

# Playing for life

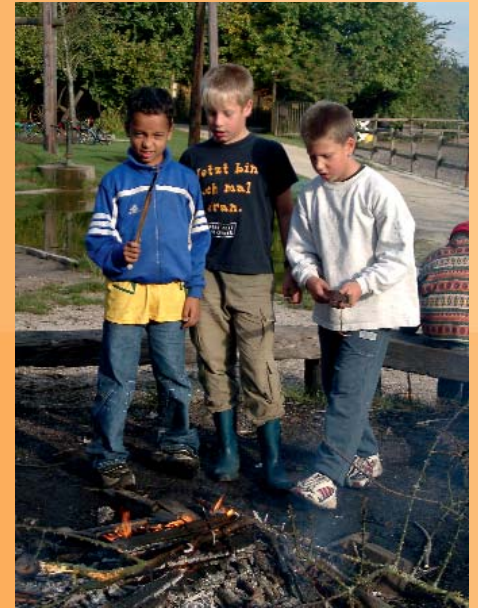


Educational work on pedagogically supervised playgrounds



Bund der Jugendfarmen  
und Aktivspielplätze e.V.





# Edition Notice

## **Publisher:**

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(Editor) Bund der Jugendfarmen und Aktivspielplätze e.V.  
1st Edition 2010, printed in Germany

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## **Cataloging in Publication German National Library**

"Spielen fürs Leben - auf pädagogisch betreuten Spielplätzen"

Editor: Bund der Jugendfarmen und Aktivspielplätze e.V., Stuttgart 2010

ISBN 978-3-9810096-2-0

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# Contents

Page

Let's stir some dust up...	3
History	4
What makes pedagogically supervised playgrounds special?	5
Animals	6
Nature and environment	6
Building huts	7
Doing handicrafts	7
Learning together and of each other	8
Being creative	8
There must not be a challenge in being challenged	9
Inclusion	9
Being proactive	10
Migration background and intercultural competence	11
One place for many	12
Diverse educational sceneries	13
Working together with schools	14
Moving and opening up all senses to the environment	15
Role perception and tasks of the social education workers on the playgrounds	16
Sustainability: An educational cross-functional responsibility	17
What else drives us...	18
Why do we need an umbrella organisation?	19





## ... Let's stir some dust up

"Could you send us some information about youth farms and activity playgrounds?".... "Since we are currently planning a supervised playground in our neighbourhood, we would like to ask for some general information about these facilities" ... As we have been receiving requests like that over the past 30 years, we are convinced of the persistent interest in this special kind of open youth and neighbourhood work. Thus, we decided to update and reissue our brochure, in which we want to portray the diversity of and the need for such projects. Our goal is to give some insights on how these places work and what kind of opportunities they offer to children and teenagers. Clearly, not only children and teenagers, but also entire families and therefore everyone can benefit from these nature-orientated adventure-places.

It is not without reason that the creation of positive living conditions for children and their families has been stipulated as self-contained objective of the youth welfare service in the Eighth Code of German Social Law.

We want to show to parents, committed citizens and political decision-makers what can be done concretely to improve the living conditions and the playgrounds of children and teenagers and in doing so we want to encourage you to do something within your field of responsibility.

This said, I wish you an inspiring reading

Hans-Jörg Lange  
Secretary

# History

In the 1930s an open-minded Danish landscape architect named Carl Theodor Sørensen observed that children of a certain age preferred to build their own creative playing environment on rampant fallow land, rather than to play on ready-furnished playgrounds. Consequentially, he demanded the foundation of so-called lumber-playgrounds. In 1942 the first playground of this kind was created on his initiative in Copenhagen's district Emdrup. Already at that time the increasing limitation of possibilities for discoveries and adventures, as well as the rising employment of both parents, were important motives to open up new playgrounds for children and teenagers. Due to the growing traffic in the cities, playing outside became dangerous and a critical factor to be considered as well.

Sorensen's idea was quickly adopted in other countries. The first "adventure playgrounds" were founded in England thanks to Lady Allen of Hurtwood, a committed advocate of the playground initiative. Similar places, so-called Robinson Playgrounds, were founded in the fifties in Switzerland. Farm projects for children were known at this time in the Netherlands as well.

At this point in time, Germany was still deeply shaped by the post-war and reconstruction phase. It was not until the sixties that the idea of a special kind of playground pedagogy gained ground. At about the same time the first adventure playground was founded in Berlin and the first city farm in Stuttgart. Whereas the Berlin project of Ilse Reichel was inspired by the English model, the Stuttgart city farm grew naturally out of the concrete needs and interests of the children and teenagers of the neighbourhood and was very much dedicated to ecological principles. By the actions of Thyra and Edgar Boehm further farm projects were established in the region. In 1972 the nationwide acting Federation of City Farms and Activity Playgrounds was founded in Stuttgart, too.

During the first flourishing of the 1970s, many pedagogically supervised playgrounds were created throughout Germany under different labels but following similar concepts. They were called building activity playgrounds, adventure playgrounds and Robinson playgrounds, playing parks, activity playgrounds or city farms. This movement calmed down remarkably at the end of the 70s, but reflowered with the establishment of the first city farms for children in Berlin in 1981 and the Fall of the Wall.

Supported by the former playing-truck movement of the ex-GDR, the first pedagogically supervised playgrounds were then founded in East Berlin and the New Laender. Today the BdJA has more than 20 member organisations in the eastern part of Germany.

The "European Federation of City Farms" was launched in the 1980s as well and acts as a supranational association of all nationwide organisations. The BdJA co-initiated this union and is one of its members since the beginning.



# What makes pedagogically supervised playgrounds special?

“Young people are to be provided with youth and community work offers that support their development. These offers should consequently tie to the needs of young people and give them the possibility to shape the offers and take part in the decision making process in order to qualify the youth to become self-determined individuals and encourage them to social responsibility and social commitment” (Eighth Code of German Social Law, Chapter 11). The mission given by this law is fulfilled extraordinarily well by city farms and activity playgrounds: The pedagogically supervised playgrounds address mostly school-aged children, who naturally bring along a huge need for movement, adventure and a lot of curiosity.

