

The nature of children's seasonal play

A case study from Auckland,
New Zealand



Dr. Christina Ergler



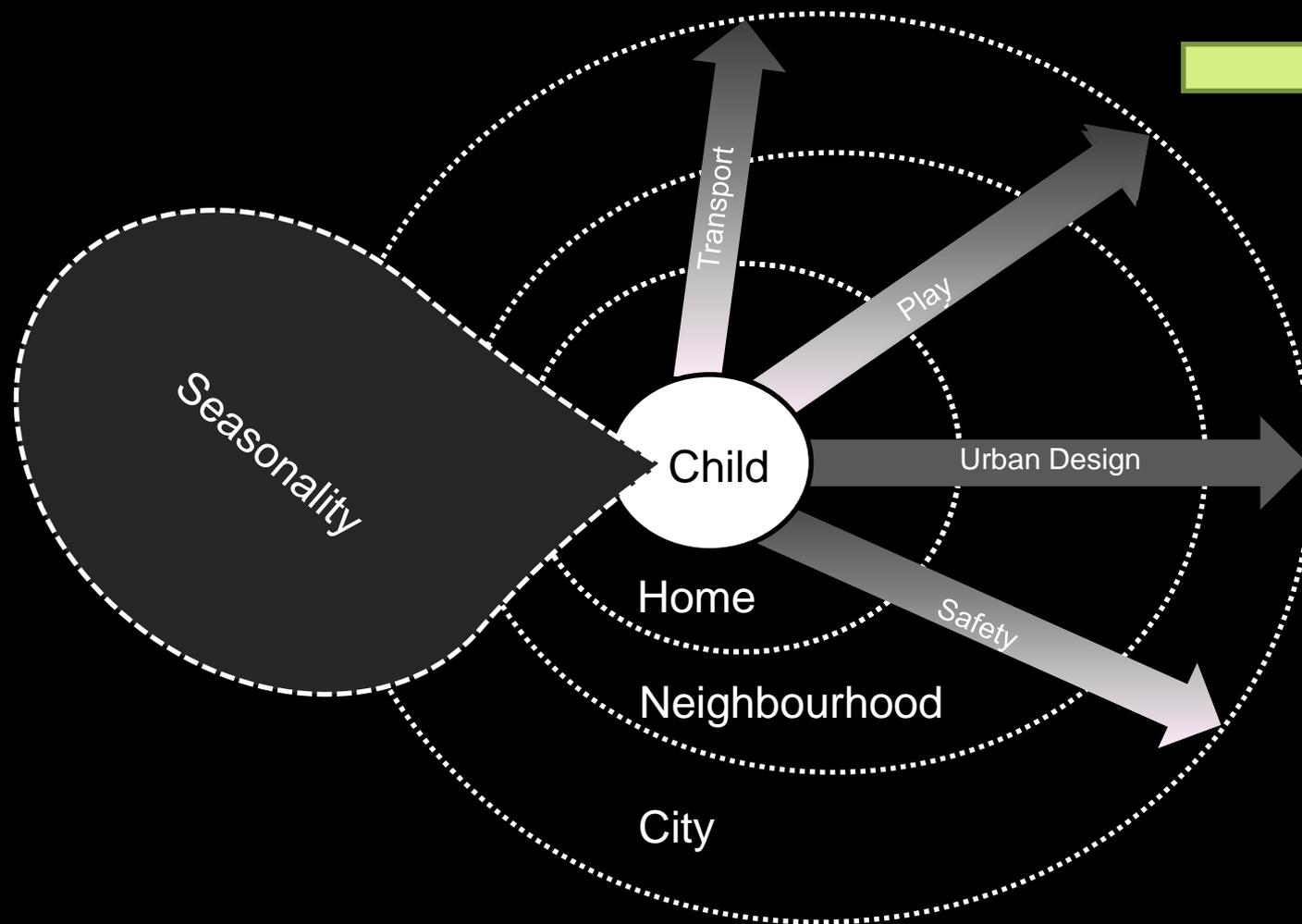
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“Too loud to play: Stonefields flying fox disabled” Council shuts down play equipment after complaints from neighbouring residents.

