

Loch Lomond
& The Trossachs
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta Loch Laomainn
is nan Tròisichean

playⁱⁿ
the park

PLAY SPACE STUDY TOUR TO BERLIN
5 – 9 JUNE 2007

Contents

Play Space Study Tour to Berlin 5–9 June 2007

INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
Berlin primary schools	4
Grün macht Schule	5
Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur	5
THE PROGRAMME	
Wednesday 6 June 2007	6
Thursday 7 June 2007	9
Friday 8 June 2007	11
WHAT WE OBSERVED	13
General discussion of approaches, attitudes and general characteristics observed, providing a context for the following illustrated sections:	
Signage and atmosphere at entry	15
Sand and water	16
Rocks and boulders	19
Planting	20
Dens and hiding places	29
Sports facilities	24
Paths, surfaces, borders, boundaries and fences	26
Play equipment	30
Seating	32
Elements of school and nursery architecture	33
The involvement of people	34
And finally	37
EVALUATION AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS	38
APPENDIX 1 List of leaders and participants	41
APPENDIX 2 Evaluation form and letter	42

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Community Futures Programme

Through the Community Futures Programme, all communities in the National Park prepared their first Community Action Plans between 2001 and 2003. Communities are currently being supported to revise and renew their action plans for 2007-2011.

These Action Plans assist communities to identify and develop their priorities for projects and actions. They also help communities to clearly represent their main needs and aspirations and to influence the preparation of the National Park Plan and Local Plan.

The National Park Authority supported the organisation of this Learning Journey and part financed the places of 6 volunteers, nominated by their community in their role as action group members leading on the development of community playspaces.

For more information contact:
Hannah Dinneen
Sustainable Development Officer

tel: 01389 722600
email: hannah.dinneen@lochlomond-trossachs.org

Berlin

On a fact finding tour of play facilities June 2007

Long straight boulevards
Cycle tracks
Tall leafy trees and grass islands
Dividing traffic
Which never seems to jam.
High flats with balconies
Blooming in profusion,
Parks, roses, lavender,
Philadelphus sweet perfume.
Children happy and energetic
Colonising rock sculptures.
I choose to ignore
The universal politics
Of litter and graffiti
Concentrating on the green of nature,
The regeneration of a city
And the dedication and vitality
Of our hosts
As they conduct us
Through their creative projects
We have come here to visit
In Berlin
And as I stand at the Brandenburg Gate,
In sadness for the past
I remember divided peoples,
French-German
German- Russian
Russian - USA - US, the UK
German - German

But I am here in friendship
And in hope for the future
With colleagues from Norway and England
Scotland and Germany
The antithesis of my earlier sadness,
A celebration of Unification,
Not just Germany
But for Europe,
For all our young people
For the hope of lasting peace

© Janette Valentine

Report author and photographer:
Sue Gutteridge 2007

Introduction

The communities in the National Park should have play areas which provide facilities for local people and for visitors, and which are in keeping with the environment – using natural resources and creating a sense of place. It is important that all ages are considered and that there are opportunities for learning through play.

This was the ‘vision’ for play space articulated in 2004 by the communities of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Since Scotland’s first National Park came into being in 2002 its communities, through the Community Futures Programme, have been actively involved in its planning processes. The aspirations that many communities had to establish and improve play and recreation facilities figure in their Local Community Plans and Action Plans, and led to the setting up in 2003 of the Play in the Park Initiative.

Between 2003 and 2005 a series of meetings, workshops and presentations took place, including a whole-day seminar devoted to play space design. The ‘vision’ was developed into a set of principles, and a number of communities continued to work with their local authority and National Park partners to create good play spaces.

This has proved to be both a challenging and a rewarding endeavour. Some beautiful and successful play spaces have been created. In other cases, entrenched ways of working, the failure to develop a shared vision between partners, the difficulties of raising funds and/or coordinating multiple funding sources, and overriding concerns with ‘health and safety’ have compromised or even halted projects.