Offering diverse possibilities to experience and to create is the central aspect of pedagogically supervised playgrounds, which distinguishes them from conventional playgrounds and other leisure time facilities. Consequently, pedagogically supervised playgrounds were seen to be most suited to the children's needs by the federal government in their 10th report on the situation of children and youth care.

The various fields of experiences described below cannot be strictly separated in practice, since they complement each other and are mutually dependent: The construction area provides housing for the farm animals, whose manure is used in the garden, where on the other hand animal food is grown ... and social contacts grow randomly and wildly across the playground anyway.

Pedagogically supervised playgrounds are normally opened all-year. Children can visit free of charge without having to apply for a membership and they can decide on their own when, how often and how long they want to come and play.





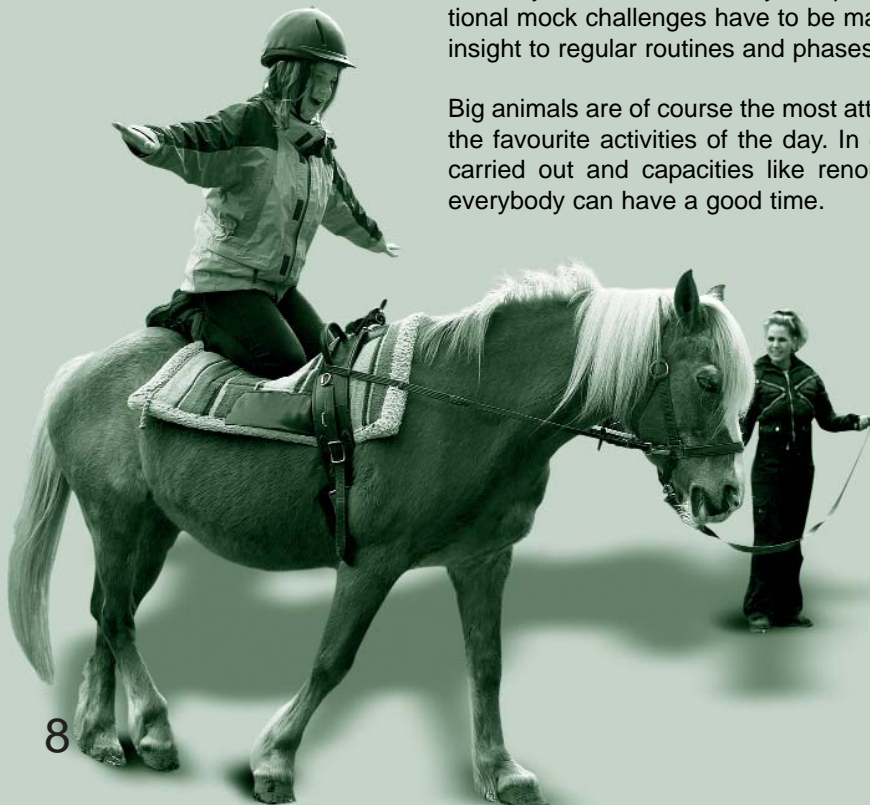
# Animals

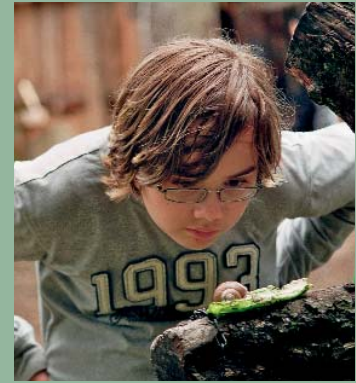
When do we put the sheep out to graze? Who wants to milk the goat? Can I take the bunny out to cuddle? Could you help me clearing out the stable? There are three new eggs in the henhouse!

For most children the animal area represents the first and most important access to the playground, because there is not too much to be explained at first. Fascination exists by itself and the daily routines are directly comprehensible and easy to follow. Hence, no artificial educational mock challenges have to be made up. Animals provide children quite naturally with an insight to regular routines and phases of life, like birth, growth, reproduction and death.

Big animals are of course the most attractive ones and especially horseback riding belongs to the favourite activities of the day. In exchange, sometimes special assignments have to be carried out and capacities like renouncement and thoughtfulness are being practised so everybody can have a good time.

Through the common interest for animals children develop very tight friendships and intensive group dynamics that put being together in the foreground.





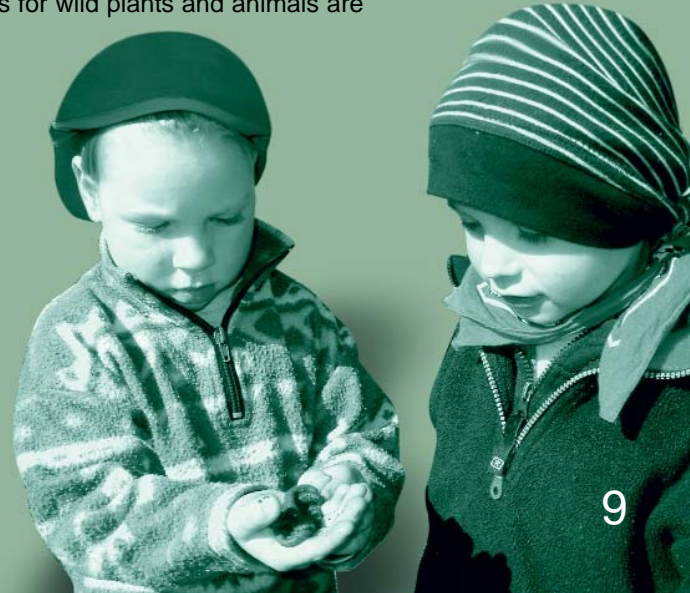
## Nature and environment

Natural elements like soil, water, fire, air, plants and animals create primary experiences that contribute together with the self-motivated exploratory urge of the children to their comprehension of the relations and the interconnections of mankind and nature.

