Governments and play: the development of collective wisdom
a case study

Approaches to ‘sufficiency’: an example
• Welsh Government’s Play Sufficiency Duty, part of Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010
• Places a statutory responsibility on local authorities to assess, and, as far as is reasonably practicable, secure sufficient play opportunities for its children

Case study
• Series of professional development workshops
• Collaboration between Wrexham Council (north Wales) and University of Gloucestershire
• Aimed to support and enhance partnership working with professional practitioners from across local authority departments and voluntary sector organisations, including
  – planning, highways, parks, arts and cultural services, early years, social work, education, criminal justice, play development, etc
• A particular conceptual and methodological approach looking at children’s play as a matter of ‘spatial justice’
Play, time and space

- Relational perspective – space is not a static or neutral container
- Constantly being produced, always in the process of becoming from entanglement of bodies, desires, affect, material objects, symbols, histories – everything at that moment
- Playing might be seen as the desire to create worlds - in opportunistic ways and from current conditions - where life is better
- It emerges whenever conditions allow

Playing: a very ordinary magic

(after Masten, 2001)

- Appears to be mundane, trivial, everyday events that can emerge anywhere and everywhere
- Playing is co-created from everyday stuff to produce out-of-the-ordinary moments where life is more vibrant
- The opposite of play is not work but depression (Sutton-Smith, 2003)
Towards collective wisdom: accountability and responsibility

**Account-ability**
- To be aware of the complex relational processes that constitute children's opportunity to find time and space for playing (messy, indeterminate, non-linear, situated, and/and, what if...)
- To collect more and more practice experiences - to do justice to the on-going ways in which children and adults get on together (or not) within their environments

**Response-ability**
- To critically examine material-discursive effects – habits of thought, language and action that make environments more or less open to the possibilities for play to emerge
- To develop a series of actions designed to keep environments open for playing
- To de-centre fixed professional roles; to work ‘in between’

... critical cartography

What is a play space?