedy with the Kansas State University troupe “On the Spot” (see Figure 1.1). It was my second year at Kansas State University and my first year in the landscape architecture program. In the fall of 2012, I started a committee for performing improv in the streets within the troupe, modeled after Improv Everywhere in New York City. During the spring of 2013, I took an urban design studio, and began to see the connections between performing improv outside, and how I thought about using urban space. I realized just how important I thought the site user was in determining the meaning of the site. I learned how programming public space could be the difference between a loved place and a derelict lot. I became concerned with how people understand and relate to space. What was important for site users? Why do spaces become important to people? Do we have the power to influence these dynamics as designers?

In the summer of 2013, I began investigating urban play. I researched urban play broadly, and made a first attempt at defining urban play. I considered how play might improve the performance of urban space by adding a distinct layer of programming to the site.



That fall, I began to try to pull the themes of urban play and place together. Both themes were relevant to me and my design work, and I was trying to design spaces that inspired interaction, exploration, and, most importantly, fun. The question of how play and place related became very important to me, and relevant to my interests as a player and designer.



**Figure 1.2** Some members of the Kansas State University improvisational comedy troupe, *On the Spot Improv* who also improvise in the streets.

I developed several values during these early investigations.

These include

- an appreciation for designers' interest in and ability to understand and use the concepts of urban play and place in design consideration
- an appreciation for the deviant player as a site user who adds value and creative site programming that designers cannot themselves develop or fully anticipate
- an appreciation for the power of fun to shape our own identities, our communities, and the spaces that we live in.

These early investigations also showed me that urban play and place are important to other designers as well.

## **The importance of urban play and place**

Urban play and place are both important topics to designers because they both relate to how sites are experienced. Urban players adapt space to fit their desire to have fun in the city, and create new and valuable ways to experience a site. Players directly and intentionally change how they experience space. Understanding urban play is relevant to design because it is another way that people occupy city spaces.

Place concepts (e.g. sense of place, place attachment, place

dependence, place identity, topophilia, etc.) describe the ways that people relate to spaces. They describe phenomena such as how people think of spaces, how they feel about spaces, and how they consider them as communities.

However, while urban play and place are both important to landscape architecture, there is little literature about how these topics relate and how they can be combined in design.

## **Objective of the study**

This study begins to fill the gap in the literature regarding urban play and place. It seeks to provide information and tools to designers for use in understanding, advocating for, and designing with and for urban play. Specifically, this thesis contributes to:

- reframing urban play as an activity that can be discussed as legitimate programming in an urban environment, and to provide language for developing discourses about urban play,
- understanding the relationship between urban play and place phenomena for players, and
- providing tools to designers, players, and communities to understand, discuss, and support urban play.



# Context.

## **Literature review**

### *Relevance to the Field*

Recent directions in research suggest that defining the relationship between urban play and place can be a beneficial next step in landscape architecture research. Urban games and urban play are emerging concepts in landscape architecture. An interest in the topic can be observed in the flurry of journal publications and papers about urban play and similar activities presented at professional events, such as the Council for Educators in Landscape Architecture conference (Rottle, 2013; Bardenhagen, et al., 2013; Zamani & Moore, 2013; Billig & Erdman, 2013; Watts, 2013; Zimbovsky & Sullivan, 2013; from CELA, 2013).

### *The Benefits of Play*

Interest in urban play is not surprising, since play activity itself has been shown to have many benefits. Several studies have shown, for example, that play improves physical health and interpersonal relationships (Ekelund, et al., 2004, Paffenbarger, et al., 1986, Driver, 1992). While these findings suggest play in a variety of contexts is

beneficial, outdoor play and child's play have both been researched extensively. Benefits of such play have been studied in great detail. For example, Spencer (2011) found that there are many benefits associated with child's play in natural settings, such as improved relationships and self-esteem. This provides immediate context for urban play if one considers the urban fabric as a new type of "wilderness" to explore (Trombleson, 2013). Altogether, it seems including play more in landscape design could explicitly benefit site users by giving them opportunities to improve their physical health and interpersonal relationships in the city.

### ***Play as a Possible Influence on Place***

While most place research focuses on spaces occupied frequently, like homes, some recent research suggests people may develop place identity at spaces visited less frequently. Rishbeth (2014) interviewed central Europeans who immigrated to the UK, and found that immigrants' place attachment to their homeland (where they now no longer live or spend time) was strong, despite not having spent much time there (2014). This development of place attachment suggests it is possible that spaces occupied for play infrequently or sporadically might still impact place. Since many place phenomena are related and overlap, it is possible that phenomena beyond attachment

may not depend on regular or substantial interaction with the space.

Place may also develop if play is seen as a use of public space for public good. In their 2010 study, Visconti, Sherry, Jr., Borghini, and Anderson found that public art can help define public space as accessible, common ground. They found that a sense of communal ownership could impact senses of meaning and place for community members. "Public space can be contested as private and commercialized, or offered back as a collective good, where sense of belonging and dialogue restore it to a meaningful place" (Visconti, et al., 2010, p. 511). It is possible that urban play, like public art, can be seen as a use of public space for the public good, and result in a sense of ownership and belonging.

It also seems that activities related to urban play may develop place. In 2012, Degen and Rose conducted a study on how sense of place developed through the sensory experience of walking through urban environments. With surveys and walk-along, photo-elicitation interviews they found that "distinct senses of place do depend on the sensory experiencing of built environments," and increase with a diversity of bodily mobility and perceptual memories associated with the built environment (Degen & Rose, 2012, p. 3271). Since urban play can involve unusual movement through a site and provide a diverse set of site-related memories, it is possible that it can develop sense of place.

Garrett published a study in 2013 about the effects of urban exploration on a community of people who explore together. The research paired an interview methodology with the researcher's own experience with exploration of derelict, temporary, and abandoned spaces to determine that urban explorers critically engage the city fabric, foster urban community, and "build personal relationships with places" (Garrett, 2013, p. 1). This suggests that urban play activities which involve exploration and discovery can result in the development of place identity.

## **Scope**

Determining the nature of the relationship between urban play and urban place is the ultimate scope of the research. The scope of the research when it comes to urban play will be limited to the study of activities that match my definition of urban play and that I will take part in as a researcher. My definition says that urban play is free and voluntary; pretend; uncertain; valuable in and of itself (intrinsically motivated); temporally and spatially separate from reality; and undertaken at the human scale, with the urban fabric as the play ground. (For a further discussion of this definition, see Chapter 2: Background) .

Regarding place, though, the scope is much broader. The

research question, data collection, and analysis techniques were all designed so that the research process would be adaptive and reflexive, and reflect any existing place concept or identify new patterns of place. Initial findings about different place phenomena narrowed the scope of the research over time. For example, the scope of research eventually shifted from place identity and attachment to insideness and sense of neighborhood.

Since the scope of the findings was initially unknown, the scope of the literature review was correspondingly large. The initial literature review considers urban games (from landscape architecture and urban design), play (from sociology), place concepts such as place identity (landscape architecture, architecture, social geography, phenomenology, etc.), and episodic memories (psychology).





**Figure 2.1** Bike polo in France. Players adapt urban spaces for fun.  
Photo credit: NealeA.





## CHAPTER 2

# BACKGROUND



# Urban play.

## What is urban play?

Urban play is a concept that I have adapted from “urban games.” The BMW Guggenheim Design Lab defines urban games as those which “are played with the city as a backdrop, either in single or multiple urban locations. They use the city as a playground and aim to bring a traditionally enclosed experience to the street. Urban games are intended to be experiential and promote social interaction in a real-life setting. They can adopt the analog form of a human-scale urban board game and may be enhanced by the use of location technology” (BMW Guggenheim Lab, 2013). Other, more colloquial definitions express the same general ideas, framing the definition of urban games around



**Figure 2.2** In this photo, I am playing in a fake rally about John Wilkes Booth. Urban play encompasses many different activities.

three principles: the use of public space as the game space, playing at the human scale, and the incorporation of technology (Grabionowski, 2005). Generally, urban games include pervasive and location-based games, both of which have a heavy technological component.

In this investigation, I use “urban play” to refer to urban games, and also to play activities that fall outside of the urban games definition. The technological element of the urban games definition, and the requirement that the city function specifically as a game board can both be seen as limitations. For example, a flash mob may be seen as urban play. It is free, pretend, fun, uncertain, and uses the city as the setting for fun. But flash mobs do not require technology, and the city is a stage and audience, not a game board. Flash mobs, then, are not urban games, but are still playful city activity. “Urban play” includes these kinds of play in addition to urban games. To lend complexity and weight to the concept of urban play, this expanded concept of urban games can be tempered with definitions from play literature from outside of the field.

### ***Definitions of Play: Huizinga and Caillois***

With his 1944 publication of *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga became the father of the modern definition of play. Huizinga summarizes play as follows: “Play is a voluntary activity or occupation

executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension [and uncertainty], joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life'. ... [Play] includes games of strength and skill, inventing games, guessing games, games of chance, [and] exhibitions and performances of all kinds" (p. 13). He adds that play is "connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it" (p. 13), and that secrecy in play can build social bonds (p. 12).

Roger Caillois is another play theorist. In 1963, Caillois challenged parts of Huizinga's definition of play and developed his own. Caillois clearly lists six defining aspects of play: (1) play is free, not obligatory; (2) play is temporally and spatially separate from reality; (3) play is uncertain, not predetermined; (4) play is unproductive, though a transfer of wealth is possible; (5) play is governed by rules; and (6) play is make-believe (Caillois, 1963). The first four elements, he argues, are always present. Either the fifth or the sixth element is also usually present. But, they rarely occur together.

## *A Hybrid Definition*

Combining the consistencies between the general urban games definition and Huizinga's and Caillois's approaches inform my definition of urban play for landscape architecture.

The hybrid definition has six salient facets.

**Urban play is free and voluntary; pretend; uncertain; valuable in and of itself (intrinsically motivated); temporally and spatially separate from reality; and undertaken at the human scale, with the urban fabric as the play ground.**

Table 2.1 shows how the three definitions can describe urban play.

(For a detailed review of how I developed my urban play definition, see Appendix B: Defining urban play).

In addition to this definition, a strategy for categorizing different play activities can help focus research regarding urban play. A categorization scheme can help make effective juxtapositions of the similarities and differences between play activities, adding richness to sampling and data analysis. Understanding different types of play might be especially helpful in determining landscape elements that support different play activities.

## Defining Urban Play

	<b>Urban Games</b> <i>BMW G. L. (2013)</i>	<b>Play</b> <i>Huizinga (1944)</i>	<b>Play</b> <i>Caillois (1963)</i>	<b>Urban Play</b> <i>Haddox (2015)</i>
<b>Defining Elements</b>	city as backdrop			urban fabric as playground
	human scale			human scale
	(technology)			
		free, voluntary, and superficial	free, not obligatory	free, voluntary
		value in itself	valuable in itself, intrinsically motivated	valuable in itself, intrinsically motivated
		not real, with temporal and spatial bounds	temporally and spatially separate	not real, with temporal and spatial bounds
		tense, uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
	promotes social interaction	communal through secrecy		

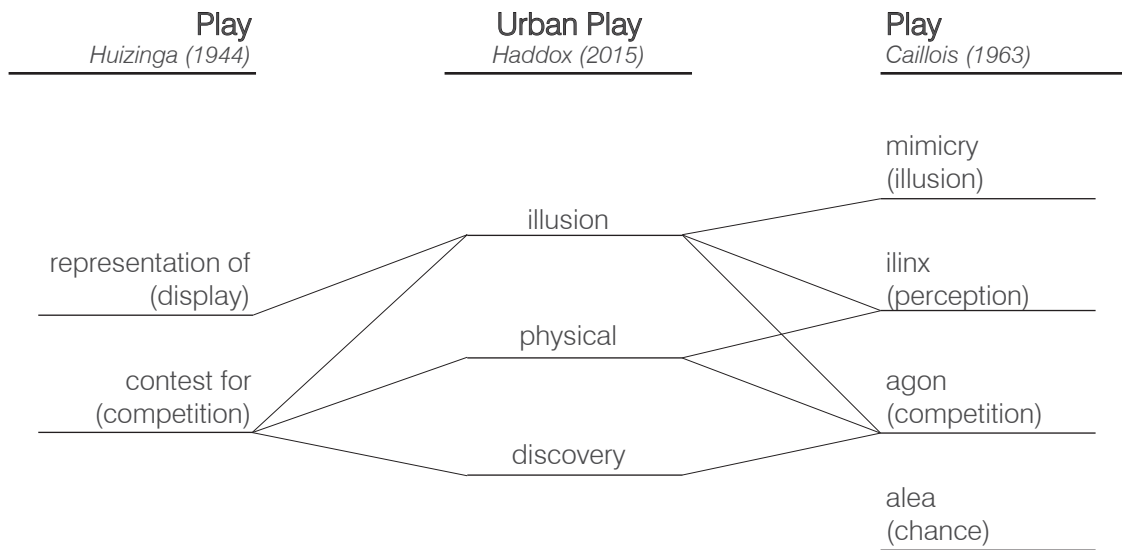
**Table 2.1** This table juxtaposes definitions of urban games, play, and my own definition of urban play.

## ***Categorization of play activities***

To classify different play activities, I looked again to Huizinga and Caillois. Both offer methods for classifying play acts, but neither method fully accommodates the range of activity described by my definition of urban play (see Appendix B for further details.) I propose the use of an alternative classification strategy for urban play acts that draws on both Huizinga and Caillois.

My classification strategy begins with competition play, which the Huizinga and Caillois classification schemes have in common. Competition play is recognized as play with a secondary motivation (the gain from winning). Therefore, I base my categories for play activity on secondary motivation. (In all play, the primary motivation is to have fun.) The three proposed categories in my classification system are illusion play, physical play, and discovery play, named for the secondary motivation. If the secondary motivation is to take on another identity or display an idea or character to an audience, then the player is engaging in illusion play. If the secondary motivation is to achieve a state of physical grace or thrill, for example, then the player is engaging in physical play. If the secondary motivation is to gain knowledge or explore the urban fabric, then the player is engaging in discovery play. Figure 2.3 shows how the types of play Huizinga and Caillois identify are accommodated in my own classification scheme.

## Categorizing Urban Play



**Figure 2.3** This diagram illustrates how my own categorization of urban play was derived from other similar schemes.

### ***Physical Space in Play Definitions***

As a part of their arguments that all kinds of play are make-believe and separate from reality, Huizinga and Caillois both note that play activity takes place in a “play space.” Though the play context changes from player to player and act to act, play in every circumstance is discretely defined both temporally and spatially. Play has a specific “play-ground,” and definitely “begins and is over” at specific times (Huizinga, 1944, p. 10, 9). This means that when a player leaves the space or stops playing by the rules, or when someone has won, the play is over. Players can end fun prematurely by abandoning the play reality.

Urban play, like all play, occurs in specific play spaces and times. Place may develop in these spaces. Alternatively, a pre-existing development of place may make specific spaces attractive for play.









*Figure 2.4, left top: Urban exploration is discovery play.*

*Figure 2.5, left bottom: Street soccer is physical play.*

*Figure 2.6, center: Bodies in urban space is illusion play.*

*Figure 2.7, right top: Basketball at a court is not urban play.*

*Figure 2.8, right bottom: Skating at a skate park is not urban play.*



# Place.

## **Place concepts**

Place phenomena are the myriad ways in which we relate to spaces and give them meaning. Place phenomena are cognitive, emotional, or social phenomena. They are described in the literature as place concepts such as place attachment, place identity, place dependence, sense of place, and topophilia.

## *Confusion of place concepts*

Indiscriminate mixing of place concepts in the literature has lead to confusion in the field and inhibited advancement in place research (Hernández, et al., 2014). With this confusion, there is a fogginess regarding how different place concepts are related to each other. Therefore, I think it is important to describe the variety of frameworks and place phenomena that are considered in this study.

I thoroughly researched twelve different place concepts during my preliminary literature review, which occurred before interviewing subjects. Each place concept I investigated is listed in Table 2.2 with a description of the concept.

I also investigated several means of organizing place concepts.

## ***Organizing place concepts***

Several frameworks for organizing place concepts exist.

Organizing these concepts is a complex problem because many are related, or overlap. Some frameworks that organize place phenomena suggest that each are independent of each other; others suggest that some place phenomena are components of others (Hernández, Hidalgo, & Ruiz, 2014).

This study uses the hierarchy of place concepts constructed by Droseltis and Vignoles to help clarify the relationships between different place phenomena (2010). Droseltis and Vignoles suggest that place identity is composed of three other place dimensions: place attachment, environmental fit, and place-self congruity (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 23). The effect of the place dimensions on place identity was determined by identifying relationships between the symbolic significance of places with different needs and motives for occupying those spaces. Overall, spaces that were the subject of place phenomena were often seen as distinct or special, and as continuous with the self (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 28). The reliability of each of these dimensions to predict place identity was shown to be statistically significant through confirmatory factor analysis, even when analyzed with conservative statistical dimensions (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010, p. 23).

## Indicators of Place Phenomena

---

**Topophilia**  
*(Ogunseitan, 2005)*

cognitive challenge (complexity, mystery, texture, coherence), sensory diction, familiarity (identifiability, privacy), ecodiversity

---

**Terraphilia**  
*(Oliviera, Roca, & Leitao, 2010)*

topophilia, plus positive and persuasive language in favor of future development

---

**Belonging**  
*(Prieto-Flores, et al., 2011)*

“I like my neighborhood” “I am satisfied with this [facility/infrastructure]” “I am a part of the community here”

---

**Rootedness**  
*(Hay, 1998; Andreotti, et al., 2013)*

unconscious appreciation of place, knowledge and use of facilities and networks; family ties

---

**Insideness**  
*(Lim & Barton, 2010)*

environmental understanding (context), environmental competence (navigation), diversity of relationship with place

---

**Urban Identity**  
*(Burdett, 2013; Blair, 2011)*

collective identity connected to and supported by urban form and infrastructure

---

<p><b>Place Attachment/Self-Extension</b> (Jorgensen, et al., 2005)</p>	<p>“I am fond of this place” “this place is part of my self” “I feel uncomfortable when strangers invade my space”</p>
<p><b>Environmental Fit</b> (Droseltis &amp; Vignoles, 2010)</p>	<p>“I fit here” “I am a part of this environment” “I belong to this place”</p>
<p><b>Place-Self Congruity</b> (Droseltis &amp; Vignoles, 2010)</p>	<p>the place is consistent with the individual’s values “I can practice my values here” “this place supports my values”</p>
<p><b>Place Identity</b> (Proshansky, 1978)</p>	<p>language that indicates that the place reflects the individual’s identity “this place is like me”</p>
<p><b>Place Dependence</b> (Jorgensen &amp; Stedman, 2005)</p>	<p>“I need this” “this place is the best place for doing what I enjoy the most”</p>
<p><b>Sense of Place</b> (Relph, 1976; Stokowski, 2002)</p>	<p>community discourses suggest and sometimes show that the place has a meaning common to many people, like neighbors</p>

**Table 2.2** This table describes some of the place dimensions that are present in the literature and their defining characteristics or linguistic indicators.



Figure 2.9 highlights place identity and its contributing dimensions (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010). I also contextualized place identity with the other place concepts to show how they relate and illustrate the pivotal importance of place identity in place research.

### ***Place phenomena and psychology***

Place phenomena develop as someone comes to know a place as complex through layered experience, and begins to identify with the place (Proshansky, 1978). Diverse memories at a place can evidence layered experience.

An episodic memory is conscious memory of a specific, sometimes unique, event (Hamann, et al., 1999). Hamann, Ely, Grafton, and Kilts found that episodic memory is enhanced when the amygdala is engaged (1999). This means that both pleasant and aversive events build stronger memories than neutral events (Hamann, et al., 1999). Urban play is emotionally engaging by definition because it uses the urban fabric for fun, hopefully stimulating enjoyment. Also by definition, urban play is a surprising use of the urban fabric. (The urban fabric is designed to safely accommodate urban function, not play. For example, railings are designed to make stairs and ramps safe and accessible, not to provide a grinding surface for skateboarders.) So, the direct physical and emotional investment that urban players make

are likely to produce vivid and enduring memories of the experience. Such memories seem likely to develop place identity.

This psychological phenomenon and my own personal experience with urban play led me to believe that there may be a relationship between urban play and place, which I have addressed separately heretofore. My research question unifies these concepts (see Chapter 4: Research Design.)



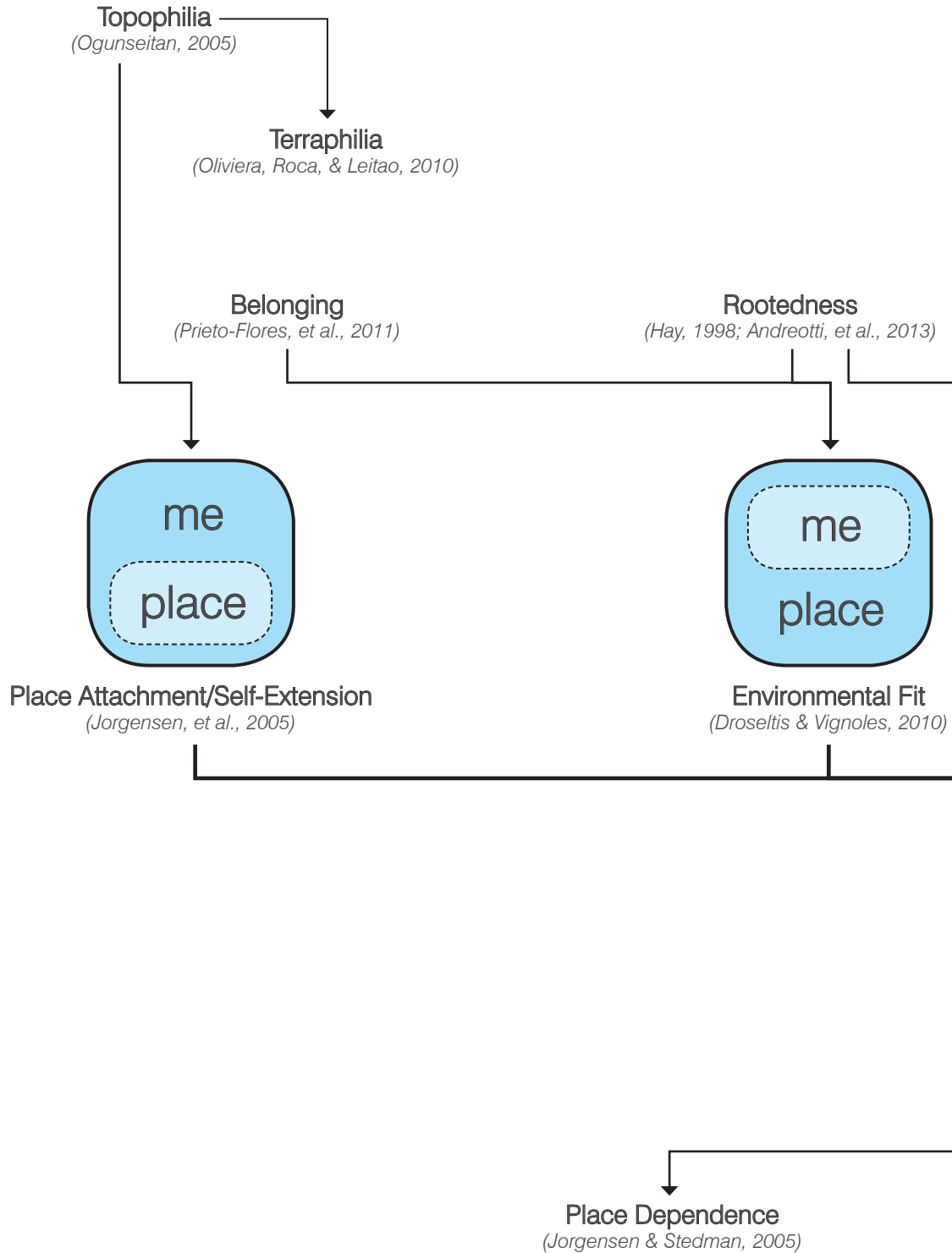
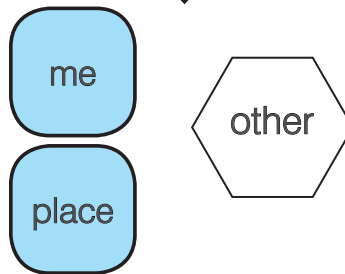


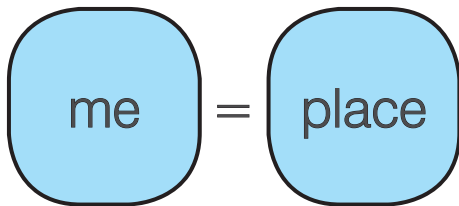
Figure 2.9 **Place concepts**. This diagram defines and relates several common place concepts. Appendix A: Glossary has definitions of all of these terms. Adapted from Hernández et al., 2014.

**Insiderness**  
*(Lim & Barton, 2010)*

**Urban Identity**  
*(Burdett, 2013; Blair, 2011)*



**Place-Self Congruity**  
*(Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010)*



**Place Identity**  
*(Proshansky, 1978)*

**Sense of Place**  
*(Relph, 1976; Stokowski, 2002)*



**Figure 3.1** A flash mob in Poland involving salsa dancing.  
Photo credit: A. Kliczek

A black and white photograph of a crowd of people dancing in a modern, brightly lit indoor space. The ceiling features a complex geometric structure of intersecting lines, possibly a skylight or a decorative architectural element. The people are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, and many are wearing sunglasses. The overall atmosphere is lively and social.

**CHAPTER 3**

**RESEARCH**

**DESIGN**





Figure 3.2 This is the result of my methods: an arrangement of the broadest findings I found through memoing.

# Research question.

## **What is the relationship between urban play and place?**

Several subquestions also helped direct my research. They are:

- Does urban play cause places to feel distinct? Why (not)?
- Does urban play encourage emotional attachment to a space?  
How? To what extent?
- Does urban play make players feel that they belong in a space?  
How? To what extent?
- Do players feel ownership over their play spaces? Why (not)? To what extent?
- Do urban play spaces seem congruent with/supportive of the values of urban players?
- Do specific elements of urban landscapes support urban play?  
What are they?
- How important is urban play to the development of place, relative to other uses of the space?
- What is the motivation to play in cities? Is play spontaneous or planned?
- Are “places” more attractive than spaces for play activity?

# Research strategy.

## **Methodology**

Since urban play is such a new topic in the field, and since place concepts are so confused, I wanted to use a research strategy that allowed interplay between pattern recognition and existing theory. This framework is appropriate to the abductive methodologies adopted for data collection and analysis outlined below.

I adopted two methodologies for this study: informed grounded theory and layered accounts autoethnography. These two methodologies were used together because, in tandem, they helped me quickly identify and understand sociocultural phenomena, such as the relationship between urban play and place. Since they are quite similar, I will explain informed grounded theory in some detail, and then describe how adding layered account autoethnography enriched my methods.

### ***Grounded Theory (GT) Methodologies***

Grounded theory is a theory of data collection and analysis based on the principles of inductive reasoning. Originally established by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the 1960s, grounded theory

addresses data collection and analysis as related processes. Data collection usually involves conducting interviews and taking field notes. Analysis in the form of “memoing” begins with the researcher's first impressions of collected data (often during data collection itself). Analysis culminates when concepts and themes emerge from the memoing technique, and give form to theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965).

In its original form, grounded theory methods are intended to be purely inductive; data analysis reflects only pattern identification, not fulfillment of a hypothesis or extant theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 6). Due to this distance from the literature, grounded theory methods are often employed to provide new perspectives in research, or to encourage quick discovery or advancement of substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 5-7). Grounded theory is appropriate to this research because the relationship between urban play and place is to date unstudied, and because the understanding of place concepts is so muddled.

Today, grounded theory is an umbrella philosophy that encompasses several related methodologies. Different GT methodologies now reflect different approaches to accommodating the literature review (Evans, 2013, p. 37-39). Guidelines for memoing and coding also help define the different methodologies (Evans, 2013, p. 38).



One of the methodologies is constructivist grounded theory. First championed by Charmaz in 1995, constructivist grounded theory abandons the pursuit of a pure inductive process. Instead, it is built on the principle that theories and concepts are constructed by researchers, not discovered. Constructivist GT research begins with “specific questions on a particular substantive area” and supports the use of a broad and early literature review that orients the researcher to a variety of extant theories (Evans, 2013, p. 45; Thornberg, 2012, p. 243). This style of GT supports a constructivist presuppositional framework that allows me to abductively move through the data.

Constructivists acknowledge that the early literature review can influence the open memoing strategy. An early literature review, though, is suggested instead of a delayed literature review since “the fear of contamination and forcing [out of emergent concepts and theories with preconceived ideas from the literature review] is an extreme position that underestimates researchers’ ability to reflect upon the links between extant theories and their gathering and analysis of data (Dunne, 2011), and to appreciate extant theories and concepts without imposing them on the data (Urquhart, 2007)” (Thornberg, 2012, p. 245; and as cited by the author). In support of this assertion, constructivists such as Bryant and Charmaz (2007) and Thornberg (2012) acknowledge the important role that abductive reasoning can

play, and argue that researchers can consciously choose to rework or even invent a hypothesis to best explain the data.

### ***Strategies for Openness in Informed Grounded Theory***

In his argument for informed grounded theory (a strategy outlined within constructivist grounded theory), Thornberg (2012) suggests some specific strategies a researcher can employ to achieve “data sensitizing” and help maintain openness and objectivity when memoing (p. 249). His strategies are:

- theoretical agnosticism, where the researcher acknowledges existing frameworks, and treats them as disputable and modifiable (p. 250),
- theoretical pluralism, where the researcher is open to the use of several theories, and uses competing theories together to account for their limitations (p. 250-251),
- theoretical sampling of literature, where the researcher can critically determine the direction of the literature review to include diverse theories but specific information (p. 252),
- staying grounded, where the researcher does not treat previous knowledge as “sacred truths” (p. 252),
- theoretical playfulness, where creativity is encouraged in the assemblage of data into a theory (p. 253),

- memoing extant knowledge associations, where the researcher explicitly notes his biases (p. 254), and
- constant reflexivity, where the researcher continuously reviews their evolving biases throughout the research process and works to move beyond them with the literature review (p. 254-5).