(NZ Herald, January 19 2015)





Move beyond context-dependent behaviour rationally chosen by individuals (Kearns, 2010)

“Placed focus” which accounts for the structural and agential dimensions of social realities (Blacksher & Lovasi, 2012)

Seasonality no fuzzy moderator, but grounded in everyday experiences (Ingold, 2008)

- **Behavioural and Exercise Science: Environmental determinism?**

(Sallis, 2000; Jones et al. 2009)

- **Children's Geographies: social actors in suburbia?**

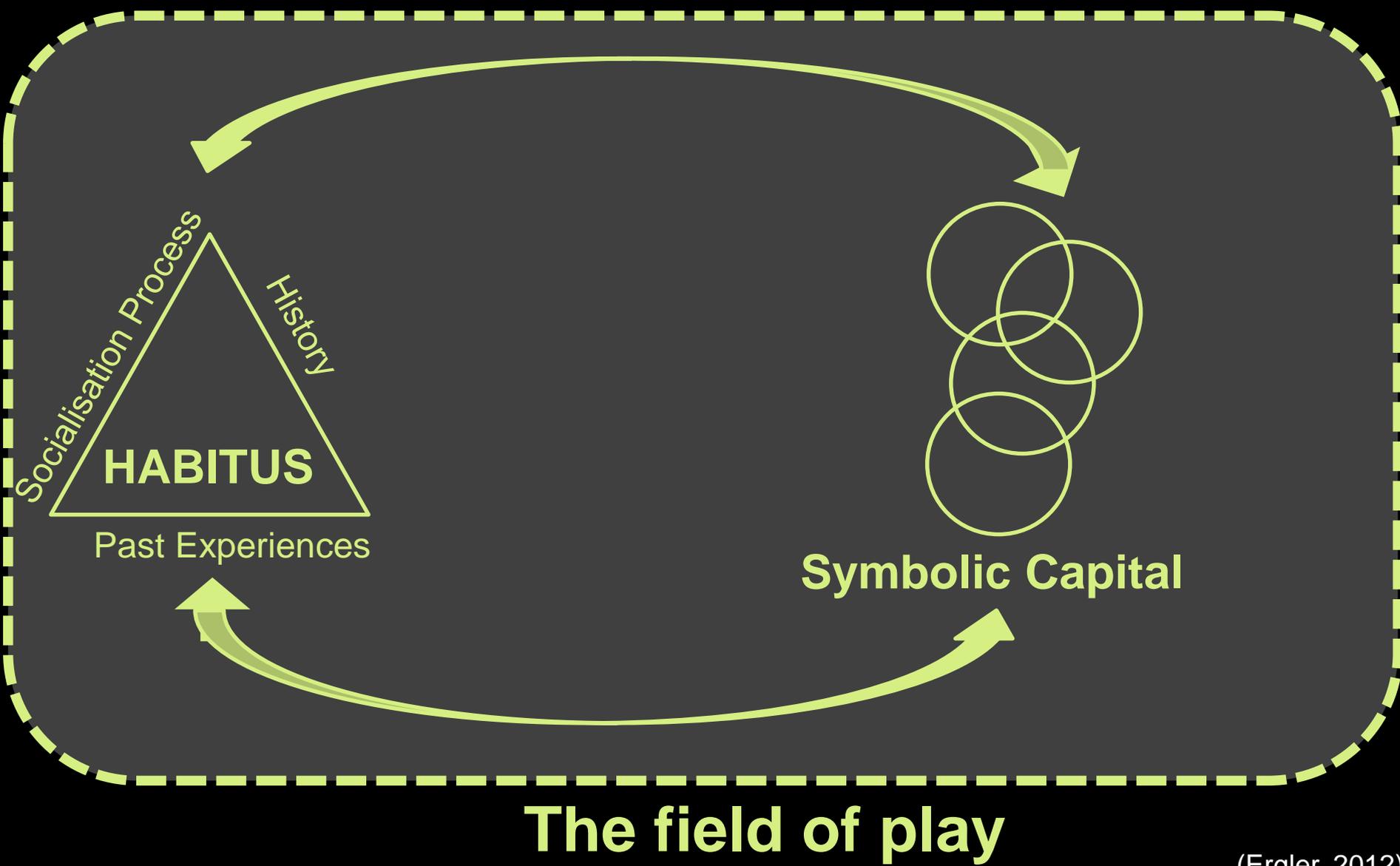
(Mitchell et al. 2007; Freeman & Tranter, 2011)