Fruit, vegetables, flowers and fodder plants are grown in the garden. Organic waste is composted and used to dung the soil. Children experience the natural cycle directly and participate in the cycle of growth, maturation and harvest. They seed, pick and mulch, take care of the garden, and discover little animals – that is what is providing them with a basic love for the nature, which eventually becomes the basis for a responsible dealing with nature and environment. Consequently, the older children on the playground are dealing consciously with subjects like prevention of waste and recycling.

Besides cultivating useful plants, habitats are created, conservation areas for wild plants and animals are fostered and nesting sites are built. In short: Elements of active nature conservation are lived on the playground or city farm. Thereby using and protecting the nature is experienced as something that causes and complements each other rather than considered to be mutually exclusive.

We call this a task-based concept of a holistic environmental education.



# Building huts

Children learn manual skills and the handling of technical devices through offered activities like building huts and using the different areas of handicraft. For many building huts is at the centre of youth work on playgrounds.

The cut between the world of leisure and the world of work, which is most often experienced as very problematic during adolescence, is suspended whilst building a hut. The challenges faced along the way are both practical and complex: A free space in the hut area needs to be found, group dynamics have to be negotiated, questions on design have to be solved and the practical realization of the project has to be carried out. Projects like that require not only constructional skills but also teamwork and ... patience – since a hut is mostly not built within a day.



# Doing handicrafts

The biggest difference between our work and the handicraft class at school is that children decide on their own if and when they want to work. They can work as long as they want and mostly children rather work together than by themselves. In groups they build something for the playground, as there is always something to repair or to supplement.

Treating boys and girls equally during these and all other activities is a matter of course.





# Learning together and of each other

The relations between the individual and the group, between children and social workers, and between generations and different cultures affect the youth work done on the playground.

By offering open and diverse activities, integrative processes are supported without moralising and educationalising them.

Appreciation of diversity and respect for others is not dictated, but lived. The basis for the encounters are shared interests, which do not cover up the differences but let them fade into the background. Down-to-earth activities make sure that everybody can find a piece of home, which is especially important for the integration of children with migration background.

Playgrounds are a field of practice for mutual help and social responsibility, for the open expression of wishes and needs as well as for learning to deal reasonably with conflicts. They are open spaces providing room for collective activities and parties, but also for informal meeting points. Niches and retreats are hereby of great importance.



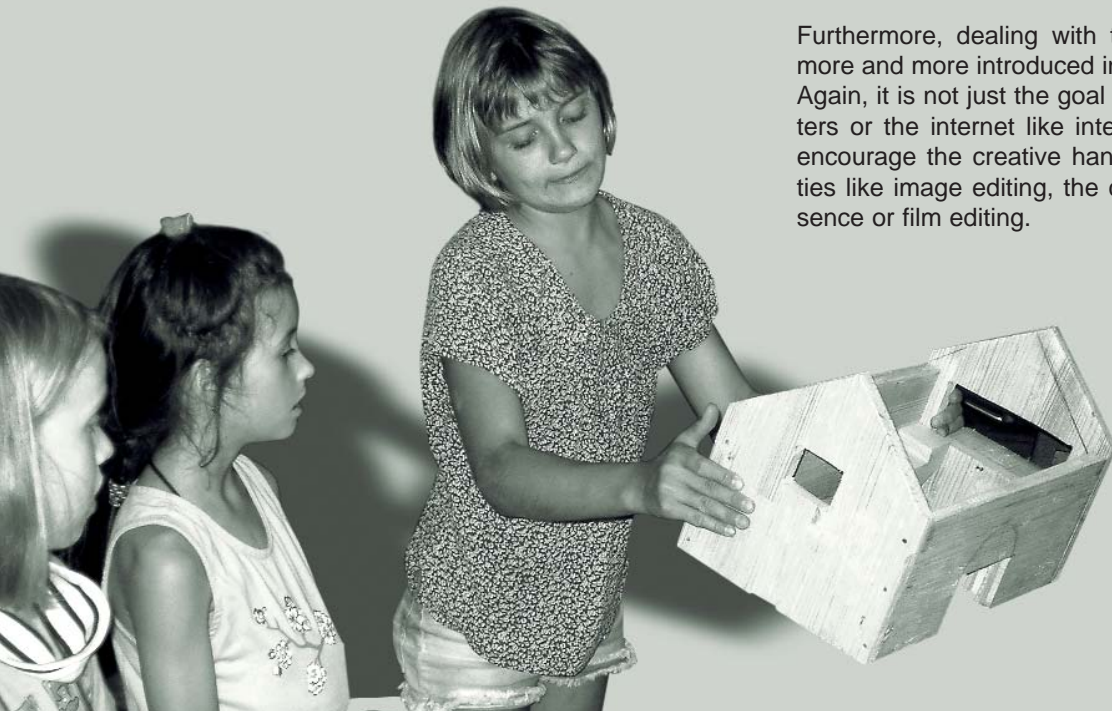
In general, the activities on the playgrounds aim for gender equality. In avoiding attributions based on gender we want to lead children of both sexes to a joint participation in social and economical processes. Keeping this in mind, some offers are still especially designed for social work with groups of girls or boys.

# Being creative



Classical educational approaches are applied on most playgrounds and farms as well; like encouraging artistic activities such as painting, theatre or music, but also circus and other forms of expressing oneself. Working with familiar materials and techniques is just as supported as learning to deal with the unknown and new. Developing and realizing own ideas is very much emphasised, as well.

Furthermore, dealing with the so-called new media is more and more introduced into the work on playgrounds. Again, it is not just the goal to provide access to computers or the internet like internet cafés do, but rather to encourage the creative handling of technical opportunities like image editing, the creation of an own web presence or film editing.