However, the desire to create good play spaces remained a priority for many communities, a number of which are actively engaged in such projects. We felt that at this point in time the opportunity to see the kinds of play spaces we envisaged and to meet the people involved in developing and managing them would help all the partners concerned to revisit, refresh and renew the vision and principles adopted three years ago and to focus on the essentials of how to get such projects on the ground, and how best to sustain them.

National Park communities nominated six representatives to go, all of whom are actively involved in local play space projects. Other places were taken up by people active in the field of play and play space in Scotland and England. We were joined in Berlin by four Norwegian delegates. The mix of perspectives and backgrounds, bound by a common interest in play, made for an excellent group feeling and lots of good discussion.

Our study tour to Berlin was led by Frode Svane, a Norwegian architect, educator and play activist who had organised and led several such visits before. He has many contacts in Berlin, particularly through the ‘Grün macht Schule’ movement, which aims to transform school grounds into beautiful and creative spaces for play and learning, and a number of these were included in our study tour. Since the focus of the National Park ‘Play in the Park Initiative’ is

on public play and recreation spaces, the particular school sites were chosen with regard to their applicability to public play areas. Many of them do anyway function wholly or partially both as school grounds and as public play areas. As can be seen in the section on evaluation, we have been inspired to think also about the possibilities and potential of school grounds, both for the school and the wider community.

At every site we were privileged to be able to observe children playing, and to meet the people who were involved not only in design and construction, but also in the way in which the sites are currently being used and developed. It was this process of observation, discussion and gradual understanding of the wider social context that gave us some real insight into how and why this marvellous play provision has been achieved and sustained.

For many of us, it was our first visit to Berlin. The vitality of the city, and the immediacy of its twentieth-century history, both physically and in the way in which it was articulated by the people that we met, were intrinsic to our experiences, and we were moved by the warmth, enthusiasm and hospitality of our guides, who made this study tour into something special.

Special thanks must go to Frode Svane of Grün macht Schule who organised this study tour with such thoughtful care

Background Information

Berlin primary schools (Grundschulen)

Berlin has 450 primary schools, of which around 100 follow the 'Grün macht Schule' approach to their grounds. There are 250 secondary schools, of which 40 follow this approach. We did not visit any secondary schools.

Children attend primary school from the age of six to twelve. Most of the primary schools have between 400 and 800 children. The school day is from 8.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. However, some schools in disadvantaged areas (usually those with a high immigrant population) are 'whole day' schools, operating from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 or 6.00 p.m. In these schools, 'educators' (they seemed to be the equivalent of teaching assistants) take over from teachers from 1.00 p.m. They usually have a different physical base from the school, and use the school grounds extensively. Parents pay a small amount for the additional hours, which are available only for children up to the age of ten. People spoke of a 'vacuum' in provision for ten- to twelve-year-olds, deemed too old for the extended day care. One of the schools we visited, Reinhartswald Grundschule, was the first 'whole day' school in Berlin.

While school grounds did not appear to be much used for curriculum purposes, they were widely and fully used before



school, during break times and by children both officially and unofficially staying on for the extended day. The degree of accessibility of school grounds both to children attending the school and to the general public varied from school to school. In one of the schools (Fläming Grundschule), the (Scottish) caretaker/facilities manager lived on the premises and was responsible for the grounds between unlocking the gates at 7.00 a.m. and locking them at 10.00 p.m. After school hours, the grounds are open to the general public. The majority of the schools were not open out of school hours. While politicians and school staff all saw this as desirable, it was not seen

as possible without staff to look after the grounds and prevent damage and misuse. However, Galileo Grundschule, situated in one of the most disadvantaged areas (unemployment rate among parents of 70 per cent), was unlocked and open to the public after 4.00 p.m.

Fläming Grundschule, the first school we visited, was described as an 'inclusive' school, with 10 per cent of the children described as having special needs. This school initiated this policy for the whole of Berlin. While parents of disabled children have the right to request places in the schools of their choice, schools have to agree that they can 'manage'.

Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur

Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur was founded in 1990, having its origins in the Spielwagen Berlin initiative. Based on principles of respect for the dignity of all, it sees itself as a lobbying organisation representing the interests and improving the lot of children and young people, especially in the Pankow area of Berlin. Its arena of interest and operation is broad, and includes a wide range of work with children and young people, such as out-of-school-hours projects, adventure playgrounds, children's farms, cultural projects with children and international youth work.

Similar projects sharing such principles and set up by other organisations may affiliate to Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur, sharing ideas and resources. In addition, it generates and supports model projects.

The projects that we visited were the adventure playgrounds Marie and Kolle 37, the Gartenarbeitsschule Tiergarten and the Jugendfarm Moritzhof (children's farm).

Grün macht Schule

Grün macht Schule was established in 1984 as a result of concern from educators and landscape designers that school grounds were a wasted resource. It is a Berlin-based organisation, employing a small number of staff, and exists to motivate, assist and encourage teachers, students and parents to transform dull and uninspiring school grounds into beautiful and creative spaces for play and learning. It does this mainly by organising workshops, feasibility studies, seminars, lectures, conferences, etc., on an in-school, regional and national basis. It also coordinates the project planning process for actual school grounds projects, working closely with landscape architects, the local council and other

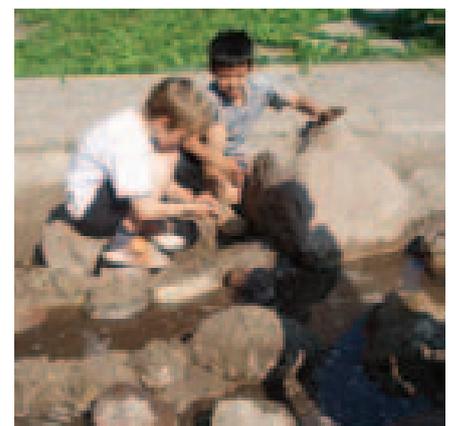
organisations and individuals to do so. It is strongly committed to the principles of self-help and participation at every stage of the process.

The specific services that Grün macht Schule offers to achieve these aims include:

- a local advisory service for schools wanting to embark on redesigning their grounds
- an advisory service on accessing information resources
- school-based training sessions
- training sessions at own base, with emphasis on practical skills
- an initial point of contact with other agencies, such as specialists, administrators, artists, etc.
- the sale of books and media material



- a contact point for regional specialists and institutions
- project management and coordination of redesign
- contacting possible sponsors and suggestions for project financing
- the organisation of guided tours to existing redesigned grounds
- talks and lectures for schools and city council committees and departments
- video, slide and PowerPoint presentation lending service for Berlin schools, covering a wide range of relevant topics
- tools and equipment loan for special projects
- an archive of literary and photographic material available for loan
- lectures and guided tours of Berlin school grounds for visitors from elsewhere.



The Programme and Descriptions of Venues

Wednesday 6 June 2007

Fläming Grundschule

Guide: Georg Coenen, Grün macht Schule

Deputy head: Frau Czycykowski

Facilities manager: Mr Gordon

Landscape architect: Gunda Klasing

The school accommodates 600 children aged six to twelve. It was established in 1975 as an inclusive school, incorporating 10 per cent of children with special needs. This school initiated the policy for the whole of Berlin. Parents of children with special needs have the right to request places in the school of their choice, but the school must agree that they can manage.

The school day operates from 7.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. From 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. the younger children (six- to nine-year-olds) go to the day-care centre adjacent to the school which has use of the grounds after 1.00 p.m. The older children (ten- to twelve-year-olds) either go home or occupy themselves in the grounds. The grounds are open to all (including the general public) until 10.00 p.m., when they are locked by the facilities manager, who lives on the premises. There is a breakfast break from 9.35 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., which is when we were visiting.