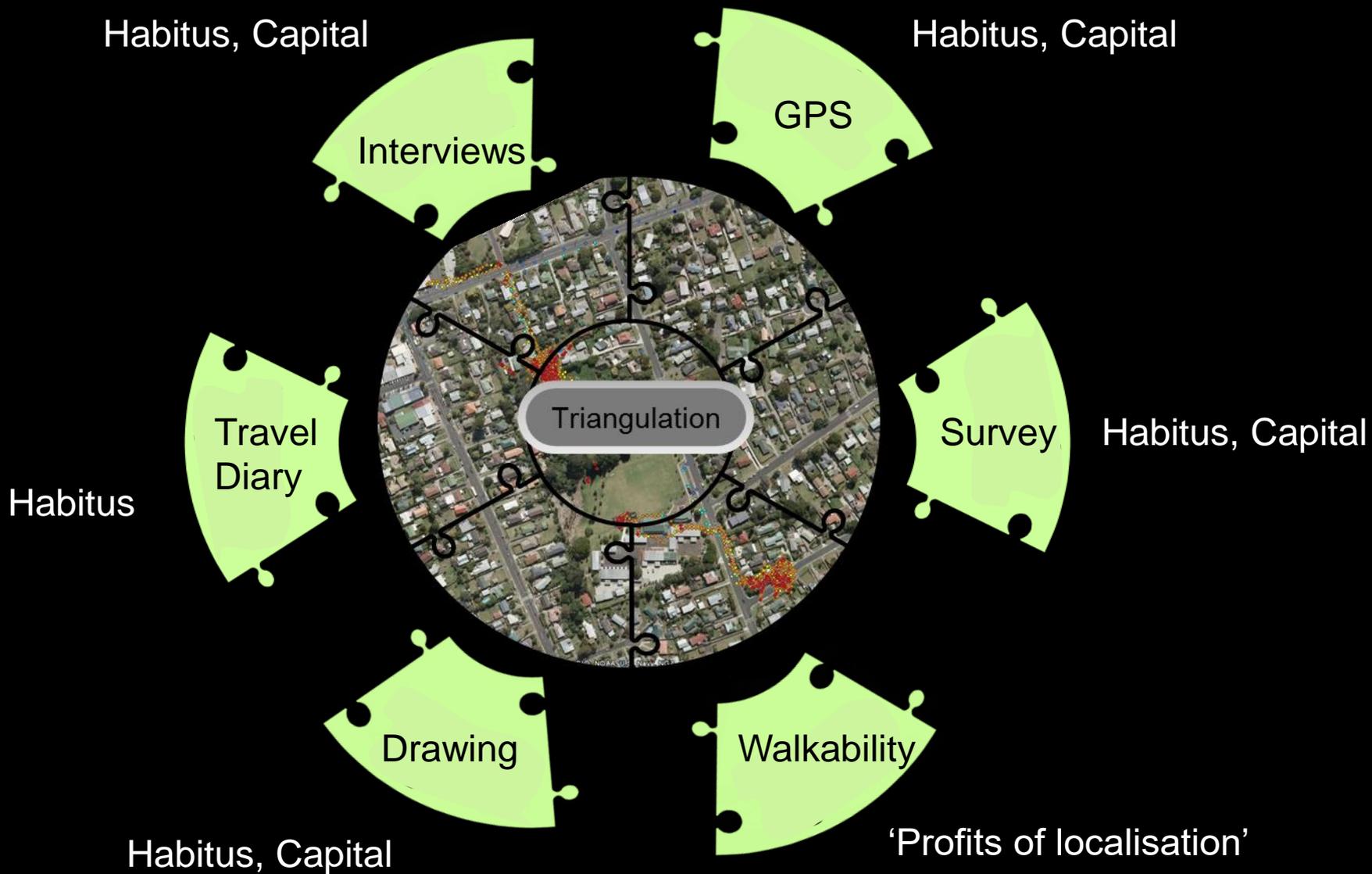
- **New Geographies of Climatic Accomodation: grounded in everyday experience?**