Each strategy emphasizes the researcher's obligation to acknowledge the literature and his own biases during memoing, and to consciously work to not let any one concept or theory unreasonably overtake another.

Even without these precautions, there seemed to be little risk in this study of being overly-influenced by any existing theories or concepts since so little research on the relationship between urban play and place exists. In fact, broad knowledge of play and place seems more likely to contribute to the substance and speed of the memoing than to create bias.

### ***Autoethnography***

“Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones 2005)” (Ellis, Adams, & Borchard, 2012; emphasis authors', and as cited by authors). Autoethnography actually

originated as a scientific methodology that tried to move past the shackles of language and extant theories in research. Unlike informed grounded theory, though, autoethnographic approaches attempt to use first-hand experiences of a cultural phenomenon to propel advances in research. Research often begins as participatory observational studies. Data from participatory observation is then coupled with other data that originates beyond the researcher to provide context and build validity through a juxtaposition of accounts. The data that contextualizes the autobiographical personal experience can come from one or more external sources, such as interviews, artifacts, or media (like movies or newspaper articles). Writing strategies are used to compare accounts. Autoethnography, like informed grounded theory, relies on an informed researcher and an extensive and continually developing literature review. Autoethnographic approaches even embrace the constant reflexivity suggested in informed grounded theory, since autoethnography focuses on the continual reflection on the personal experiences of cultural community members. Further, in both informed grounded theory and autoethnography, literature is used to stimulate questions and inform data analysis as opposed to dictate truth (Ellis, Adams, & Borchard, 2012).

Like grounded theory methodology, autoethnography attempts to guide the researcher beyond extant theory to new concepts (Ellis,



*Figure 3.3, top: Barney Glaser, one of the founders of grounded theory.*

*Figure 3.4, middle: Robert Thornberg, who published informed grounded theory in 2012.*

*Figure 3.5, bottom: Carolyn Ellis, a leader in ethnographies.*

*Figure 3.6, right: An ethnography being carried out.*







Adams, & Borchard, 2012). The methodologies struggle to push research beyond the literature. In a related vein, both methodologies also acknowledge the explicit and implicit influences that a researcher has on each study. Both ultimately agree that knowledge is constructed by researchers (Ellis, Adams, & Borchard, 2012).

Also, as grounded theory employs writing in its memoing strategy, autoethnographic approaches to data analysis rely on writing and pattern identification as strategies for coming to conclusions in research. Writing is pursued as a way of knowing in each methodology. However, unlike informed grounded theory, autoethnographic methodology values the artistry of autobiographical writing as paired with the a more rigid approach to a cultural study. Engaging, thick descriptions of cultural acts are encouraged, especially in the final stages of autoethnographic study. This is because while informed grounded theory culminates with a paper that describes theories, autoethnography often culminates with an attempt to share findings through the production of “analytical, accessible texts” that can stimulate conversation and affect real social change by using storytelling techniques (Ellis, Adams, & Borchard, 2012).

### ***Layered Accounts***

In layered accounts autoethnography, data collection



and analysis can be simultaneous events, just as memoing and data collection can be in GT. During data collection, participatory observation expands the data set and informs the interview process. During data analysis, personal experience is layered with the reported and perceived experiences of others to construct narratives about cultural phenomena (Ellis, Adams, & Borchard, 2012).

### ***Autoethnography and Grounded Theory***

In this study, informed grounded theory and layered accounts autoethnography were paired to create a valid and coherent mixed-methods approach to studying urban play and place. Together, the methodologies worked to contextualize data and findings within reality and the literature. These principles directly influenced my methods.

During data collection, personal experience in urban play informed me as a researcher by giving me first-hand knowledge of play and place. I took field notes to document my own experiences. Sometimes I engaged in urban play on my own, but I also played with many other players in Vienna, Austria, Denver, Colorado, and Manhattan, Kansas to broaden my play experiences. My field notes document all of these experiences.

I balanced my field notes by also collecting data through semi-structured, walk along interviews. I interviewed six of the people

I played with, six other “urban players’ or just “players,” about urban play and urban play spaces. Gathering data from informants through interviews is common to both autoethnography and grounded theory.

I then engaged in data analysis by memoing my field notes and data from interviews. Continual reference to the literature, as guided by the themes in my memoing, also developed my analysis. Triangulating field notes, interviews, and the literature ensured validity and reliability in the study.

Writing was very important to my research process. Both methodologies use writing to acquire and process data, and I used writing styles from both methodologies to collect, analyze, and communicate data. Memoing (from informed grounded theory) was suited to quick and fluid data analysis. Memoing fit with my timeline for the study, and also allowed reflexive and uninhibited thought. Field notes and the construction of narrative accounts (from layered accounts autoethnography) provided data and contextualized interviews, and helped me communicate my findings, respectively.

In these ways, pairing autoethnography with grounded theory framed a successful and valid method.

# Methods.

## Overview

Informed grounded theory and autoethnography structured a mixed-methods approach to studying the relationship between urban play and place. Briefly, my methods were:

1. Conduct literature review (inform myself as a researcher)
2. Engage in play myself (further inform myself, generate data with field notes, scout play groups and possible interviewees)
3. Interview other players (build the body of the data set, situate my own observations) and record interviews, take photos, make path maps along the way
4. Conduct layered memoing by writing, mapping, diagramming, and sketching (memo and memo-on-memo to find patterns in data, use several memoing techniques, and, all the while, continue to consult the literature and play)
5. Construct findings (construct findings through memoing, with findings being theories and not descriptive narratives)
6. Disseminate findings (share findings as an accessible text, write descriptive narratives to help communicate findings)

Details of the methods are described below as aspects of preparation, data collection, and data analysis.

### ***Schedule***

Most of data collection and analysis overlapped. This overlap of events can be generally understood in Figure 3.7.

A more specific schedule of the research process can be found in Appendix C. Research began in early June 2014. The entire memoing process concluded in December 2014.

### **Preparation**

To prepare for conducting the research, I tested the interview questions for clarity by conducting two mock interviews with people who had engaged in urban play once or twice. I practiced memoing to develop an efficient and effective memoing style. Finally, just before my first play experience for research, I memoed what I perceived to be my biases. These biases focused on perceptions of play and place I had developed through my literature review, my social surroundings, and my own history with urban play. I continued to periodically record my biases to support an aware and objective memoing process (Thornberg, 2012).

## Data Collection

A broad data set is favored in grounded theory studies because it supports breadth and depth to the memoing and findings (Thornberg, 2012, Glaser, 2013), and in autoethnography because it juxtaposes perceptions (Ellis, Adams, & Borchers, 2012).

I therefore collected data on four different play activities: buildinging (physical play, in which players climb up and around buildings), parkour (physical play, in which players move past physical obstacles in quick, efficient, and graceful ways), urban exploration (discovery play, in which players access typically unoccupied spaces like abandoned buildings and sewers), and improvised street theater (illusion play, in which players use typical city spaces as stages for improvised comedy theater). Data collection occurred in two phases. First, I played myself. I played on my own and with the people whom I would later interview. After playing and taking field notes on my own experiences and the behavior of other players, I selected people to interview. For each type of play listed above, I interviewed at least one person. I tried to carefully select each interviewee. I interviewed people who all seemed open to being interviewed, but who also seemed to have varying experiences with play and place. The first three interviews I conducted focused on very different experiences and on different kinds of play. The last three interviews I conducted focused on the

2014

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

# DISSEMINATION

presenting at CELA 2015 | sharing toolkit

# MEMOING

writing | diagramming | sketching | mapping

# INTERVIEWS

alpha | bravo | charlie | delta | echo | foxtrot

A B

C

# LITERATURE

books | books | books

# PLAY

building | parkour | urban exploration | urban improv

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Figure 3.7 The layered methods of my research in a graphic timeline.



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same style of play; in fact, each of the final interviewees had played together at some point. Part of this selection strategy was to contrast their experiences to determine what might be common between players who had some similar experiences, but overall had different histories with play. I originally hoped to interview between eight and ten players. I found that six interviews of about 45 minutes each, along with my own field notes, provided plenty of data for analysis.

The interviews themselves were open ended, on-site interviews with players, where the players and I walked through the site. Each interview took place at a site where the interviewee had done urban play.

Several media were used for data collection during the interview. Recordings of the verbal exchanges, maps of the physical paths of the interviews, and photographs of landscape conditions identified as significant to play activity made up the data set. Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. I took nearly 80 photos altogether, and, of course, ended up with six interview path maps.

### ***Interview Questions***

All interview questions focus on understanding the urban player's relationship to play spaces. The questions were based on other studies regarding place phenomena. Language from surveys was

adapted to fit the topic and scope of research.

I asked the interview questions in no particular order. The order changed from interview to interview, and usually responded to the topics that interviewees were naturally touching on. I made it a point to try to move seamlessly between questions. I found it was easy to get interviewees into a rhythm of talking by first asking them about the play they do, and any play we may have done together. At times I also strayed from the questions or ask for elaborations to get further details or make interviewees feel more comfortable by talking about a familiar topic. No matter how the interviews changed, I still asked all of the original questions at some point.

The questions were

- How did you find this place?
- Does this place feel distinct? Why (not)?
- What do you come here to do?
- How often do you come here? How often do you come here to play?
- Do you plan to come here?
- What does this space make you think of? Do you have any good stories about this space?
- Do you feel any emotional attachment to this place (e.g. fondness)?

- Does this place feel like a part of who you are (when you do urban play)?
- If this place no longer existed, would you feel you had lost part of yourself? Why (not)?
- Do you fit with this place? How/Why?
- Does this place allow you to connect with yourself? What specifically allows this?
- Does the aesthetic of this environment support special events? How? What specifically? Do you look for specific qualities in a play space? Does this place reflect your personal values? Why?/How?
- Does this place reflect the type of person you are? Why?/How?
- Would you ever describe this space as a play space? Elaborate.

# Player profiles.

I played with many people in Vienna, Austria, Denver, Colorado, and Manhattan, Kansas. I practiced building, parkour, urban exploration, and improv in the streets.

I chose interview subjects for my research from the people I played with. Here I have included a brief profile of each player I interviewed, including a photograph of one of their play spaces, the map of the path we walked on their interview, and some quotes from their interview.







# ALPHA

Name: Alpha

Play: Buildering

Place: Vienna, Austria

5+ years playing



*Figure 3.8, left: A street corner near Landstrasse/Wien Mitte past which Alpha and I walked during our interview.*

*Figure 3.9, top: Alpha.*

*Figure 3.10, bottom: A builderer scaling a wall.*

*Figure 3.11, next spread: Interview path*







#### QUOTES FROM ALPHA'S INTERVIEW

“We decided we'd go downtown, we found a building facade that was basically empty. It could've been any building facade, but that's the first we came across.”

“I mean, it's cool to, like, pass by the finished building, for example, along the Cherry Creek and remember playing in, like, a construction net that used to be there.”

“We identified it as something that would be cool to do after work.”

“We would walk into construction sites and just look around. We never saw anyone, although apparently they have cars that patrol the area.”

“It gave the field, quote unquote, a lot more width. ... And there was a brick wall you could use to do tricks.”

“It was just a lot of fun.”



FRANZ JOSEPH MUSEUM

USE PLACES

Poster featuring a woman in a pink dress

Poster featuring a portrait of a man

Poster featuring a red graphic design

Information kiosk with various symbols and text



# BRAVO

Name: Bravo

Play: Parkour

Place: Vienna, Austria

15+ years playing

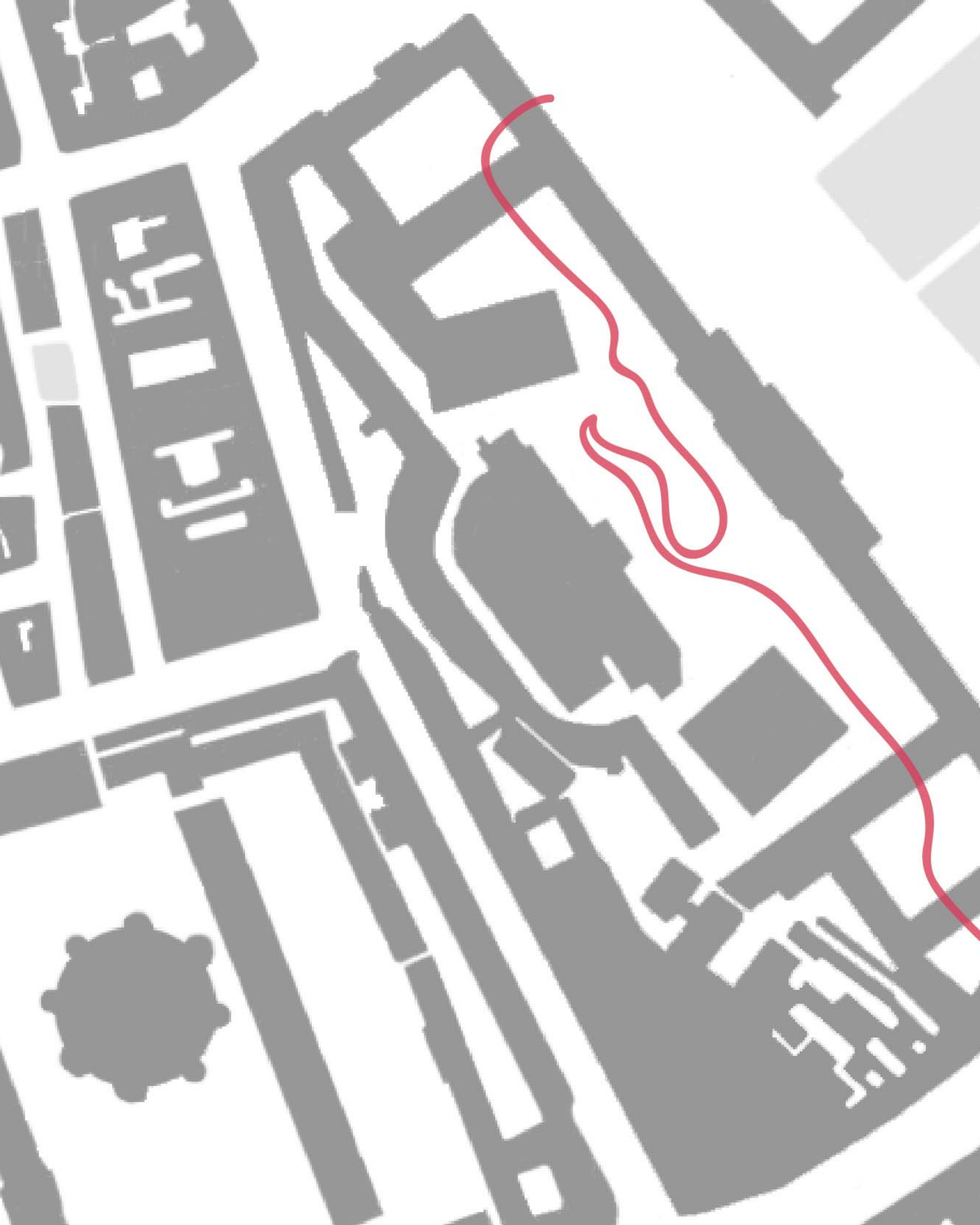


*Figure 3.12, left: A corner in Museumsquartier in Vienna, Austria where I interviewed Bravo.*

*Figure 3.13, top: Bravo.*

*Figure 3.14, bottom: Parkour players (traceurs) in Denver.*

*Figure 3.15, next spread: Interview path*







#### QUOTES FROM BRAVO'S INTERVIEW

“For me, it's important, I'm not seeing parkour as political tool or something like that, but for me it's important to bring back the thinking of, public spaces are for everyone. You should be able to do everything when you take care of other people and when you take care of the area. So when you don't destroy anything or when you don't run someone down, or, so, if you don't hurt anyone, you should be able to do everything. That's my point of view. That's why I think it's important that we should use the public spaces and we should be seen there. And that the people know, okay, there are people moving, and there's nothing dangerous with it, it's nothing illegal. There are just kids moving. And why shouldn't they?”

“We are really taking care of public spaces. And also private areas.”

“Traveling is very important for parkour. ... So there is a lot of exchange.”

“Let's ... talk about it.”





EAST RIVER PLAZA

ZEN SALON





# CHARLIE

Name: Charlie

Play: Urban exploration, roofing

Place: Denver, Colorado, USA

10+ years playing

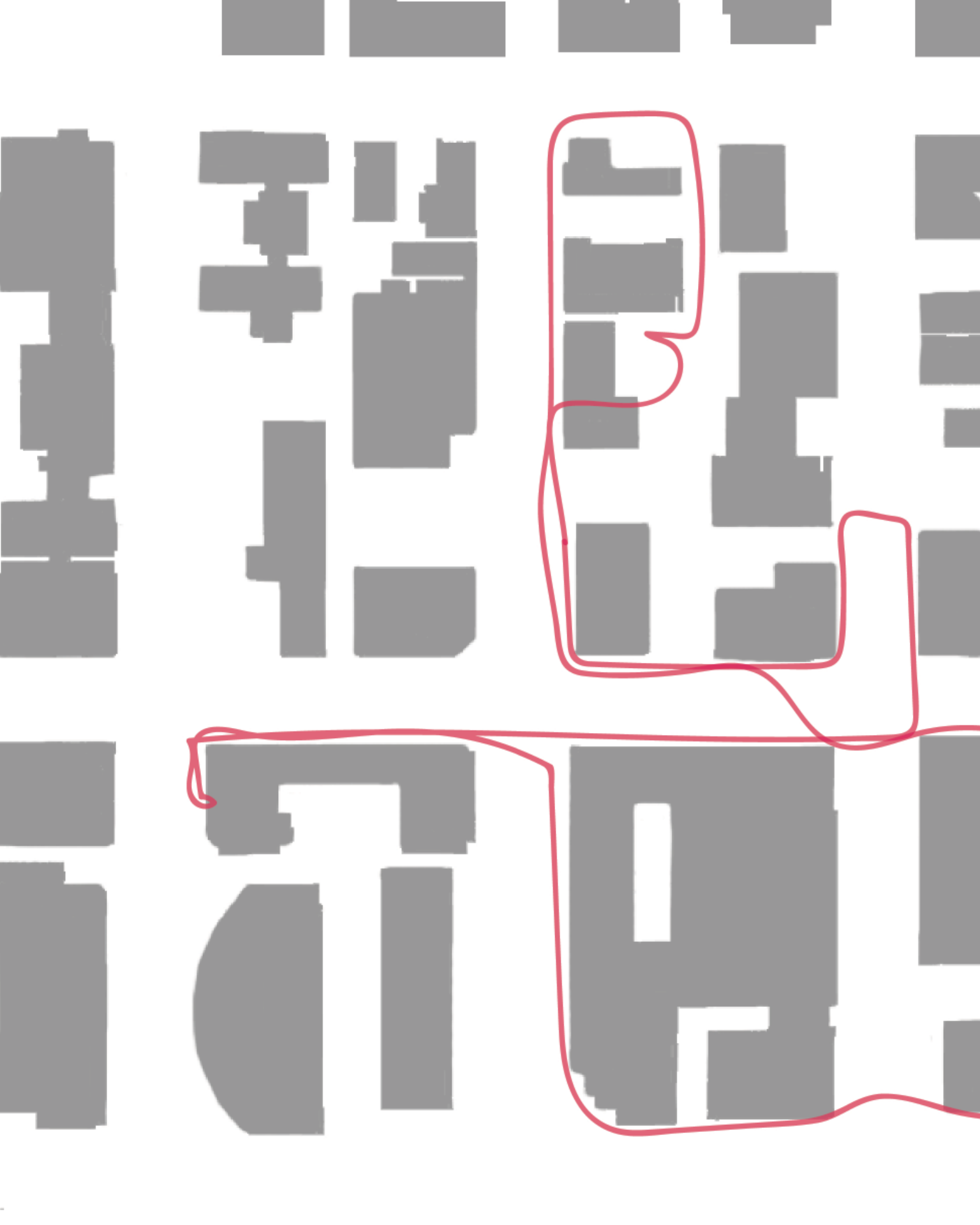


*Figure 3.16, left: One of the streets that Charlie and I walked down while playing and interviewing.*

*Figure 3.17, top: Charlie.*

*Figure 3.18, bottom: Gates Factory, before it was torn down.*

*Figure 3.19, next spread: Interview path*





## QUOTES FROM CHARLIE'S INTERVIEW

"I just think roofs are cool, 'cause nobody sees them and nobody really looks at them, except for, like, maintenance and initial construction, they don't get much time spent on them. But, they're a really cool part of a building."

"It sucks when you get older because you can't do it with as much immunity."

"And I think it makes you love the city more to, like, explore. Like, if, for example, you were like Spiderman and you could've gone on all the buildings, you would feel way attached to the city. 'Cause, like, "Oh, that roof, yeah, I remember that one," because you've been on, like, the Empire State Building. Spiderman probably feels super attached to New York."

"Going on roofs in foreign places is something I would like to do more. ... It cements that place in your mind and makes it almost like a souvenir in your head."





DONUTS  
MAKE PEOPLE  
HAPPY  
AGGIEVILLE  
Vanality



GRACE  
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Hannah  
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# DELTA

Name: Delta

Play: Improvised street theater

Place: Manhattan, Kansas, USA

1 year playing

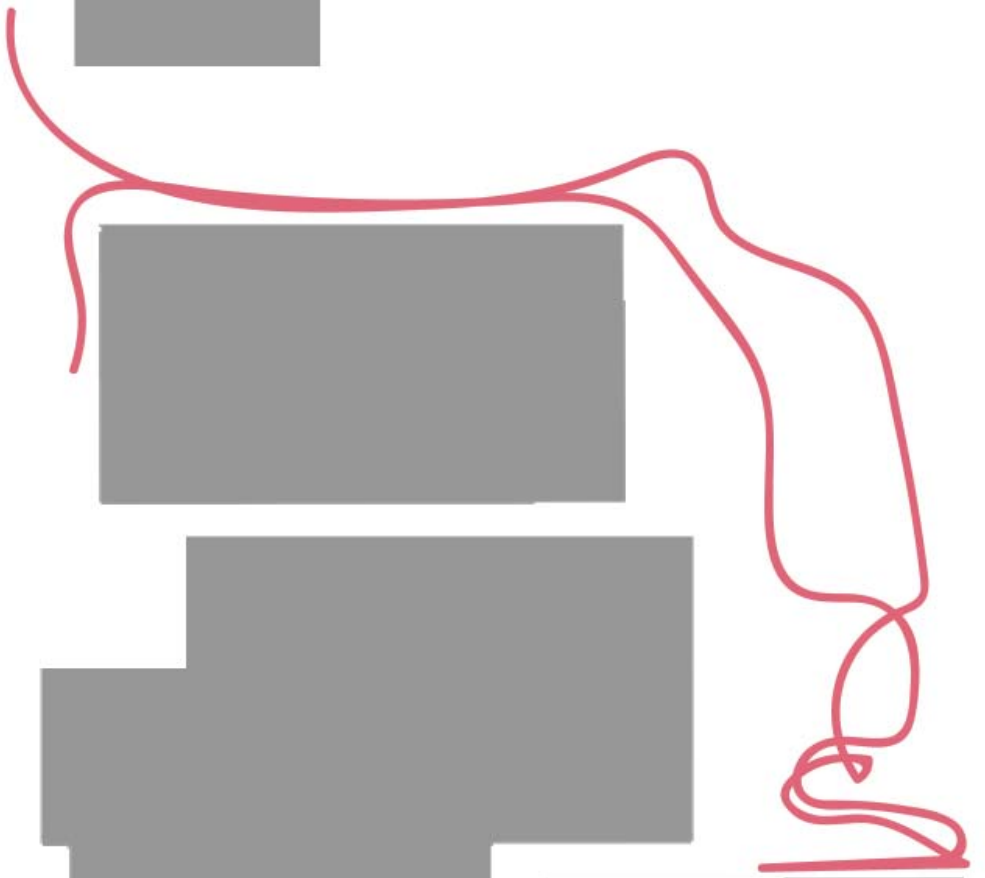


*Figure 3.20, left: A feature Delta said was significant on the interview: creativity at the Varsity Truck.*

*Figure 3.21, top: Delta.*

*Figure 3.22, bottom: Delta, street theater.*

*Figure 3.23, next spread: Interview path*





## QUOTES FROM DELTA'S INTERVIEW

"People respect the space. Most of the time."

"-For me, at least, there's a difference, like, between, like, some stories I tell people I know, and some stories are for, like, general conversation with strangers. And I feel like the John Wilkes Booth one is kind of like a "Get to Know You" story, more than anything. And, like, figure out, you know, what stuff you would do, or who the kind of people you like to hang out with is. Stuff like that. -What do you think that the John Wilkes Booth story says about you?  
-Uh. I think it says that I'm weird, and that I'm willing to try things that don't seem... normal. And that I'm willing to go out in public and do improv and be a part of--and be a part of something bigger."

"I don't think it [the space] reflects values so much as who I am."

"It's a place where everybody can come together. ... That feeling of togetherness and comradeship."









# ECHO

Name: Echo

Play: Improvised street theater

Place: Manhattan, Kansas, USA

2 years playing



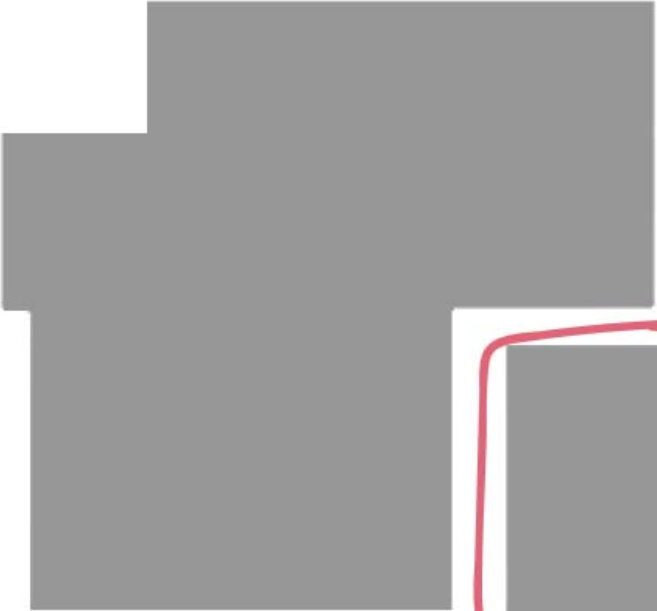
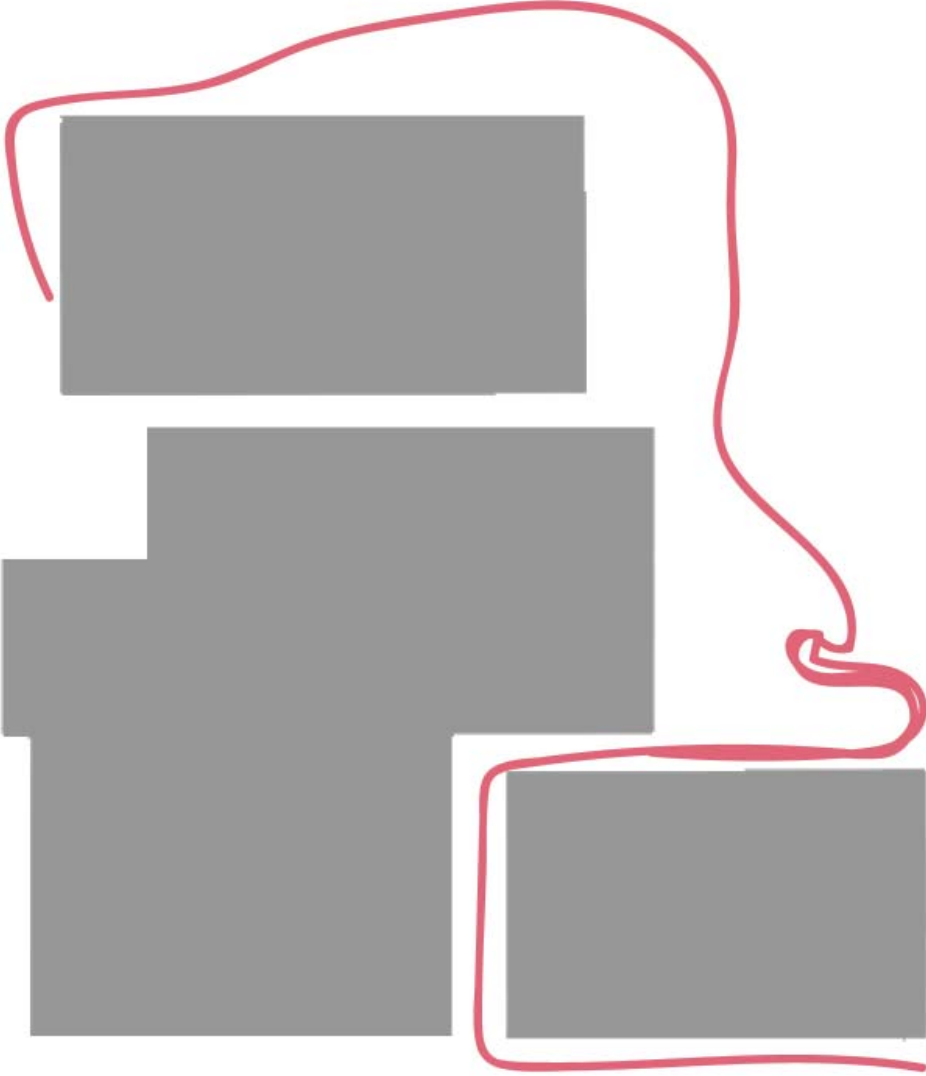
*Figure 3.24, left: The back benches at the Varsity Truck; a favorite spot of Echo's.*

*Figure 3.25, top: Echo.*

*Figure 3.26, bottom: Echo during a fake rally.*

*Figure 3.27, next spread: Interview path*







## QUOTES FROM ECHO'S INTERVIEW

“You know how you’re, like, on a playground when you’re in kindergarten, and everybody is kind of your friend, no matter what? So, like, the walls are already broken down, everybody is either talking to each other or picking fights, like, without knowing anybody. So, it kind of reminds me a lot of a kindergarten playground.”