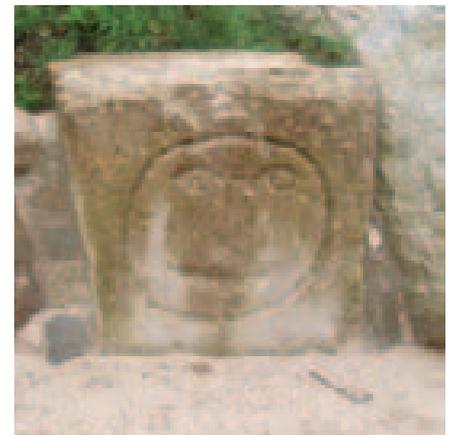
In 1999 an additional floor was added to the school, and at this point a budget was found to redesign the school grounds. The school worked with Grün macht Schule to do this, and children, staff and parents were all involved. There were visits to other school grounds, and children built models of what they would like and were involved in practical work outside. An example of this was the creation of the flagpole wood. Children scraped the bark off pine logs and then painted them. The flagpole wood is no longer there, and it was emphasised that the grounds are a constant work in progress. Other children's projects and



developments have included the fence decorations and the African village. A project being planned at the moment is flying objects made of willow that will be lodged in the trees.

Gunda Klasing, the landscape architect, converted the developing ideas into designs, taking five years for the project to be realised (see site plan). The grounds include 'no go' areas for adults and 'jungle area' hiding places for children. There were many mature trees on the site, which were kept, with more being planted. These provide shade and social focal points. The sports pitch area is unmarked, and used for multiple games and activities. It is also unfenced, bordering on the sand area. Children played extensively in the sand area and did not change their shoes when going in or out of the building (though the dry Berlin climate was an important factor). Maintenance was clearly ongoing, with areas of planting taped off and sweeping brushes available and in use at the end of break times.

Children are allowed a great deal of freedom. We were told that 'they should find out what an accident means', and they are encouraged not to complain. The deputy head said that there are fewer accidents than occurred before the grounds were redesigned (they had formerly included large expanses of hard surface) and that the insurance company supported their approach.



Neumark Grundschule

Head: Ulf Schröder

Landscape architect: Birgit Teichmann

The school, which is in a poor area of Berlin, accommodates 300 children aged six to twelve, 98 per cent of whom are of North African or Turkish origin, while the remaining 2 per cent cover sixteen other nationalities. It is a 'whole day' school, operating from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. (These extended hours exist in schools in poor areas.) The school building, dating from 1890, is the oldest in Berlin. The outside of the building was refurbished in 2004.

Birgit Teichmann described the process of redesigning the outside space. The project began in 2003. The original playground was mostly asphalt. The budget was limited, and not everything was affordable at once. Phase I included realisation of the children's main desire – the creation of a hilly landscape with a climbing structure. The asphalt was cut

into, with areas of it being retained as paths and hard surfaces. This was much cheaper than entirely removing it. Stones and boulders were recycled from the city supplies, and children worked with artists on a series of stone carvings into the sandstone blocks. Much of this work was done by high-school children, and also included wood sculptures and ceramic work.

The amphitheatre was created as phase 2. Phase 3, which is still to be realised (this year), will include a water and paved area.

Planting has been included in all phases, and low walls round the newly planted areas are regarded as useful both for balancing and for the protection of the plants. The metalwork fences and gates were inspired by the artist Miro, and other Miro-inspired children's work was evident inside the school.

Teichmann's view is that 'benches don't work in schools', and, instead, various shapes and levels of platforms have been created for sitting, standing and working on. There was initial parental resistance to the predominance of stones and boulders, but with the evidence of the value of these features, and their safety, this has now been overcome.



Spreewald Grundschule and Winterfeld Platz Park

Head: Eberhard Laube

Landscape architect: Icken

The school accommodates 600 children aged six to twelve and operates from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m./6.00 p.m. It specialises in drama. For its after-school activities it has acquired a famous roof-garden glass-house designed originally as a nursery. It was started in 1989, the year before unification, when there was a lot of money available for such projects, but took many years to complete. The nursery was run by a voluntary organisation but proved too difficult and expensive for them to maintain. While it is an extraordinary and beautiful building, the fact that it was designed as a nursery means that it is not ideal as a space for older children. The difficulties and expense of its maintenance exist for the school as well, and it is normally in use only after 4.00 p.m. on weekdays. The head discussed the problems of vandalism and damage in relation both to this particular building and in the grounds

in general, and he himself checks the grounds on a regular basis in the evenings and at weekends.