(Hitchings, 2010)

(Ergler, 2012)

Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit





Participants/Collaborators for summer and winter: 20 children aged 8-10 years and their parents

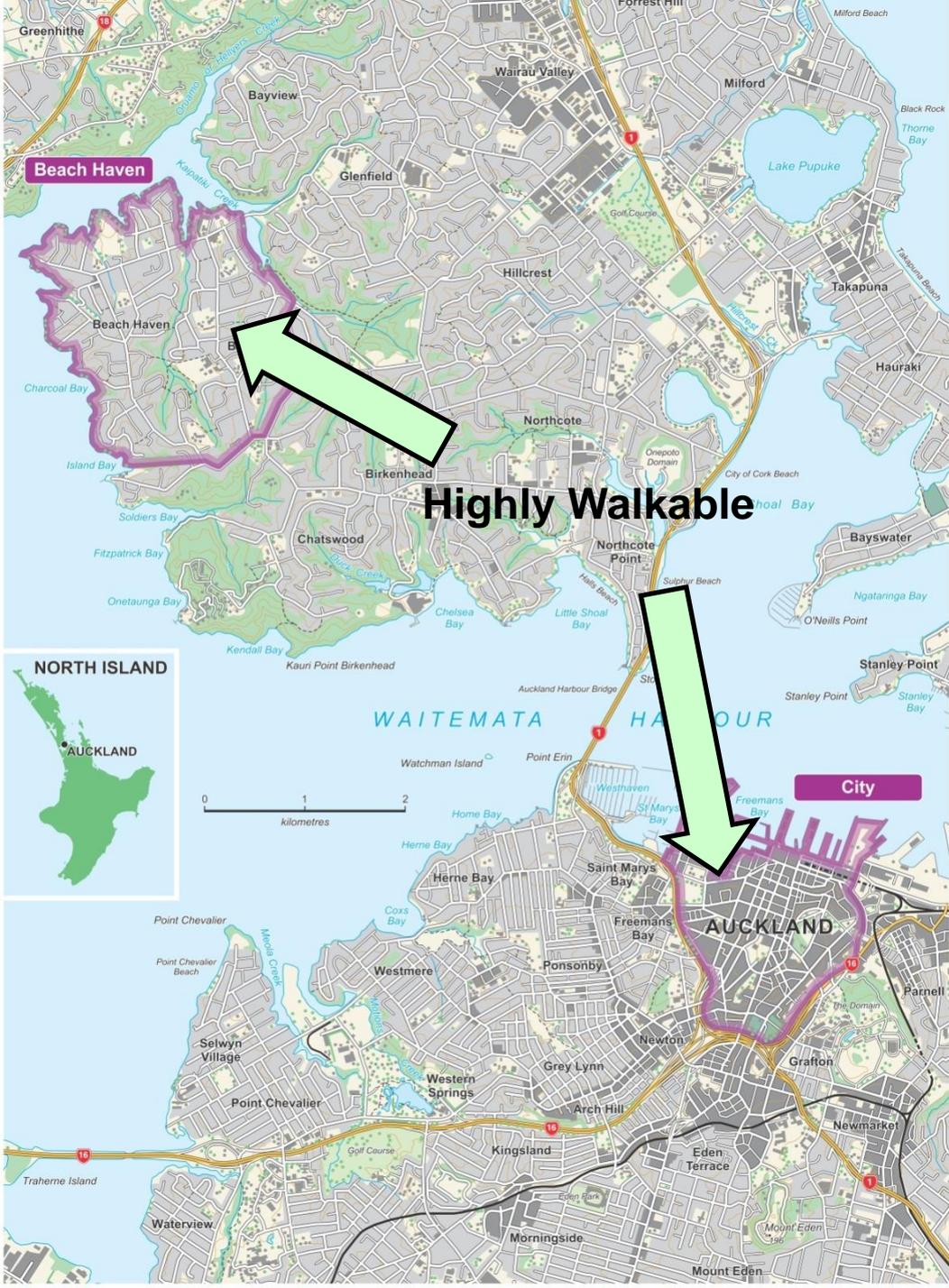
Beyond passive participation: Children as researchers