“Just by being in the space, they were engaged [in the game], and they were experiencing it, which was more than anybody else, like, in the world was doing. Like, they kind of had this experience that nobody else would ever get, which is unique and fun. So, yeah, they were definitely in on it. And some people really took advantage of it, and some people didn't. Like, people were Instagramming it and laughing and enjoying it, and other people were just straight up ignoring it. Um, so, yeah. It just, kind of, surprisingly showed you what kind of people they were. You know? Not in a good or a bad way, but, just, like, what kind of people they were, and, like, how they handle a situation like that. It was interesting.”

# RSITY DONUTS

FRIDAY  
SATURDAY

10PM - 2AM

75 1414

## THE VARSITY TRUCK

<b>HOT DONUTS</b> <small>PLEASE NOTE: HOT DONUTS AVAILABLE UNTIL 11:00PM. OTHERWISE, WE'LL BE CLOSED.</small>	\$1	<b>BACON BOMB</b> <small>BAKED DONUT COATED WITH BACON SAUCE AND TILLY. IT'S AS GOOD AS IT GETS.</small>	\$3
<b>PARTY BALLS</b> <small>ONE IN BACON AND CHEESE. OTHER DONUT SAUCE. GET 'EM BY THE BUCKET OR CASE.</small>	\$1.50 / 10	<b>PARTY BOX</b> <small>THAT'S RIGHT. BACON, CHEESE, BACON &amp; CHEESE.</small>	\$5
<b>CORN DOG</b> <small>CRACKER CRUST. THREE IN A BUCKET. THE SECRET'S FOOD ON A STICK.</small>	\$2	<b>BACON</b> <small>BAKED DONUT COATED WITH BACON SAUCE AND TILLY. IT'S AS GOOD AS IT GETS.</small>	\$1
<b>MAC 'N CHEESE GRILLED CHEESE</b> <small>GRILLED BACON. TOPPED WITH JALAPENO AND CHEESE. THE SECRET'S THE SAUCE. IT'S BACON.</small>	\$4	<b>MILK/REDBULL WATER/SODA</b> <small>THE SECRET'S THE SAUCE.</small>	\$2 \$1





# FOXTROT

Name: Foxtrot

Play: Improvised street theater

Place: Manhattan, Kansas, USA

4 years playing



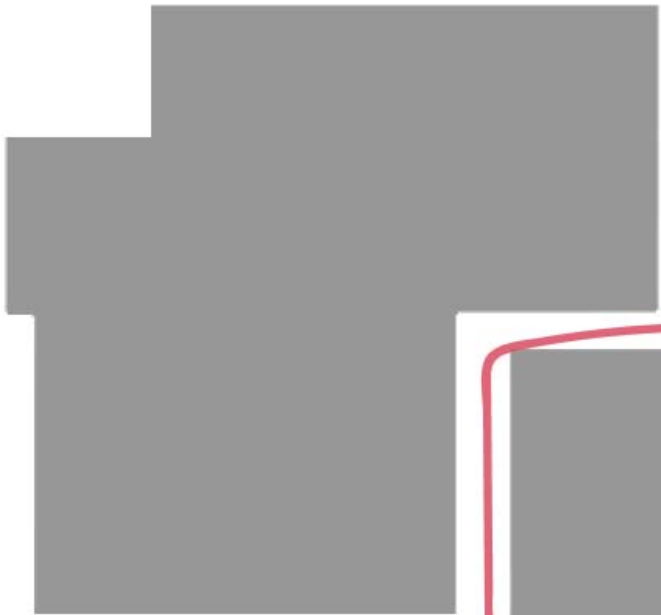
*Figure 3.28, left: The front of the Varsity Truck, where we did the fake rally.*

*Figure 3.29, top: Echo.*

*Figure 3.30, bottom: An Improv Everywhere event.*

*Figure 3.31, next spread: Interview path*







## QUOTES FROM FOXTROT'S INTERVIEW

“It wasn't until I met my best friend, ----, ... It wasn't really until I met someone else who kind of did that [improv in public] that I felt more comfortable doing it, and then after that I didn't stop because it's fun.”

“You get people in a confined space so they can't really leave... they have to watch you!”

“It keeps you playful, and it keeps the creative juices flowing and reminds you that you can have inspiration anywhere.”

“If I do it on campus... I don't know. I try not to do it in public because it can get really loud and obnoxious and some people, like, you know you're going to make them uncomfortable, or you'll embarrass yourself and you're really not intending to. Because you never know when a professor's going to be behind you and you'll be like 'Meh meh meh meh meh. This is a character that I pretend to be!' And they're like, 'Alright, good luck on your exam tomorrow.'”

*This is an example of the kind of field notes I would take while playing. I typed field notes on my phone.*

*This excerpt is from the set of field notes that I later developed into the narrative “Charlie,” presented in the next chapter. Charlie and I engaged in discovery play together through urban exploration.*

*The field notes and narrative together show what changed as I developed field notes into digestible narratives.*

CHARLIE

We just found this place by chance. It is right off of the parking garage. Weird that it is not closed off somehow to the public. I mean, the door is cracked, not locked or even closed. Lights from within, so we enter. It's construction materials, open to the weather. Window pane areas are open, but maybe it's not actually for window panes. Maybe it is for parking? No, must be indoor space in the future, because we had to get there through a door.

Construction materials everywhere. Tool lockers. Wood. Metal. A broken chair. Smoke breaks?

We are two or three stories up. Open to city. It's nighttime. Why are the lights in? Bare bulbs. We ask. We whisper. Tip toe. Shoes on, sounds off. I'm glad I have a backpack for my stuff. Where else would it go?

We creep to windows and look out. Space extends to right, to where? Interesting stuff on the left side though. Supplies and stuff. A grill. -a grill? Who's eating up here? Light is orange. Cords. -there's gotta be someone here, right? -yeah, it's weird that the lights are on.

So amazing so scary my heart is going crazy!! Trespassing is scary, but I want to see more. I push us forward. I climb the rail. He comes too. The lights are on.

We tip toe

We whisper  
Isn't there someone here?

We come up with back stories  
I start talking in German -ah, scheiße, verboten? Entschuldigung!

What is our cover up?  
We had a showing and we only just got here.

We hoped someone might still be around. -We are a couple. -Where are we from? -Omaha. No one wants to be from Omaha. -yeah, we can make up details that people will have to believe.

We tip toe

We are supposed to wear booties. -oh shit.

Did you see any booties? -no

We find booties down the hall. -here, these are for you. -these are going to be super loud, though. -oh shit, you're right.

We want to wear the booties, be respectful. Of the carpet. Hahaha irony. Is anyone here?

We find rolling metal cases. Locked. Yank up on them, make a noise. We are still. -wait, but it's latched here. Can we move it? ... I can't get it. -here, let me try. Damn. That would've been really cool. -yeah, I know, right? Still. Laugh.

Lots of junk here. Well lit. We explore. -what's in here? -shipped from far away. Something



important? -probably exotic. -ooh.

Stairwell. No more leaping over small gate barrier, no barrier here. Workers don't need barriers once they are in. Stairs are scary, you can't see if someone is up there. He goes first. My shoes are slipping off a little. I came right after work. Flats, not sandals or sneakers. Smelly flats. Scared. Heart pumping. Next floor could be occupied. Before, it was just the entry sequence to this construction palace. Now we are getting further, penetrating deeper. Excuses become less and less believable the further we go. Fear is getting caught, not danger of construction materials.

Hallway. Empty, we think. -this hallway is creepy. -I know, right? -should we check it out? -yeah.

Walk down the hall. Tip toe. Scared. No, thrilled. New room. Rooms for a condo. Filled with construction materials, no finishes. -oh shit, what if someone is in here? -we are so

paranoid. We are acting high. -haha

If we talk loud it is more likely that we are not sneaking. -You should say something. -hello? Hello? -you have a good voice for that, it's like it's a little bit nervous but covering up. It almost sounds indignant, like you're mad that there isn't anyone here. (I am scared and I am confident. I cannot pretend)

Charlie: what are these metal tags for?

Me: these ceilings are so low.

Ch: I wonder what's in here.

Me: You can barely stand up straight.

Char: but nothing here is locked up. Weird.

Me: you can get a haircut from those fire sprinkler things

Ch: there is no security

Me: look at this chair.

Ch: look at this view. Denver is beautiful.

Me: yeah, I can't believe it. This is amazing.

This is an unusually interesting roof.

It's creepy that this light is on. Do you think it's

creepy that this light is on?

Yes, it's super creepy.

Did you hear something? I think I heard a voice

I hear something but I don't know what it is

Straining to see in a dark stairwell

What would happen if we got stuck in here?

-hi, mom...

Still whispering. And tip toeing. Walking slow

He makes a face as we go up the stairs. I get scared for a second. What does he see.

Top floor. Light part way down. Or. We can go to the roof? Are there any warnings? Charlie

climbs the ladder and pulls the latch. It makes a noise. We go outside. It is raining. We prop the hatch open with a rope. The roof is open to a condo below. We are louder on the roof.

We look around. We talk about the city. -I

recognize those apartment buildings. -it looks

like some aerial view with google maps. ... If we were Russian, this is the part where we would hang off the edge of the building and take pictures.

Less scary on descent. Louder. Take a souvenir.

It's really good that we had each other to push each other forward. It was scary sometimes, but really good that you had someone to be brave and fearless in front of.

## **Data analysis**

Data was interpreted through a layered memoing process (as per Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, Thornberg, 2012). I used several memoing strategies including note-taking, voice recordings, mapping, and sketching (Schreiber & Stern, 2001). (Note: No transcriptions were made of the voice recordings of the interviews. The audio recordings themselves were memoed in order to keep the analysis quick and flowing, and not pollute the analysis with extensive thought about each individual word of the interviews. The quick pace is appropriate for grounded theory methodologies (Schreiber & Stern, 2001; Glaser, 2011).)

My memos ranged in development and detail from incident to incident memos, which recorded the first connections I saw as a researcher, to conceptual memos, which could be as long as a few paragraphs. I ended up having many shorter memos with smaller leaps of abstraction at the beginning, and memoed longer and with more supporting logic and intricacy later on in research.

Mapping memos were more common earlier on. With these memos I found it helpful to indicate where interviewees walked, but also where they pointed (see Figures 3.35 and 3.37). I also layered maps of activity (see Figure 3.36). Towards the end, diagrammatic and sketching memos were more important (see Figures 3.40-3.43).

I sketched some play spaces to understand what elements were important, and why, and to help remind me of the intricacy of different play spaces. Sometimes, these sketches or diagrams were constructed over the photographs I took.

During memoing, I often searched the Kansas State University databases for articles that related to the themes I was discovering. Most notably, I found literature on the concept “sense of neighborhood,” which helped me describe the effect of play on place.

Once I found a core of 32 concepts from my memoing, I grouped these findings into more overarching themes (see Figures 3.38 and 3.39). I listened back to the interview recordings at this point, and then refined my findings to reflect the interviews. I compiled supporting quotes from the interviews and early memos under the headings of different findings. These themes and supporting quotes became my findings.



MEMOING. Under the impression that there is  
 between play+place. I am research  
 I think it exists. Also, I think that  
 I am believes that this doesn't have to happen  
 a good, but part of me also thinks that play  
 ... place. I think I see that in myself and my own  
 experiences with play, but I also think that I see that  
 people. I certainly worry that people will say what  
 I think I want them to say during interviews because  
 I read my IRB consent form which pretty direct  
 states that relationship. So, I am worried about the  
 of play impacting place on at least two levels:  
 1. me in myself, and I know that I believe play is  
 true in my own experience (and probably in another  
 well based on interviews)  
 2. worry that my interview subjects have maybe uncon-  
 (perhaps consciously) inflated place awareness  
 because of my research  
 I hope this won't really carry through all of my research  
 issues of ownership, for example, seem separate  
 think. And that's a lot of what I'm looking at  
 under the impression for a long time that the  
 age I was using would be an effective way of talking  
 place, but more and more I think that it could vary  
 on sociocultural phenomena / context / ~~memory~~  
 believe that different people speak about place  
 differently.  
 I wonder if this may be a direction I may  
 take a topic I may explore professionally.  
 or as community design.  
 regard. Also - role of landscape architect as a  
 & there is a lot that isn't being done by landscape  
 issues on their own (for example, Walk+Travel). For  
 some other brilliant landscape architects are adding  
 out landscape partners professionally. I mean, I  
 wonder if there is work that can be done

Figures 3.32, left: An example of memoing biases.

Figure 3.33, center: An example of initial memoing.

Figure 3.34, right: An example of diagramming in memoing.

probably, it's just about making  
 in a place that ~~isn't~~ isn't <sup>sure</sup>  
 conducive to exploring a  
 that, so it's nice to have a  
 sneak up on and infiltrate

cultural value of  
 Exploration, ownership, etc  
 American identity.

↳ probably, human to  
 explore, conquer, find

Exploration + experim  
 Society, but cities in  
 not "supportive" of  
 of those motivations,

It's the evolution of the

It sucks as you get older  
 do it with as much imm

↳ my parents would be  
 pick me up from jail.

Regulations are age  
 Admittedly, limbs +  
 better for exploring  
 bodies are genera

Showing a roof to a new pe  
 exciting.

→ Finding - laundry room s  
 cities are exciting. these  
 out that we aren't suppose

... a little mini-adventure  
like, cities aren't super-  
rest or something like  
little roof you can

... exploration.

... so tied up in the

... entity.

... frontiers + master them.

... tation are valued in  
and of themselves are  
that kind of activity.  
tc.

... ort.

... because you can't  
... nity"

... had if they had to

... st.

... bodies are  
... climbing, and younger  
... y limberer.

... son out is always

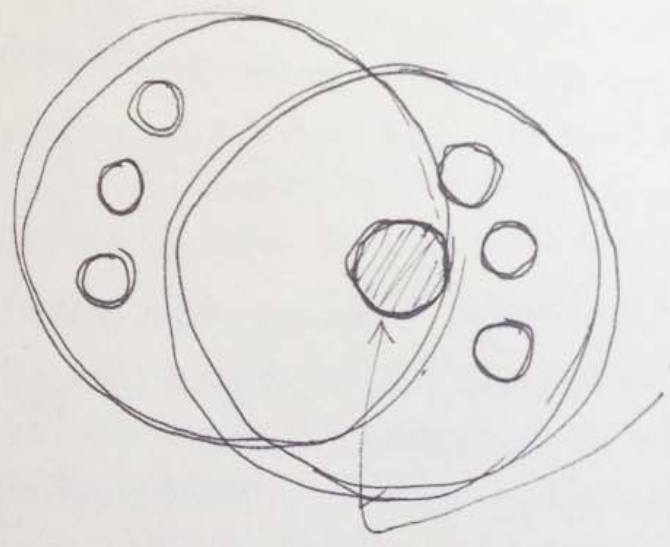
... well on top of a building.

... stuff we design  
... to know.

... thing

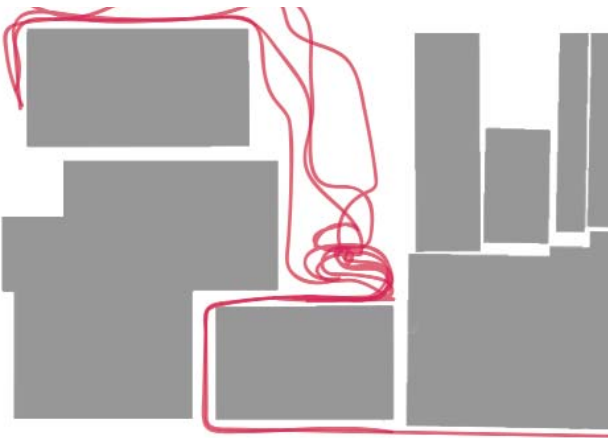
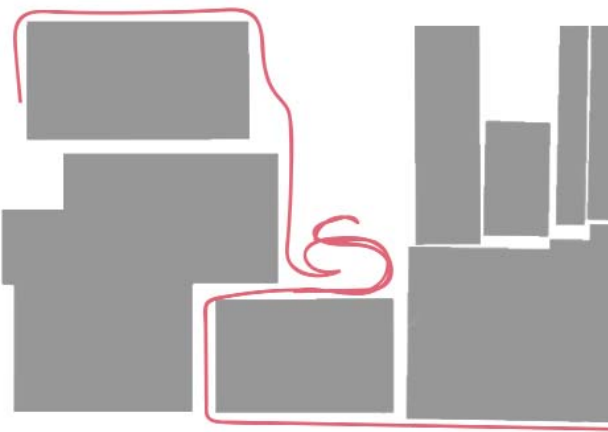
• when someone shows me a place to  
use and know, it makes me feel in  
community, and sometimes with  
depending. In with space if allowed  
in community if it's not allowed.  
It's definitely an element of not-  
not allowed. and stuff. but it's what  
I want the thrill. I need it. We want  
who we are as friends sometimes.

Physical - place - self congruity  
Social - place - self incongruity  
except for  
allies who



SEEING  
DOUBLE.





Figures 3.35, left top: An example of a path map.

Figure 3.36, left middle: An example of layered path maps.

Figure 3.37, left bottom: An example of mapping significant objects on site.

Figures 3.38, center: More structured memoing.

Figures 3.39, right: Grouping findings into themes.

VERT

preliminary ...

- ▶ play spaces are other ...
- other
- ▶ creativity is a big mo
- ▶ mapping as memoing
- ▶ not ownership, but und
- ▶ small change<sup>(?)</sup>, but not a
- + Topophilia Emotional experien
- Terraphilia So, there is a c
- and to being a part
- + Belonging definitely a quality
- / Rootedness Perhaps this is
- the comment abo
- ++ Insiderness — understan
- Urban Identity an urban pla
- thing about i
- Place Attachment Or, there
- that comes from home
- it is not as potent if u
- Urban plays can
- Place-Self Congruity cue
- and one-upping. Let me take a s
- + Place Identity does relate
- play. So, without wanting to c
- + Place Dependence I am f
- of very high horses, ~~there is~~ I still
- + SOP who play to play, and thro

How TO MENTION THE OTHER PLACE PHENO

- right before my first committee mee

and tried to reconsider if my data

have already written regarding pla

seemed more consistent with what

other ideas.

Feelings. From the inconsistent

transferring and their communit

- ▶ us against the world
- ▶ nerves
- ▶ thrill 😊
- ▶ happy. Smarter. Connect
- ▶ discomfort

Advertisement of play in

is a way to gain approval

heart operator (and

for different types of

whatly invited it the

word

for spreading the word

and their communit

the inconsistent

of society

and

something like a hot environment and



ICAL.

spaces, too  
in spaces first  
variation

technique  
standing.

anger or damage  
desired

es in research  
an emotive aspect to playing  
that community. I think there's  
business with a community.  
what Joon was referring to with  
becoming a professional hipster?  
There is a way in which being  
defines you. But I think another  
is that you don't really advertise it.  
Maybe a quality of authenticity  
pursuing urban play, but  
we're doing it to put on facebook.  
be part of a culture of play or a  
ve of display and bragging  
fic. That is a no. And it really  
of basic motivations for doing  
and elitist or exclusionary or as if  
the owner and keeper of a stable full  
want to say that there are those  
who play for the fame, and there  
ENA: is a right way/

ng. I specifically went through  
was fitting in with what people  
the phenomena. Some ideas  
I had been remembering than  
feel between themselves and the  
play better and faster and to help  
becoming better known is to help  
being accessible, making a  
recreation they represent. Their motto  
urban play are those who are  
! In fact, the only legitmate spaces  
put I think that those who put  
make friends, start a discourse:  
a way to advance the play itself.  
bragging and general + self aware  
which might seem confusing because

Security is always important

play @ landmarks  
play everyday

play is better in walkable cities spaces

play spaces are everyday spaces  
(except exploration, sometimes)

enclosure  
protection  
fety  
boundaries  
crecy

variety accessibility safety  
enclosure aesthetics seating  
maintenance plants shade  
seating lighting water  
topo- hails operation

play makes memories

perception of all spaces (more than play spaces) change because of play

play creates boundaries at multiple scales

play landscapes  
defining  
riscapes  
(yandoche)

memorable pieces are the elements of a landscape, not the composition

puzzle - how do you fit w/ this space

peace is a byproduct not a motivation





Figure 3.40, above: Sketching the Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic to understand urban exploration..

Figure 3.41, immediate right: Sketching the McCain Quad at Kansas State University to understand place.

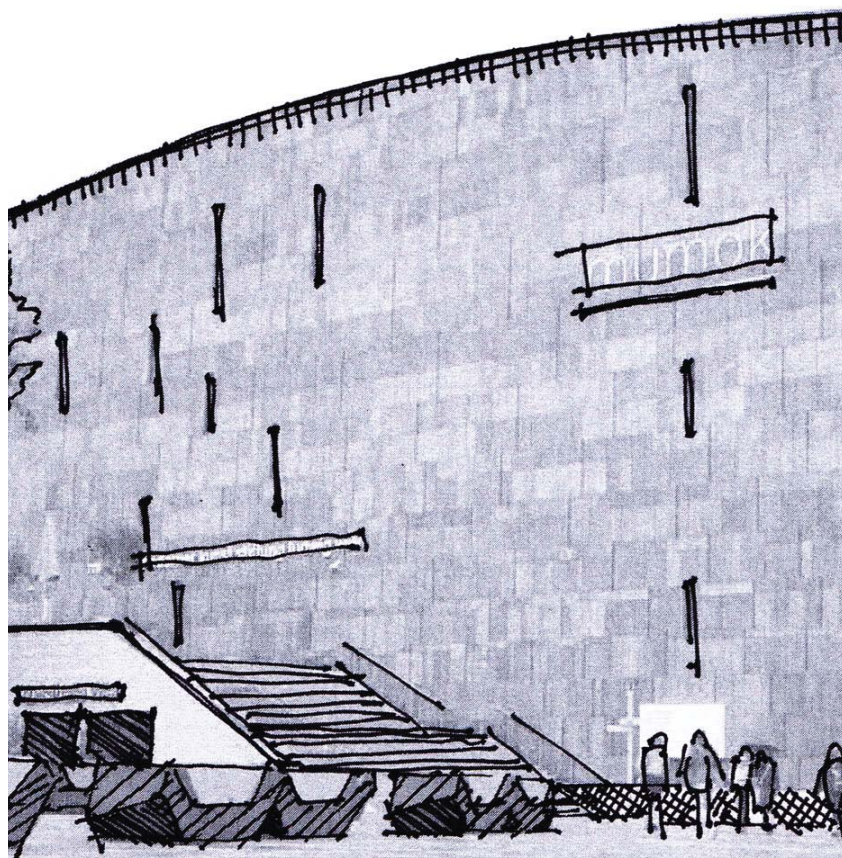
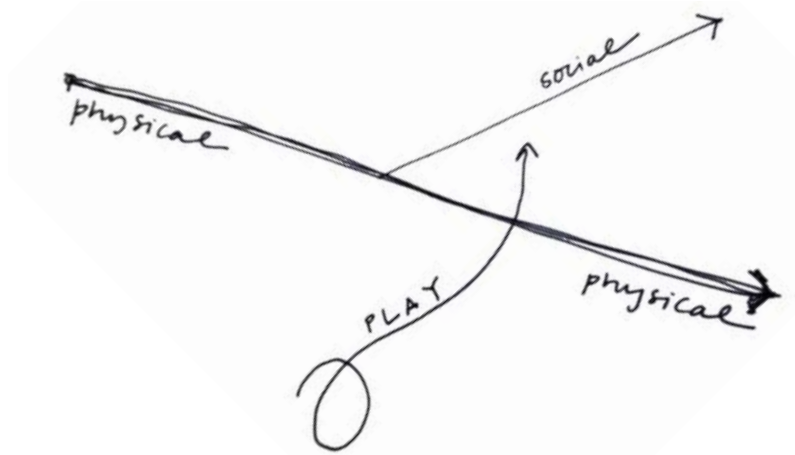






Figure 3.42, immediately below: A diagram of how play acts as a pivoty between the physical and social landscapes.

Figure 3.43, bottom right: Sketching Museumsquartier to understand what makes a play space great.



## **Limitations**

### ***Confounding Variables***

During memoing, it seemed possible that the spaces under investigation gained more weight in my own mind and the minds of the interview subjects because it was the subject of my research. Data may also have been affected by elements like social desirability bias. Also, the interviews were conversational, and I would sometimes share my own experiences. So, some sections of interviews seemed to be focused on the interviewees responding to my own perceptions of space, rather than describing their own. Usually, these sections occurred at the end of the interviews, and hopefully did not impact most of the interview. Special concern was exercised when memoing these parts of interviews.

During one of the interviews, the interviewee and I adjourned to a restaurant after conducting most of the interview in the field for personal comfort (it was very cold outside). It seemed that the description of spaces remained as detailed as the interviewee was at the site itself; however, moving away from the site may have impacted the type or quality of memories that were shared during the interview.

### ***Limitations of the methods***

Adopting an autoethnographic methodology meant that data

collection and analysis were both directly influenced by my own play experiences. My own play experiences and personal relationships impacted the sample and success of the interviews, in addition to directly contributing to the data set. Since I included personal experiences in the data set, and also used them to guide sampling and data analysis, the strength of conclusions regarding different kinds of play activity are impacted by my own preferences regarding play.

The study was also limited by the types of media used to collect data. Though I adopted a mixed methods approach to data collection, data descriptive of the relationship between urban play and place identity could still have been missed.

Additionally, the study is limited by who was interviewed. I did try to have a diverse sample. The interviewees are different across several spectra:

- types of play (building, parkour, exploration, improvised street theater)
- different genders (male and female)
- different nationalities and home cities (Vienna, Austria; Denver, Colorado; Manhattan, Kansas)
- different ages (18-37)
- different ethnicities (Caucasian, black)
- different socioeconomic backgrounds (lower class to upper middle class)



Nonetheless, the application of findings to the broader play community is limited because of the size of the sample and the fact that I chose who to interview.

Finally, since the data analysis was limited by my own knowledge of place concepts, and my ability to impartially discern patterns in the data during the memoing process. Surely, despite my intent to be objective, the findings of the study are biased towards my own views.







*Figure 4.1* People climbing the “Iamsterdam” sculpture in Amsterdam.



**CHAPTER 4**

**FINDINGS &  
APPLICATIONS**

# Findings.

## **What is the relationship between play and place?**

Play develops place.

However, place is rarely a direct outcome of play; more often, it is a byproduct. Play and place function as pivots between the physical landscape and the social landscape.

“Sense of neighborhood” is the best existing term to describe the way that play responds to both physical and social landscapes, and can be used as a springboard for describing play and place across social and physical dimensions.

## **Introduction**

Initially, I expected to find conclusions that dealt primarily with the physical landscape. While some of my memos led to such findings, I also learned a great deal about how play impacts social landscapes. As play and place are both inputs and outputs in social discourse about urban spaces, the importance of the social landscape now seems obvious to me. My findings can be categorized into findings regarding the physical landscape, findings regarding the social



landscape, and findings about how play relates to both landscapes.

These findings can be explored at different scales, with play being most important at smaller scales, from details to neighborhoods, from self-expression to the dynamics of local communities.

Overall, I arrived at twenty-one findings, which can be organized into four broader topics. Figure 4.2 illustrates how my findings are organized into the four broader topics.

In the following pages, each finding is elaborated upon, and is accompanied by supporting quotes and memos. Quotes are attributed to interviewees, and other notes, those without a specific attribution, are my own memos and developing thoughts on the topic. To preserve anonymity, names of players who were not interviewed are substituted with [name redacted]. When the quote involves an exchange between me and the interviewee, the change in speaker is noted with a dash, “-”, and my words are italicized.

Two narratives developed from field notes are also included in this section as well to help illustrate the findings. They are offset from the findings on their own pages.

## Themes

*Figure 4.2 This figure shows how my findings are organized into broader themes. The findings are on the right, and the themes are described and listed on the left.*

### **THE PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE INFLUENCES PLAY.**

Play occurs in landscapes with specific physical characteristics. Players do not adapt the physical landscape to have these characteristics; instead, they play in landscapes that already have these features. Play spaces are found, not made.

### **PLAY INFLUENCES THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE.**

Players build friendships and communities through play. These groups have real and complex structures, and are defined by social elements like linguistic markers and play patterns. Players are very aware of the social discourses they take part in as players.

### **PLAY DEVELOPS SENSE OF NEIGHBORHOOD.**

This existing concept best describes the relationship that players develop with spaces because of play. However, the relationship is more complicated. Sense of neighborhood can be used as a springboard off of which to understand the relationship.

### **PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPES ARE PART OF PLAY ACROSS SCALES.**

Play is a strong pivot between physical and social landscapes.

# Findings

---

The identity of a space for play is tied specifically to the urban form, and not building names or addresses, meaning: the memorable parts of a play space are physical features.

Play is intensely creative.

Players know that cities change, that their play spaces will evolve and disappear. They like this (it feeds the creativity, the layering). However, the prohibition or persecution of play, especially at or from specific spaces, is frustrating.

Exploration play can be in new spaces. Otherwise, play occurs in spaces used for other things, or encountered in day to day life by the player.

Different types of play demand different things from the landscape.

