

**Written evidence submitted by Professor Luca Csepely-Knorr, University of Liverpool
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Brenda Colvin (1897–1981) landscape architect and first female president of the Institute of Landscape Architects' (elected in 1951) vision for post-war planning and reconstruction included landscapes as part of the provisions of the Welfare State. Something everyone should have access to, regardless of social status, age, or place of living. Her vision for the time after WW2 when *"In the towns there will probably be not only a more generous provision of public parks and playgrounds, but also gardens attached to housing schemes, providing children's playgrounds, allotments and some general pleasure garden for each community"* clearly described the importance she attributed to green space.¹ As she has argued *"We have seen a period when building and other new developments have been carried out almost without regard to their landscape appearance: when it was thought that any occasion to that aspect was of sentimental value only, a luxury which might or might not be applied when the project was complete. We have seen the results of such thinking, and we know that they reflect unhealthy social conditions. [...] If the world is a stage, then landscape is the scenery... It is the setting for national and individual lives; and in so far as it is the result of human activities, it becomes a measure of underlying social structures."*² Later on she added that *"Landscape is also a most precious national resource. A capital fund, on which the future welfare of the people may depend."*³

Beyond being a key campaigner, writer and advocate, Colvin was also a prolific designer. She was involved in designing the landscape of Scotland's first New Town, East Kilbride. Here she provided plans for numerous play spaces – both formal and informal, but most importantly, saw children and young people as key in forming their own environment. She supported the organisation of events, where schoolchildren planted trees to actively take part in the physical creation of the landscape around them, to encourage their appreciation of the importance of green spaces.

Landscape architect **Michael Brown** (1923-1996) was a generation younger than Colvin, but his designs of public housing estate landscapes in London, such as the now Grade 2 registered Brunel Estate, Winstanley Road Estate, the now demolished Mozart Street estate Lancaster Road West shows that the premise of accessible play space and landscape for all was an enduring idea in post-war Britain, supported by long term policies and planning decisions. Brown argued that *"What is important – and this is true for all age groups – is that users, consumers, tenants and owners (and we are often one or more of these) are made to feel that the whole of their habitation belongs to them"*.⁴

¹ Colvin, Brenda (1942) 'The Future of Women on the Land' *International Women's News* 37:1, 11.

² Colvin, Brenda (n.d.) 'Landscape as an Expression of Social Evolution' – manuscript MERL AR COL B/ 3-4

³ Colvin, Brenda (1969) 'Landscape Design, Past, Present and Future' – manuscript 26th March, 1969 MERL AR COL B/ 3-4

⁴ Brown, Michael (1981) 'Placemaking Start with Facts; Finish with Values' *Landscape Architecture* May 1981

In her appraisal of Brown's landscape designs, Lady Allen of Hurtwood explained that in Brown's designs "*[t]he entire landscape scheme has been conceived in terms of children's play activities and all the outside spaces and pedestrian ways have been considered as potential play-space and are part of the total environment. A number of different types of playground have been provided but children's play has not been regarded as an activity which should be restricted to these areas.*"⁵ This evaluation describes Brown's own ideas about children's play areas. He believed, that "*Designed play areas do of course have value but are much less important than achieving the right general character of the total housing environment*". Going further Brown elaborated his understanding of children's play areas saying that: "*Play being, for children a part of living, it is pointless to design for it as if it were a commodity that can be procured only at designated places – a sort of supermarket at which their needs can uniquely be provided. The fact is that the instinct for play is within the child. Our job is to nurture the development of the instinct that is an essential part of the child's total development*".⁶ As he argued: "*What is important ...Quite simply, for a design to be integrated with its users' needs, it must offer choices and possibilities. Our role is to make places that lend themselves to a multitude of uses.*"⁷

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pp.382-286

⁵ Allen of Hurtwood, Lady Marjorie (1968) *Planning for Play* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968) pp. 26-27

⁶ Tandy, Clifford 1971. *Handbook of Urban Landscapes*. London: The Architectural Press, p.181

⁷ Brown, Michael (1981) 'Placemaking Start with Facts; Finish with Values' *Landscape Architecture* May 1981 pp.382-386.