# There must not be a challenge in being challenged

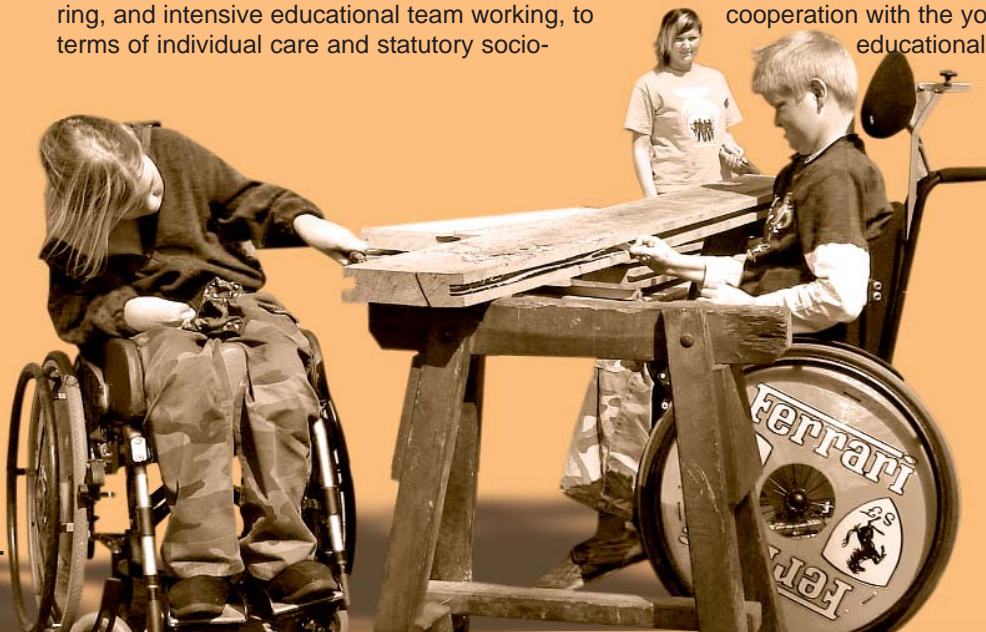


Many playgrounds and youth farms are making a special effort to include mentally and physically challenged children in their daily work. Compared to conventional, ready-furnished playgrounds, they are less focussed on the availability and the development of gross motor skills, but possess a much wider range of possibilities for children to encounter and experience. Additionally, the educational guidance given at the playground provides good conditions for the work with children with special needs.



Some projects developed special offers for mentally and physically challenged children that go beyond their integration in the everyday life at the playground. Hippotherapy has proven itself to be an especially adequate tool for this kind of integrative work.

Since neglect within families and social disadvantages can be seen as a special kind of challenge that causes children to be locked out of many fields of society and restrains them in their development, many projects of the open youth work try to dedicate special attention and care to those children. Approaches range from having lunch together, homework tutoring, and intensive educational team working, to cooperation with the youth welfare and youth service office in terms of individual care and statutory socio-educational provisions for children with problems.



# Inclusion

In 2010 the United Nations Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees the inclusion of people with special needs aiming for their comprehensive participation in social life. German government pledged to create adequate conditions on all federal levels in order to implement the convention.

The main issue of the lively public debate in Germany is the implementation of equal educational opportunities for all children and adolescents in the general school development and the active, inclusionary shaping of the public youth welfare service.

The nature- and animal-based educational work done on activity playgrounds and city farms addresses socially, physically, mentally, and emotionally challenged children, as it opens a natural space for encounter for children with and without special needs. Creating inclusionary offers constantly represents a consistent advancement of the concept of open social work. The singularity of all persons present on the playground is seen as potential for enrichment and normality.

On the preferably barrier-free terrain, physically and mentally challenged children can take part in all activities with or without assistance. A natural contact that goes beyond the playground itself is created through the act of playing and being together.





# Being proactive

Maybe some of you were already wondering how expensive it is to mount and maintain a city farm or an activity playground and what kind of equipment is really necessary. A temporary maintenance of a playground is possible with relatively little effort: You need a parcel of land, an old contractor's shed or just any other old shed, some tools, a truck full of wooden pallets, some dedicated volunteers and maybe some sheep, bunnies or a donkey – with so little, many things can be done. However, on the long run you cannot really work on a professional level with such equipment. Nevertheless, a playground with permanent employees, a solid house, a workshop and a hut construction area, a fireplace and a standpipe, some animals and a playing field that offers lots of varieties, are reasonably cheap compared to the total cost

of any other community institution providing individual care for children that are destabilised or impaired by a lack of exercise.

Due to the communal budgetary situation, it has become more and more necessary to generate own resources, to collect donations and to find volunteers that help constructing and maintaining the playground. Many playgrounds have had good experience with honorary initiatives, since people increasingly appreciate the work done at the playgrounds and esteem them as an important factor for urban life quality (not only for children and adolescents).

Most playgrounds and city farms offer very good opportunities for activities like group volunteering, corporate team building workshops or international work camps. Especially projects, which are part of independent organising institutions and are well connected within their community, can be sure to get the necessary help.



# Migration background and intercultural competence



Nowadays we are well aware of the fact that Germany is a country, which attracts a lot of immigrants. But in spite of this, we are only slowly beginning to acknowledge the further-reaching demands for a functioning integration of entire families with migration background that goes far beyond the integration of guest workers.