The school shares the adjacent Winterfeld Platz Park (a public park) as a part of its school grounds, though it also has its own beautifully designed sports area with a curved mesh roof. The public park has two gates into it, one of which is directly from the school grounds. This gate is locked outside break times. The sharing of the space seems to work very well, and we observed it in operation. The public park includes extensive water and sand play areas, with water cascading from the top of a 'hill' into the sand area; flexible open space; and jungly planted areas. There are also stone sculptures and ceramic walls created by an artist working with local high-school children. This park was built on an area that had been bombed during the war. The neighbourhood is predominantly North African, with a North African market held by the gates of the park three times a week.



Reinhardtswald Grundschule

Head: Werner Munk

This school accommodates 800 children aged six to twelve and operates from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m./6.00 p.m. It was built in 1976. In 1860 the site was a military camp and there are still some remaining military buildings. The school has tried unsuccessfully to acquire them for after-school activities, but they are being converted into commercial artists' workshops instead.

This was the first school in Berlin to operate a 'whole day' programme. Since 1980 it has been an 'ecological' building, with many low-energy/recycling features. The water management system has been made into a feature of the school grounds (see illustrations). The school is also in the process of establishing a science and technical area outside. This will include the conversion of an already acquired tram into a cafe for parents. The grounds include a sculpture garden made up of items created by each final year. In another part of the grounds is a beech maze with all kinds of hidden features.



Britzer Garden – Makunaima and Spiellandschaft

Artist: Rainer Warzecha

The Britzer Garden is the former Bundesgartenschau Berlin and is a huge 90 acre public park that includes lakes, hills, wildlife areas, an animal enclosure, special gardens, play areas, cafes and events areas, and extensive information in the form of boards, leaflets, guided tours, lectures, etc. We spent most of our time visiting 'Makunaima' and the nearby 'Spiellandschaft' children's play area.

Makunaima is a clay village open in the summer and run by the artist Rainer Warzecha.

Funding acquired in 2003 enabled the creation of the 'Spielpalast' (playing palace) and other features. Everything is manufactured from clay and made, fired and painted on the premises. Warzecha and others work with children to design and make these features. The Spiellandschaft (playing landscape) includes a climbing pyramid and an extensive water landscape created from boulders that spout water.



Britzer Garden – Freilandlabor Britz

Manager: Ursula Müller

Landscape architects: Ortrud Kuhl
and Hartmuth Meyer-Buck

Freilandlabor Britz is both a city-wide centre based at the Britzer Garden and a charitable body that promotes environmental education and training. It works with interested individuals of any age, with groups from nurseries, schools and youth institutions, and with relevant public and voluntary-sector organisations. It is closely connected with Grün macht Schule, and together they have established a special working group to provide advice and consultation to schools to improve their grounds. It provides training for teachers and also has an internship programme for young adults.

At the weekends there are guided tours, events and seminars on a wide range of ecological, environmental and often seasonal topics. During the school holidays there are two-day workshops for children. There is also a children's working group – 'Tausendfüßler' – that meets every month at the Freilandlabor Britz. Support is given, too, to city-wide and local community events organised outside the Britzer Garden itself.

The constantly changing exhibition programme is also available for loan.



Grundschule an der Bäke

Guide: Ortrud Kuhl

Head: Herr Raase

Landscape architect: Barbara Hanke

The school accommodates 486 children aged six to twelve and operates a 'whole day' programme from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The grounds are not open to the public (including the school children) outside these hours, although this is what Berlin politicians wanted and what the school felt should happen. However, additional staff resources were felt to be essential to allow this to happen.

In 1994 the school lost one-third of its grounds to the Berlin water authority. In 2002 compensation of the equivalent of 175,000 euros was secured on the basis that, if 'green' land is taken out of commission, it must be restored. This covered the cost of the landscaping (but not equipment).