As players evolve, they experience a corresponding evolution of their play spaces. New abilities reveal new possibilities in old haunts.

Players judge spaces based on how well they host play.

---

Play landscapes are temporary social landscapes.

Risk and chance are salient elements of urban play.

Players sometimes feel that play is misunderstood.

Players experience a tension of simultaneously being a part of multiple social realities in the same physical space.

You and your players (your group) are separate from them, and/or other players (other groups).

Players keep their best spots secret.

---

Players create a dialect of play.

Policy enforcement regarding many different play activities is not equal.

Play does not necessarily breed comfort in a space.

Players make play memories, and play memories are important to them. Players experience increased insideness.

Players experience an increased sense of neighborhood.

---

Play and place at multiple scales.

Play landscapes are representative/defining landscapes. Synecdoche.

## The physical landscape influences play.



**Figure 4.3** *Players might adjust movable furniture, like these people did at Museumsquartier, but do not often change anything more.*

*The identity of a space for play is tied specifically to the urban form, and not building names or addresses, meaning: the memorable parts of a play space are physical features.*

Players consistently demonstrate that building names and addresses are relatively unimportant. Players are more likely to remember spaces based on site details, or relative location of the site to their common routes or destinations. Details often inspire a new name for a play space, known to only a community of players.



- Alpha: It gave the field, quote unquote, a lot more width. ... And there was a brick wall [“the wall”] you could use to do tricks. *-And the smaller space made it necessary [to do unusual tricks]. -Yeah, basically.*
- Alpha: We decided we’d go downtown, we found a building facade that was basically empty. It could’ve been any building facade, but that’s the first we came across.
- Alpha: It seemed pretty anonymous. Maybe not [I would maybe not miss it]. But, just the fact that there are places like that [is good]...
- Alpha: *-Did you do it multiple times? Did you go back to the same place?* -I think we may have considered it, but I think we only did it once.
- The identity of a space can be limited to something as generic as “an office building.” Lots of play spaces are just anonymous, and taken advantage of because they are available. And the important parts of spaces aren’t even the space itself, but moreso the details that make spaces important. For example, a particular kind of wall or bench, or cool stuff that’s up just because a block is under construction.

***Play is intensely creative.***

Players are passionate about the creativity that is involved

in urban play. Many of the interviews revolved around this theme. Interestingly, the interviews about improvised street theater focused less on the theme of creativity. However, the constant creativity required by improvisation may seem more commonplace to those who improvise regularly than to other people.

Play demands creativity from players. By definition, play is a creative act, since it requires players to reconsider what space should be used for, and how they should be relating to space and to each other. Players relish the challenge of eking out each drop of potential from a space. How many ways can each wall, rail, step, bench, sewer, and roof be used? How many spaces in my city can be mined for play? Which ones are best? How can players be better and more creative than their friends at adapting the space?

The creativity theme reveals how well play develops topophilia. Topophilia is defined as a combination of cognitive challenge, which includes complexity, mystery, texture, and coherence; sensory diction; familiarity, which includes identifiability and privacy; and ecodiversity (Ogunseitán, 2005). Creativity relates well to complexity and coherence.

- Alpha: We also raced across the nets because it was really long. [name redacted] is just really creative.
- Bravo: It's like, I'm not looking for something particular, it's just a

creative process, and I can think “Okay, there could be something useful for me.”

- Bravo: So, it's just really a creative process.
- Bravo: There is so much after 10 years not discovered [in the same city, Vienna]. We discover spots right now, like, this year. New spots come up. And there will be a lot of other spots discovered next year.
- Bravo: For me, the variety of the city is very important. I think that should never be taken away from parkour.
- Charlie: [Gyms are] the opposite of creative.
- Charlie: It's a little more fun if there is an unusual way up. [as opposed to a ladder]
- Foxtrot: It keeps you playful, and it keeps the creative juices flowing and reminds you that you can have inspiration anywhere.
- Memo: REAPPROPRIATION.
- Memo: CREATIVITY.
- Memo: It's a creative process for everybody. Creativity and knowledge of how to adapt space and be creative is a huge allure. Aside from fun, that is another reason to do play. Or, it's part of the fun.

*Players know that cities change, that their play spaces will evolve and disappear. They like this (it feeds the creativity, the layering). However, the prohibition or persecution of play, especially at or from specific spaces, is frustrating.*

Players do not like being barred from playing in a space. In fact, they see this as less acceptable than having their play spaces be totally demolished or redesigned. Players understand and even appreciate that cities are evolving, organic entities. The redesign of space is something players expect. However, limiting the creative reuse of space is akin to limiting freedom of expression.

- Alpha: You know that it's temporary. But it's cool to remember, like, yeah... something that isn't there anymore.
- Alpha: I mean, it's cool to, like, pass by the finished building, for example, along the Cherry Creek and remember playing in, like, a construction net that used to be there.
- Bravo: If it's forbidden to do it... If the spot is still there, it's still functional, so to say, but if it's forbidden, the place is still there, but people say you are not allowed to do it, that's a sad thing for me.
- Bravo: If they get away from the old spot and build something new. Like Donauinsel, for an example, we know that in a few years they



will scrape it off and put something new there. But that's the time, that's happening. Like, spots disappearing and new spots coming. That's life. You can't change that.

- Memo: Players are cool with the fact that cities are evolving. And they talk about playing as a way of actually tracking a city and how it develops.

***Exploration play can be in new spaces. Otherwise, play occurs in spaces used for other things, or encountered in day to day life by the player.***

Part of the allure of walkable spaces for play is their comfort and safety. Their accessibility, though, is also of primary importance.

The discovery of a new play space is often serendipitous. That is, players often see or visit spaces without the intention of playing there, only to find that they imagine it a a play space. Those who play often develop an eye for finding new, interesting play spaces in a city. Even a glimpse from a bus window can be enough to spark a seasoned player's imagination. Therefore, the spaces near homes, offices, schools, shops, and commutes are usually appropriated to urban play. Spaces outside of the daily routine that are nonetheless frequented because of their walkability are also attractive for playful reappropriation.

- Alpha: The construction site was right by work. Or, you just see construction sites around town. ... The net looked really fun. It was right there.
- Bravo: When I just go by tram, or something like that, I look out of the window, it's like, "Hey! Cool! There is something!"
- Memo: You scope it out in advance, you see it around town when you're biking or driving around. A lot of it seems to be on commutes because a lot of commutes are boring, especially after a while. So your mind wanders, and that's when you scope it out. Players scope out spots on the way to work/school, and then you go out afterwards.

### ***Different types of play demand different things from the landscape.***

Sites for play are selected for many different reasons. However, players consistently adapt walkable spaces for play. Players, like other people, like to be in comfortable, accessible spaces. Safety, shade, seating, enclosure, and lighting all contribute to the comfort of players and other people in the space.

Variety in a space's surfaces generally helps engender creativity and makes a space playable. A change in elevation (through stairs,

for example) and sturdy site furnishings are also usually important to players. The draw of spaces with these features can overpower the compunction that accompanies playing in spaces there are often used by non-players.

The novelty of playing at landmarks and in famous spaces is one reason people sometimes play away from walkable spaces. However, players may not find these spaces attractive for repeated play or play over long periods of time because of increased security and the potential for overcrowding.

Of course, each player and type of play works with different landscape elements. For example, parkour, geocaching, and street improv require different landscape spaces and elements to be successful. And parkour and building require different landscapes even though they are both acts of physical play. However, there seem to be some spatial characteristics that are desirable across each of the three types of play: discovery play, illusion play, and physical play.

## DISCOVERY PLAY

Discovery players look for new spaces. The best spaces for discovery are ones that other people have not experienced, and are actually not what landscape architects usually think of as walkable spaces. To avoid persecution, discovery play sometimes takes

place in derelict and abandoned, or otherwise unoccupied, spaces. Sometimes these spaces are distant from walkable city centers. Other times, spaces are walkable and accessible, but out of public view. All discovery spaces need to be geographically accessible, meaning the player has to be able to actually get to the site via walking, biking, car, etc. This is not the same as physical accessibility. Good discovery sites often involve some kind of squeezing or sneaking or climbing, but the best sites are usually not across town.

Popular spaces for discovery are abandoned buildings, sewers, and roofs. Abandoned buildings are sometimes distant, but roofs and underground utilities are usually accessed in crowded areas where the networks of these types of infrastructure are interesting and dense.

Variety is also important to all kinds of discovery play. Discovery players are curious about new spaces, and the monotony of, for example, a pre-fabricated residential development is not an appealing space for play. The best spaces are where there is intricacy and variation in material and spaces, and where these elements are at the human scale or smaller. Importantly, the presence of other people is not necessarily important to the quality of a discovery. For example, finding a detail in a crowded space can be just as, or even more rewarding, than finding a space in an abandoned district or unused roof.



## ILLUSION PLAY

Illusion players require an audience for their play. The best play spaces are crowded spots. Usually, the most crowded spots are the most walkable, and offer seating, shade, eyes on the street, and other features that are important to urban spaces. Additionally, illusion play requires that the players be visible to the crowd. Views from other spots on the site are ideal, with views from surrounding buildings and passersby on the street also desirable. To maximize views on the site, an implied space that can be used for the “performance” and a change in elevation that allows others on the site to see the performance area is important. Seating that also offers a view to the performance area can be important to the success of illusion play that lasts longer than a couple of minutes.

## PHYSICAL PLAY

Physical play relies most heavily on the intricacy of both horizontal and vertical surfaces at the site. “Folds” and opportunities for gripping are necessary for changes in elevation. Additionally, the presence of objects and obstacles is important to physical play. These physical elements are placed more desirably at distances that are based on the human body. Lengths that are jumpable, grips that are reachable, and dumpsters and sills that are climbable are the most

important. Additionally, the repetition of a site element helps suggest play. For example, a player might see a connection between a bollard and its brother more easily than between a wall and a post. The same might be true for the top and the bottom of a set of stairs, two benches or chairs, or between walls or roofs. Again, any elements that are constructed or spaced at the human scale are used most often.

Physical play is sometimes hampered by crowds because of the increased risk of injury or accident. Players moving in unexpected ways through space run into other people, and other people run into them. While the risk of injury can add excitement to play, it also adds obstacles that are sometimes undesirable.

## GENERAL

Of course, beyond these descriptions, each actual landscape will fulfill the different requirements of play in different ways. Surprising combinations of desirable play landscape elements and spaces can be good hosts and not fit with the description of a good play space.

- Alpha: We decided we'd go downtown, we found a building facade that was basically empty. It could've been any building facade, but that's the first we came across.
- Bravo: So, basically, the main things are, like, when there is a height difference. So when there is, like, a few meters up and

down, so normally you have stairs or something ... there is normally something you can do for parkour. But also some other things. It's a pretty much creative process and it's not something you can boil down to a formula or something. So, some additional things which are very good, like, if you have water to drink, and if you have, like, shadows, and then, if it's not exactly near to someone living, or if it's like, you have a place around, and even if you're a little bit noisier so it's no problem for other people, so that's also a good thing. But it's not like a formula, where you can say, "Okay, this is, like, a spot for me."

- Charlie: Ease and desirability [make a roof desirable].
- Delta: I don't know. [The space is good for what I like to do here because] It's inviting. It's kind of stark against the rest of the alleyway because it's a lot of wood and, you know, it's the white truck against the red background, and kind of... it sticks out a little bit.
- Foxtrot: You get people in a confined space so they can't really leave... they have to watch you!
- Foxtrot: [What comes to mind about the play space.] -It's cheap. It has sweets and also, like, real food, if you want that, too. -*Savory and sweet.* -Savory and sweet. Salty, sweet. It's really neat. -*Mm hmm. I got that.* -Have a seat. -*Thank you.* -Come over and I will greet... you. It's nice to meet and have something to eat. It's cold,

you can bring some heat. *-True. Too true!* -Okay, so that's good.

Next question.

- Memo: Amenities. Social spaces are adapted to be play spaces.

***As players evolve, they experience a corresponding evolution of their play spaces. New abilities reveal new possibilities in old haunts.***

As skill develops, new play activities are possible for individual players, especially with physical play and discovery play activities. With this development in skill, players experience an evolution in their own identity as a player and in the identities of the spaces they play in. A space can therefore develop new potential as the player himself grows. Also, players, as they learn, develop an eye for play spaces that corresponds to their abilities and preferences as a player.

Illusion players often experience this variety of potential within a space without necessarily having to develop their skill as players. The creative display of their play makes each encounter with a play space new. More than skill, creative ability limits the richness of a space for players.

- Bravo: But when you progress your training and you get better and you have more techniques you can use at this area, you have more and more things you can do at one spot. So the spots where



I began training I could do, like, two or three moves, and now I can, like, do a hundred different moves, and now I can keep the whole day there.

### ***Players judge spaces based on how well they host play.***

Players are quick to compare play spaces. Playability (how well a site is suited to play, that is) is a measure of performance to them. Value judgments of spaces are quick to influence a player's perception of a space. Admittedly, the values of a space for play and for other activity are separable in players' minds. Since play often occurs in walkable spaces, though, those spaces that are both walkable (and successful in traditional ways) and playable (and successful hosts for play) will be cumulatively valued more highly. An overall assessment of performance of a space for a player includes playability.

- Bravo: I go to spots which are near of me. I have a lot of cool spots where I can train everything.
- Memo: Something that came up while playing, but not much in interviews, was judging spaces. Things like, "I like this place," or "I don't like it here, we were thrown out," or "People treat me well here when I play," or "I am undecided. Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's not good to play here."

## **Play influences the social landscape.**



*Figure 4.4* Players often meet other players and passersby while playing. Sometimes meeting people is half the fun, like at this fake rally.

### ***Play landscapes are temporary social landscapes.***

Play catalyzes socialization. Players are often approached by people who are not playing, but who want to join in. The presence of play and players seems to add an element of creative and social infrastructure that inspires a temporary play landscape where others feel comfortable playing. Playing can inspire the play of others and, in doing so, make friends. Play starts conversations.

Players also like bringing their friends along. Play is a fun thing to do together.

- Charlie: Mostly, it's really fun to show new people a roof. ... And, like, to explore it with people.
- Charlie: I think the emotional part is more about, like, friendship than the place. It's just like, "Oh, this is a fun thing to do with my friends," and we have, like, this sense of excitement together, of doing something fun and exploring something. Which is the same thing you get when you're going on any adventure, or camping trip, or something.
- Charlie: *-That's [roofing play is] such a cool trust thing, also, to show your friends and stuff. I don't know. I feel like when I do things like that or buildering type of things, you know, it's exciting to go with your friends, and you trust them to, like, have your back and, like, keep a watch out. -Yeah, totally. And, like, give yourself a hand up and boost each other, and then the other person grabs the other person and helps them up. -It's really social. -Super social. Yeah. Even though you don't talk very much because you have to be quiet. -Yeah, definitely.*
- Delta: I feel more connected to the people that were there. Like you, [name redacted], and [name redacted]. It was a bonding experience, I think, as well as just something weird to do.
- Echo: Just by being in the space, they were engaged [in the game], and they were experiencing it, which was more than anybody else,

like, in the world was doing. Like, they kind of had this experience that nobody else would ever get, which is unique and fun. So, yeah, they were definitely in on it. And some people really took advantage of it, and some people didn't. Like, people were Instagramming it and laughing and enjoying it, and other people were just straight up ignoring it. Um, so, yeah. It just, kind of, surprisingly showed you what kind of people they were. You know? Not in a good or a bad way, but, just, like, what kind of people they were, and, like, how they handle a situation like that. It was interesting.

- Foxtrot: It wasn't until I met my best friend, [name redacted]... It wasn't really until I met someone else who kind of did that [improv in public] that I felt more comfortable doing it, and then after that I didn't stop because it's fun.
- Memo: Fellow players are people you trust. They become your friends, and playing games and watching each other's backs really makes you trust each other. It's your own little community.
- Memo: Play is a way of meeting new people.

### ***Risk and chance are salient elements of urban play.***

Risk and chance are inherent to all types of play, and there is always something that is unknown about the game, or how it will end. This is what makes play engaging. However, urban play directly pits the

player against social norms in very public spaces. The transgression is visible to the public and to authorities. And, unlike many games, most of the people around you are unaware of the rules the player is playing by. The fact that the reception of players in the social landscape affects the “real” identity of the player in society, not just the “play” identity, makes the risk inherent in the play act dramatic and real.

- Charlie: No matter what, even if you’re, like, doing it for the third time or the fifth time, or the tenth time or something, it still feels, like, exciting, and, like, there’s, like, ducts everywhere, and, like, metal everywhere, and stuff that you figure you aren’t supposed to see as part of a building. It’s cool to see all that stuff, and hear all the, like, loud air conditioning stuff humming, and weird smells coming from the laundry room... Laundry room smell is awesome.
- Charlie: It would take away from it a little bit [to have all roofs accessible and intentionally occupiable], but it was always really exciting when we, like, went on a roof and then found, like, a door with, like, a chair next to it, and knew that, like, somebody sat outside smoking in this chair all the time. Which is pretty cool. So, it’s sort of, like, it’s mixed, I think.
- Foxtrot: I felt definitely out of my comfort zone.



### ***Players sometimes feel that play is misunderstood.***

The transgressive use of space is sometimes confusing to those who do not play. Non-players who misunderstand urban play sometimes view players as criminals or terrorists. Players sometimes have to interact with law enforcement officials to explain their behavior. Sometimes the play activity is accepted, and other times it is discouraged. This indicates that play can be different enough from traditional uses of space to spark a dialogue about the use of specific play spaces, and make players feel out of place.

A related challenge is the way play is (not) communicated to non-players. Explaining play is sometimes not interesting or important to players. Players who are really playing are not doing it for Facebook, they are doing it for themselves. Play is still always motivated by fun, not by reputation. Also, while face-to-face interactions can perhaps best relate urban play and its importance, even play that uses the virtual realm, is something that almost always occurs and is celebrated in the physical realm. So, records and communication of play is not very available to non-players.

- Bravo: It's a sad thing that people are always against new things [like play] ... without knowing what it is.
- Bravo: I've used it for years and now there was a restriction for

it. And that's something ... It's not so much a problem for me because there are so many other possibilities. If there is a city where you don't have so many other possibilities, I think it would be completely different. So we have people from around Vienna which have, like, living in smaller cities, and they have like one major, giant spot, and they are nearly training every day there, and this was closed for them. They said "You can't train any more." This was terrible for them. So they are now traveling a lot to Vienna because there are a lot of spots here.

- Bravo: We are also using spots where we are not allowed anymore, as long as nobody's offended by it. ... We do small trainings, we try to be very silent. And if someone says something we say, "Okay," and we go away. There is no discussion.
- Bravo: We are really taking care of public spaces. And also private areas.
- Delta: People respect the space. Most of the time.

***Players experience a tension of simultaneously being a part of multiple social realities in the same physical space.***

During play, players often identify with both their fellow players and with those who witness the play. Players are regular people, too, and are fluent in social discourses of how to "properly" occupy a

space. However, the play act pushes the discourse of spatial use in unusual directions. The player adds an unexpected element to the social discourse. The new discourse is taken seriously because it is executed seriously. Players bring themselves closer to other players, but may distance themselves from non-players. They experience both realms simultaneously.

- Delta: I feel like we were in between [insiders and outsiders]. Like, it was the right amount of weirdness. But I think if the crowd had been a little different, we might've been more ... involved with ... and, like, more accepted as a part of it.
- Delta: *-I was talking about being a part of different groups, and feeling the tension between that. Of being, like, a part of the improv group when we were doing John Wilkes Booth, but then being a part of the other group because I've been in their shoes a lot and having it be kind of, like, weird because I know there is this tension of reality, right? Where that's real life that's happening for them, and for us it's a game, and, like, trying to bring them together. -Mm hmm. -Would you, just agree with that sentiment? -Yeah. I was trying to make the two groups the same in a way, but knowing that wouldn't really work.*

***You and your players (your group) are separate from them, and/or other players (other groups).***

Players often become friends with fellow players and develop play communities. Due to the spread of players across the urban realm, a single city may host many different types of play simultaneously. Further, a city may host several groups of players who engage in the same game. Groups of players may develop their own unique style of play, their own practices, and, to a certain extent, their own language. Some groups are intentionally formed to create competition within the play realm (for example, with bike polo). Therefore, even if a player climbs roofs with his friends in one part of town, he may not fit in with the play community in another district, or with other people. Intimate play communities rarely expand beyond a dozen players. At this point, smaller sub-groups begin to form (similar to cliques).

Play communities across larger scales such as cities are usually less intimate. These communities are used less for daily play activities, and more for sharing information or organizing larger meetings of players. Players feel most a part of their own play groups, and least a part of a global, national, or regional communities.

Occasional interactions with other communities who do the same kind of urban play is important to advancing a group's individual style of play.

## CHARLIE

\*\*Note: "Charlie" is the pseudonym assigned to one of my research subjects. This story is adapted from my field notes of the exploration of some condos I did with Charlie in Denver in August 2014.

We were walking through the parking garage, looking for where we parked, and then we saw that this door was open. It was night, and there was a light behind the door, and we thought we'd check it out. (It was just the two of us, me and Charlie.)

We walked over quickly, laughing, and curious. We pushed open the door, and saw a room with construction materials in it. Tool carts, lumber, and no windows, just open holes in the walls, like gaps in teeth. Some of those caged construction bulbs were buzzing. We walked in. After all, no one had told us not to.

And we wanted to see what was up.

The room was really big.

- What are these metal tags for?
- These ceilings are so low.
- I wonder what's in here.
- You can barely stand up straight.
- But nothing here is locked up. Weird.
- You could get a haircut from those fire sprinkler things.

And there were giant wrenches lying around, and little plastic flags, and huge pallets with god knows what. We wandered around, talking and laughing, but perhaps a little quieter than we were around the cars. We found a beat up lawn chair next to a little Weber grill... Were the workers all bringing hot dogs for lunch?

We tried to open the tool carts. No luck. We tried harder. Nothing. We yanked on the drawers, hard, jiggling them, and trying to undo latches and locks. Nothing! And it made a lot of noise... but no one came. So, we shared some jokes, and wandered around.

We noticed another door. (The adventure



could continue!) I grabbed a metal tag off the ground as a souvenir, and we left the big room.

We sneaked between the door and its frame, slowly, quietly. And then we were in The Stairwell. The light was from construction lamps that are hung a couple of floors up. The Stairwell wasn't anything special. But, it did have a small gate at the base of the stairs, which was intriguing. Right in front of the stairs going up. There was dust and drywall everywhere. Tape and plastic, too.

-- Do you want to go up? Passed the gate?  
-- Yeah, I wanna go.

It was locked, but that wasn't going to stop us. We got over the gate by climbing the railing up, and then dropping back down onto the steps. Quietly.

The mood was shifting.

Once we passed the gate, we knew we definitely weren't supposed to be there. And we definitely shouldn't be loud. So our feet on the stairs were as soft as marshmallows. As soft as marshmallows wrapped in blankets. We tip toed. We whispered, and took shallow breaths. Our hands on the railing were light, just the barest of caresses. I doubt we left any fingerprints... as if it mattered.

-- Do you think there's someone here?  
-- Why are the lights on?  
There was a door to the next floor, of course. It was closed, but not locked. The latch clicked when Charlie opened it, and our eyes darted to each other, and then around. Everywhere. Up, down, and back again. Laughing silently, we opened the door all the way, and tip toed through. The hallway was carpeted.

-- We need back stories in case we're caught.  
-- Yeah.

-- What's our cover? Something about the condos.

Because now we could tell that the new construction was condos. A door across from The Stairwell was open, and we wandered into someone's... foyer? We couldn't tell. It wasn't actually anyone's yet, this was new construction. (It was less personal that way, so we felt okay walking in.) We walked passed a kitchen and into a living room with huge tooth-gap window-holes. Beautiful. It was starting to rain outside.

Charlie walked further in, and I heard a noise. I skipped on marshmallow feet to the door to the carpeted hall, and peaked around the corner, holding my breath. No one... yet. Then, Charlie:

-- There's a bathroom over here.  
-- Cool!

(Whispered, of course.)

It's half finished, and rain is dripping in. Excellent. (And, wow, someone definitely messed up on scheduling how this was being constructed, since a bunch of the floors and walls and stuff were done, but totally getting soaked. Wow. (--"You had one job!" Laughing.)) Then, we're back in the hallway, wondering what else is here.

The problem is, the hallway is the worst place to be, probably even worse than The Stairwell. Because in the hallway, people can see you from really far away. And we can't tell what's down the hallway, but it's probably people who will yell at us if they see us. But we have to use the hallway to see the rest. So, it's just a nervous and funny situation all around.

-- What's our backstory?  
-- We had a showing and we only just got

here. We hoped someone might still be around.  
(This is crazy since it's probably 9:30 by now.)  
-- We are a couple.  
-- Where are we from?  
-- Omaha.  
-- Yeah, no one's from Omaha. We can make up details, and they'll have to believe us.  
-- Yeah.  
(We're pretty smart.)

Armed with a back story, we crept down the hall. (Which also had windows all along it, by the way, on the side that doesn't have condos. Yikes.)

The hallway jogged, and at the bend there was a sign: BOOTIES REQUIRED.

-- Shit, did you see any booties?  
-- No! Not at all!

Well, we were trespassing, but we were not barbarians. So, we found some booties, and put them on before we kept going.

We came across a very unfinished room packed with tools, and with pipes running exposed through it all, like a forest. There were some mirrors stacked against a wall, and I freaked out when I thought someone else was in the room... but it was just my reflection. We chuckled, quietly, and left.

The hallway again. The horror.

We reached a different set of stairs at the end of the hall, but there weren't any lights on here. We debated. Do we go in? What if the door locks behind us? What if there's no way out? Where does this go? Can we get back to the car? Can we get to the roof? Should we risk it? And, should we risk walking back the entire length of the hallway? The hallway seems like miles...

But at least we knew we could get back out if we went down the hallway, so in the end we left the new, dark stairs and headed back towards The Stairwell. No one saw us. We didn't speak.

We had returned the booties and were twisting through the doorframe to head downstairs when Charlie noticed the hatch.

-- Want to go up?

The hatch was at the very top of The Stairwell, and it looked locked and heavy, and shouldn't we just leave? Get out of the game while we were ahead? I was silent, unsure, and he was the one pushing me to go further this time.

-- C'mon let's check it out.  
-- What if we get stuck?  
-- Hi, Mom... (miming a phone)

Charlie climbed to the top of The Stairwell's shaft on a small ladder that lead to a metal hatch to the roof, and I was worried about getting on the roof and locked out at this point (and what if we really did end up having to call a mom?), and it felt like if the hatch opened we'd be somehow announcing our presence to whomever was around.

But I went up, too, because when the person you're exploring with goes, you go, and that is the end of that.

Charlie yanked on the heavy metal bar that locked the hatch in place, and it make a horribly loud screeching noise.

-- Oh shit!  
-- Way to go, Charlie.  
(Laughing again.)

We pull ourselves out onto the roof. What

sweet, sweet release. What air. No air is like Denver air right after it's rained, when the world is dry, and it smells like rocks and metal and crispness.

What relief. What openness. What confidence that we wouldn't be found here, on our roof.

The stars were out, and the city was beautiful, and everything was funny again. We took pictures, and looked down at the street a few stories down, and we talked and walked around. It was raining still, but only a little. And mainly we just spent some time exploring, and arranging, and leaving traces, and looking at the businesses below. We took more pictures.

And then it was late, because time stops for no explorer. So, we walked over to the hatch again, propped open by a giant rope. We hefted the lid open, and I lowered myself to the top rungs of the ladder... silently. I climbed down, and Charlie followed, and clanged the hatch shut above. (Hahahaha.)

We took a last look down the Hallway, not scary now. We said goodbye to the scary hallway, knowing the next time we'd be around, the condos might be finished and we wouldn't see it again.

-- Bye!  
-- See ya!

We walked down the stairs, chins up, but still on our marshmallowy, blanketed toes. We came back to the gate, and it was awkward and hard to get back over. But, again, it wasn't an obstacle for us. We landed loudly on lower steps when we scrambled across the rail, and our eyes darted around again, but a little more lazily, and with less expectation of finding anything. Or anyone.

We practically stomped back through the

first room, the one with the Weber grill. Such confidence. And brashness. The light on the white walls was stark against the sky. The construction lamps were little globes. Why were they on? They were so bright. The misty rain shimmered as it fell inside the walls.

We sauntered quickly back into the parking garage and had a jubilee.

-- That was awesome!  
-- That was so great!  
-- I had so much fun!  
-- Yeah, definitely, me, too. Those booties!

We reminded each other of what just happened, calling details forth again in each other's mind, like you do after a movie. It was a success. I was happy that I'd taken the metal tag, and I was happy we had pictures. We stepped to the car, and got in. The celebration continued. The radio was off, and our windows were open. The headlights made the rain shimmer again.

When we left, we drove around the block, and tried to see back in the condos.

But, somehow, it all just looked dark.

\*\*\*\*\*

- Bravo: But, also, like, big gatherings, with, also foreign people, so international meet-ups and bigger meet-ups because the creativity is much higher if you have lots of people and lots of different ways. It's like, people are moving in different ways and they show you things which you've never seen before.
- Bravo: If people are training in different areas, they develop a certain style, or a certain movement style. So, like, people are very technical, flow, are doing a lot of flow movements, or movements after another. And other people are, like, very strengthy, and doing big jumps and stuff like that. So it's an interesting thing, people are adapting to their environment, and when they are traveling to another city which has different architecture, they are adapting to it. ... It's very important in parkour to adapt to your environment.
- Echo: *-Do you think that doing John Wilkes Booth revealed to observers the kind of person that you were? Or, revealed to other players?* -Yeah, I think so. I think so. ... In a way. Like, in a stereotypical way. Like, this person's ready to be loud and, like, talk to a group of people. ... In a very stereotypical way, yes. Just as stereotypical as I can judge who they are from that situation.
- Foxtrot: [on where to do play] Anywhere that it's just like you and your group.
- Foxtrot: [It was a little unusual because] I was doing it with

strangers. I don't think I'd normally just be like, "Hey, people that are friends with my friend that I've never met before." You know? If it was like, "Oh, we're mutual friends, kinda," then whatever. But I definitely wouldn't stage anything public like that, but, like, privately, like, if we were at, like, a party, I might pretend. Like, "Let's make up this idea for a protest! Isn't that funny? We're funny."