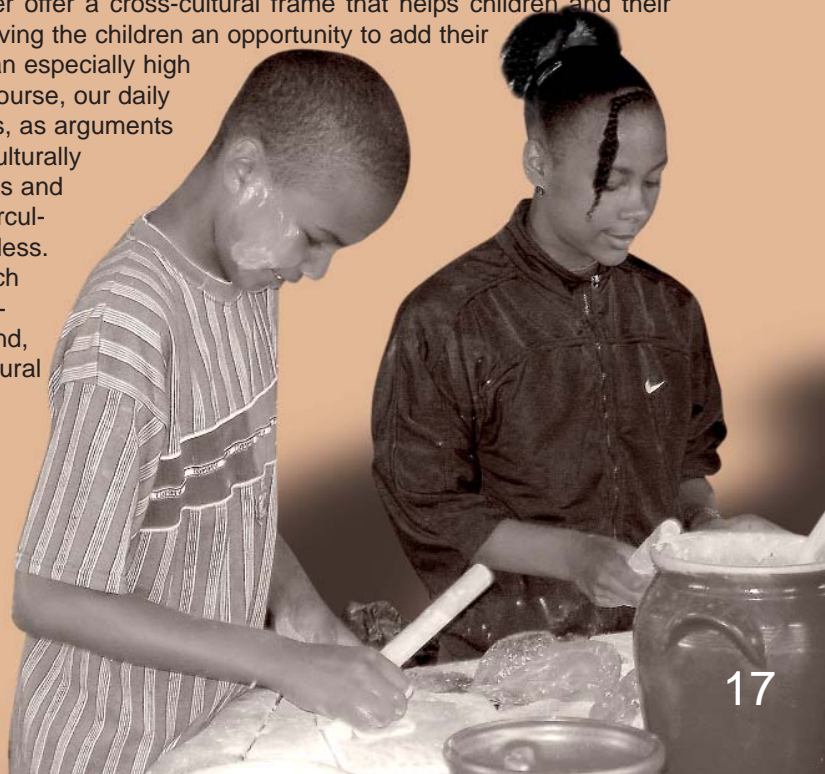
We should be more focused on apprehending cultural diversity as a resource, rather than emphasising only assimilation and linguistic adoption. The educational work on playgrounds can profit enormously of the socio-cultural competences of people with a migrant background. This is especially true for activity playgrounds and city farms, since a lot of children with migrant backgrounds are used to spend most of their free time outside playing and the lack of opportunities for open-air activities in the

cities hits them really hard. These children have on the other hand a better understanding of social group behaviour and are coming to playgrounds with their siblings or even their whole families. Therefore, it is very important to offer diverse activities on the playgrounds that appeal to children of different ages.

Conveying basic cultural skills and preparing meals together offer a cross-cultural frame that helps children and their parents regardless their social and cultural background. In giving the children an opportunity to add their personal cultural background, open social work offers have an especially high inclusive potential without forcing children to assimilate. Of course, our daily work of social and cultural integration is not without problems, as arguments between different ethnical groups appear on a daily basis. Culturally determined differences on how to handle fights or discussions and on how to solve these conflicts are not easy to manage. Intercultural communication is therefore nothing to be handled effortlessly.

It challenges more often the social or educational work, which tries not to block out the explosive potential of the social conflicts. We care about the intercultural diversity on the one hand, and have to try finding strategies to dissolve these cross-cultural conflicts on the other hand.

In contrast to the normal and anonymous urban space, qualified social workers can work with the different kinds of appropriation of diverse groups present on the playground and attempt to balance out the different needs of those groups. Thus, social integration becomes a process everybody can profit of.



# One place for many

Most projects are dedicated in their work to the concept of open social work with children and teenagers. The special type of openness inherent to this concept gives children and adolescents the possibility to visit the playground regardless their social or cultural background or their financial situation. Children decide on their own, if and when they come to the playground, how long they stay and what or with whom they want to play. Openness in this sense means also being open for different cultural, religious or political opinions.



Working with children mostly means working on building up relations. It is a kind of educational work, but without academic purpose. Being able to work continuously with permanent employees is indispensable in order to create a relation of trust between visitors and employees of the project. Educational purposes can be achieved in combining openness as concept of the social work and continuous types of offers.

The structures of a playground should be transparent to the children and teenagers visiting: Transparency of what is happening on the playground, combined with a certain regularity of the (daily) working processes, eventually leads to the child's feeling of self-confidence. Elements like participation and taking over responsibility support the development of maturity, interest, engagement, identification and self-confidence.



Younger Children coming to the playground are mostly living in the direct neighbourhood, whereas older children already able to use public transport come to the activity playgrounds and city farms from more distant districts.

The composition and the equipment of the playground are mostly suited for children at the age of 8 to 14, as they constitute the largest group on the playground. But also teenagers that have been visiting the playground when they were younger, stay, looking for different, challenging and responsible experiences and fields of action, for example in taking care of the animals, doing handicrafts or they visit simply to socialize.



Not only children and teenagers but also grown-ups should be urged to treat our environment in a more responsible way, since they are responsible for the living conditions of the next generation on this earth.

Playgrounds offer a space for grown-ups, too: Parents exchange opinions on questions about raising children, as a group they can discuss about social interrelations and can develop new methods and techniques on how to treat our environment in a more careful way, both on a practical and theoretical level. That is why educational work on the playgrounds always tries to involve parents and other adults into the work done at the site as well. Adults use the playground as forum for discussion and help in creating new offers, sometimes they accompany groups on excursions and trips and very often they do an irreplaceable honorary work in building and maintaining the sites. Last but not least: Parents can take on important strategic function within the association itself and bring in constructive criticism and ideas for improvement.

Parental involvement is therefore a very diverse field of practice on the playgrounds and we offer:

- Parent's evenings for parents whose children are regular visitors of the playgrounds
- Days of building action, where parents can provide practical help or guiding support
- Information and orientation sessions for and with parents und playground members
- Conceptual work with parents who represent the playground in the committee of the association.



