

The research centre for inclusive access to outdoor environments 

Engagement with the natural and built environment for children at home, at school, and into their teenage and adult years

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Potential mechanisms linking landscape and health - 1



Almost everyone is more active outdoors than indoors

Potential mechanisms linking landscape and health - 2



Social contact may be enhanced when in natural environments

Potential mechanisms linking landscape and health - 3a



Psychological response to perceiving natural environments
Attention Restoration Model (Kaplan & Kaplan)

Potential mechanisms linking landscape and health - 3b



Independent physiological responses to natural environments





Local Woodlands/parks:

"You can just go away by yourself. You can just disappear and nobody can see you...you can't do that in the city, you can't just keep walking, walking, walking"

"I find it's quiet, it gets you away from everyday life. You just go away and be in a world of your own sometimes... if you're angry at anything, just go away and get yourself all calmed down."

Unemployed men and women from urban areas in Central Scotland



Open Space and Social Inclusion: Local Woodland Use in Central Scotland, Edinburgh: Forestry Commission, 2004

What did you do when you were small?

"Collected conkers, look for fishing in the river; there's hardly any fish there now"

(Teenager, Wishaw)

"I was always in Greenfield when I was a wee lassie, climbing the trees"

(Teenager, Alloa)

"We used to cook just at this little dip, and we used to play in it (Water of Leith) ...and we used to swim...it was very wild."

(Adult, Corstorphine)

Open Space and Social Inclusion: Local Woodland Use in Central Scotland, Edinburgh: Forestry Commission, 2004

Experiences for Children

"There is plenty for the kids to do... throwing stones in the river, climbing trees and making pirates boats out of trees that have slightly fallen down. (On) some of the dead trees, you can actually hit the stick and make what we call a music tree...get music out of it"

Woman from mother and toddlers group, Lennoxton

Open Space and Social Inclusion: Local Woodland Use in Central Scotland, Edinburgh: Forestry Commission, 2004

What predicts how often adults visit woodlands or green spaces?

Frequency of childhood green space visits
True for surveys in urban and rural England and in urban communities in Central Scotland
($p \leq .002$ in logistic regression models)

People who did not visit green spaces frequently as children were very unlikely to visit as adults

Also significant:

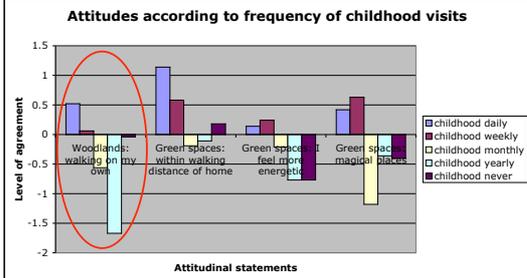
Gender (woodlands)

Distance of green space from home

Whether you might visit green places **alone** or with family or friends



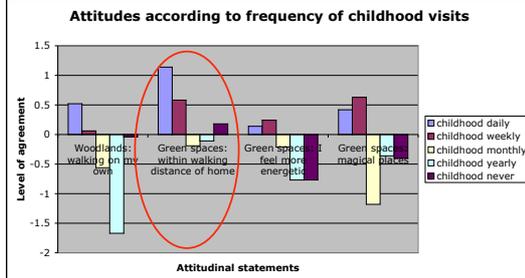
Childhood experience and adult attitudes



Ward Thompson, Aspinall, & Montarzino (2008). The childhood factor: people's use of green places and the significance of childhood experience. *Environment and Behavior* 40 (1) 111-143



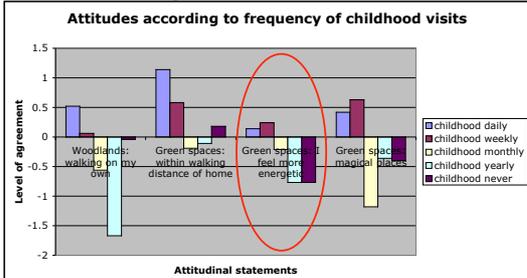
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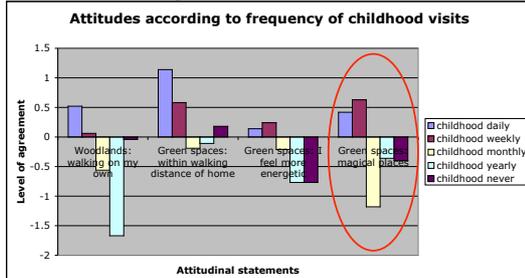
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Childhood experience and adult attitudes



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The importance of childhood experience:

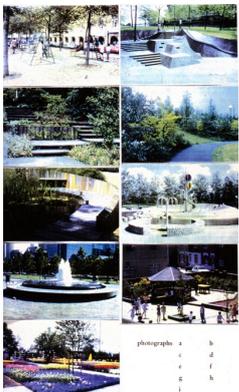
In addition to being important for *healthy physical, mental, cognitive, emotional and social development*, childhood play in natural settings appears to have a long-term and positive effect on attitudes, well-being and behaviour



Natural England 2010 Free-Range Teenagers: Wild Adventure Space its role in teenagers' lives. NECR025

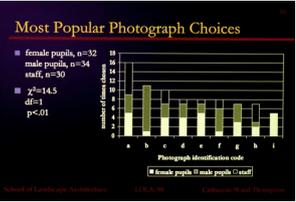


Research with Pupils aged 9-10 yrs, and their teachers
 Asked about which image would be their favourite playground
 Likes and dislikes, what they'd like to do there, on their own, and with a friend.
 What would an ideal school playground be like?



Most Popular Photograph Choices

- female pupils, n=32
- male pupils, n=34
- staff, n=30
- $\chi^2=14.5$
- df=1
- p<.01



Ward Thompson, C. 1995. 'School playground design: a projective approach with school pupils and staff' *Landscape Research* Vol 20 (3), 124-140
 Ward Thompson, C. 1998. 'A Projective Approach to a Language of Landscape Design', *Landscape Review* 4 (2), 27-40

Ecoanalysis: PCT and the Location Task
 (Arie Peled 1970s)
 Explores the parallel between how we interact with the space around us and how we experience and construe the regions of our own body



FIG. 6 "THE SKIN OF ALL ENTITIES SURROUNDING US"

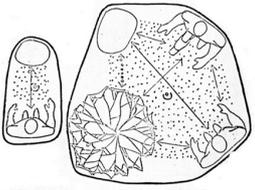
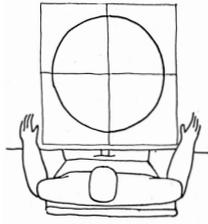


FIG. 7 INTERACTING IN A ZONE IN TIME AND SPACE WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Location Task Diagram



Participants sit on this side facing the diagram



Placement of elements on Location Task Diagram: Centre/Inner vs Outer/Outside
 Pupils - elements mainly Centre/Inner

Wildlife/nature study/fishing (Centre/Inner vs. Outer 4:1)
 Planting/gardening/gardens (Centre/Inner vs. Outer 2:1)



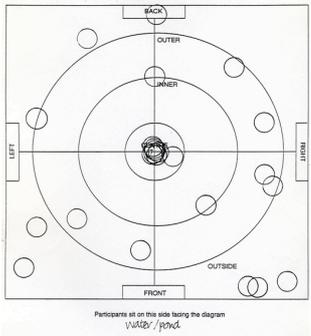
Placement of elements on Location Task Diagram: Front vs. Back
 Pupils - elements mainly in front (front vs back 2:1)

- shelter and shade
- sitting areas
- greenery/flowers/plants
- chatting
- running
- formal games courts/equipment

Staff - elements mainly in back (front vs back 1:5)

- shelter and shade
- sitting areas
- greenery and flowers
- wildlife/nature study etc

Placement of water by all pupils



Participants sit on this side facing the diagram

Ward Thompson, C. 1998. 'A Projective Approach to a Language of Landscape Design', *Landscape Review* 4 (2), 27-40

Experiential Learning

Patrick Geddes - believed that education, from childhood onwards, should involve direct and practical experience.

Geddes promoted the idea the every school yard should have a garden in place of their "desolate playgrounds"

"*Vivendo discimus*" - by living, we learn

Patrick Geddes, c. 1904



The ideal zoo (from Geddes' s Pittencrieff Park Plan, 1904)

True education starts with the feelings and proceeds towards the intellect, not vice versa

"... the ideal zoo, in which not only should animals be happily free or happily tame, but in which we ourselves should be again in nature"



Natural England Commissioned Report NECR025

Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers' lives

www.naturalengland.org.uk

First published 28 May 2010

NATURAL ENGLAND

"People have stereotyped teenagers – there are no play areas for teenagers."

Teenagers and risk-taking

Child Accident Prevention Trust (2000) study of urban youth

40% spent their leisure time in what they considered to be dangerous places (but drug culture creates no-go areas)

50% said that they were taking risks and dares when out with their friends.

Most popular places were wasteland, building sites and subways, or underpasses, along with rivers, abandoned buildings and quarries. Such marginal spaces afford freedom and many opportunities for playful modification of the environment

Natural England 2010 Free-Range Teenagers: Wild Adventure Space its role in teenagers' lives. NECR025



Experiential learning today

ESRC funded research by Shayer on 11- and 12-year-old children, UK, 2006, using Piaget's model of development:

They are now on average **between two and three years behind** where they were 15 years ago in terms of cognitive and conceptual development.

