



## The nature of play: children's seasonal playing practices in Auckland, New Zealand

**Speaker:** Christina Ergler  
University of Otago

**Chair:** Tracey Skelton, Department of Geography, NUS

**Date/Time:** Friday, 24 January 2014, 3.30pm – 5pm

**Place:** Executive Seminar Room AS7-01-07, Level 1

### Abstract

Children's independent mobility and physical activity is declining in unison with the increase in time spent engaged in sedentary indoor activities. Questioning the environmental determinist perspective of many previous studies, which simply called for an improvement in the number and quality of play spaces and viewed climatic and weather conditions as fuzzy moderators structuring outdoor play from above, this paper explores why 'play' resonates differently across localities (in both vertical and suburban environments) and seasons in Auckland, a city with a moderate climate. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice and Gibson's affordance theory, I argue that the empathy participating parents and primary school-age children revealed towards outdoor play in 73 semi-structured interviews reflects locally constituted beliefs about what is seasonally 'appropriate' children's activity. These beliefs are related to the type of habitus families embody (e.g. 'outdoor habitus', 'curtailed outdoor habitus' and 'hibernating outdoor habitus'), which is formed through historical, placed and seasonally-specific structures and practices. Thus, the determinants of seasonal outdoor play transcend modifiable barriers such as traffic and unsuitable play spaces as well as the inevitable issue of inclement weather requiring a more nuanced discussion on the nature of children's seasonal play than currently undertaken in the majority of studies.

### About the Speaker



Christina Ergler is a lecturer in Social Geography at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research interests are at the intersection of geography, sociology and public health and centre on how physical, social and symbolic environments shape and are shaped by the way people play, live, age fall ill and recover in particular places. Through her recently completed PhD, a Bourdieusian analysis of children's seasonal play practices, she became interested in developing methodological approaches that acknowledge children's expertise or what she calls "beyond passive participation". Recent publications include articles in *Social Science & Medicine* and *Progress in Development Studies* as well as book chapters on the social history of play in New Zealand and children's wellbeing in urban environments.

**ADMISSION IS FREE – ALL ARE WELCOME**

ENQUIRES: Sakinah – 65163559 CONVENORS: Dr Karen Lai, Dr Sin Harn Luh and Dr Winston Chow