# Diverse educational sceneries

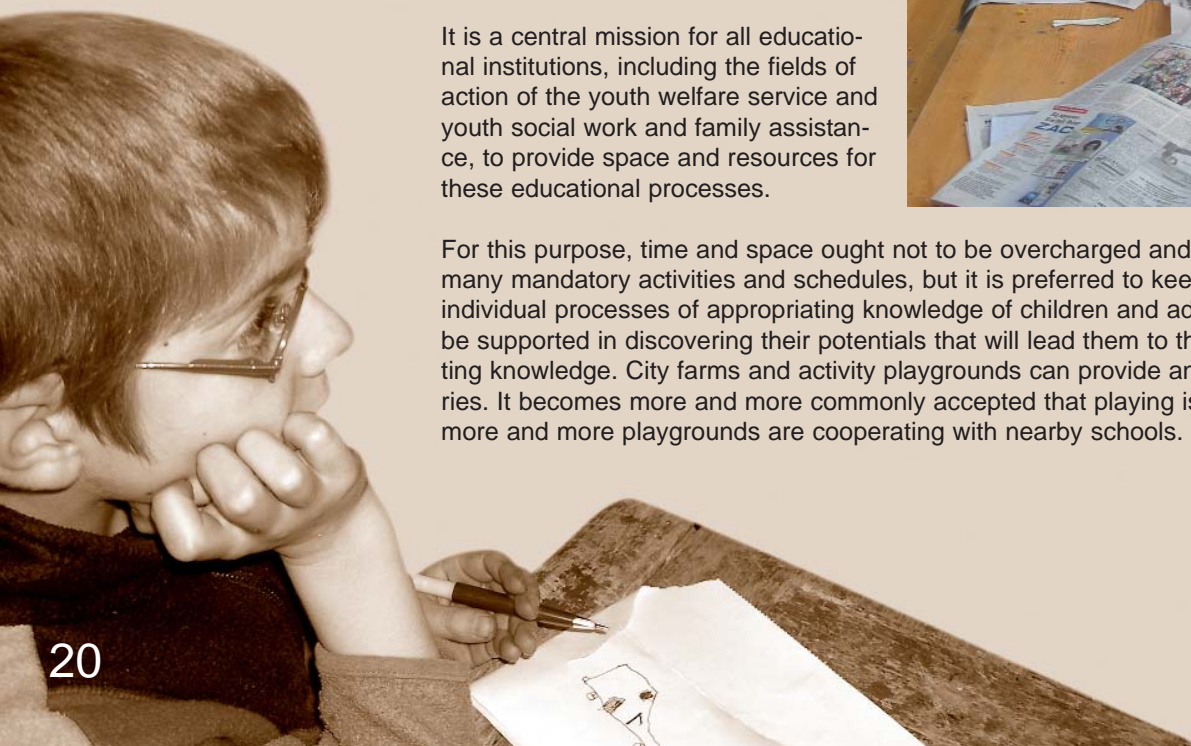
Since many years education finds itself in the centre of many debates. Education is more than the mere acquirement of factual knowledge; it is a resource for the orientation on future life style and handling of life, of personal development and a basis for active participation in society, politics and culture.

For a long time it was assumed that it is mainly the responsibility of schools on what kind of knowledge and skills are transferred to the next generation. But it has been shown that only a small amount of the knowledge and competences adolescents have acquired, once they enter their work lives, can be traced back to school education. For the most part, knowledge is acquired in other kind of learning sceneries, like family, peer groups, extra-curricular activities and via media.

Increasingly we rediscover other possibilities in time and space for education that teach children without being structured, guided or graded by grown-ups. These possibilities are found outside school.

It is a central mission for all educational institutions, including the fields of action of the youth welfare service and youth social work and family assistance, to provide space and resources for these educational processes.

For this purpose, time and space ought not to be overcharged and overly structured with too many mandatory activities and schedules, but it is preferred to keep everything open to the individual processes of appropriating knowledge of children and adolescents. Children should be supported in discovering their potentials that will lead them to their own way of appropriating knowledge. City farms and activity playgrounds can provide and be such learning sceneries. It becomes more and more commonly accepted that playing is a form of education. Thus, more and more playgrounds are cooperating with nearby schools.



# Working together with schools



Due to an active approach learning and learning processes become attractive to children. Children are tempted to try new things solely by the composition and the structures of the youth work that follow the open social work concept. They work on tasks of their individual choice and gain self-confidence by positive adventures and experiences handling material, tools and animals.

Supported by the free space and the equipment with tools, playgrounds and city farms offer possibilities that demand to act practically and give way to primary experiences that enable children and teenagers to gain skills and competences through practice.

The diverse possibilities to play and learn offer ideal conditions for whole classes to have positive group experiences, supported by of trained professional social workers present at the playgrounds. A school class can work in this way on themes of the curriculum like "Creating a green classroom". The playground complements the nearby school's curriculum in a reasonable way.

Many activity playgrounds and city farms have been maintaining fruitful co-operations for many years with primary schools and the different kinds of high schools of the German education system (which are secondary general schools, intermediate schools and grammar schools). The model of open full-time schools seems to be most promising in this respect.

We consider city farms and activity playgrounds to be educational institutions on their own offering various possibilities to learn and experience life, helping children and teenagers to develop their competences holistically:

- Social, personal, methodological and professional competences are amplified
- A sense of responsibility is developed
- The ability to solve conflicts through comprises and consensus is practised