Shayer speculates this is due to "the lack of experiential play in primary schools, and the growth of a video-game, TV culture. Both take away the kind of hands-on play that enables children to comprehend the world around them."

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Kids no longer "free range"

Children's opportunity to experience outdoors is increasingly restricted (Louv's "nature deficit disorder")

- Young people seen as 'problem' and 'threat'
- Parental fears about safety
- Young people's fears about safety
- Educators' fears of litigation
- Social class and ethnic background
- Poor environmental quality
- Negative images of woodlands/wilderness
- Attractions of staying inside
- Commercialisation of youth spaces
- The changing nature of childhood

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A risk-averse culture

We live in an increasingly restrictive social climate - a 'culture of fear' (Gill 2005, Cooper 2005)

Risk management that only focuses on reducing the costs of getting it wrong will miss significant opportunity costs

But the socio-cultural dimensions of fear are complex

By constraining young people's access to adventure,

"...we have already condemned an entire generation to a life of awful quality and shocking brevity"

(Baillie, Adventure Activities Licensing Authority 2005)

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What do young people say they like?

Teenagers want a warm, comfortable and quiet place to hang out: "Teenagers don't really want to be on the streets, they want to be somewhere with their friends where is no one to tell them to get off."

The value of 'packaged' activities - so long as young people felt they were free to do what they wanted, they enjoyed the sense of challenge and achievement as well as "having a good time with your mates".

Choice is important "... the opportunity to do things alone... a sense of power, being mature/ responsible... developing new skills... doing what you want"

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What do young people say they dislike?

Without somewhere to go, or youth workers to legitimise activities, there is little alternative but to hang out in the street

The dangers of traffic, the unwelcoming attitudes of society and an ASBO culture are recognised

Fear of other teenage groups and gangs is a real issue

The barriers to undertaking wild adventure activities independently include transport and costs, parents' concerns, and lack of planning, wayfinding and organisational skills.

Bad weather, rain and cold in particular, are a barrier for many

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Teenagers' good experiences

"My brothers like to make dens with friends, up the woods"



"I like the bit up the wood, by the quarry. You can sit up at the top ...and see the whole of Edinburgh"

Ward Thompson, C., Aspinall, P., Bell, S. and Findlay, C. 2005. "It gets you away from everyday life": local woodlands and community use - what makes a difference? *Landscape Research* 30 (1), 109-146

Recommendations for action



Recommendations for action 1

- **Safety, risk and liability** - develop advice and training on risk management for wild adventure space
- **Social Inclusion** - recognition that all young people have a right and need to experience adventure outdoors; what works to attract young people from areas and contexts of deprivation?
- **Understanding unstructured use of local wild adventure space** - e.g. through use of weblogs
- **Involving young people and training them as leaders and mentors**

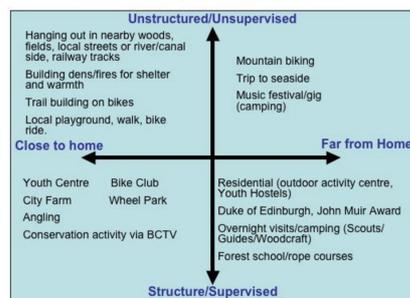
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Recommendations for action 2

- **Managing and maintaining wild adventure space** - advice and support to land managers; demonstration projects
- **Adequacy of access to and supply of wild adventure space** - involving young people in audits of wild spaces and adventure opportunities
- **Improved evidence of physical, social and environmental benefits** - common framework for gathering evidence; at least one, well-founded, longitudinal study; better theoretical basis for interventions

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Spectrum of opportunity for wild adventure outdoors



(adapted from HenleyCentreHeadlightVision, 2005)

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“There is just something about going into the forest which makes me feel so good.”

WOODS IN AND AROUND TOWNS PHASE III WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

Woods In and Around Towns (WIAT) is one of the most significant initiatives ever undertaken by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). In summary it aims to improve the quality of life of people living and working in Scotland's towns and cities. Since the launch of WIAT in 2005, FCS has made a major investment of over £50 million in this programme. For this – the third phase (2011-2014) – FCS will continue to treat WIAT as a priority initiative.

From <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/wiat>

A longitudinal study of the impact of urban woodland improvements for deprived communities (funded by NIHR PHR)

An evaluation of the Forestry Commission Scotland Woods In and Around Towns programme:

1. Physical woodland improvements (management of vegetation and litter, new paths and surfacing, benches, etc.)
2. Increased promotion in the community (led-walks, event days, forest school initiatives).




Catharine Ward Thompson, Richard Mitchell, Steve Cummins, Jenny Roe, Peter Aspinall, Andy Briggs



