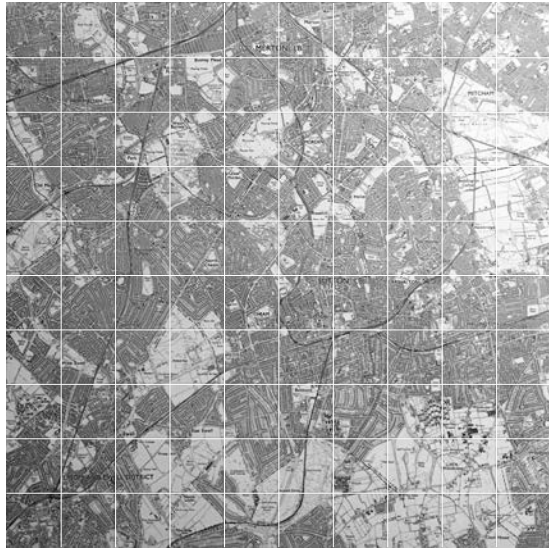# Aggregate

This geography—a hundred square kilometres that are largely part of the London Boroughs of Sutton and Merton—is the area where I spent my childhood. It includes the schools and parks and libraries that I went to, and the type of place with which I was most familiar during my first twenty years.

Ten or fifteen years later, in the early 1990s and living in central London, I would travel out to this area and walk from one familiar place to another. There seemed to be specific ideas of connectedness, a psychological understanding of the way locations are related to each other. Places are linked from here to there by car, or bus, the bits in-between largely filled with houses and gardens, all making a particular mental geography of the suburbs. This can perhaps be best understood in contrast to an *isolative* perceptual geography: that of a single feature related to its particular topography, for example, a hill farm in a rural landscape.

One part of this suburban landscape seemed anomalous, its 'identity' could be perceived as an 'inverted wilderness': a large flat area bordering Mitcham, Carshalton, Croydon and Wallington—a square mile or so—of officially private rough land, gravel pits and ex-sewage workings. There is a network of paths and the whole area is fenced-off (unofficial access is available about every few hundred yards). The area is used for riding motorbikes, rabbiting, watching birds, etc.; marginal activities.

Bounded on all sides by arterial roads and a railway line, from within the fenced-off area there is a feeling of detachment and in effect, *invisibility*. From a car one is aware of the perimeter and the power lines that cross the area, and five miles away on the horizon are the buildings of central Croydon. It seems to correspond to the opposite of the land beyond the medieval town walls—this perimeter containing the town and keeping out the land, whereas here the 'wild' is an island within the suburban.

Some hypothetical ideas of orientation in landscape and space were provoked by being here—that there may exist a sort of historical and acoustical 'depth' in the place, a pre-electrical *radio* of invisible/inaudible sound.

Abbreviations

Allot Gdns: Allotment Gardens
BP: Boundary Post or Plate
BS: Boundary Stone
Cemy: Cemetery
CH: Club House
Coll: College
Ct: Court
F Sta: Fire Station
FB: Foot Bridge
Hospl: Hospital
Liby: Library
MS: Mile Stone
PO: Post Office
Pol Sta: Police Station
Recn Gd: Recreation Ground
Resr: Reservoir
Sch: School
Spr: Spring
Sta: Station
TA: Territorial Army
TH: Town Hall
W: Well
War Meml: War Memorial
Wks: Works