THE PLACES OF MAGIC AND PLAY

Aspects on creating the good places on the kindergartens outdoor area by taking children in as active parts of the planning process
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Task

• To develop a better environment for play, movement and learning by renovating and develop new spaces on the areas connected to the site of the KG building and the playground area
Background: Framework of Kindergartens

About physical environment:

*Kindergartens shall provide children with opportunities for play, self-expression, and meaningful experiences in safe yet challenging experiences* (Act of Kindergarten 2006)
Background

About children's rights of participation:
*Children shall regularly be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten*

*(Act of kindergarten:2006)*
Body, movement and learning

- Body, movement and health
- Art, culture and creativity
- Nature, environment and technology

Subjects from Framework Plan for the content and tasks for kindergartens (R-2006)
Former studies of children's choice
3 theoretical approaches of children's experiences of spaces

- Merleau Ponty: The phenomenology of the body – the body as the site of knowledge.
- Lev Vygotskij: The creativity and imagination
- C. Nordberg Schultz: Genius loci, the spirit of places
Methodes

• Registration of use
• Registration of design
• Tracing childrens footsteps
• Observation and photo
Methodes
Part 1 Registrations of use

- Using maps marking where the children were at the time of observation Ongoing for a week at 2 different times of the year. 4 zones/spaces
- Description of the aspects:

  - Gender
  - Age
  - Activities with adults involved
  - Activities without adults involved
Part 1

- The youngest closest to the building. Big differences in time of the year and weather conditions
- No significant differences in gender but differences in age
- No specific places that required adult help
## Part 2. Registration of design
### Basic design elements

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Accessible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Passive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge/Risk</td>
<td>Repetition/Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>People -made</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanence</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Complex</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Result design elements

Lack of challenging possibilities according to gross motoric skills on the areas closest to the building

Lack of private places

Best variation on the westside of the building also challenging throughout the year.
Outdoor area view from the west
Outdoor area – standardized playground
Playbridge and sand
Playhouse and bump
Vegetation
Methodes
Part 3 : Tracing the footsteps

Registrations on the area when it is not in use

Tracing children's footsteps gives a good view of their preferences
Results part 3  Tracing footsteps

• This methods gave information of the children's preferences and even some of their secret and magic places

• Paths to places not obvious for the adult observes
The places of magic
4 The childrens preferances

- Observations and photos on favourite places
Observations and narratives

• By observing and listening to the children's choices the personal got a view into the world of creativity, imagination of the children, embodied in their play.

• The children showed the unknown possibilities.
The boat for the master of balance

Photo.staff
Sharpening knives

Photo. staff
The thuja : My own secret place

Photo. staff
Steps towards changes:

The bodily experience, the creativity and the imagination and the knowledge of places

Tarmac – For bicycling, place to ride, material to create different situations

Stones and climbing wall with changeable grips: For adventurous climbing and a view

Willow for creative material and installations: Hedge, tunnel, cave and chairs for storytelling
Summary

Registrations of use and design elements are not sufficient for the comprehension of children's needs for poetic places, places of magic, play and imagination. We need the stories of the meaning of the places.
We do need methods that covers the viewpoints of

Children's bodily experiences as the way of learning.
The phenomenology of places. The meaning of the space are based on doing. Poetic places, the qualitative values
Children's needs for creativity and imagination.
The creative activity is directly dependent upon the individuals experiences, and the extent and the degree of variations of this experience

L. Vygotsky
Creativity and imagination

The Chinese Wall

Photo. Line Melvold, pedagogic leader
Questions on aspects of environmentally planning and child participation

Is it possible to make broader interdisciplinary programs for planning the Kindergarten environments?

Narratives are valuable as they can tell one part of the picture. Different methods tells different stories, what about the possibility of narrative analyses putting the results side by side?
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