- Memo: Urban play has these levels of communities. Like, yourself. Then your close friends/players. Then the broader district/city group that you touch with occasionally. Then the regional community, where you see people who come into town for visits and stuff. And finally globally. And the largest scales are facilitated primarily over the internet. But mostly, people do this stuff in person and over more personal forms of communication. Like phones.
- Memo: And there are friends you play with, and friends you don't. And some players are your friends, and some aren't.

### ***Players keep their best spots secret.***

Players share great spaces with their friends, with other players whom they trust. However, many players don't share their best spots. The very best spots are reserved just for themselves, and perhaps the closest of friends. The best spots are often hoarded by players. Sharing spaces with others can be a special occasion for players. This shows



how valuable play spaces can be to players, and how they can reflect or develop emotional or social phenomena.

- Bravo: [Often, when] I find a new spot, I would share it and tell everyone. ... There are some people which are, like, they find something, and they are taking it as a secret for me. I am just telling my friends and we keep it for us. We are not telling the big group. ... Strange behavior, because everyone should be able to use it.
- Bravo: I really enjoy training on my own.
- Memo: Keep it secret. Keep it safe.

### ***Players create a dialect of play.***

Players consciously adapt language to fit their needs, or develop new words that describe their action. For players, the nature of the play action often influences the appropriation of language. For example, players that explore roofs call themselves “roofers.” Players who climb around buildings refer to “buildering,” a combination of building and bouldering.

Language is shared between players as a way of defining a community. Players in the in-group know the language, outsiders do not. Linguistic indexes quickly identify community members, novices, and people who do not belong.

Language is also used to indicate permissions. Sometimes, there are “notes” on buildings to other players that communicate whether or not you can play there.

- Alpha: It gave the field, quote unquote, a lot more width.
- Bravo: We call training areas that are very good for us “spots.”
- Bravo: There are some kind of nicknames for [spots].
- Charlie: Finds.
- Memo: It’s weird how players feel self-conscious about language... or, not self-conscious, but really aware of it. And aware that regular language doesn’t really apply to play activity. I loved Alpha’s thing where he said “quote, unquote” when he used regular sports language to describe play in the city. It’s really obvious that urban play is separate cognitively and linguistically. Also, note other play language. Bravo: spots. Charlie: roofing. That kind of stuff. And Delta, Echo, and Foxtrot all said play was “weird” and “goofy” and that it fit with “weird” and “goofy” spaces.

***Policy enforcement regarding many different play activities is not equal.***

Regulations against play occur at smaller levels of government, and are usually met by local enforcement. For example, some cities

have policies against urban climbing. Past punishments have included arrest.

Players may fear that enforcement may be inconsistent, and reflect the demographics of the player. Age is the clearest division: younger players are forgiven for their transgressions, while older players are questioned more by society. Additionally, other demographics seem to impact enforcement of policies against play. My privilege of being a white, upper-middle class woman was obvious to me multiple times while playing.

Policies against play are sometimes puzzling if they seem like extensions of social stigmas, instead of directives that ensure health, safety, and welfare. For example, urban climbing is discouraged much more than climbing trees.

- Bravo: We have lots of positive feedback. ... We also have people calling the police [calling us burglars in training].
- Bravo: It's not fair. [to treat us differently]
- Charlie: It sucks when you get older because you can't do it with as much immunity.
- Charlie: Part of it is because there's no forests and stuff to explore, and you always read, about, you know, like, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn and stuff. And I remember my friend [name redacted] and I in,

like, fourth grade were always, like, trying to find things to explore, but we weren't really old enough to climb on roofs. So we would, like, climb on trees in the park and stuff, and make little forts all over the place. So, probably, it's just about ... I don't know. Kind of like making a mini adventure in a place that isn't ... like, cities aren't super conducive to, like, exploring a forest or something like that. So it's nice to have, like, a little roof you can sneak up on and then infiltrate.

- Memo: Regulations (or, enforcement) are so ageist! It's like, young people, it's fine. No problem. But for adults? No way.

## **Play develops sense of neighborhood.**



*Figure 4.5* Sense of neighborhood, including understanding of physical space and social connections, results from play. Friends explore utilities, for example.

### ***Play does not necessarily breed comfort in a space.***

Players feel familiar with play spaces, but they often do not feel comfortable there. In other words, players develop insiderness (Lim & Barton, 2010) but not environmental fit (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010). It seems that this is because players challenge the extant programming of a space, and alter the discourse of the use of public space. While a player may feel in control of their own play experience, and even in control of how they are affecting other people and the space they are in, players rarely feel ownership over a space. In contrast, they feel



like intruders. Players are conscious of the fact that their behavior is atypical, and that someone else, often the public, owns the play space. Players are aware of their position as a member of a community, not as a dictator of spatial use.

Instead of feeling comfort, players often feel discomfort. The significance of play experiences is at times enhanced by the feeling of discomfort.

- Charlie: Definitely not ownership. You definitely feel like a trespasser.
- Memo: It was making me really nervous to climb on that cabin thing, but I really wanted to because the chimney texture was so good. I spend a lot of time these days being paranoid and trying to determine the level of surveillance on this kind of place.

***Players make play memories, and play memories are important to them.***

Players enjoy reliving play memories and often have stories at hand about play experiences. The importance of play memories that are specifically sited reveals place attachment/self-extension (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010).

- Alpha: Just talking about the nets is sufficient to remind us about the place.
- Charlie: Going on roofs in foreign places is something I would like to do more of because it really cements that place in your mind and makes it almost like a souvenir in your head.
- Charlie: It's definitely a distinct-ish memory.
- Charlie: Looking out on something with somebody is an emotional experience.
- Echo: I think it's [John Wilkes Booth is] something that I'll remember. But, like, that argument with [name redacted] at the Truck ... will always--just because it was just, like, so intense. And that's something that I think I'll always think when I walk back there. But I think John Wilkes Booth would be up there. Yeah. It was just a really crazy argument.

### ***Players experience increased insideness.***

Insideness is described as environmental understanding (context), environmental competence (navigation), and diversity of relationships with place (Lim & Barton, 2010). Players certainly develop a greater understanding of the workings of a space by playing there. Usually, people only experience a space as the designer intended, more or less: they walk on the sidewalk, hold the handrail, enter by the

door, and sit on the bench. However, players test the landscape for other uses, and develop an understanding of a space through the lens of the player.

To plan play, players usually investigate a site. How the space is occupied is particularly important. Who is there? How often? Will they let me play here? Will they engage with me?

These informal, intuitive investigations help players understand and navigate social and physical sites and cities. As such, intimacy with a play spot is developed through play experiences.

- Bravo: It's like discovering, exploring, the urban environment. And using your environment. Really using it.
- Memo: I think climbing makes me more aware of the architecture around me. When a building looks good or interesting to climb, it's something I make an effort to remember. I remember something because of its potential. And then, when I go back and climb there, I feel fulfilled or disappointed. And if it was good, I talk about it, and want to go back. And it makes me feel good and smart, good at climbing. I feel as if campus, for example, fulfills that need for me. So it makes it an attractive place to be.

### ***Players experience an increased sense of neighborhood.***

Sense of neighborhood can be defined as attachment to place (satisfaction, connectedness, ownership, integration), community identity (personal and public identifications with the community), and social interaction (casual encounters, social support, community participation) (Kim & Kaplan, 2004, from Filipovic, 2008).

#### ATTACHMENT TO PLACE

Play seems to increase satisfaction in the function of a space for players. They are enjoying themselves, being creative, and “really using” and leveraging a space for all its potential.

Players also sometimes develop connectedness at sites. While some spaces can be anonymous, other play spots that are used regularly or returned to over time can hold great meaning for players. And, as stated earlier, the best play spots are kept for one’s self.

#### COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Players certainly have found a new way to connect with their neighbors. Whether their neighbors also play, or whether they question the play activity, players connect with their neighbors by playing.

Also, players develop play communities that are usually composed of people that live or work near each other. Play groups such as these develop their own community identities. Players within

these groups identify with each other.

## SOCIAL INTERACTION

Play almost always creates some kind of social interaction. Players often play with each other, and play always occurs within the simultaneously existing real social landscape. Play is never completely isolated from society or social interaction.

Playing is a diverse way of interacting with others. It is atypical and social.

Play promotes equality between players because the play reality is separate from the existing socio-cultural reality. Distinctions that separate people in everyday urban spaces sometimes disappear during play.

Play increases the number of casual encounters people have with each other because it inspires conversation. Players also occupy city space more often because they play there. And, they are always on the lookout for new spaces they can play in.

Play communities are communities around which people can develop neighborhoods.

- Bravo: And there is also, I think, pictures of spots, when I show to people which are experienced in the way of training for a long



## NIGHT CLIMBING

\*\*Note: This story is adapted from my field notes of some buildering I did on my own in Manhattan in September 2014.

I heard a car in the lot so I stopped climbing where I was, and just froze on the wall... which might not have been that inconspicuous, looking back. When I hopped down from the wall, I noticed that someone had gathered some stone chippings from the area and piled them into a small cairn. On my next climb, a flake of stone came away in my hand, and I knew the source. The building was shedding. How strange.

I felt a little nervous at this wall because of the traffic. But I really liked the stone and the doors. I waited a while. I heard the engine pick up, and the headlights scraped across the ground and away from me. The car was gone. Back to climbing. (The thing is, you really can't climb that much when people are watching you. It's just not done. They don't like it, and you will get in trouble.)

I climbed at the shedding wall a while longer, and then my arms got tired, so it was time to shift spots. I found a new wall. It was interesting because I could start braced in a crevice, and work my way to different alcoves along the wall, weaving in and out with the building. On the first attempt, I made it about two feet. (Hahaha.) Next try, I went up a few feet, and sideways about a yard before I thrust my hand into the shadows and a light, sticky mess. Startled, I jumped down -- HO-ly!... Hahaha. (It was just cobwebs.) (Just.(?))

Next time, I got to the spider web part again. Of course, there were still webs. It was... not ideal, but I wasn't that scared, and I thought if I moved fast enough I could get away from the spiders and wipe my hand on the wall. My leg reached, and my toes felt for something to balance on while I found a new hand hold. They landed on an uncommonly excellent foothold... But then I heard water.

This is weird, I thought. I hopped off onto soft

dirt, almost muddy, and stepped so that my shadow filtered along the grass instead of the wall. I bent down quickly and turned off the spigot, hoping I hadn't damaged the pipe at all, or bent it out of shape. The water shut off, and the mystery solved, I laughed, and went back to where I started the climb to go again. But not before scoping a different foot hold so that I wouldn't waste any more water.

After a while, my arms needed a little break, so I climbed the tree next door. Beautiful, wonderful tree. (This tree twists you around as you climb it. You have to twist around to pull yourself between the branches... it's too askew to be natural. So you move unnaturally, matching it.) Once in the canopy, I looked back at the wall, at my route, and found new holds. I got back down to try the wall again.

But, I had forgotten about the cobwebs this time, and I was so surprised that I almost peed my pants when I grabbed them again. (Hahahaha.)

I climbed the wall again, but went in a different direction. I got to the window sill, up and left a ways. It felt good. People were walking by, but I was in the shadows now, so I kept going. (And since I kept climbing around, I got close enough to sidewalk that I could yell for help if I fell and broke my neck (I love you, Mom).) Then someone said, "Get it, spider girl!" Probably drunk. It was time to move on. I wished they'd known about the spider webs.

My arms got tired again anyway, so I hopped on my bike, and pedaled around until I had a new find.

This one had shrubs near the climb wall, which was great for secrecy, since my plan was to stay low and move laterally across the wall. And, because of the shrubs, there was also soil to land on instead of concrete. (This

is a definite plus, especially since your vision is limited (it's nighttime, and you're in the shadows).)

As I climbed, I thought, This is so different from a climbing gym. It's all just that boulder surface climbing type of thing, and the holds are just long smooth nothings. It's less about finding the best holds and more about finding possible holds, or textured holds or whatever you can make the wall give you. It's a physics lesson.

Next to this new spot, there is this low concrete box(?) / pad(?) / utility(?) that I could sort of jump onto, and from there I could hold my body up in the air with just my arms and abs. Oioihhhhhhhh! So cool and interesting! It was as if I was in cirque du soleil.

And then

-- Shit, I just broke the concrete thing doing cirque du soleil.

How could I have done that? Why are these buildings shedding stone, and offering me concrete chunks? Why are they just falling apart? How is this real??

I wondered... should I take a souvenir?

I didn't, and I decided not to tell where I broke the concrete, too. I didn't want to get in trouble for having fun. And it was just a little chunk. It's probably not a problem anyway, I think it's just a utility cover. Plus, how could it have been me? It's concrete. So... not my fault.

Climbing buildings, taking names.

\*\*\*\*\*

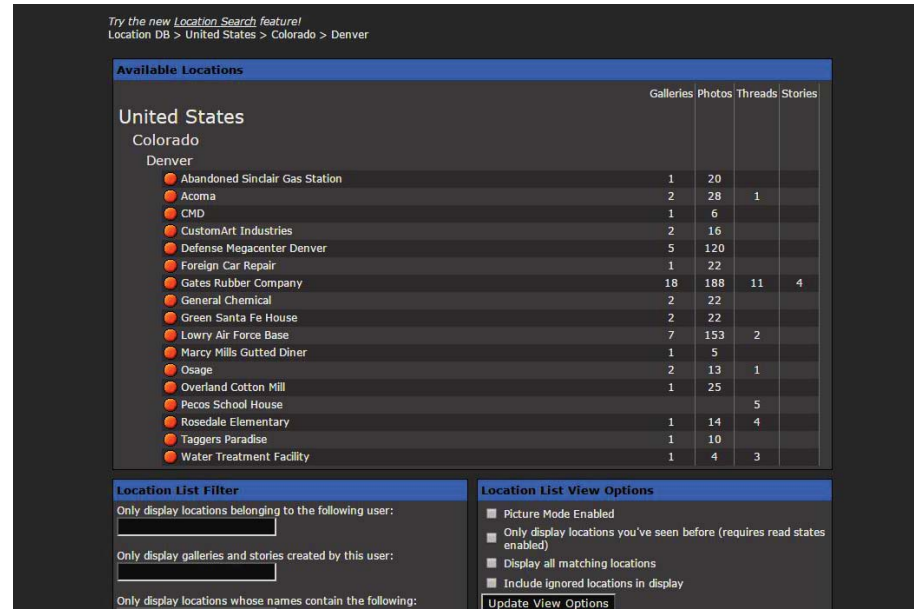
time, they would recognize in one second where this is and what this is called in the parkour community. So, spots also have certain names. ... There is like the Manhauer Gap.

- Charlie: I would miss it, and also, if it was totally allowed, if it was like, "Come on a roof tour!" that wouldn't be as fun, you know? ... If there was no, like, infiltration element, and, like, secrecy or something, it wouldn't be as fun.
- Charlie: Yeah, definitely. [love Denver more?] ... And I think it makes you love the city more to, like, explore. Like, if, for example, you were like Spiderman and you could've gone on all the buildings, you would feel way attached to the city. 'Cause, like, "Oh, that roof, yeah, I remember that one," because you've been on, like, the Empire State Building. Spiderman probably feels super attached to New York. ... There is definitely a bonding experience with your city that involves going on roofs.
- Delta: I don't think it [the space] reflects values so much as who I am.
- Delta: It's a place where everybody can come together. ... That feeling of togetherness and comradeship.
- Echo: *-Would you ever describe this space as a play space? -As a play space? Yes. Oh, yeah. -Tell me more about that. -It turns into more, like, a playground for adults. ... You know how you're, like, on*

a playground when you're in kindergarten, and everybody is kind of your friend, no matter what? So, like, the walls are already broken down, everybody is either talking to each other or picking fights, like, without knowing anybody. So, it kind of reminds me a lot of a kindergarten playground.

- Memo: Topophilia up, terraphilia down, belonging up, rootedness eh, insideness way up, urban identity eh, place attachment eh, environmental fit eh, place-self congruity down, place identity up, place dependence up, sense of place up.

## Play relates to physical and social landscapes at multiple scales.



*Figure 4.6* Players connect in person and at sites, but also across districts, countries, and internationally. They use websites, for example, to share.

### *Play and place at multiple scales.*

Clearly, play interacts with physical and social landscapes at multiple scales. The physical landscape is particularly important to play at the detail and site scales, and the social landscape is particularly important at the smallest scales as well—for individuals, and their small play communities. However, play can start a social dialogue about the use of space at the larger scale of an entire urban community.



Urban play develops identities and communities across scales.

For example:

1. Play develops personal identities. Play is something that players do, and often play reflects personal values. For example, exploration play reflects curiosity. An exploration player might characterize himself as curious.
2. Play develops close friendships. Play involves trust and companionship. Playing often with certain people can help develop close friendships.
3. Play develops broader play groups. While players may have a small group they often play with, they are usually also a part of a slightly larger group. This group is composed of players you touch with occasionally to advance each other's play.
4. Play develops distant social groups. Players play with local groups when they travel, and share information over the internet.

***Play landscapes are representative/defining landscapes.***

***Synecdoche.***

A player may find play spaces to be representatives of entire neighborhoods, especially in districts the player is unfamiliar with. Discovery play is especially effective at developing this type of spatial synecdoche since discovery play is more commonly played in

unfamiliar spaces and districts than the other types of play.

The elements of a play space that seem to be included in a representative conception of a district are materiality, safety, accessibility, and creative potential. Safety and creative potential relate primarily to the social landscape; materiality and accessibility relate primarily to elements of the physical landscape. When materiality reflects the intricacy of a surface, it also relates to the creative potential of a spot.

Materiality and detail design can be particularly important to spatial synecdoche. Since districts/neighborhoods often share an architectural style, details and materials of one space can form the conception of an entire district. In this way, play can influence one's perception of an entire district or city.

- Bravo: UK is great for doing parkour because the UK architecture is completely different.
- Plus, spots with something unique are fun to go to, easy to remember... it's a novelty. And that's fun and memorable and exciting.
- Memo: Different districts have different architectural characteristics that are more or less amenable to climbing and exploration.



# Applications.

These applications stem directly from the findings discussed earlier. The findings were developed into these applications because of my own values and the values that seem to concern the field.

At the 2014 ASLA National Conference, there was a panel discussion of the success of landscape architects in addressing the triple bottom line: economic, environmental, and social concerns. It was noted that landscape architects have become relatively effective at addressing economic and environmental issues, but that their effect on social issues is usually less successful and less understood.

In this context, the number of findings that addressed the social landscape cannot be ignored. The ability of play to provide a pivot between physical and social landscapes is important for landscape architects to consider, especially because landscape architects can design spaces, which influence play, which influences social groups. Incorporating play into design and the design process can help landscape architects understand and develop the social landscape, especially for players.

## Managing language



*Figure 4.7* Players make their own language for their activity, and use that language with friends and other players. For example, “roofing” can be adapted for play, and not at all mean building roofs.

### *Play language is important because it can affect general language.*

Play language has sometimes become part of everyday language. For example, to varying extents, “checkmate” and “score” are part of standard English. While these terms do not reflect urban play activities, we see that play terms can work their way into everyday usage. Play language should be used carefully, as if it might one day be common language.

Some play terms that were common in this study include words like spot (for places to play) and roofing (the act of scaling a building and occupying its roof).



Other language developing from urban play is not studied in this investigation, but surely exists. Language I encountered during my investigation describes a range of play- and place-related elements, including players, actions, spaces, and attitudes, not to mention names. With so much play language, it is no stretch to imagine that urban play language could become more of a part of everyday language. I believe using play language carefully as players and as designers, we can make future dialogues about urban play clear, precise, and inclusive.

For designers interested in urban play, I would recommend engaging with play communities and learning their language. It may reveal values and references, as well as make play discourse more intelligible.

***Place language is complex, but should be applied correctly in landscape architecture.***

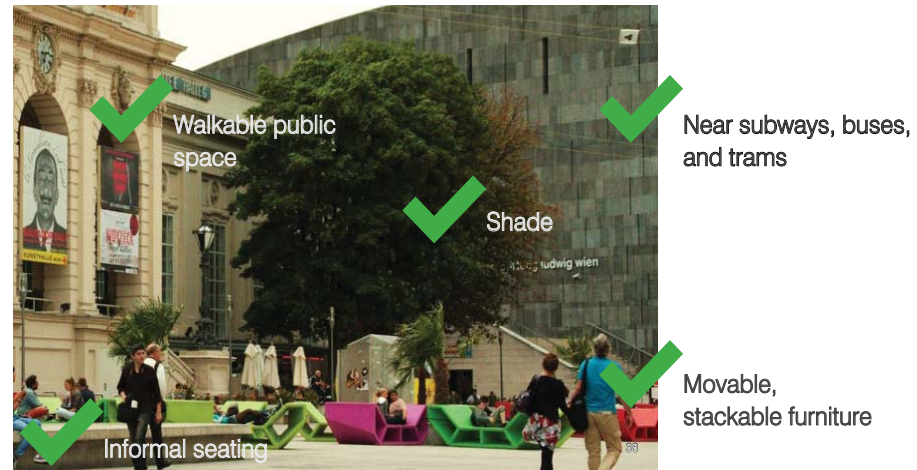
Many “place” phenomena are documented in the literature, such as insideness, sense of neighborhood, place identity, place attachment, and sense of place. Often, points of distinction between different phenomena are fine. While these differences in terms are important in research, it is impractical to expect professionals to master the distinction between these terms and use them all carefully and

effectively. A framework of simple place and play terms should be developed for clear communication with practicing professionals and communities.

Using tools such as the table of place phenomena and their respective linguistic indicators presented earlier in this report can help designers apply place language correctly to design.

This kind of tool can be disseminated to be used by designers. I am therefore including a table of place language as part of a toolkit I am developing about urban play and playability.

## Designing for Playability



**Figure 4.8** There are specific features that make spaces appropriate for urban play. We can leverage our knowledge of these features to design for play.

### *Playability and walkability*

Walkability is an important standard in planning and design. It is a principle that describes comfortable and simple experience of accessing to amenities. Complexity, coherence, legibility, and many other features contribute to walkability.

Striving for walkability can help designers make more accommodating cities. However, while walkability refers to comfort and function of a space, there is more that urban spaces can do.

Playability takes walkability to the next step. Playability is about making spaces appropriate for play. Since play is a dialogue about how to use spaces, it shows that spaces can not only be effective and

comfortable, but that they can also be arenas for discourses on how public spaces should be used. Designing for playability is a way of designing for discourse.

Designing for play cannot be explicit physical design. Creativity is too much a motivation for play. But creative, playful design, understanding of play motivations, and policy that is lenient and allows for play are all ways to encourage urban play in the city. Designing for playability is less about designing physical spaces. It is more about designing policy.

Beyond policy, there are some simple strategies designers can use to design for playable spaces. Elements to include in the landscape to provide the opportunity for play are: audiences, programming, and scheduled uses of space; stairs, ramps, and other changes in elevations; vertical surfaces with intricate textures, and that provide spots for watching activities in the space; novel, new, exciting details; landmarks and iconic spaces and details; and details at the human scale, meaning elements that are constructed and spaced in ways that are relatable to the human body.

To achieve this, designers might hide details for players to find, play themselves, design by moving with their own bodies, include modular, movable furniture, include naturalistic elements, and, of course, make walkable spaces.

I sincerely suggest that designers who would like to design for playability become players and connect with play communities.

- Bravo: Additionally, if someone like you, if someone which is studying this, or architects, or something like this, work together, and are influenced by parkour and the eye of people which are using the environment differently and developing an area for using. And it's not only for using parkour because we always, when we work together in terms of Parkour Parks, we say "Don't call it parkour park. Call it Movement Park, or something like that." Don't stick it to one small group or one activity. It's like, just movement. Just for everyone. So, just use it and use influence of people which are using the environment. And that would be great from my point of view.
- Charlie: They didn't, obviously, design them [roofs] to be climbed on, but they clearly did not design them not to be climbed on. Like, they weren't like, "Let's avoid having people get up here."
- Memo: People who do urban play just sometimes have a different view of things. But, I think people who do it a lot and have had people accuse them of things such as criminal activities and have to be secretive in the neighborhoods where they live... I mean, they've thought about it a lot more, and its socio-political



implications and the context of urban play. Bravo: doesn't want to use it as a political tool? That's definitely what he describes, though. Using play as a way to bring on the awareness of public space for everybody, and for all uses, not just whatever is prescribed for people. Charlie: talks a lot about cultural context. America as a land of exploration... to the West, to the moon... all that. But exploring cities and being creative is not allowed now. ? It's something celebrated by our culture, but weirdly is not allowed. What does this reflect in our society?

- Memo: Is enough environmental and social change possible in a democracy? Is it possible quickly enough? And how far can you go with play without building a barrier that makes play counter-productive?

## The Bear of Policy



*Figure 4.9 Urban play begins discourse about the use of space, and always engages policy. Sometimes people formally restrict play through policy.*

### *Policy, evolving*

Policy and policy enforcement can be surprising, inconsistent, and sometimes prejudiced. Urban play sometimes goes against policy in addition to questioning social norms. Policies for the use of space are implemented for logical reasons, like protecting property, and the health, safety, and welfare of the people. Sometimes people develop policies against urban play in service of these values. Urban play can challenge and redefine policy regarding behavior in urban spaces. In this way, play becomes an explicit element of a discourse about the use of urban spaces. Urban play spark discussion and evolve policy. Therefore policy on urban play activities is inconsistent across districts,

let alone states and nations. And, because policy is uncertain, players can be targeted for acting in unusual, transgressive ways.

And, variation in enforcement is not unnoticed by players.

People I played with who were black men worried much more about being “caught at it” than, for example, I was. We understood that policy enforcement sometimes is influenced by demographics, for example. With this knowledge of policy and enforcement, though, encouraging non-destructive play is not impossible.

### ***We can encourage non-destructive play.***

Something that became clear during this study is that players do not intend to damage spaces, hurt other people, or hurt themselves. Urban play is only destructive play on accident. Non-destructive play is what players plan for and want to do.

So, encouraging non-destructive play can be simple for players to accept. As designers, we might play the role of mediator between players and non-players who advocate policy against play. Explaining the motivations and practices of players might help non-players accept play.

It seems that the best way to encourage play is to not ban it with policy, to allow players to be creative, and to develop a dialogue about play that focuses less on policy and limitations and more

about opportunities, players as people, and neighborhoods. Inclusive discourse is the best aid.

## Urban Play, Research, and Design



*Figure 4.10* Urban play has helped me explore and understand spaces. Reflective mapping and memoing also helped me understand play and space.

### *Mapping can be a memoing technique.*

I used maps to help memo the use of space. Maps helped reveal important findings about the use of physical space that weren't apparent in the interviews. Mapping is a concise and accurate way of describing the spatial distribution of the uses of a site.

Sometimes mapping is used in ethnography for documenting spatial uses by the study subjects. But, mapping is not often used as a memoing technique for data analysis and in grounded theory studies. In this study, mapping was also used as a memoing technique. Mapping is not described yet in the literature, but should not be ignored. Just like sketching, mapping can reveal patterns in behavior,



at times more quickly or clearly than traditional memoing.

Mapping can be especially effective at revealing spatial relationships. It also capitalizes on the professional skills of landscape architects and other designers. Mapping as memoing, therefore, should be added to the toolset that design researchers can use while studying space.

### ***Urban play can make designers better.***

Play develops insideness. Designers can use play to understand the physical and social landscapes of a space. Urban play makes players very aware of the details of these landscapes, and players develop an eye for landscape details. For example, through play, I became aware of elements such as benches, spigots, windows, and policy and enforcement during play.

Also, play can help designers connect with players. Play can even be a tool for community engagement during the design process. I found that by playing with people, I could meet community members I was not acquainted with before. Making more connections like this in the future can help me connect with a more holistic sample of a community's population. It can help me understand how other people see spaces better.

Finally, play is another way of experiencing a space. It adds layers of understanding by employing the five senses and one's haptic

sense in new ways. It also gives people new ways of occupying a space. This creativity and curiosity that accompanies play can inspire design. I believe play can be a part of the creative design process.