The original school grounds consisted mostly of flat hard surfaces where, as the head said, 'the only possibilities were running'. He also said that the new designs had seen a dramatic reduction in accidents and fighting, claiming: 'I haven't seen blood for two or three years.' Demarcation by gender or age was not considered necessary, and the grounds were designed as integrated areas where spaces and activities flowed one from the other. The sports pitch in the upper yard

is shared with a private tennis club whose members used it in the afternoons.

A major inspiration for the design was the actual 'der Bäke' stream that runs near the school. This is replicated in the school grounds in the form of a dry river bed running through the centre which is fed by a water pump on higher ground at one end. The river bed is filled with boulders, stones and gravel, all of which can be moved around to form dams, change the course of the water, etc. A long series of banks and hills separates the river bed from a broad running track and provides welcome changes of level and perspective on the formerly flat site.

We were at the school during the breakfast break and witnessed many children playing enthusiastically in and around the river bed area. We were told that children did sometimes go back to class soaked to the skin, but that 'it's no problem – no one's caught a cold yet and there are always spare clothes in the lost property box'.

The overriding general aim of the redesign was to bring children closer to nature. Children were intensively involved in the planning stage, which went on through 2001–2. During this period groups of children built eight different models incorporating possible ideas for the new grounds. Implementation occurred in 2003.

Schweizerhof Grundschule

Head: Frau Ebel

Teacher with responsibility for grounds: Frau Walden

This school accommodates 570 children aged six to twelve and is open from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Core hours are 8.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m., and parents choose whether or not to use the non-core hours. Frau Walden, along with a school grounds group of twelve children, takes the main responsibility for looking after the grounds.

In 2001 Frau Walden embarked on consultation with the children with the aim of redesigning the grounds. The result seemed somewhat more formulaic than the other grounds we saw, and there also seemed to have been a more literal (and not necessarily successful) interpretation of children's expressed desires. The priority that children had given to football had been interpreted in the grounds as a sun design, the centre of which was given over to football, with different areas accommodated in the 'rays' of the sun. A desire to 'jump high into the sky' had been interpreted by putting a trampoline at the top of a climbing structure – where its bounce potential had to be strictly limited. There was a water pump in the grounds, but the caretaker had switched it off because of what he described as misuse.

The project cost 200,000 euros, of which 90 per cent came from the EU and the remaining 10 per cent from the school. The grounds offered an interesting contrast to the next-door ex-American school, whose grounds consisted entirely of sports pitches (football, baseball and running tracks).

Lunch at Botanical Gardens.



Galileo Grundschule

Head: Gerti Sinzinger

Landscape architect: Birgit Teichmann

This is a combination of two schools, one of which accommodates 500 children and the other 250 children with various speech and communication difficulties. All the children are aged six to twelve. The school day operates from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., and about one-third of the children up to the age of ten stay on until 4.00 p.m. in the care of 'educators'. This is the parents' choice. There is a low cost for this service. There is no provision for ten- to twelve-year-olds. The area is predominantly Turkish and the unemployment rate among the parents is very high indeed (80 per cent). This is largely a result of former immigrant labour having been replaced by former East German labour.

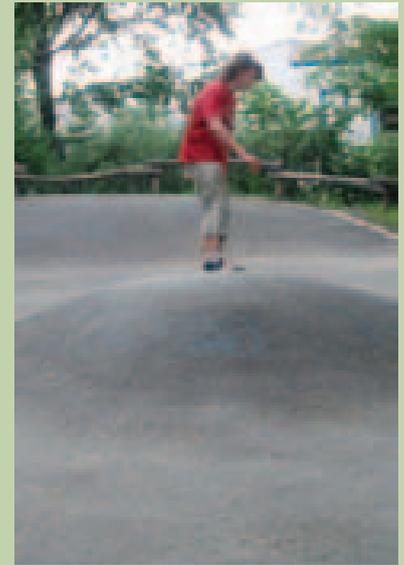
The grounds are unlocked and open to the public from 4.00 p.m. onwards. This provides a highly valued and much needed facility in the local area.