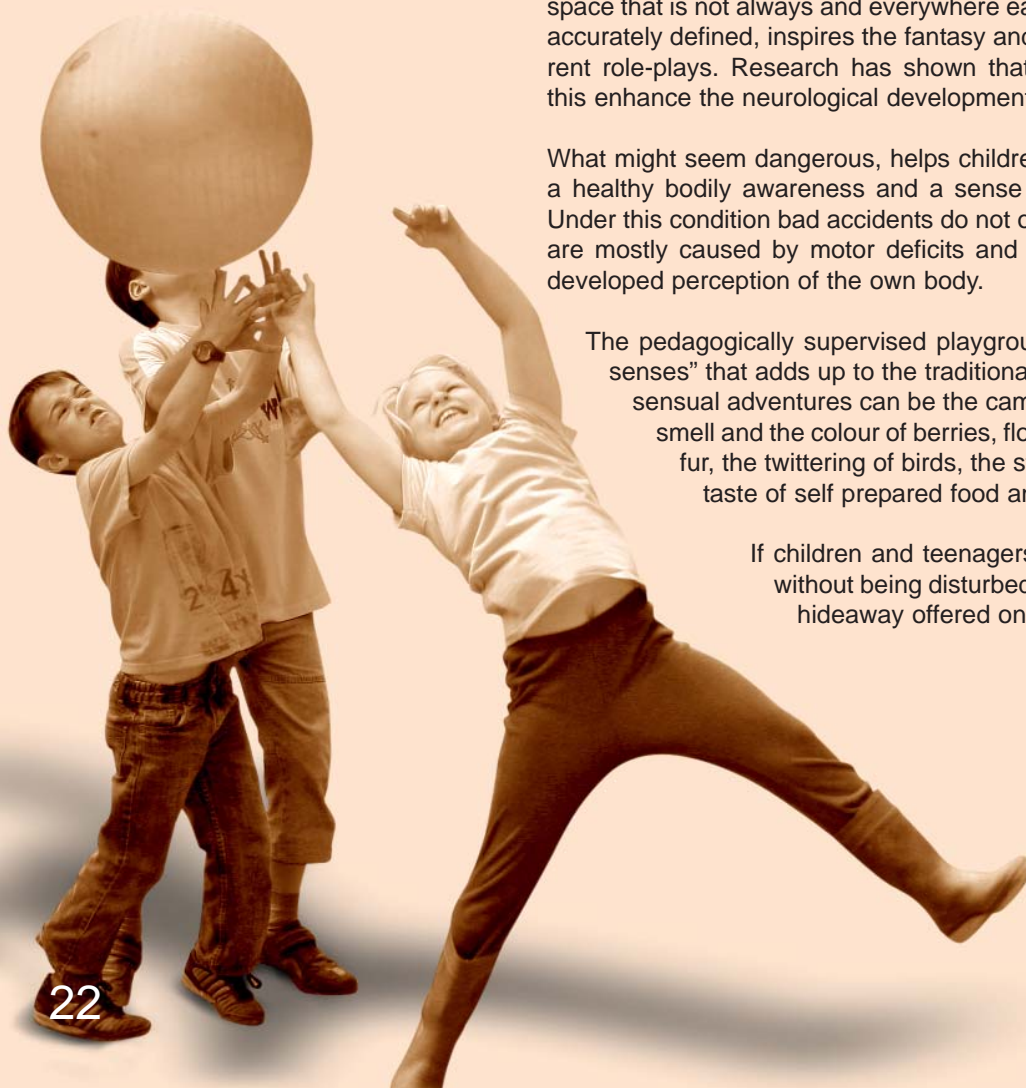
# Moving and opening up all senses to the environment

By shaping and creating a diverse environment, motor activities (like running, climbing, jumping, balancing ...) and perception (taste, feel, smell, and hear) are stimulated. A space that is not always and everywhere easy to grasp and accurately defined, inspires the fantasy and invites to different role-plays. Research has shown that conditions like this enhance the neurological development.

What might seem dangerous, helps children in developing a healthy bodily awareness and a sense of self-security. Under this condition bad accidents do not occur, since they are mostly caused by motor deficits and an insufficiently developed perception of the own body.

The pedagogically supervised playground can therefore be seen as a “school of senses” that adds up to the traditional “school of the mind”. Such instructive and sensual adventures can be the camp fire with its crackling, heat and smell, the smell and the colour of berries, flowers and herbs, the softness of an animal's fur, the twittering of birds, the structure of natural material or the smell and taste of self prepared food and drinks.

If children and teenagers want to be left alone or just want to chat without being disturbed, there are quiet refuges and possibilities to hideaway offered on the site.



# Role perception and tasks of the social education workers on the playgrounds



Supervised playgrounds are above all “fields for social practise”, that is children should be left on their own devices without being left alone. Children need people they can relate to and rely on, who can help them growing-up, based on practical experiences and theoretical education; that is to say, they need people who support them in having new and unfamiliar experiences and in developing behavioural alternatives. Trained social education workers carry out the supervision on the playgrounds. In exceptional cases other staff members can be equated to the social education workers, if they show the necessary personal qualifications. Staff is supported by young men doing their compulsory non-military civilian service, by people from different professions working on a part-time or a fee basis and by volunteers in the technical, organisational or educational field.

Furthermore, pedagogical supervised playgrounds offer practical placements for trainees of different educational professions. Young people taking a gap year to do voluntary work in the environmental or social sector are employed as well.

The educational work done at the supervised playgrounds is engaged in a very complex learning field, where the importance of single learning steps is almost impossible to identify. The work on the playground is much more centred on the concern to convey diverse skills within the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical dimension of education to the children and to enable them to be self-confident, self-responsible, tolerant, independent, efficient and open to teamwork.

Learning progress cannot only be seen as mere result of specific educational measures, but also as a consequence of the pedagogical arrangement of the playgrounds and the interactions among the children themselves.

In this respect, the employees of the playgrounds do not see themselves as mere persons in charge but much more as experts in animation, moderation and mediation and in creating exiting playing sites.



# Sustainability: An educational cross-functional responsibility

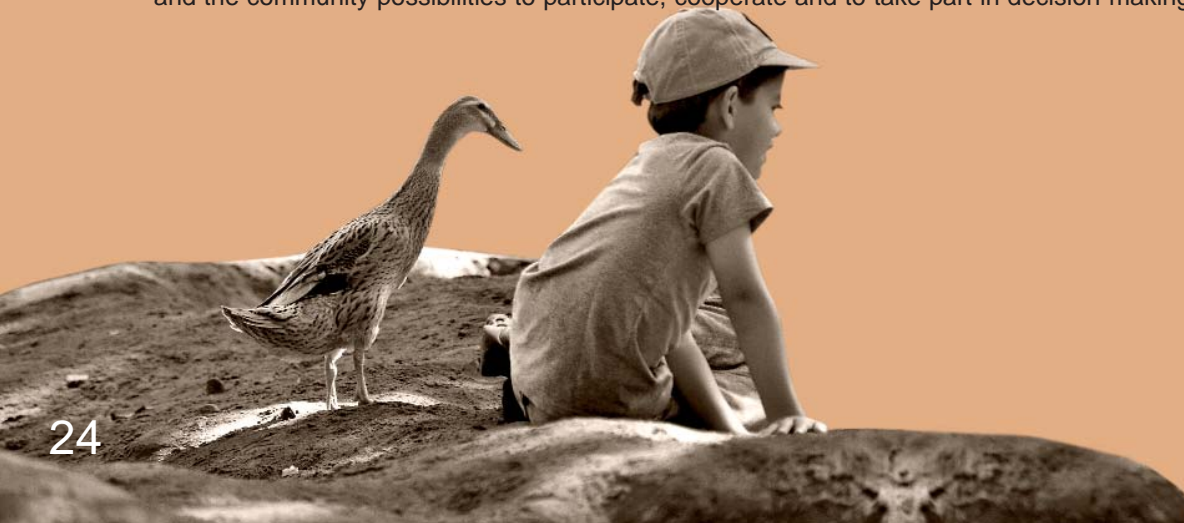
Since the United Nations World Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, sustainability has become a guiding principle of future-orientated politics. The guideline states briefly, that people are to handle the planet's resources in a way, which will leave enough to live on for the generations yet to come.