### ***Designers all have the potential to be great players***

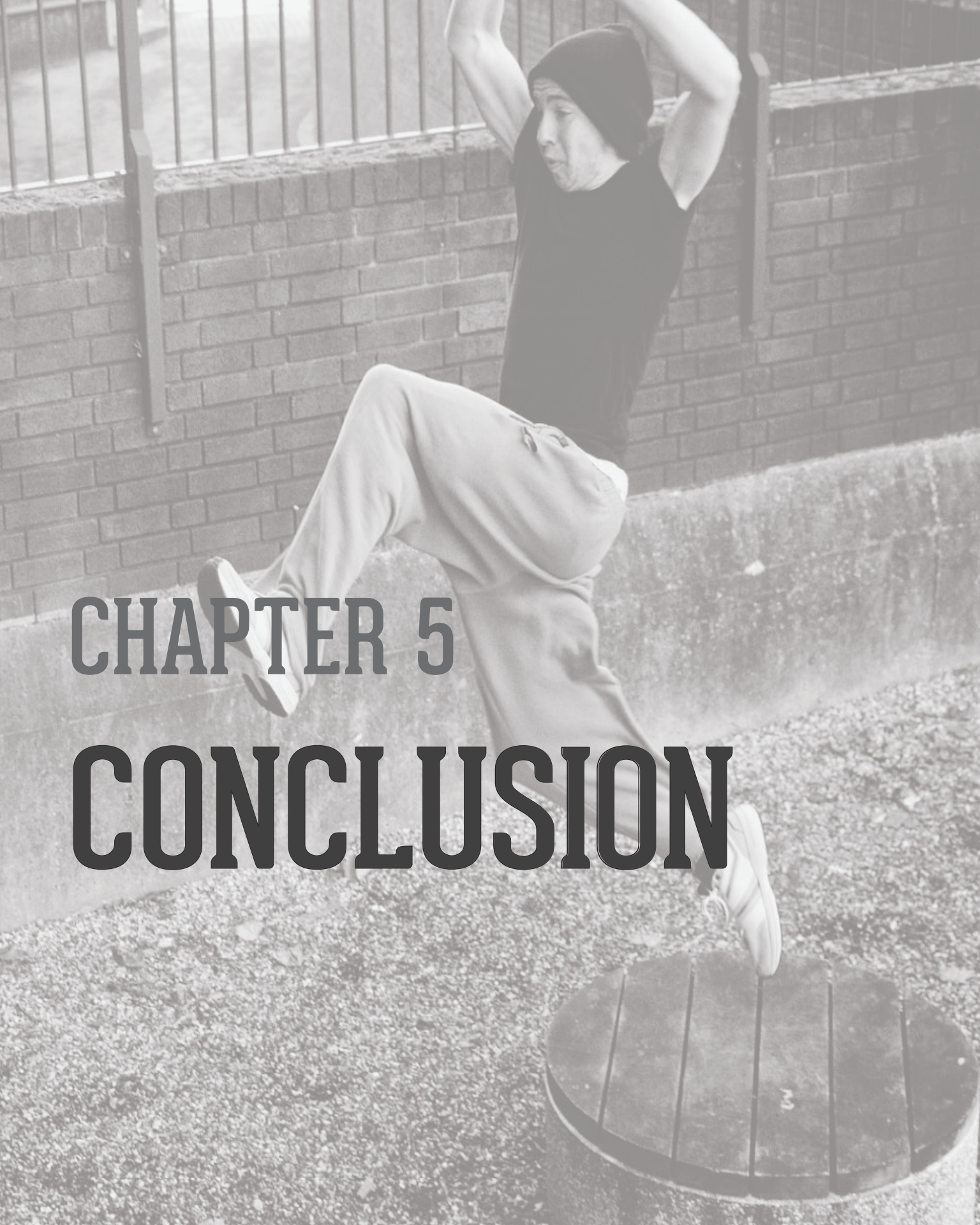
A key component of play for players is the element of creativity. Players exercise their creative minds by playing. Designers seem well prepared to be players because they are constantly engaged in a creative challenge. So, I challenge designers: let's play!

- Memo: I think climbing makes me more aware of the architecture around me. When a building looks good or interesting to climb, it's something I make an effort to remember. I remember something because of its potential. And then, when I go back and climb there, I feel fulfilled or disappointed. And if it was good, I talk about it, and want to go back. And it makes me feel good and smart, good at climbing. I feel as if, for example, campus fulfills that need for me. So it makes it an attractive place to be.
- Memo: It makes me understand the function of buildings and landscapes and cities better. Especially materials and utilities!



*Figure 5.1* Parkour. A “leap of faith.”





**CHAPTER 5**

**CONCLUSION**

# Reflection.

Most of my reflection on this study actually occurred during the memoing process. Memoing was a dynamic, reflexive exercise during which I was constantly reflecting and adjusting my views. So, I believe that most of my conclusions and reflection is summarized as my findings and applications. The applications provide special insight into my own reflection as a researcher and professional because they are comprised of how I would like my research findings to contribute to play and design.

Generally, though, I was surprised by how much my research ended up addressing the social dimension of urban play and place. However, this is, of course, the strength of my methods. I am convinced now that urban play takes the physical environment as it is, and builds the social environment. Play develops communities and spatial attachments. This greater understanding of place phenomena is very important to me.

I am excited to assemble my methods, findings, and reflections in a toolkit: *A Toolkit for Playability*. The toolkit discusses urban play and play spaces in language that is meant to be accessible to designers and interested community members. The toolkit focuses on play spaces and their strengths.



To supplement these reflections on my findings, I have some comments on the investigation and the research process as well.

## BACKGROUND

This investigation was exciting and fulfilling. It was very meaningful for me to work on a topic that is on the cutting edge of the field. It was helpful to have collaborators and professionals excited about this topic, especially since there is so little extant literature to contextualize this study.

## METHODS

I was surprised by how long the layered memoing process was, even though I had planned for the right amount of time by referring to the literature. However, while the memoing process felt surprisingly long, I think it can still be used as a valuable research tool for busy designers.

Autoethnography was a valuable process to engage in. It is important to practice empathy by actually taking part in the activities of site users.

# Future directions.

## **More thorough investigation into urban play**

Urban play activities have so much depth. The ways that people build relationships while adapting the city space is multivalent and complex. Understanding players and how they play (together) is a very important future direction for research. Future research could investigate urban play in greater depth. Future studies could focus on, for example: a single kind of urban play more deeply; trying to establish a database of common urban play activities; looking further into the motivations of players; looking further into urban play communities, their structure, and their language; determining in greater detail the physical features of landscapes that are appropriate to specific play activities; investigating how players typically interact with designers, and what some ways of cultivating productive player-designer relationships can be.

## ***Addressing limitations***

To help address the bias that I brought into this study, it would be important for others to research this topic as well, to either corroborate or challenge my findings. Similarly, a study that includes

quantitative metrics could also be helpful in illustrating the relationship between play and place, and also the magnitude of the relationship.

Also, a clear future direction is to expand the scope of data collected to include data on other types of urban play. I only included data from four types of play activity, but there is a variety of play activities. To understand urban play as a whole, many more of these should be investigated.

In future iterations of this research, it might be interesting to try to video record the interviews and play activities to have a thick data set that describes how players use space for play. Video recordings can also be shared with many researchers who can memo or code data, and provide even greater validity to the study.

## **Reflection on the use of place language**

Going forward, it seems important for designers to continually reflect upon how we use place language. It is surprising to find that sense of neighborhood, a term I didn't know before my research began, explains place (as it results from play) quite well, and connects impressions of physical space with the development of relationships and social groups. Cultivating a better understanding of place language in the profession is a task to which all designers are accountable. Hopefully, the use of tools such as the chart of place language, can help designers use language well and communicate clearly.

## **Moving cities toward playability**

### *Developing a metric of playability*

A promising direction for future work is the development of a metric that can score the playability of different spaces and cities. This leap to a quantitative measure of playability will require further, and more detailed research with accomplished players who have an eye for play spaces.

Precedents for this kind of measure include walkscores and bikescores that are available to the public online. The data on walkability and bikability is integrated with dynamic mapping interfaces. The interfaces clearly and effectively tie data to the landscape.

Before this kind of metric can be developed for playability, more detailed research about play spaces should be conducted. My findings about what makes play spaces valuable should be confirmed, adjusted, and fleshed out in greater detail. Then, a nuanced dataset can be used with programs such as GIS to create dynamic maps.

### *Using the toolkit*

To provide playable spaces and encourage play, designers, policymakers, and communities need to work together. The toolkit I developed about urban play and playability can aid conversations about urban play spaces between players, designers, engineers, and

politicians. This interdisciplinary and collaborative discourse is one of the important elements to tackling the bear of policy.

Beyond documents, play events can give people first hand accounts of the potential of sites and cities. Alternatively, producing video accounts of play could be a strategy for sharing play.

The toolkit is included in this document as Appendix G.

### ***Workshops for landscape architects***

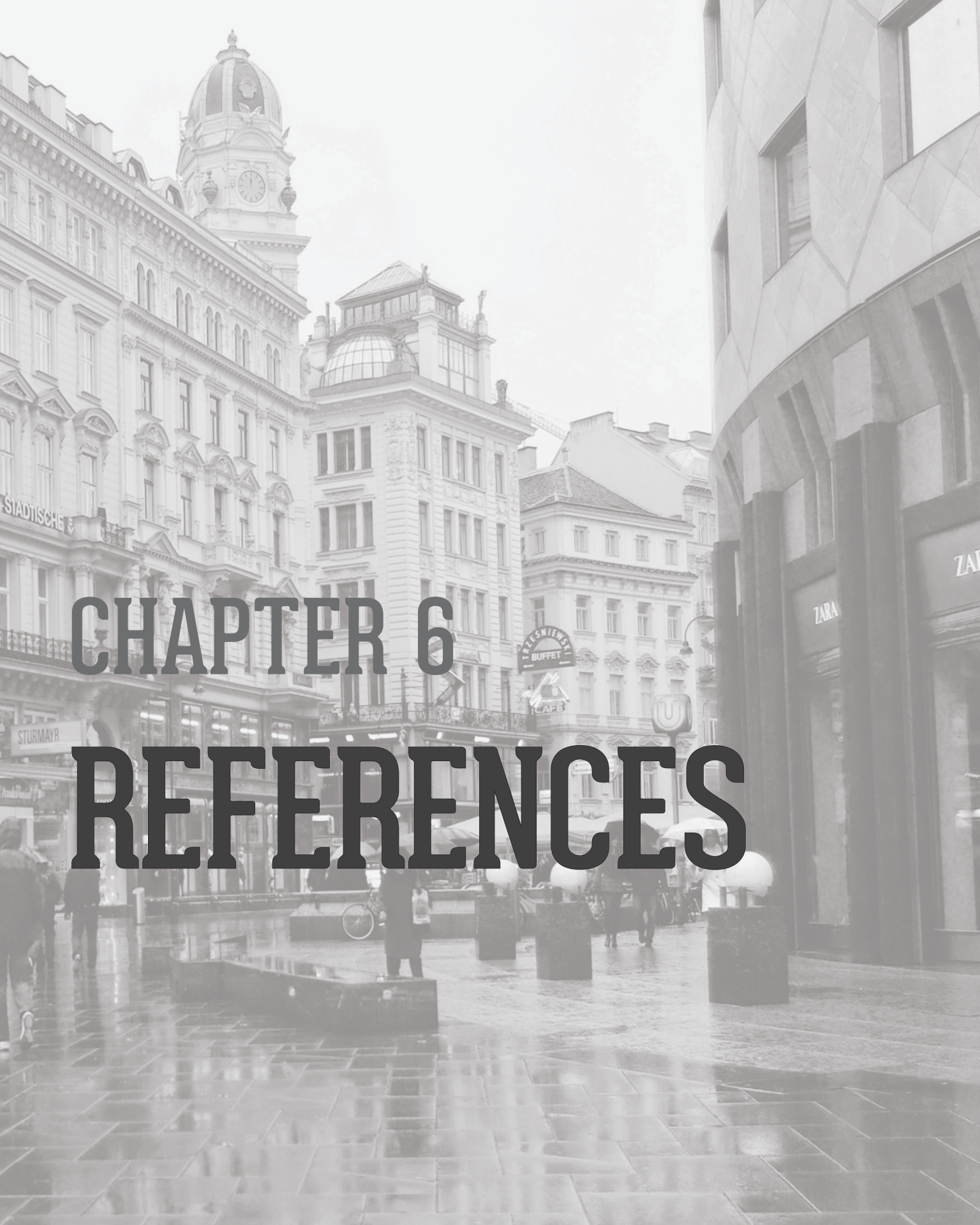
To disseminate my findings and help improve understanding of urban play and play in design, I could develop and host workshops. These workshops could use the toolkit to frame a discussion on play, and cover topics such as: what urban play is; what playability is; the importance of creative uses of space; strategies for designing playable spaces; strategies for designing play policy; strategies for beginning to play; and an introduction to ethnography and grounded theory for use in landscape architecture and other design professions.





Figure 6.1 Intricate vertical surfaces in Vienna, Austria.





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Figure 4.1

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Figure 5.1

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## **Chapter 6**

Figure 6.1

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## **Chapter 7**

Figure 7.1

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# Tables.

Table 2.1

Haddox, Elizabeth. (2014). "Defining Urban Play."

Table 2.2

Haddox, Elizabeth. (2014). "Indicators of Place Phenomena."





*Figure 7.1* Bike polo at an underpass.



A grayscale photograph of a bicycle leaning against a light-colored wall. The bicycle is the central focus, with its frame, wheels, and handlebars visible. In the foreground, a white bicycle helmet with several ventilation holes sits on the ground. The overall scene is dimly lit, creating a moody atmosphere. The text 'CHAPTER 7' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**CHAPTER 7**

**APPENDICES**

# A: Glossary

## *environmental fit*

the sense of fitting into or naturally being a part of their physical environment; also referred to as “ecological self” (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010)

## *insiderness*

a contextualized, comprehensive, and critical understanding of one's environment; environmental competence (knowing how to navigate and engage in a space); and diverse, strong relationships with a place (Lim & Barton, 2010)

## *place attachment*

emotive connection with a space (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2005)

## *place dependence*

behavioral commitments in a space; the acknowledged behavioral advantage of a place for a particular activity, relative to other settings (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2005)

### ***place identity***

definition of one's self with respect to a place; the feeling that a place reflects your identity (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2010)

### ***place-self congruity***

the sense that a place matches the individual's personality and values (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010)

### ***rootedness***

the feeling of unselfconscious dwelling (Hay, 1998)

### ***sense of belonging***

fitting with a space, happiness with context and facilities (Prieto-Flores, Fernandez-Mayoralas, João-Forjaz, Rojo-Perez, & Martinez-Martin, 2010)

### ***sense of place***

a communally accepted identity of a space (Stokowski); conscious occupation of a place that allows one to appreciate the place (Hay, 1998)

### ***terrabilia***

the affective bond between people and territory that encourages local development and intervention; the pro-development extension of topophilia (Oliviera, Roca, & Leitão, 2010)

### ***topophilia***

“the affective bond between people and place or environmental setting (Tuan, 1999); also, a vivid and personal experience (Ogunseitan, 2005)

### ***urban identity***

a dynamic interplay between community and site identity, specifically related to urban form and infrastructure (Burdett, 2013; Blair, 2011)

### ***urban play***

activity that is free and voluntary, valuable in and of itself (not externally motivated), pretend, and separate from reality both temporally and spatially, uncertain, at the human scale, and undertaken with the urban fabric as the play ground (Haddock, 2014)

### ***discovery play***

urban play, with the player's secondary motivation is to gain

knowledge or explore the urban fabric (Haddox, 2014)

***illusion play***

urban play, with the player's secondary motivation being to take part in taking on another identity or displaying another idea or character to an audience (Haddox, 2014)

***physical play***

urban play, with the player's secondary motivation being to achieve a state of grace through thrill, creation of pattern/rhythm, etc. with their body (Haddox, 2014)

# B: Defining urban play

## **What is urban play?**

Urban play is a concept that includes and goes beyond urban games. My urban play definition is structured with principles from common definitions of urban games and the definitions of play from Huizinga and Caillois.

### *Definitions of play: Huizinga and Caillois*

Huizinga, the father of the modern play definition, summarizes play as follows:

“Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life’. ... [Play] includes games of strength and skill, inventing games, guessing games, games of chance, [and] exhibitions and performances of all kinds” (p. 13).

He adds that “play is tense” and uncertain (p. 11), that play is “connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it” (p. 13), and that secrecy in play can build social bonds (p. 12).



Roger Caillois writes in response to Huizinga's play definition. Beginning with an appendix in the book *Man and the Sacred* (1959) and culminating with the publication of his own book on play entitled *Man, Play and Games* in 1961, Caillois develops his own definition of play. He clearly lists six defining aspects: (1) play is free, not obligatory; (2) play is temporally and spatially separate from reality; (3) play is uncertain, not predetermined; (4) play is unproductive, though a transfer of property is possible; (5) play is governed by rules; and (6) play is make-believe. (The fifth and sixth elements rarely occur in the presence of each other.)

While worded differently, Caillois's and Huizinga's play definitions share many tenets. Caillois agrees with Huizinga that play is a free act. Play is done for amusement, or joy, and ends the moment one says "I'm not playing anymore" (Caillois, 1961, p. 6). "The need for [play] is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need" (Huizinga, 1944, p. 8). Huizinga and Caillois also agree that play is both uncertain and separate from reality, that "play is essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life" (Caillois, 1961, p. 6). Additionally, both also agree that ritual is not play. Ritual includes a separate reality into one's own, but play always involves "the consciousness, however latent, of 'only pretending'" (Huizinga, 1944, p. 22). In other words, "play [becomes] ritual when it is 'real,' but play is

always make-believe (Caillois, 1961, p. 318).

However, while he agrees with Huizinga on some elements of a play definition, Caillois specifically identifies two aspects of Huizinga's definition that he finds to be unsatisfactory. First, Huizinga argues that secrecy, specifically the secret of the rules shared amongst the players, builds play communities (Huizinga, 1944, 12). Interestingly, this description of secrecy hints at the social interaction that the Guggenheim Lab describes as part of urban games (BMW Guggenheim Lab, 2013). Caillois contends, though, that the element of mystery and secrecy shared between players in Huizinga's definition is unnecessary, and in fact is contrary to some play activities. Caillois argues, in fact, that the function of some games "is to remove the mystery" (Caillois, 1961, p. 4).

Second, Caillois includes gambling and games of chance from his play definition, but Huizinga excludes them. While Caillois agrees with Huizinga that "a characteristic of play, in fact, is that it creates no wealth or goods, thus differing from work or art," he insists that gambling is a transfer or waste of wealth, not a generation or a loss (Caillois, 1961, p. 6). "Wasting" is part of the play experience, and financial waste is a type of waste. Play, without being pursued for gain, is "an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often of money" (Caillois, 1961, p. 5-6). The resolution of these two

inconsistencies is described in the next section.

### ***A hybrid definition***

In recognition of the limitations of each of the play definitions, a hybrid definition was constructed. The primary strategy for creating the urban play definition was retaining consistencies in the definitions and eliminating inconsistencies. The inconsistencies that were stricken from the play definition are described below.

While both Huizinga and the Guggenheim Lab see the social element of play as important, it seems that it may not be necessary for play. No other elements of the play or urban games definitions requires that fun be had in groups, and some types of play (e.g. base jumping, scavenger hunting, etc.) can be successfully carried out by an individual player. Ultimately, the social aspect of the play definition can be left out of the urban play definition. (Note: Eliminating the social element does not imply that the social element is not important to some kinds of play, or to people as a social need.)

The inconsistency regarding gambling and chance play also warrants removing chance from the definition of urban play. Despite his argument to the contrary, Caillois's chance play does not seem to be play at all; while it may be fun, it seems that the primary motivation is instead gain. Therefore, Huizinga's absenting of gambling play

is appropriate. Plus, chance play is inconsistent with urban games because it does not happen at the human scale.

Finally, as discussed earlier, technology is not necessary for many play activities that fulfill all of the other requirements for play (improvised street theatre, base jumping, etc.).

## **Categorization of play activities**

Categorizing play activities can help the researcher find patterns within and between different aspects of play and place development. I constructed a classification system that is based on Huizinga and Caillois's play classifications, but which functions more coherently with my own urban play definition. Evaluation of Huizinga and Caillois's classification schemes and the justification for my own classification scheme is below.

### ***Huizinga and Caillois***

Huizinga argues that play can be categorized as one of two things: "as a contest for something or a representation of something" (emphasis author, Huizinga, 1944, p. 13). Essentially, Huizinga theorizes that play is either competition play or display play. Caillois posits an alternative categorization strategy for play activity. He argues that play can be divided into four types: *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*

(hereafter competition, chance, illusion, and perception, respectively) (Caillois, 1961). Neither classification scheme is satisfactory.

Huizinga's classification does not incorporate all urban play activities. Perception play (meaning vertigo play, like parkour) is neither competition nor display play, and so does not fit in Huizinga's classification scheme. Neither does geocaching, an accepted example of urban games.

Caillois's classification strategy does not fit with urban play either, though. Again, geocaching and similar play activities do not fit in the schema. Plus, an entire category of his play classification system is specifically discluded from my urban play definition (gambling and chance). Clearly, neither Caillois's nor Huizinga's classification system is appropriate for urban play.

# C: Schedule

Playce		2014																																				
W		Jan	2	3	4	Feb	6	7	8	Mar	10	11	12	13	Apr	15	16	17	May	19	20	21	Jun	23	24	25	Jul	27	28	29	30	Aug	32	33				
<b>Spring 2014</b>																																						
Proposal	Full text (this includes things like interview questions!)								n	n	n	n	n	n																								
Proposal	Full draft													n	n	n																						
COMMITTEE	Send Hogwarts letters																n	n																				
Proposal	Final before presentation																		n	n																		
Presentation	Practice																				n	n																
Presentation	Final																					n																
Proposal	Discuss, make edits																							n														
Proposal	Final due (accepted? :)																									n												
<b>Summer 2014</b>																																						
IRB	Submit materials for IRB approval																									n												
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Data Collection - Vienna	Start playing! Look for people to interview, take field notes																										n	n	n	n								
CELA	Write/submit abstract																												n	n								
<b>Fall 2014</b>																																						
Data Collection - Vienna	Interviews																																					
Data Analysis - Vienna	Initial memorig																																					
Data Analysis	More literature																																					
Data Collection - States	Play (field notes, sample)																																					
Data Collection - States	Interviews																																					
Data Analysis - States	Initial memorig																																					
Data Analysis	Reflective memorig																																					
Data Analysis	More literature																																					
Conclusions	Preliminary conclusions																																					
Data Analysis	Expand literature																																					
Document	Write draft/adapt proposal (includes preliminary/draft/placeholder graphics)																																					
COMMITTEE	Send summary/draft for brief comments																																					
Play	For fun																																					
Data Analysis	Revised themes																																					
<b>Winter 2014-2015</b>																																						
Document	Full draft of book (75% of text, with placeholder graphics)																																					
Play	Take a break - have fun!																																					
Document	Begin graphics																																					
Document	Break from writing																																					





Playce

2014

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Playce

2014

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Spring 2014

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Proposal	Full text (this includes things like interview questions!)						n	n	n	n	n	n																					
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COMMITTEE	Send Hogwarts letters															n	n																
Proposal	Final before presentation																	n	n														
Presentation	Practice																			n	n												
Presentation	Final																				n												
Proposal	Discuss, make edits																					n											
Proposal	Final due (accepted? :)																						n										

Summer 2014

IRB	Submit materials for IRB approval																					n											
IRB	Anticipated date of approval																						n	n									
Data Collection - Vienna	Start playing! Look for people to interview, take field notes																						n	n	n	n							
CELA	Write/submit abstract																							n	n								

Fall 2014

Data Collection - Vienna	Interviews																						n	n	n									
Data Analysis - Vienna	Initial memorig																						n	n	n	n	n							
Data Analysis	More literature																							n	n	n	n	n						
Data Collection - States	Play (field notes, sample)																											n	n	n	n	n	n	
Data Collection - States	Interviews																												n	n	n	n	n	
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Conclustions	Preliminary conclusions																																	
Data Analysis	Expand literature																																	
Document	Write draft/adapt proposal (includes preliminary/draft/placeholder graphics)																																	
COMMITTEE	Send summary/draft for brief comments																																	
Play	For fun																																	



# D: Ethical Approval

TO: Blake Belanger  
LARC  
310 Seaton  
Proposal Number: 7160

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 06/19/14

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Place Identity in Urban Play."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: 06/19/2014

EXPIRATION DATE: 06/19/2015

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "**continuing review**" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
 There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY: IRB Protocol # \_\_\_\_\_ Application Received: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Routed: \_\_\_\_\_ Training Complete: \_\_\_\_\_**

## Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

### Application for Approval Form

Last revised on January 2011

#### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)

Place Identity in Urban Play

- **Type of Application:**

New/Renewal       Revision (to a pending new application)  
 Modification (to an existing # \_\_\_\_\_ approved application)

- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)

Name:	Blake Belanger	Degree/Title:	Associate Professor
Department:	Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning	Campus Phone:	(785) 532-1096
Campus Address:	310 Seaton Hall	Fax #:	(785) 532-6722
E-mail	belanger@k-state.edu		

- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:** Elizabeth Haddox / ehaddox@k-state.edu / (720) 235-6892

- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):

No  
 Yes

- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):

Thesis  
 Dissertation  
 Faculty Research  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Class Projects should use the short form application for class projects.**

- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**

Copy attached  
 Consent form not used

- **Funding Source:**  Internal       External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)

Copy attached       Not applicable

- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**

No  
 Yes (If yes, please complete application including Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

**If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu)**



## Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu).

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	Blake Belanger
Project Title:	Place Identity in Urban Play
Date:	20 April 2014

### MODIFICATION

Is this a modification of an approved protocol?  Yes  No If yes, please comply with the following:

If you are requesting a modification or a change to an IRB approved protocol, please provide a concise description of all of the changes that you are proposing in the following block. Additionally, please highlight or bold the proposed changes in the body of the protocol where appropriate, so that it is clearly discernable to the IRB reviewers what and where the proposed changes are. This will greatly help the committee and facilitate the review.

### NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

Urban play is play at the human scale, where the urban fabric serves as the setting for fun. Urban play is voluntary, uncertain, temporally and spatially separate from reality, and pursued for its own sake (for fun). Examples of urban play are flash mobs, parkour, and scavenger hunts. Urban play may develop players' understanding of, or relationship with, urban spaces. Such relationships can be understood through the lens of place research, specifically that of place identity. Exploring the relationship between urban play and place identity can help designers advocate and design for urban play.

To gather data about how urban play might impact the development of place identity, the research proposes interviewing those who engage in urban play, "players." Players will be selected for the study if they have participated in urban play, are available for interview in the same city as the interviewer, and if they are interested in participating. No one who cannot provide their own informed consent (i.e. children, mentally disadvantaged, etc.) will be asked to participate in the study.

The investigation will be structured by Thornberg's informed grounded theory methodology (2012). This methodology involves data analysis through "memoing," where patterns in qualitative data (often interview responses) are noted by the researcher. Broad data sets are the most conducive to successful memoing because they provide the most opportunities for the researcher to observe a pattern (Glaser, 2012). The interview data collection process, then, is designed to gather the greatest amount of data from each interview. Therefore, recordings of the verbal exchanges, maps of the physical path of the interviews, and photographs of landscape conditions identified as significant to play activity will all be collected to add to the breadth and richness of the data set (and subsequent memoing process).

Possible findings include insights into the relationship between urban play and the three dimensions of place identity (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010), such as:

- Urban play may increase place attachment, if players express that the play space is a part of who they are.
- Urban play may increase environmental fit, if players say they "belong" in their play spaces.
- Urban play may increase place-self congruity, if players report that sites of successful urban play seem "supportive" of their values and goals.

It is also possible that no significant relationships exist.

**I. BACKGROUND** (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

Findings from a range of topics and fields suggest that research regarding the relationship between urban play and place identity may be beneficial.

First, urban games and urban play are emerging concepts in landscape architecture. A growing interest in the topic can be observed in the flurry of recent journal publications and conference presentations (CELA, 2013).

Second, much research about place identity and other place concepts focuses on spaces that are occupied frequently and consistently, such as homes (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). Some recent research focuses on spaces visited less frequently, though. In a research program that interviewed immigrants to the UK from several other European countries, Rishbeth found that immigrants' place attachment to their homeland (where they now no longer live or spend time) was strong, despite not having spent much time there (2014). Since place attachment is considered to be an element of place identity (per Droseltis & Vignoles, 2009), it is possible that place identity may not depend on regular or substantial interaction with the space.

Many studies have researched and recorded the tangible and intangible benefits of play for individuals and communities (Ekelund, et al., 2004, Paffenbarger, et al., 1986, Driver, 1992). Benefits to children have been researched particularly extensively. For example, Spencer (2011) found that there are many benefits of child's play in natural settings. If the urban fabric is considered a new type of "wilderness" to explore (Trombleson, 2013), benefits from play in urban environments would be a logical next investigation.

Additionally, some research about children's urban play environments has been conducted. Li and Zhou, for example, have worked to develop mapping tools that help children identify their preferred urban play spaces. Their research also addressed the relationship between play spaces and the safety of those spaces (an element of the place's identity) (2012). Li and Zhou's research is closely related to this proposed research. The proposed study will not involve any children, though, to broaden the field by using adult subjects.

Finally, one might note that interviews (and specifically walk-along, on-site interviews) are an established method for investigating place identity (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). This lends some credibility to the interview strategy as the appropriate method for this proposed study.

**II. PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION** (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

To gather information on place identity and urban play, data will be collected during on-site interviews with players (i.e., those who have previously engaged in urban play). In these on-site interviews, the players and researcher will walk through a site where the interviewee has done urban play. Interviewees will be asked about their play activity at the site and how it and other uses of the site have contributed to place identity. They will not be asked to engage in urban play during the interviews. Audio recordings of the verbal exchanges, maps of the physical paths of the interviews, and photographs of landscape conditions identified as significant to play activity will make up the set of collected data. No photographs of interviewees will be taken. Each interview is expected to take 30-45 minutes.

**III. OBJECTIVE** (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

This research aims to provide evidence that designers and players can use to advocate and design for play in the urban environment.

- This research aims to shed light on the relationship between urban play and place identity.
- This research aims to reframe urban play as an activity that can be formally discussed as legitimate use of an urban spaces (with clear language, benefits, etc.).

- This research aims to provide tools (language, examples, maps, images, etc.) to designers and players so that they can structure productive discourses about play in the urban environment. These objectives can be achieved by using a mixed-methods data collection approach.