Children's wellbeing at stake?



**Where do Auckland children play?
What influences their play practices:
locality or seasonality?**



Auckland as Study Context

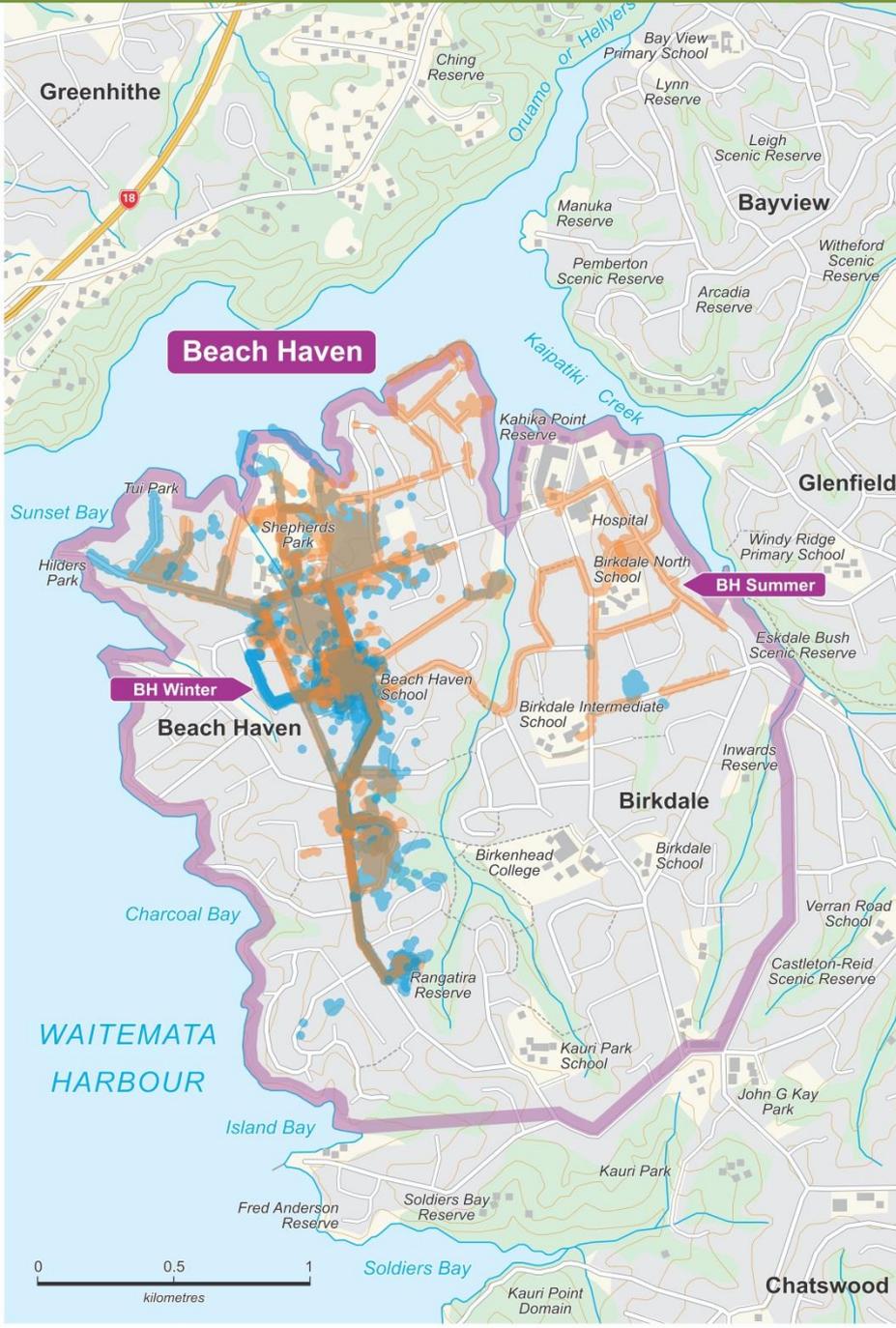




Children's seasonal activity space

- Insularisation of activities (Zeihner, 2003) in summer and winter
- Institutionalisation of activities (Leverett, 2011)
- Parental/ Societal aspirations for development?

Children's seasonal activity spaces



Locational Play 'Rules': City



There is **not** such a place close to my house where I can play [independently].
(Elena, City, Winter)

We usually **don't go outside**.
(MacBeth, City, Summer)

The city is not for kids. It's not the ideal place for kids to be!

(Juana's mother, City)

Locational Play 'Rules': City



Locational Play 'Rules': Suburb



I like being a mum here and my son likes exploring. If he goes off the beaten path, and gets lost, he knows a door to knock on...

(Dexter's mother, suburb)



Because there's lots of trees, so that you can climb on and lots of grass to play on and I like going to the playground in the park.

(Maree, suburb, summer)



“And this is what we call the pirate ship. It’s like this little rock formation sort of and we go up and there’s a bridge along there and there’s this sort of meeting place around here.”

(Dexter, BH)

Seasonal 'Rules'?



I really don't like going down there [park] sometime...because there is **not much to do**"

(Cyane, suburb, winter)

There's nothing really fun about the park in the winter, because everything is wet.

(Juana, city, winter)

I think a lot of **people look down on you when you are outside in the rain**, especially with your kids.

(Cyane's mother, suburb, winter)

Seasonal 'Rules'?

For fun you need to **go outside in the cold**...Don't feel as tired as I was sitting the whole time on the couch.

(Michael, suburb, winter)

Sometimes you get goals by sliding on the ground and stuff. **You can't do that in summer**. You get soar knees.

(Tim, city, winter)