What sounds really easy at first turns out to be a complex task with diverse economical, ecological and social aspects. Some contributions to the principle of sustainability of city farms and activity playgrounds are to be presented briefly: The most immediate contribution is to offer a space to children and teenagers, where they can develop their physical, mental and emotional potentials in a playful way.

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child has been adopted internationally, despite this; children's rights to move around and play are still terribly neglected. In fact, city farms and activity playgrounds are an investment into the so-called human capital, as they advance children in developing social and communicative key qualifications, which are essential in the working life of a post-industrial society.

From conveying responsible forms of living with nature and environment, to healthy food and creative use of renewable and recycled materials and resources, to the adoption of renewable energy sources; city farms and activity playgrounds are advancing diverse impulses on how to live sustainably. Not only do they teach ecological skills, they help forming an opinion oriented towards the principle of: "It is better to live a good life than to own a lot."

Inner-city playgrounds are very important recreational and adventure areas for the entire neighbourhood. They contribute to the overall life quality in an area. Hereby, they help reducing the suburbanisation and offer space for neighbourly contacts and social networking. The educational approaches and offers of the playgrounds have proven themselves to be effective integrative youth and community work. Processes of integration arise almost on their own, since the offers of the site are not to be consumed passively but shaped actively. Hence, it is absolutely essential to offer children, teenagers and the community possibilities to participate, cooperate and to take part in decision-making processes.



# What else drives us....

## **Loss of opportunities and places to play, move and make experiences**

In the course of the past decades a development took place in the cities in which urban areas were split, redesigned and built into different functional units; separate commercial and shopping areas, business centres, dormitory towns, recreation parks and sport facilities were created. Urbanisation continued at the same time, waste land got rare in the inner-city areas and more and more families moved to the suburbs.

## **Constraint of experiencing the nature**

Nowadays children hardly ever have the opportunity to witness ecological cycles and interrelations at first hand. They have little experience in growing useful plants and almost none in dealing with farm animals. In the child's imagination a steak, milk and wool - all these things have little or nothing to do with real animals. If a child is not as lucky as to have a garden on its own or to live nearby a city farm or an activity playground, it will scarcely have the opportunity to see lettuce, radish or tomatoes grow.

## **Media, Society of consumption and identity crises**

Children and teenagers are currently a very important and heavily fought over consumer group with an enormous purchasing power that generates own marketing strategies. Consequently, children and teens are living in a constant conflict between finding their own identity, choosing consumer goods and competing with others while consuming. This conflict requires an integrative work that cannot be fulfilled by family and the school alone.

## **A calculated childhood**

Whereas in the beginning, the primary problem seemed to be the lack of areas to play, time has become an important factor in the discussion. Due to family coordination processes, school demands and last but not least precisely defined leisure time activities the phenomenon of the (mis-)calculated childhood has been created: Children and teenagers have almost no free time at their disposal anymore.

## **Decreasing importance of families as educational authority**

In the last two decades the forms and conditions under which families are living have changed just as much as their role-perception. More and more marriages stay childless and many children grow up as only child. Patterns of family life have changed consequently. Since there are no siblings, families offer less coeval companionship, which destabilizes the family as a field of social learning, where rivalries can be lived and the imperative skills to respect differing interests, sharing the parents love or solving conflicts by compromises can be acquired.



# Why do we need an umbrella organisation?

Quite soon after the first activity playgrounds and city farms were founded in Berlin and Stuttgart, it became obvious that promoting the ideas and concepts of these sites would only be possible if continuous organisational and professional support was at hand and influence on social youth work policy would be exerted. Many local and regional associations were thus created and the Federation of City Farms and Activity Playgrounds was installed as nationwide accredited umbrella organisation. Together with likeminded initiatives and organisations the federation works on improving the living conditions of children and teenagers.



The Federation of City Farms and Activity Playgrounds:

- Encourages citizens to realize their own ideas and experiences into concrete initiatives and therefore strengthens an active civil society
- Presents exemplary initiatives and organisations in their publications to a broad audience and thereby helps them to gain more acceptance
- Is the editor of the magazine "Open Playgrounds" and other manuals and books
- Helps in organizing, carrying out and evaluating activities of our member organizations
- Communicates information, possibilities to exchange experiences and contact for our members and staff through events and advanced training offers
- Assists initiatives, local authorities and experts of city planning in creating new playgrounds
- Maintains contact with authorities and federations at the federal level
- Supports international cooperation by taking part in and organizing of international symposia and provides financial and professional aid for youth exchanges
- Develops co-operations with other organizations following the open work concept

In the past years the Federation of City Farms and Activity Playgrounds was able to convince many youth welfare services and Committees of youth welfare service, that city farms and activity playgrounds are essential infrastructural facilities and not arbitrary, optional offers. The associations' goal is to promote the creation of pedagogically supervised playgrounds as regular institutions of the youth and community work and to ensure their ongoing political and financial support. Moreover, we want to advance the development of the concepts of educational work done at playgrounds. Hence, we are having an ongoing exchange of ideas with universities and professionals of various disciplines and are building a network of dedicated personalities who share the same opinion in considering children as our most important resource. Today's youth can only keep up to the necessities of the 21st century, if we support them in a holistic way taking their physical, mental, emotional and social needs into consideration. This kind of support is based on the belief that it is essential to reconcile social responsibilities, ecological rationality and economical ability.





Bund der Jugendfarmen  
und Aktivspielplätze e.V.



ISBN 978-3-9810096-2-0