**IV. DESIGN AND PROCEDURES** (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| A. Location of study:   | <p>The location of each interview will vary by subject. Each interview should take place where the interviewee has engaged in urban play. All interview locations will be publicly accessible spaces. Interviews are expected to take place in the following cities (ordered in terms of likelihood): Manhattan, Kansas, USA; Vienna, Austria; Denver, Colorado, USA; Seattle, Washington, USA. (Please see attachment from Viennese Ethikkommission regarding ethical approval in Austria. The attachment states that the KSU IRB approval is sufficient to proceed with the research; the Ethikkommission only presides over medical research.)</p>  |
| B. Variables to be studied:   | <p>The strength of place identity the subject has at the play space, and the extent to which the strength of the place identity is the result of urban play activity as opposed to other experiences.</p>  |
| C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – PLEASE ATTACH)   | <p>All data will be collected during walking interviews. A copy of the interview questions is attached. The same questions will be used in each interview.</p> <p>The audio of the interview will be recorded with a small, handheld audio recorder. (And, as suggested by precedents that use grounded theory methodologies, no transcriptions of the interviews will ever be made. There will therefore never be a written record of the interview.) The path of the interview will be recorded using a GPS application. Photographs of landscape conditions may be taken if they are described as salient by the subject. No photographs that can identify the subject will be taken.</p> |
| D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.: | <p>Subjects may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason.</p> <p>Subjects may withdraw if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- fear or experience any emotional or physical stress.</li> <li>- fear any negative repercussions in their employment, social circles, etc.</li> <li>- are inconvenienced by the interview.</li> </ul> <p>This is not an exhaustive list.</p>  |
| E. List all biological samples taken: (if any)  | <p>n/a</p>   |
| F. Debriefing procedures for participants:  | <p>Immediately after each interview, participants will be given a debriefing sheet (attached) informing them of the aims of the study and relevant contact information. If requested, general findings will be written up and e-mailed to participants after the study is complete (likely in Spring 2015).</p>  |

V. **RESEARCH SUBJECTS:**

A. Source:

**Volunteers only.**

**Possible subjects will be notified of the study by the researcher, either through email or in person. Possible subjects are those who have engaged in urban play prior to the study and may want to participate. Possible subjects will come to the attention of the researcher through social acquaintance, and through research into public records of play groups and play activity (in online periodicals, the websites of urban play groups, etc.).**

B. Number:

**8-24**

C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)

**- All subjects must have engaged in urban play.  
- For convenience, all subjects will be able to give their own informed consent. This means that only people 18 years of age or older will be involved in the research.  
- Players must be available for interview in a city that the researcher will be in (listed above, and including Manhattan, KS and Vienna, Austria).**

**No other characteristics will determine eligibility for the study. This means that subjects may be physically disabled, over 65 years of age, economically or educationally disadvantaged, victims, or a subject of a halfway house, for example. However, as long as they meet the three criteria listed above, there seems no need for the researcher to know these details of the interview subjects. Their privacy in these matters will be respected. Additionally, as stated before, any subject may withdraw from the study for any reason at any time.**

D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.)

**The collaborator will directly contact possible interview subjects. Possible subjects will be identified through social acquaintance or the possible subjects' published association with an urban play activity. No inducements to participate will be offered.**

VI. **RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS:** The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

A. **Risks for Subjects:** (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are “no known risks” if appropriate.)

Overall, the risk to the research subjects is expected to be small.

Subjects may experience some stress during the interview process. In addition to any stress they may experience by being questioned in an interview setting, they may experience some anxiety if, for example, they describe an unpleasant memory during the interview. These risks will be minimized since no subject will be pressured to share something unwillingly.

In case any subject would suffer from their interview responses being linked to their identity, the anonymity of the subjects will be protected (procedure described below in "VII. Confidentiality"). Such risks might include, but are not limited to: risk of being charged with a legal infraction committed during play, such as trespassing; risk of ostracism, if the play activity described is not acceptable to a player's social group; risk of monetary fine for admitting to the accidental damaging of property during play activity; etc. Again, these risks may be seen as minimal since the subjects will not be pressured into saying anything unwillingly, and since all responses will remain anonymous in any dissemination of data or findings.

No physical risks are anticipated for the walking interview. If any physical risks are anticipated due to site conditions, weather, or physical state of the researcher or subject, an alternative location will be used that is agreed to by both parties.

- B. **Minimizing Risk:** (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)

Subjects will take part in the study voluntarily. Subjects will know that they may refrain from answering any interview question or to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. This will be a part of the signed consent form, and will also be reviewed at the beginning of each interview and at the end of the debriefing.

The interview questions are designed to help structure a discussion, not cause the interviewees stress. They are broad, and do not ask players to recount stressful events. Subjects will not be prodded to recall any instance of play that could incriminate them or make them uncomfortable.

The identities of the subjects will be known only to the primary investigator and collaborator named in this document.

- C. **Benefits:** (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)

The primary anticipated benefits of this study are broadly applicable. Greater knowledge of the place identity phenomenon and urban play activity can help landscape architects and others design more usable and accommodating urban fabrics, and design and advocate for play activity.

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? ("Minimal risk" means that "the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

Yes       No

**VII. CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

Though it may cause the subjects no harm to be associated with their interview responses, measures to keep their responses anonymous are taken as a precaution.

The names and contact information of the research subjects will be available only to the primary investigator, Blake Belanger, and the collaborator, Elizabeth Haddox. Specifically, the identities and contact information of participants will not be shared in any publications of data or findings. Instead, each participant will be assigned a pseudonym from the phonetic alphabet. These pseudonyms will be used instead of the participants' names during data analysis and in any publication of data or results.

Additionally, the researchers will make an effort to not include any information in the recorded interviews that would identify the participants. In the event that identifying details are mentioned during the recorded interviews, the researcher will delete that part of the recording immediately after the interview (within 48 hours). The recordings of the interviews will only be shared if another researcher requests them to verify results, or augment their own research on either urban play or place identity. The subjects will be notified if the interviews are shared. The identities of the participants will never be shared with the audio recordings.

The subjects' contact information will be retained in case they need to be contacted with regards to the study. Three years after debriefing the research subjects, the record of which subject each pseudonym represents will be deleted.

Additionally, while unlikely, measures will be taken to secure the data, especially the audio recordings, in case anyone would try to gain unauthorized access. The recording device itself is password protected. The audio recordings from the interviews will be transferred as soon as possible from the audio recording device onto the collaborator's computer on the Kansas State University campus. The files will be encrypted once they are transferred. The collaborator's Kansas State University computer is physically locked to a desk in a locked student studio. The computer is password protected. The network is a secure Kansas State University network. A copy of the encrypted files will be automatically backed up from this computer to password-protected cloud storage. In the event that the researcher will be unable to transfer the files to the Kansas State University studio computer within a week of the interview, the files will be encrypted and stored on the collaborator's password-protected personal computer, and similarly stored through automated cloud backup. After the collaborator graduates from Kansas State University, the files will be stored exclusively in the password-protected cloud storage account.

The researchers reserve the right to share the audio recordings of the interviews with other researchers and professionals to help illustrate findings and methods.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, no transcriptions of the interviews will ever be made (as suggested by precedent studies using the same methodology).

**VIII. INFORMED CONSENT:** Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of “deception” of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/consentckls.html>

Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.



- | Yes                                 | No                                  |  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | A. Are you using a written informed consent form? If “yes,” include a copy with this application. If “no” see b.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | B. In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If “yes,” provide a basis and/or justification for your request.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | C. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If “no,” does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | D. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | E. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If “no” explain why.) Attach copy of debriefing statement to be utilized.  |

**\*It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.**

**IX. PROJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes                                 | No                                  |  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Deception of subjects   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Shock or other forms of punishment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Physical exercise or stress   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc? |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection  |
- IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!**

**X. SUBJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes                                 | No                                  |  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | b. Over 65 years of age  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | c. Physically or mentally disabled   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Pregnant females as target population   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | g. Victims   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | h. Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any <u>alternatives options</u> for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. (It is also important to remember that: Students must be free to choose <b>not</b> to participate in research that they have signed up for <b>at any time</b> without penalty. Communication of their decision can be conveyed in any manner, to include <b>simply not showing up</b> for the research.) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | j. Are research subjects <b>audio</b> taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, photographed)? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  |

XI. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in them selves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- | Yes                      | No                                  |   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.          |

**XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:**

**A. KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:	Campus Email:
Elizabeth Haddox	Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning	(720) 235-6892	ehaddox@k-state.ed

**B. Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/Unaffiliated%20Investigator%20Agreement.doc>

**C.** The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:	Institutional Email:

**Does your non-KSU collaborator’s organization have an Assurance with OHRP?** (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search>).

No  
 Yes If yes, Collaborator’s FWA or MPA # \_\_\_\_\_

**Is your non-KSU collaborator’s IRB reviewing this proposal?**

No  
 Yes If yes, IRB approval # \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Exempt Projects:** 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

**Exemption Category:** \_\_\_\_\_

**XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL** Yes No  
 (If so, please give product.)

**Export Controls Training:**

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

<http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/ecp/index.htm>

1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage
2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program
3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can't recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu) and we will be happy to look it up for you.

**Post Approval Monitoring:** The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

**If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu)**

# INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: Blake Belanger

Title of Project: Place Identity in Urban Play

## XIV. ASSURANCES: As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

- A. **Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.
- B. **Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.htm>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.
- C. **Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.
- D. **Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.
- E. **Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.
- F. **Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved. Unanticipated or Adverse Event Form is located on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/index.htm>. In the case of a serious event, the Unanticipated or Adverse Events Form may follow a phone call or email contact with the URCO.
- G. **Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal Investigator Signature)

4/20/2014

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

# KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

## INFORMED CONSENT

**PROJECT TITLE:** Place Identity in Urban Play

**APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):** Blake Belanger, (785) 532-1096, belanger@k-state.edu  
Betsy Haddox, (720) 235-6892, ehaddox@k-state.edu

**CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:** Blake Belanger, (785) 532-1096, belanger@k-state.edu

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:** Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-3224

**SPONSOR OF PROJECT:** n/a

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:** This is a research problem undertaken as part of a thesis in landscape architecture. The purpose of the research is to understand the relationship between urban play activity and place identity. Place identity is a concept in landscape architecture that describes part of how people relate to and understand spaces. Understanding these relationships and urban play activity can help landscape architects and others design cities that better serve the needs of city residents.

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:** This research involves an unstructured walking interview, where the researcher, Betsy Haddox, will join you somewhere you have done urban play to ask you about your experience and the space. You will not be asked to engage in urban play during the interview. During the interview, three types of data will be collected. Several types of data are collected because very little research has been done about urban play and place identity so far, and we do not know what patterns to look for. (1) You will be recorded on an audio recording device. (2) A GPS application will record the path of the interview. (3) Photographs will be taken of elements of the landscape that seem important to your urban play activity. You will not be photographed.

You will receive no money or other compensation for your participation in this study.



**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:**

n/a

**LENGTH OF STUDY:** The interview is expected to last 30-45 minutes.

**RISKS ANTICIPATED:** You may experience some stress resulting from the interview setting. No physical risks are anticipated. The confidentiality agreement (below) should limit all other risks, including any risk you incur by admitting to an illicit activity, etc.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:** Benefits from the research are expected to be broad, and not immediately felt. Ideally, greater knowledge of urban play and place attachment will help designers build cities that accommodate more of your needs as a city dweller (like the need to play).

**EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your identity will only be known to the principal investigator and co-investigator listed above. In all analysis and publication of the data collected during the interview, you will be referred to by a pseudonym. If you say anything during the interview that can identify you, that part of the interview will be deleted from the digital record and will not be considered part of the data set. If the recordings of the interviews are shared in part or in whole (for example, at a conference, or for verification of results), your identity will not be shared. Recordings of the interviews will be kept in secure file storage, but your identity and contact information will be deleted from the researchers' records after you are debriefed. At this point, it will no longer be possible to associate you with the research.

**IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:** No

**PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:** n/a

**TERMS OF PARTICIPATION:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant

<b>Participant Name:</b>			
<b>Participant Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Witness to Signature: (project staff)</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

## Urban Play and Place Identity – Debriefing Statement

### *Summary*

Thank you for participating in this study. Your interview was conducted as part of a thesis in landscape architecture. The purpose of the research is to understand the relationship between urban play activity and place identity. Urban play is play at the human scale, where the urban fabric serves as the setting for fun. Place identity is a concept in landscape architecture that describes how people relate to and understand spaces. While benefits from the research are expected to be broad and not immediately felt, your participation in this study is very valuable. Greater knowledge of urban play and place identity should help designers build cities that accommodate more of your needs as a city dweller (like the need to play).

### *Confidentiality*

Please remember that your interview recording may be presented in part or full to other researchers or professionals. Your recording might be shared for a variety of reasons and in a variety of contexts. For example, your interview may be presented in part at the collaborator's thesis defense presentation or a professional conference to illustrate methods or findings. Regardless of whether your interview is ever shared, your identity will never be shared with anyone other than the primary investigator and research collaborator, Blake Belanger and Betsy Haddox.

### *Withdrawal*

Please remember that you may withdraw from this study at any time, for any reason. At this stage, though you have completed the interview, your interview recording can be deleted. In this case, your interview would not be analyzed or presented in any findings.

### *Contacts*

If you have any questions, or would like to withdraw from the study, please contact Betsy Haddox or Blake Belanger.

Betsy Haddox  
(720) 235-6892  
ehaddox@k-state.edu

Blake Belanger  
(785) 532-1096  
belanger@k-state.edu

For information regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Kansas State University IRB office.

Rick Scheidt, Chair  
Committee on Research Involving  
Human Subjects  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-3224

Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for  
Research Compliance and University  
Veterinarian  
203 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
(785) 532-3224

## **Urban Play and Place Identity – Interview Questions**

How did you find this place?

Does this place feel distinct? Why (not)?

What do you come here to do?

How often do you come here? How often do you come here to play?

Do you plan to come here?

What does this space make you think of? Do you have any good stories about this space?

Do you feel any emotional attachment to this place (e.g. fondness)?

Does this place feel like a part of who you are (when you do urban play)?

If this place no longer existed, would you feel you had lost part of yourself? Why (not)?

Do you fit with this place? How/why?

Does this place allow you to connect with yourself? What specifically allows this?

Does the aesthetic of this environment support special events? How/what specifically? Do you look for specific qualities in a play space?

Does this place reflect your personal values? Why/how?

Does this place reflect the type of person you are? Why/how?

Would you ever describe this space as a play space? Elaborate.

**MAGISTRAT DER STADT WIEN**  
**Magistratsabteilung 15 – Gesundheitsdienst der Stadt Wien**  
**Ethikkommission der Stadt Wien**

1030 Wien, Thomas-Klestil-Platz 8, Town Town 1. Stock, CB 12.103  
Zugang: 1030 Wien, Schnirchgasse 12, Stiege 2, CB 12.103  
Telefon: 40 00\*, Fax: 40 00-99-877 54, E-Mail: [ethikkommission@m15.magwien.gv.at](mailto:ethikkommission@m15.magwien.gv.at)  
DVR: 0000191

EK 14-091-VK\_NZ

Wien, 16. April 2014

Frau  
Elizabeth Haddox  
[ehaddox@ksu.edu](mailto:ehaddox@ksu.edu)

Sehr geehrte Frau Haddox!

Anlässlich Ihres Ansuchens zur Beurteilung der Studie mit dem Titel:

**“Forschung in Wien“**

vom 8. April 2014 teilen wir Ihnen mit, dass die Begutachtung dieser Unterlagen gemäß der gesetzlichen Vorgabe zu klinischen Prüfungen und multizentrischen Prüfungen nach dem AMG (Arzneimittelgesetz) und dem MPG (Medizinproduktegesetz) nicht durch eine Ethikkommission zu erfolgen hat.

Eine Zuständigkeit der Ethikkommission zur Beurteilung eines Projektes ist nur dann gegeben, wenn entweder eine Prüfung von Arzneimitteln oder Medizinprodukten oder die Anwendung neuer medizinischer Methoden am Menschen vorgesehen ist. Keines der genannten Kriterien trifft auf das gegenständliche Projekt zu.

Seitens der Ethikkommission der Stadt Wien wird jedoch empfohlen, bei der Auswertung der Daten auf den Datenschutz zu achten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen  
Der Geschäftsführer:

Reinhard Undeutsch

Ethikkommission der Stadt Wien  
1030 Wien, Thomas-Klestil-Platz 8  
e-Mail: [ethikkommission@m15.magwien.gv.at](mailto:ethikkommission@m15.magwien.gv.at)

# E: Argumentation

## Enthymeme

Claim: Landscape architects should understand, advocate, and design for urban play

Reason: because urban play can develop place.

## Grounds

Theoretical:

- urban play may develop place phenomena like place identity and its indicators
- urban play can affect community concepts of place (Visconti, et al., 2010; Degen & Rose, 2012; Garrett, 2013)
- urban play can build strong memories

Evidentiary:

- urban play is effected by the physical landscape
- urban play develops the social landscape
- urban play develops sense of neighborhood
- urban play operates across many scales

## Possible rebuttal

- urban play/spontaneous activity cannot be designed for
- design decisions do not impact how place develops
- there are better and/or easier ways to develop place, some of which landscape architects already employ
- landscape architects should focus on other design problems
- urban play cannot affect place dimensions
- place dimensions cannot affect urban play

## Warrant

Developing place is good

## Backing

- landscape architects want people to be comfortable in cities
- place identity makes people feel comfortable (e.g. increases their feelings of attachment and belonging)
- place identity is something that develops

## Possible rebuttal

- landscape architects should not design for comfort, but for other things (ecological function, etc.) to the exclusion of comfort
- urban play, as deviant behavior, makes people uncomfortable more often than comfortable, and we should not sacrifice comfort for place identity
- place is an *a priori* phenomenon

# F: Examples of Field Notes and Memos

## Field Notes

Field notes were mostly taken on my phone. This was the least invasive way to take notes and still play and be accepted by other players. Below is an example of some field notes that I took that later informed one of the narratives that were presented with the findings.

I hear a car in the lot, and stop climbing. Frozen.  
I hop down from the wall, and see some stone chippings.  
It's a little cairn on the ground, by the column. Who left this here?  
Someone else has noticed this building's texture, too, apparently.

I'm feeling a little nervous here because of the traffic.  
But I really like the stone and the doors. Waiting. Car is gone, back to climbing.



I climb at this spot a couple more times, and then I go to a new spot. First time, I can't make it up. (Ha.) Then I get up a few feet, and go sideways a couple, too, before I stick my hand into some really thick spider webs. Startled. Jump down.

-- HO-ly... Hahaha.

Next time, I get to the spider web part and then step on a bizarrely excellent foothold. And then I hear water. This is weird. I hop off... What's happening? It's the spigot. I turned on the water with my foot.

My arms need a little break, so I climb the tree next door. Beautiful, wonderful tree. It twists you around. You have to. I look back at the wall, and see the places I should be gripping. I get back down to try the wall again.

Arms straining a little more now. Forgot about the cobwebs. Almost peed my pants when I grabbed them again, hahahaha.

Climbed again and got to the window sill, up and

left a ways. Feeling good. People walking by, but I'm in the shadows now, so I keep going. And now I'm close enough to sidewalk that I could yell for help if I broke my neck (I love you, Mom). Someone says "Get it, spider girl!" and keeps walking. Probably drunk. Wish they knew about the spider webs. It's time to move on.

Arms are tired, so I hop on my bike, and pedal to a new find.

This one has shrubs near my climb wall, secrecy. Also, soil for landing on if I fall instead of concrete. Definite plus, especially since my vision is limited (it's night).

This is so different from a gym. It's all just that boulder surface climbing type of thing, and the holds are just long smooth nothings. It's less about finding the best holds and more about finding possible holds, or textured holds or something

Whoooooey! I am diggin' this spot. The grips here rock.

And right next to the spot, there is this low concrete slab thing where you can just jump on, and I can hold my body up off it and work my arms and abs. Oioihhhhhhhh! This is like cirque du soleil.

Fuck, I just broke the thing doing cirque du soleil.

Souvenir?

Not telling.

Probably not a problem anyway, I think it's just a utility. Also, how could I have done that? It's concrete. So... not my fault.

Climbing buildings, taking names.

## **Memos**

I memoed extensively during data analysis, and filled several sketchbooks. At right and below are examples of memoing that I did. Written memos were the most common. However, I also memoed by diagramming, sketching, and mapping. Examples of each kind of memo are included. One of the written memos is an example of my reflexive memoing of my own biases.

play fighting patterns and goofiness. And so, I'm  
getting nervous and playing with my body language  
a little, but not saying anything, and also not saying  
anything with my eyes etc. Instead, or well, to be  
honest, I am communicating a lot w/ my eyes to  
= who cannot see them coming, that there is  
something behind her. And she turns to look,  
but keeps playing, deciding it's okay. —  
think it's okay, too. So then I'm the odd one  
out b/c I still feel as if it's not okay.

The real missing piece is that I don't trust  
anyone around me anymore. I don't trust the people  
walking by to leave us alone because Maureen is  
practically ~~is~~ crying at this point, and it seems as  
if ~~she~~ — and I am victimizing her and the Mogs  
was just Ted talks, so I'm betting that everyone is  
feeling pretty aware of themselves right now. So  
I don't trust them to leave us be if we're making  
this poor girl (=) Scared. And I don't trust (=)  
to stop if someone asks b/c he gets carried away  
over things and has a less-developed idea of  
boundaries. And I guess I should have trusted (=)  
to be able to allay all fears, and just stop crying,  
but what if she doesn't? Or, even more than that,  
what if she's not convincing? (shit the denial the  
kind of thing a victim might say? I don't know.  
Stupid, because I say "you guys, people are  
coming" and I break character and you don't  
know that we do in public, especially when people  
around us are especially when people  
around us are especially when people

account the scene  
outside. I think I worry a lot about the  
scene that we do in public, especially when people  
around us are especially when people



2 September 2014

Personal field notes/memoing.

It was making me really nervous to climb on that cabin thing, but I really wanted to because the chimney texture was so good.

I spend a lot of time these days being paranoid and trying to determine the level of surveillance on this kind of place. I mean, there is a high seat inside. What?!! But, there don't seem to be any cameras, Manhattan is probably too cheap for that. Yeah, of course they are, who am I kidding. And there are cops everywhere because it's the beginning of the school year, but they are all apparently on traffic duty. This might be nice to do with someone else, actually, because they could be my lookout, but I go climbing how to get away from it all. I mean, it's a really relaxing thing, to find the rhythm of the wall, to try to sort it all out at night without being able to see very well. Though, admittedly, Manhattan is the city that I've been building in that's been it the poorest. Sort of good, because it means there's less visibility for people → me, so I can climb more without worrying so much. But it also makes taking all that stuff built in for that mountain expert! climbing and stuff built in for that mountain expert! was working on at my internship when they have rock sort of like Johnson-Habitat Park, the park was that I rock climbing, but it's also like spelunking. And it's there is a whole nether (?) layer to that! It's like like spelunking in that way too. Whoa, check that out! to learn a different way to climb. I mean, it's sort of harder to climb. Or, it makes it harder because I have



I think it exists. Also, I think that I am relieved that this doesn't have to happen a good, but part of me also thinks that play impacts place. I think I see that in myself and my own experiences with play, but I also think that I see that in other people. I certainly worry that people will say what they think I want them to say during interviews because they read my IRB consent form which pretty directly addresses that relationship. So, I am worried about the bias of play impacting place on at least two levels:

1. I see it in myself, and I know that I believe play:: place is true in my own experience (and probably in another's as well based on interviews)
2. I worry that my interview subjects have maybe unconscious (or perhaps consciously) inflated place awareness because of my research

Maybe this won't really carry through all of my research because issues of ownership, for example, seem separate to them I think. And that's a lot of what I'm looking at.

I was under the impression for a long time that the language I was using would be an effective way of talking about place, but more and more I think that it could vary based on sociocultural phenomena / context / ~~membership~~ / ~~phenomena~~. I now believe that different people speak about place differently.

I actually wonder if this may be a direction I may go in a topic I may explore professionally. do that really? Et. How much can you do as a community designer. or as a landscape architect or sp. designer that regard. Also - role of landscape architect as sp. designer. I think there is a lot that isn't being done by LAs in that issues on their own (for example, Walk + Travel). But that some other brilliant landscape architects are addressing different language patterns professionally. I mean, I think I wonder if there is work that I can do to address



looked for an "empty facade" "could be any facade"

- "gave the bidet a lot more width" - setback of building, so not in street worrying about the traffic
- Small space with bank-able wall allowed different tricks.
  - indoor fields not nearby at all.
- the places were "anonymous" - "it seemed pretty anonymous"

### || unobserved / deviant behavior

- Alpha also mentioned off the recording that there was a security officer who interrupted their game so that they couldn't play any longer. Said it wasn't allowed. Was it allowed? What are the regulations? I don't know the regulations, I don't think they do either.

Falling into the net: "like a balling object! [laughter]"

|| Haming - "The nets," not street names, not the names of the buildings

|| Exploration - led to reappropriation of elements / related to or inspired by the exploration

→ racing along the nets at the construction site.

Alpha remembers the place -

"He <sup>pass</sup> <sub>construction</sub> that used playing in the

of another place?

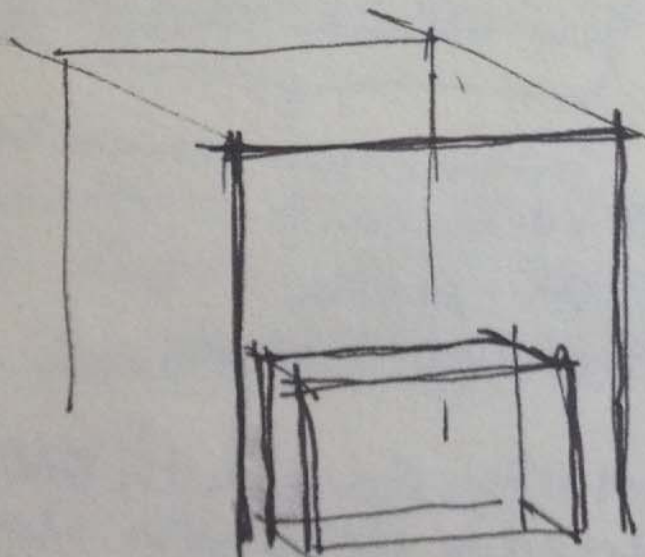
Alpha: Because the net looked really fun.  
It was right there

↓  
accessible. easy.

↓  
unusual. recognizable  
play feature in a  
new setting.

→ Alpha would  
play like a pirate  
as a kid and  
climb + hang  
upside down on  
ropes + nets.

|| Familiar element,  
urban appropriation,  
reclaimed by inner child.



↑ enclosed field  
for you



"probably, it's just about making a little mini-adventure in a place that ~~isn't~~ isn't <sup>sup</sup> like, cities aren't super-conducive to exploring a forest or something like that, so it's nice to have a little roof you can sneak up on and infiltrate.

Cultural value of exploration.

Exploration, ownership, etc. so tied up in the American identity.

↳ probably, human identity.

Explore, conquer, find frontiers + master them.

Exploration + experimentation are valued in society, but cities in and of themselves are not "supportive" of that kind of activity. of those motivations, etc.

It's the evolution of the fort.

"It sucks as you get older because you can't do it with as much immunity"

↳ my parents would be mad if they had to pick me up from jail.

↳ regulations are ageist.

Admittedly, limberer bodies are better for exploring + climbing, and younger bodies are generally limberer.

Showing a roof to a new person ~~out~~ is always exciting.

→ Finding laundry room smell on top of a building. Cities are exciting. these's stuff we design out that we can't find in nature.

got scared because we heard noises

How did you know it was going to support your weight?

didn't.

Didn't know. ~~lose~~ Assholes!

What if they had died

hahaha

but it never feels like dying.

The hot tub is gone. He misses the hot tub.

Every hotel in Aspen has a sneakable-into hot tub.

It's not about the place, though. It's about friendship, memories associated

DEFINITELY NOT OWNERSHIP.

DEFINITELY TRESPASSING.

↖ I am a trespasser ↗

---

Something evolving from childhood.

Discovery, mystery. Experiencing something as a young person, and experiencing it differently as an adult.

Authority.

No "secrecy" element, limits fun.

Exciting to go with friends. Trust.

Social.



• when someone shows me a place they already use and know, it makes me feel in with the community, and sometimes with the space, too. depending. In with space if allowed. Even more in community if it's not allowed.

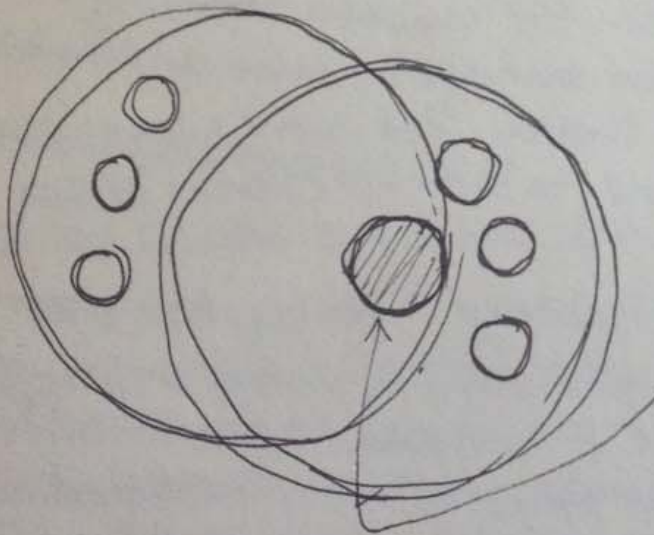
It's definitely an element of not-belonging if it's not allowed. and stuff. but it's more thrilling. I want the thrill. I need it. We want it. It's who we are as friends sometimes. Moments.

staring + observation + thinking

Physical - place - self congruity

Social - place - self incongruity.