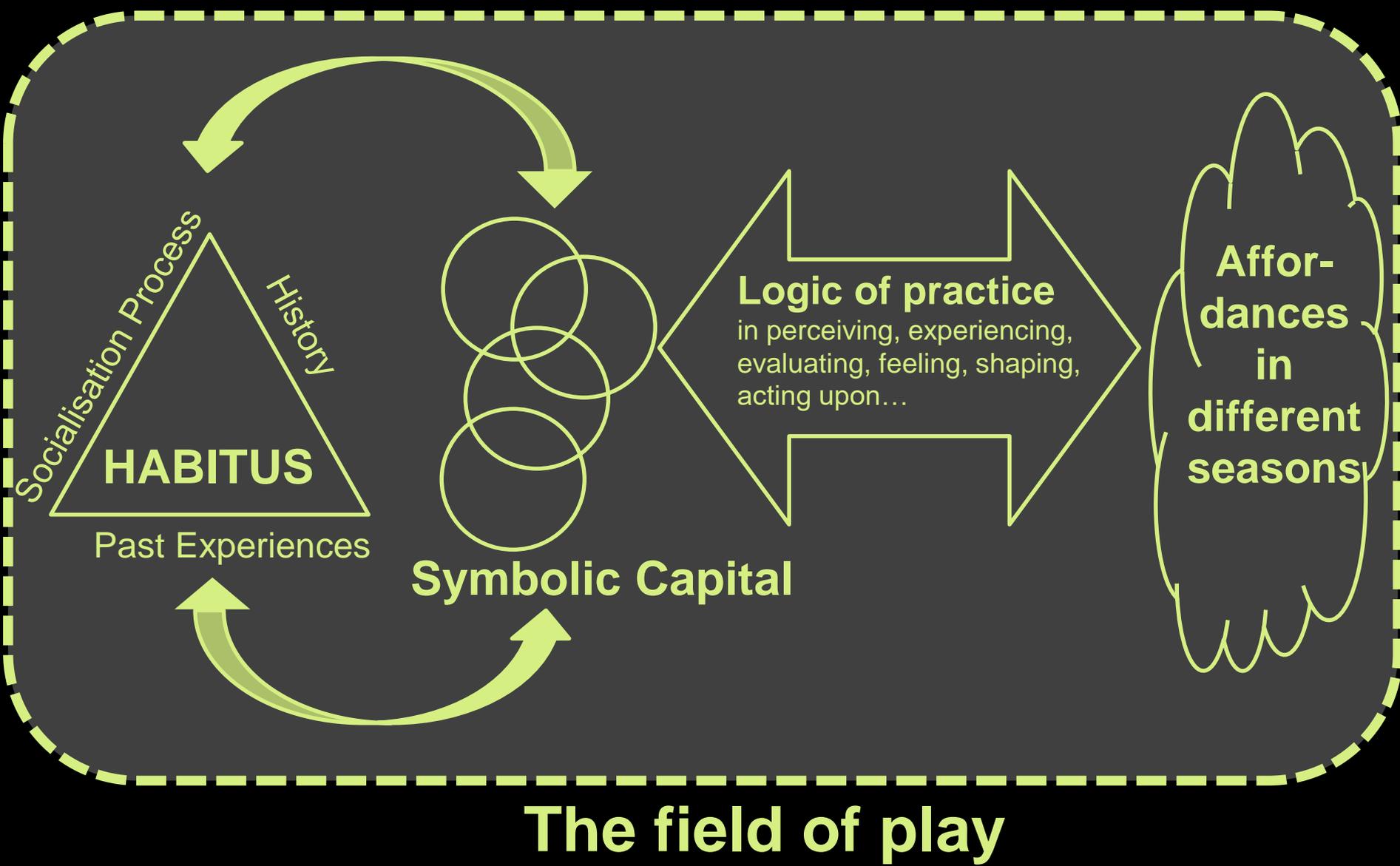
I encourage them to go outside in winter like put gumboots and rain coats on. I am not, I don't, I know that **you don't catch a cold from playing in the rain**, so [laughs] go out... and they love it.

(Rosie's mother, suburb, winter)

She is **pretty fearless**, she just would go out and doesn't seem to worry about **rain or cold or wearing shorts when it is cold**.

(Clara's father, city, winter)

Combining Bourdieu & Gibson



Concluding remarks

- Play not only determined by environmental opportunities, but also by a practical sense on how to behave. As a consequence, play environments need to be 'read' socially
- Seasonal logic of practice shapes (non)participation and (non)appreciation of outdoor play in place
- In analysing neighbourhood environments, which are important for children's healthy development, we should discuss behaviour (e.g. activity, play, travel) in a wider context and acknowledge structural (e.g. urban form, class) as well as agential (e.g. shape, transform) aspects

Thank you

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Te Kaunihera Rangahau Hauora o Aotearoa



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