The school was built in 1991 and after ten years the grounds, which consisted of two internal courtyards and an external area, were in need of refurbishment. This started as a low-key, low-budget project by introducing an area of logs and tree

trunks. However, EU money was secured on the back of a water conservation element: water drained from all the roofs, including one of the courtyards which was also the roof of the gymnasium below, was diverted by a pump to the playground, where it appears as a river when it rains. Another water pump area completely separate from this ensures a supply of water for playing at all times.

The classrooms for the younger children are arranged as a street with an avenue of cherry trees down the centre. Each classroom has direct access to its own outdoor space. At break times all the open spaces are available for everyone to use, though the younger children tend to stick to the 'street' of classroom spaces.

As with all the schools we saw, there was also excellent traditional sports provision. However, this never meant an either/or approach to the way in which different spaces were used. Everywhere we saw ball games being played on 'non'-sports areas as well, and sports areas being used for things other than sports.



Kids in Bewegung

'Kids in Bewegung' stands for 'child-friendly streets'. The play area that we visited that was part of this project had been designed as part of a route between home and school, and was part of a network of streets that had been designated as 'home zones' (where the traffic is reduced to speeds of less than 10 km an hour, with the aim of restoring the social function of streets). The very high climbing net at the end of the route draws the eye as you enter the site, and looks in place among the tall trees and buildings. Leading from the play area is a skate and bike area with several entrance points from the paths and streets around.

Gartenarbeitschule Tiergarten

The Gartenarbeitschule Tiergarten offers space and support for school groups to visit and adopt garden plots of their own to cultivate, as well as to participate in outdoor arts projects and collective projects such as tree planting and looking after the bee hives (the bee 'hotel!').

Friday 8 June 2007

8.00–10.00

Guided stroll along the River Spree

Guide: Hartmuth Meyer-Buck

10.30–4.00

Prenzlauer Berg adventure playgrounds and neighbourhood parks (by bike)

Guide: Oliver Ginsberg

Prenzlauer Berg is in the former GDR area, and since reunification there have been comprehensive urban renewal schemes, with funds available from European and federal sources.

10.45

Adventure playground Marie, pocket park and sports facilities

In 1994 the area was declared a formal city renewal area, and the demolition of a former fire brigade building opened up the space for park and leisure facilities. The development of the park and adventure playground was funded by European and federal money, and local schoolchildren and residents were involved in developing the ideas and designs. They were completed in 1999, with sports facilities and a youth club being added later. At the time of our visit there were few children using the facilities, so it was difficult to judge their quality, though the adventure playground did appear under resourced and lacking in vitality compared to the adventure playground Kolle 37 which we visited next (see below).



12.00

Adventure playground Kolle 37

Leader: Martyn Sorge

Like the adventure playground Marie, Kolle 37 is part of the Netzwerk Spielkultur organisation. During the 1970s and 1980s, before the Wall came down, the area around Kollwitzplatz (named after the artist Kathe Kollwitz) was full of political dissidents. While the commercial success of the neighbourhood since reunification has meant that many of the original residents have now left, Kolle 37, founded in 1990, with its connections with the international play movement, sees itself as preserving some of the values and culture of that time.

Martyn is one of the most experienced playworkers from the former GDR. Originally an electrician, he trained as a pedagogue while working at the adventure playground. 'Pedagogues' acting as playworkers in settings such as these are not equivalent to the 'educators' who serve as playworkers in school settings. As was the case with some others in the former GDR, Martyn worked with children under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture rather than, as do 'educators', under the Ministry of Education (and in an inevitably subservient position to teachers).

The adventure playground was explained to us as being based on three principles:

- Normally children are only able to change traditional playgrounds by destroying them. Adventure playgrounds offer opportunities for construction.
- Children are often now deprived of experiences of risk and danger. This in itself leads to accidents. The adventure playground offers these important experiences, and its accident rate in seventeen years has been extremely low.
- It isn't possible to build alone. Therefore in the process of construction children learn to cooperate and negotiate with others.

