

Hand-out

„Transforming environments: ways of involving children and young adults in changing spaces – a European perspective“

Rebuilding a multi-story-carparc to a child care centre

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Architects: Spangenberg and Frohwein
Time of rebuilding: 2 years
Costs of conversion: 8 million DM
Floor-space: 2100 square meters
Completion: 1988

Influences the architecture had on our pedagogical conception

- we work in teams – corresponding to the open architecture
- we move our groups every year – corresponding to the different possibilities the rooms offer
- each group has 3-4 rooms at their disposal – there is room for decision of little play groups
- we have traditional age groups and play areas for mixed age-grouping

Basic spatial arrangements in each group

Each group has access to 3 to 4 rooms. We divided these rooms in a number of play areas:

- play area for building and constructing
- play area for reading
- play area for role play including a children's flat
- play area for painting and tinkering
- area for sleep and/or rest
- area for eating

Additional facilities all children can use:

- play area for scientific and technical basic experiences
- the gym and possibilities to move on the ramps (trampoline, basketball)
- bathrooms on every floor with paddle-ponds
- kitchens on every floor
- the glass dome as a meeting point
- a playground
- the roof-garden with beds for every group, a tactile street between bushes, you can pick berries from

The rooms offer activities in the following educational areas:

- body, movement, health
- social and cultural environments
- communication: languages, written culture, media
- arts
- music
- scientific and technical basic experiments
- mathematical basic experiments

Additional facilities only some can use:

- children's restaurant for children over the age of 3
- parents coffee shop

Involvement of children in the age between 0 to 3 years in spatial arrangements

Questions to discuss in the teams before moving to a new room:

How can I respond to the following needs in the spatial arrangements?

How do I recognise the consideration of these needs in the room?

- need for movement
- need for rest, sleep, retreat, security
- need for food
- need for own activity, self-determination, independence, challenge
- need for identity, individuation of the group rooms, space for parents
- need for documentation for children and adults
- need for nature

Main source of involvement in this age is observation.

You can also find out what children like by talking to their parents.

Involvement of children in the age between 3 to 6 years in spatial arrangements

Children and educators make an inspection of the new rooms.

Questions to discuss with the children before moving to a new room:

- What did you like in the new rooms?
- What would you like to take with you?
- What would you like to change?
- What else do you need?
- Do we need help to transform our ideas? Who can help us? (managers/money and advice, parents/ all sorts of competences, care-taker)

Quality check

Ask the children to draw or paint their favourite play area.

If one hasn't been drawn or painted, there is something wrong with it.

Questions to discuss in the team when the children have settled down in the new rooms:

- How do the children react to the spatial arrangements you made for them?
- How often are they using which area?
- What else do they need?
- What has to be reconsidered?
- Who can help to transpose our idea/s? (managers/money and advice, parents/ all sorts of competences, care-taker)
- How many of them are boys and how many girls?

Adjust according to the results.

Involvement of parents

- Invent ways of individualising the rooms by making the families and their cultural background visible
- Ask them for help by transforming the imaginations of the children
- Find out and use their competences
- Respect their individual ways of contributing

What children learn from being involved in the spatial arrangements

- they learn to think about their surroundings
- they learn to think about what's important to them
- they learn that's possible to change surroundings
- they make the experience to work together and with adults
- they make the experience, that adults listen to them
- they make the experience, that what say is important
- they learn to talk to each other and with adults
- they learn to make decisions and to take them back, if they don't work