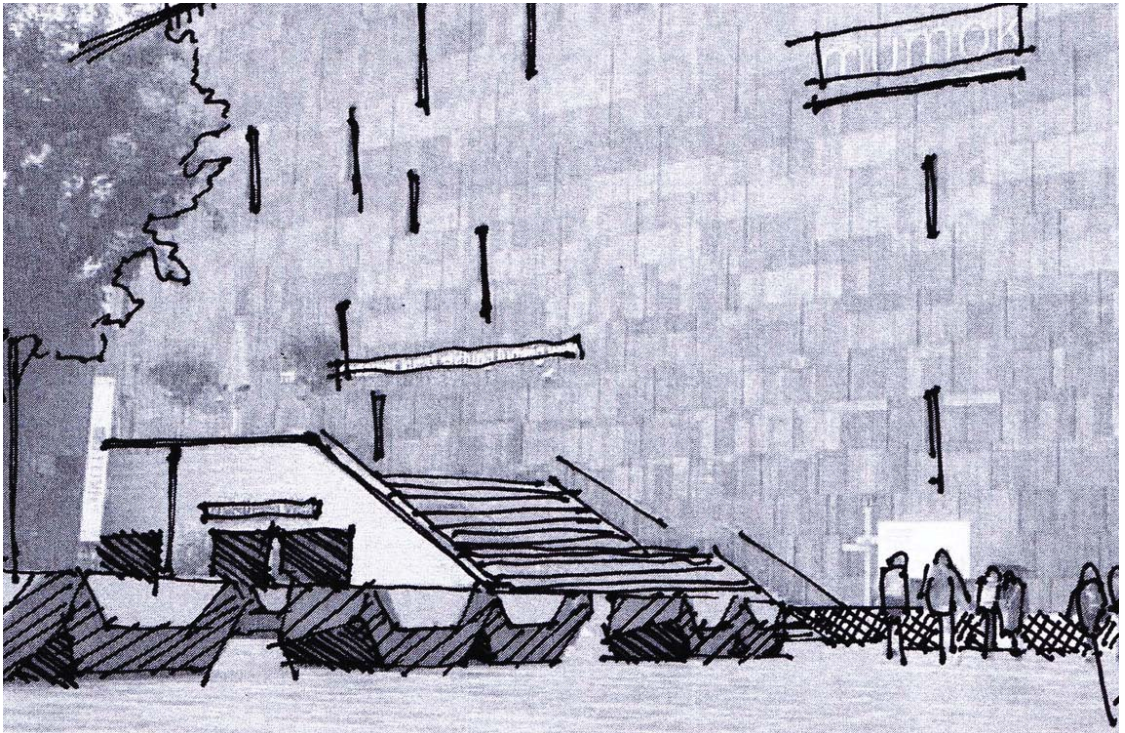
except for your friends + allies who you bring along.



SEEING  
DOUBLE.

in playing.  
your identity is split. there is the identity of player + ID of citizen + you're holding them both in your mind + the space is two things.







2005: IMPACTS? DEFINITION?

Socially comm lang	naminy		
	personal	friends	meeting people
Spatially abstract concrete	details	access + density	attachment + identity
	owner	policy	policy

PLACE.

Urban Jacoby Steiner (Fred)

CASE STUDIES  
— wave bench



# VERTICAL.

## Preliminary

- ▶ play spaces are other spaces, too  
- other spaces first
- ▶ creativity is a big motivation
- ▶ mapping as memoing technique
- ▶ not ownership, but understanding.
- ▶ small change<sup>(?)</sup>, but not danger or damage

- + Topophilia Emotional experiences in research
- Terraphilia So, there is a clear emotive aspect to playing and to being a part of that community. I think there's definitely a quality of inness with a community.
- + Belonging
- / Rootedness Perhaps this is what Jason was referring to with the comment about becoming a professional hipster?
- + Insideness — understanding There is a way in which being an urban player defines you. But I think another thing about it is that you don't really advertise it. Or, there may be a quality of authenticity that comes from honestly pursuing urban play, but it is not as potent if you're doing it to put on facebook.
- Place Attachment
- Env. Fit
- Place-Self Congruity culture of display and bragging and one-upping. Let me take a selfie. That is a no. And it really does relate to basic motivations for doing play. So, without wanting to sound elitist or exclusionary or as if I am the owner and keeper of a stable full of very high horses, ~~there is~~ I still want to say that there are those who play to play, and those who play for the fame, and there is a right way!

of urban community vs. concepts

### HOW TO MENTION THE OTHER PLACE PHENOMENA:

- Right before my first committee meeting, I specifically went through and tried to reconsider if my data was fitting in with what people have already written regarding place phenomena. Some ideas seemed more consistent with what I had been memoing than other ideas.

- Feelings
- ▶ no against the world
- ▶ nerves
- ▶ thrill 😊
- ▶ happy, smarter, connected
- ▶ dis comfort





American Cultural  
Value of  
exploration

social knowledge  
trumps technical  
knowledge

people can climb  
trees, not bldgs?

play levels  
social  
circles-

buildings meant  
for play?  
recreation?

learning + finding  
traces

walking  
around naked  
is legal, but

play is  
intensely  
creative

Enclosure  
protection  
safety  
boundaries  
secrecy

Secrecy  
always  
important

variety, accessibility, safety,  
enclosure, aesthetics, seating,  
maintenance, plants/shade,  
sewer/lighting, water,  
topo, hails, operation

play is  
in walk  
cities + spa

play makes  
memories

play landscapes  
are defining  
landscapes  
(Synecdoche)

play does not  
necessarily  
need comfort  
in a space

play + play  
landscapes  
can catalyze  
change

play creates  
boundaries at  
multiple  
scales

sense of  
neighborhood

memorable  
pieces are  
the elements  
of a landscape,  
not the composition

can't own space  
(even guys) but  
you can own  
your own play  
+ play space

perception of all  
spaces (more than  
play spaces) change



practice is too complex for practice

level PLAYING field

"peace" lang is for WASPS

permissions in code

players naming + labeling themselves

We assume the demeanor of criminals b/c we are misunderstood

enforcement is against

play builds new language

play + change  
OK  
play prohibited  
NOK

play language can become real language...

puzzle - how do you fit w/ this space

challenge

play @ landmarks  
play @ everyday

play is not for FB

damage is not intentional

play spaces are everyday spaces

peace is a byproduct not a motivation

risk  
chance

(except exploration, sometimes)

finding + finding out + finding people

insiderness +++

dual realities.

no one shares their best spots. not really --

you + your players are different from them + their players; even collaborative

players name their spaces. - language? -

urban play can make a better design - notice - talk - learn



playing doesn't  
use standard  
conventions

Europe - density  
is different  
from US density

planning  
before resp  
- not taking  
- not taking

American cultural  
value of  
exploration

level playing field

play is  
intensely  
creative

Security is  
always  
important

play @  
landmarks  
play @  
everyday

play + play  
landscapes  
can catalyze  
change

play is better  
in walkable  
cities + spaces

play spaces are  
everyday spaces  
(except exploration,  
sometimes)

"play" lang  
is for WASPS  
play builds  
new language

Enclosure  
Protection  
Safety  
boundaries  
Security

variety accessibility safety  
enclosure aesthetics scenic  
maintenance plant/shrub  
seating lighting water  
topo - built up operation

players name  
their spaces  
- language? -

players name  
+ labeling  
themselves

play creates  
boundaries at  
multiple  
scales

play makes  
memories

can't own space  
(even guys) but  
you can own  
your own play  
+ play space

perception of all  
spaces (more than  
play spaces) change  
because of play

play does not  
necessarily  
need comfort  
in a space

play landscapes  
are defining  
landscapes  
(Synecdoche)

memorable  
pieces are  
the elements  
of a landscape,  
not the composition

puzzle -



people can climb  
trees not blss?  
buildings meant  
for play  
recreation?

walking  
around naked  
is legal, but  
play is not?

we assume the  
demeanor of  
criminals b/c we  
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social knowledge  
trumps technical  
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circles

dual  
realities

you + your players  
are different from  
them + their  
players; even  
collaborative

insidness  
+++

sense of  
neighborhood

no one shares  
their best spots.  
not really --



... (crafting  
mes)

...  
crecy

variety accessibility safety  
inclusive aesthetics sense  
maintenance plant/shed  
seating lighting water  
topo habits of pedestrian

puzzle-  
how do you  
fit w/ this  
space

players name  
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play  
landmarks  
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Can't own space  
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dual  
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play makes  
memories

play is better  
in walkable  
areas + spaces  
enclosure  
protection  
safety  
boundaries  
secrecy

sense of  
neighborhood

variety accessibility safety  
inclusive aesthetics sense  
maintenance plant/shed  
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topo habits of pedestrian

insidiness  
++

no one shares  
their best spots,  
not really -

play +  
play  
we  
do



play is intensely creative

challenge

damage is not intentional

leaving + finding traces

risk chance

finding + finding out + finding people

play is not for FB

social knowledge trumps technical knowledge

play develops social circles

you + your players are different from them + their players; even collaborative

buildings meant for play + recreation?

walking around naked is legal, but play is not?

enforcement is against

level PLAYING + fidd

people can climb trees, not bldgs?

change inhibited OK

assume that fear of animals b/c we misunderstand

secrecy is always important

players naming + labeling themselves

pen code

can become language

# G: Toolkit





**Playability and Design:  
A Toolkit for Designers**

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Elizabeth Haddox  
Kansas State University





## Background

This toolkit reflects the research and findings that I have completed as part of my thesis on urban play and place at Kansas State University. The research was conducted in the summer and fall of 2014. The thesis was completed in May of 2015.





## Intent

This book was developed as a reference for designers who are interested in urban play to use.

The book is intended to help designers understand, use, and share urban play with professionals and communities.







# Contents

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

1. What is urban play?
2. What are place phenomena?
3. What is playability?

## **PART II: DESIGNING FOR PLAYABILITY**

1. Types of play and play spaces
2. What do players look for?
3. Design elements for play spaces
4. Case studies

## **PART III: DESIGNING WITH PLAY**

1. Site analysis
2. Community engagement
3. Principles of play in ideation
4. Introduction to ethnography for designers



# **PART I INTRODUCTION**

# WHAT IS URBAN PLAY?

## ✓ URBAN PLAY IS

- using buildings as rock walls
- using subway platforms as stages
- using parking lots as soccer fields
- climbing scaffolding like monkey bars
- LARPing in the city, with your phone
- jumping stripe to stripe on crosswalks
- geocaching
- exploring sewers and rooftops
- climbing really tall buildings

## ✗ URBAN PLAY IS NOT

- using skateparks for skating
- using sports fields for sports
- using playgrounds as playgrounds
- busking/performing for money
- those amazing giant chess boards
- playing in the wilderness
- playing games for social media
- playing in urban parks
- anything that is not fun



Urban play is free and voluntary; pretend; uncertain; valuable in and of itself (intrinsically motivated); temporally and spatially separate from reality; and undertaken at the human scale, with the urban fabric as the play ground.

Urban play is important because it is a way for people to creatively adapt cities to be what they want. It's a way to show how they want to use the city, and to take part in a dialogue on the use of spaces for fun. Creativity can catalyze change.



# WHAT ARE PLACE PHENOMENA?

## PLACE LANGUAGE

refers to the different ways that people connect to the land. It refers to their emotional attachment, their familiarity, their appreciation, their insider knowledge of different spaces.

As a tool for designers to use when investigating and communicating about place phenomena, some linguistic indicators, or “indexes,” that reveal the presence of different place phenomena are included at the right.



**PLACE IDENTITY**

language that indicates that the place reflects the individual's identity; "This place is like me"  
*(Huizinga, 1944; Caillois, 1963)*

**PLACE ATTACHMENT**

"I am fond of this place"  
"This place is part of my self"  
"I feel uncomfortable when strangers invade my space"  
*(Jorgensen, et al., 2005)*

**ROOTEDNESS**

unconscious appreciation of place, knowledge and use of facilities and networks, family ties  
*(Hay, 1998; Andreotti, et al., 2013)*

**BELONGING**

"I like my neighborhood"  
"I am satisfied with this [facility/ infrastructure]"  
"I am a part of the community"  
*(Prieto-Flores, et al., 2011)*

**SENSE OF NEIGHBORHOOD**

"feeling of attachment to one's neighborhood, having social relations in the neighborhood, and a trusting relationship with one's neighbors"  
*(Filipovic, 2008)*

**INSIDENESS**

environmental understanding (context), environmental competence (navigation), diversity of relationships with place  
*(Lim & Barton, 2010)*

**PLACE DEPENDENCE**

"I need this" "This place is the best place for doing what I enjoy the most"  
*(Jorgensen & Stedman, 2005)*

**TOPOPHILIA**

cognitive challenge (complexity, mystery, texture, coherence); sensory diction, familiarity (identifiability, privacy); ecodiversity  
*(Ogunseitn, 2005)*

**SENSE OF PLACE**

refers only to discourses about the meaning of a place to a community as a whole  
*(Relph, 1976; Stokowski, 2002)*

**TERRAPHILIA**

topophilia, plus positive and persuasive language regarding future development  
*(Ogunseitan, 2010)*

**URBAN IDENTITY**

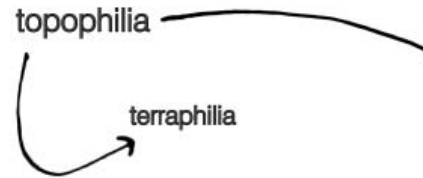
a collective identity that is connected to urban form and infrastructure  
*(Burdett, 2013; Blair, 2011)*

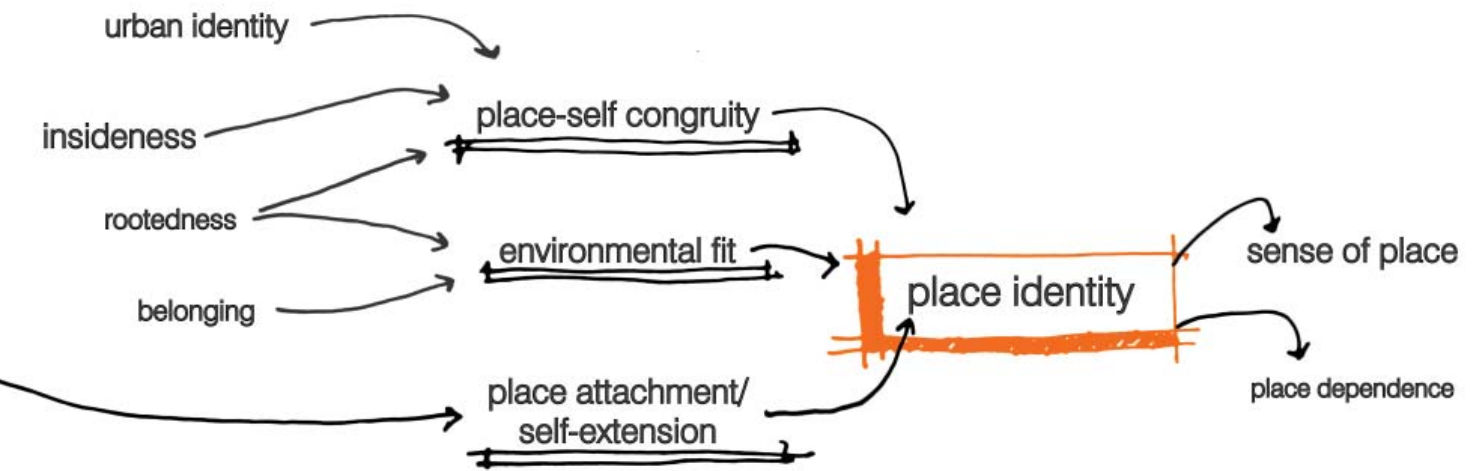
**ENVIRONMENTAL FIT**

"I fit here"  
"I am a part of this environment"  
"I belong to this place"  
*(Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010)*

But these place phenomena are not isolated from each other. They overlap and encompass each other.

Something like this..





# WHAT IS PLAYABILITY?

Walkability is an important standard in planning and design. It is a principle that describes comfortable and simple experience of accessing to amenities. Complexity, coherence, legibility, and many other features contribute to walkability.





Striving for walkability can help designers make more accommodating cities. However, while walkability refers to comfort and function of a space, there is more that urban spaces can do.

Playability takes walkability to the next step. Playability is about making spaces appropriate for play. Since play is a dialogue about how to use spaces, it shows that spaces can not only be effective and comfortable, but that they can also be arenas for discourses on how public spaces should be used. Designing for playability is a way of designing for discourse.



# **PART II** DESIGNING FOR PLAYABILITY

# TYPES OF PLAY

16

## DISCOVERY PLAY

having fun discovering new places  
and things in a city



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## ILLUSION PLAY

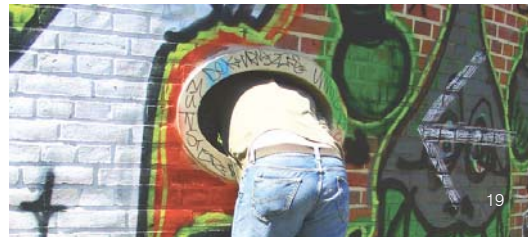
having fun displaying another identity  
to an audience; play pretend



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## PHYSICAL PLAY

having fun by achieving a physical  
state of grace or thrill



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# AND PLAY SPACES

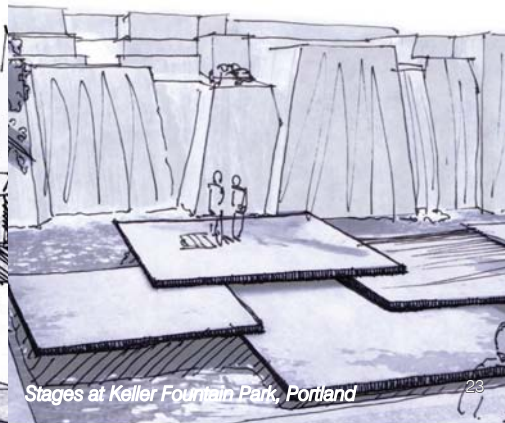
DISCOVERY PLAY



*Details at the Charles Bridge, Prague*

22

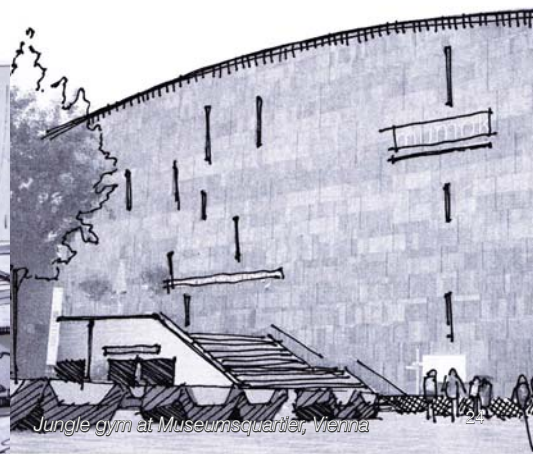
ILLUSION PLAY



*Stages at Keller Fountain Park, Portland*

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PHYSICAL PLAY



*Jungle gym at Museumsquartier, Vienna*

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# WHAT DO PLAYERS LOOK FOR?

## PLAYERS LOOK FOR A VARIETY OF SPACES

All different types of play rely upon different types of landscapes. Even different types of physical play, for example, require different elements.

## DISCOVERY PLAY

Discovery players look primarily for spaces they have not been to before or spaces that have changed. Popular spaces for discovery play are abandoned buildings, sewers, and roofs. Accessible spaces are great finds. Discovery play is easiest away from crowds, but that's not a necessity.

## ILLUSION PLAY

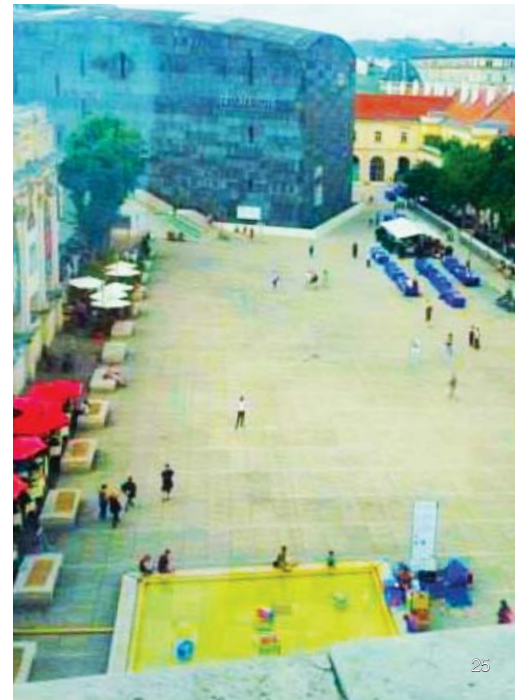
The most important element of illusion play spaces is the presence of an audience. Seating, shade, foot traffic, and eyes on the street are all important to having an audience. A space that can be defined as a stage by a change in material or elevation is ideal.

## PHYSICAL PLAY

Intricacy of both the horizontal and physical surfaces is important to physical play. Transitions between materials on the site and changes in elevation at the human scale offer the most opportunities for creativity. Physical play is sometimes hampered by crowds.

### ARE THERE ANY COMMONALITIES BETWEEN IDEAL PLAY SPACES?

It seems that most of the best play spaces have these characteristics in common:  
accessibility, varied and intricate materiality, and elements at the human scale.



# PLAY ELEMENTS IN PLAY SPACES

## AUDIENCES

play is sometimes most fulfilling if  
other people are watching

## STAIRS

stairs and ramps make spaces vertically  
dynamic, creating play opportunities

## VERTICAL SURFACES

vertical surfaces can define visibility,  
provide access, and inspire play



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### NOVELTY

new spaces and spaces that aren't meant for use are exciting to play in



### LANDMARKS

players like checking landmarks off of their bucket list of play spaces



### HUMAN SCALE DETAILS

details that you can experience with your body pepper good play spaces



# DESIGN TIPS

## HIDE DETAILS

Make some elements of the design discoverable, not overt. If you think that your design details could be part of a conspiracy theory someday, you're on the right track.

## PLAY

Make fun design decisions. Try quirky changes in materials, and let other people make up the game. (Who hasn't been that kid leaping across crosswalks?) If they fit with your concept, make playful choices.

## DESIGN WITH AND FOR THE HUMAN BODY

Add intricacy at the scale of a human body. Use brick patterns, changes in materiality that reflect human size and proportions. And use your body! Could you climb here? Dance?



### **MAKE IT WALKABLE**

Don't forget the basic amenities that are characteristic of walkable spaces: seating, shade, eyes on the street, etc. Walkable spaces are fun spaces to play in because they are comfortable, popular, and safe.

### **ADD SOME "NATURE"**

Adding naturalistic elements like boulders and trees can make the city seem less like a city, even less formal. Less formal elements inspire play, and help onlookers accept the playful use of the space.

### **MODULAR, MOVABLE FURNITURE**

Site users who experiment with the space by moving modular, movable elements are two steps away from play!

# CASE STUDIES

## MUSEUMSQUARTIER

Vienna, Austria

Museumsquartier is a popular public space in Vienna. It is often used to host events, but it is also the site of many a casual encounter or nap in the sun.

It also hosts urban play, most notably parkour. Here's why...

Open 24/7

Amenities like cafes  
and restrooms



Intricate vertical  
surfaces



Walkable public space

Near subways, buses, and trams

Shade

Movable, stackable furniture

Informal seating

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## TANNER SPRINGS PARK

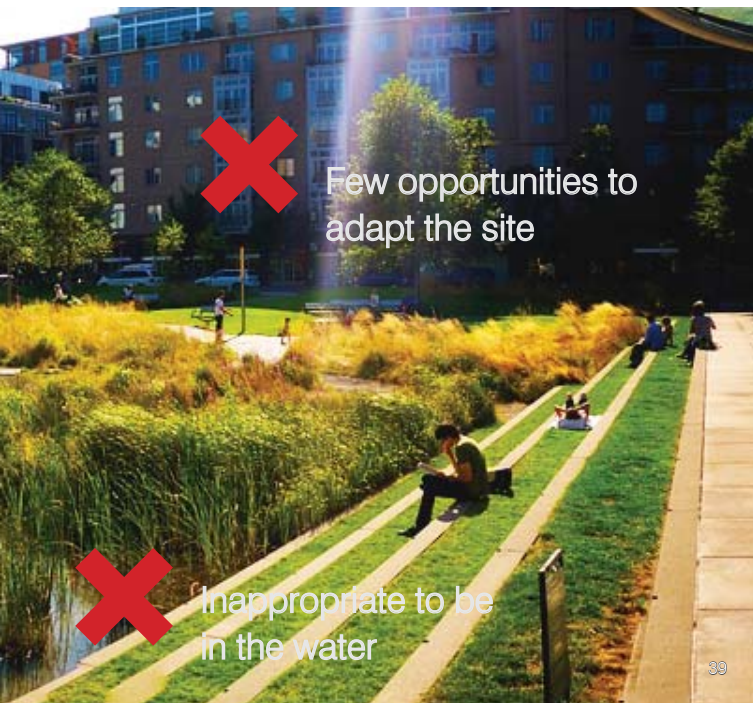
Portland, Oregon

Tanner Springs Park is a beautiful urban park by Atelier Dreiseitl.

The authenticity of the site ecology is especially compelling, as are the aesthetics. However, it is not as able to host urban play as some other spaces.

Here's why...





Few opportunities to adapt the site



Inappropriate to be in the water

39



Bikable, and near buses



Plenty of seating, on sides



Fun, inventive use of materials; hidden details





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# **PART III** DESIGNING WITH PLAY

# SITE ANALYSIS

## PARTICIPATING IN PLAY

can be a fun and interesting way to learn about a site.

Playing can help highlight elements of both the social and physical landscapes at a site. The ease and accessibility of play relates to the physical landscape

and the presence of amenities; the allowance or disallowance can reflect the community's values and begin a discourse on how public space should be used. Play has taught me about utilities and construction practices; patterns of how spaces are occupied; and issues of policy design and enforcement.

Something particularly interesting is the ability of play to create impressions of entire districts or cities. Playing in an unfamiliar district can help paint a picture of the architectural character and community disposition of an entire neighborhood.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## PLAY SPANS SOCIOECONOMIC CLASSES

Urban play is not exclusive to a single cultural group or class. Urban play can be for anybody. In learning different types of play, I was exposed to communities of people that I normally wouldn't encounter. It was valuable to meet them to understand how they feel in cities and how they want to use spaces.

Since play can involve a variety of people, it is one way to connect with the community. Research also shows that playing games breeds trust between people (in this case, between a designer and the community). Play can even turn into physical and verbal charrettes.







# PLAY IN IDEATION

## THE DRIVE TO BE CREATIVE

A ubiquitous theme in all interviews and field notes taken during research was the fulfillment of creative potential through urban play. Players love imagining what urban spaces can be, and truly enjoy the act of creatively adapting space.

## SEPARATE FROM REALITY

Imaginative play and design both occur somewhat separate from reality. Fun is activity that is established as temporally and spatially separate from reality. In ideation, designers can support each others' ideas to the extreme. Players support each other in their constructions of an alternative reality.





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### **SAYING "YES, AND"**

One of the types of play I engaged in for my research is improv in the streets. In improv, a key strategy is to accept every idea, and then build upon it. Saying "Yes, and" can foster creativity and help build exciting designs.

# INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOGRAPHY

## ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is the study of a social or cultural group to come to a holistic understanding of a specific community. It is usually pursued by anthropologists and other social scientists. These researchers usually conduct ethnography by immersing themselves

in the community of study for an extended period of time.

Ethnographic studies might involve several methods of data collection, including photos, video or audio recordings, and, of course, extensive and detailed field notes.

## LISTENING

It is important in ethnography to listen to the research subjects and make an effort to identify with them. Genuine interest and listening is fundamental to ethnography.

# FOR DESIGNERS

## DEVELOPING A STUDY

The principles of committing to fully understanding a community can be valuable to designers. I was able to adapt ethnographic methods to fit the tighter time frame demanded by my thesis schedule. While abbreviated ethnographic methods will not provide

the kind of depth that a long-term study would, I believe that such methods can still provide insight to guide analysis and design.

Many resources exist that can help inform ethnographic studies, such as Gobo's *Doing Ethnography*.





## Research Methods

The methods that I used were mixed methods, and structured with two methodologies: layered accounts autoethnography and informed grounded theory.

### **LAYERED ACCOUNTS AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

My research involved ethnographic methods. I played along with many urban players, and recorded our interactions. I backed up my own field notes and impressions with interviews with six other players. I took notes, made audio recordings, took pictures, and drew maps to collect data.

### **INFORMED GROUNDED THEORY**

Grounded theory is all about working from the ground up, not from theory down. I used informed grounded theory (a kind of constructivist grounded theory) to inform my data analysis. Informed grounded theory encourages research that is situated in the literature.

In fact, a thorough understanding of the literature is the cornerstone of informed grounded theory. Informed researchers write memos (observations) playfully and reflexively. The researcher uses their own experience (in my case, play) to paint a holistic picture.

In the end, I took six months to play on my own and with others. I engaged in discovery, physical, and illusion play. I played in Vienna, Denver, and Manhattan (KS). I interviewed six other players, and memoed for three months. And I want to share what I found.

small change, but not danger or damage  
 Topophilia Emotional experiences in regard to  
 Terraphilia So there is a clear emotive aspect  
 Belonging definitely a quality of inness with a comm  
 Rootedness Perhaps this is what Jason was referin  
 Insiderness — understanding there is a way  
 Urban Identity an urban play-able thing. But I  
 Place Attachment Or, there maybe to a quality of  
 Env. Fit it is not as potent if you're doing it to put o  
 Place-Self Consistency culture of display and  
 Place Identity does relate to basic motivations  
 Place Dependence I am the owner and keeper of  
 SOP who play to play, and those who play for the fun  
 TO MENTION THE OTHER PLACE PHENOMENA: I specifically w  
 he before my first committee meeting. I specifically w  
 d tried to reconsider if my data was fitting in with  
 ve already written regarding place phenomena. So  
 med more consistent with what I had been memo  
 or ideas.  
 feelings. Emotions. Community and their connect  
 no against the world  
 nerves  
 thrill  
 happy. Smarter. Connected  
 generate self-aware awareness

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