Kolle 37 is open to children aged six to sixteen, though the main users are aged ten to twelve. It is open six days a week and is staffed by five pedagogues (three full-time equivalents). There are also technicians on the staff. Some young people go on to the nearby youth centre. However, because some youngsters wanted to stay with the adventure playground the concept of 'youth firms' was developed, whereby young people develop their own enterprises from the adventure playground. One of these enterprises is a flourishing bike rental business which began five years ago. There is also a thriving youth music group, which is financially supported by a youth firm cafe.

In the mornings, school groups use the facilities and can pursue special projects such as the Stone Age experience. In the afternoons the adventure playground is used on a drop-in basis. It includes a builders' yard area that is always staffed by a pedagogue, and also blacksmith and pottery workshop areas. Experience of and contact with fire is regarded as important, and there is an area that includes ovens and an open fire space.

A group of parents have also arranged special contracts for the equivalent of out-of-school care in preference to the out-of-school care provided in the local school. This project has its own two additional staff. A 'pre-adventure playground' has been established for younger children and their parents and carers. This includes an ingenious sand and water play area that was built by an international youth camp.

At the back of the adventure playground is a shared neighbourhood space bounded by the Jewish cemetery wall. This is used for communal neighbourhood events, such as the seventeenth birthday party of the adventure playground planned for the weekend after our visit.

The adventure playground is used as follows on a daily basis: 40 afternoon drop-in children; 20 afternoon out-of-school children; 10 to 15 morning school-group children; 25 to 30 young 'pre-adventure playground' users, plus their parents and carers.

Funds come from a variety of sources, including the city government, the ministries of defence and unemployment, and the special out-of-school care contract, and through renting out space to community groups in the evenings.



14.30

Teutoburger Platz neighbourhood park

The area where this park and playground has been created was originally (at the end of the nineteenth century) a market square serving the surrounding densely populated area and, following that (1910), an early children's playground. This developed into a city park in 1928. After reunification the area was designated as a formal city renewal area, and local residents campaigned to keep and develop the area as a play area and park. The former milk bar in the park (dating from 1928) has become a neighbourhood community centre operated by local volunteers. Planning took place from 1991 to 1993 and the plans were implemented between 1993 and 1999.

16.00

Mauerpark and Jugendfarm Moritzhof (children's farm)

This area was originally a military training ground, then a railway station, and from 1961 to 1989 a strip of no-man's land between the two walls that divided East and West Berlin (hence its name, 'Wall Park'). In connection with Berlin's bid for the Olympic Games, the whole area underwent a formalised planning process, but it was only as a result of intensive local campaigning that a children's farm was established, run by the Netzwerk Spielkultur. The children's farm also cares for part of the park, including a small orchard. The park is being developed under a public-private partnership. The original concept was for a four-phase 15 hectare development to be completed by 2010. So far, two phases of 6 hectares have been developed, and there is currently unresolved conflict between the public and private partners, the latter of which (Vicio real estate, an offshoot of the federal railway company) wants to use some of the designated park space for housing. This proposal is being strenuously resisted by the public, and there is growing grass-roots activity.

What We Observed

Most of this section is organised into highly illustrated themes. The themes include: signage and initial atmosphere; topography and landscape; planting; the use of sand and water; dens and hiding places; paths, surfaces and borders; fences and boundaries; rocks, boulders and logs; seating; proprietary playground equipment; and people (including artists and craftspeople) working with children. The many illustrations that are the substance of this section of the report are drawn from all the sites that we visited.

These themes should be studied in the context of the overriding approaches and attitudes to children, young people and play and recreation that became evident in what people told us and in our discussions and observations. It is these approaches and attitudes that have clearly guided the physical design of spaces and the way in which they are looked after and developed.

On the subject of general physical design, it was obvious that, unlike the vast majority of either public play areas or school grounds in the UK, the play spaces we saw had been professionally designed. Even if work had been carried out in phases over quite a long period of time, it followed a well-thought-out and coherent overall plan. On meeting a number of the landscape architects that had designed the spaces we visited, it became clear that they had continuing relationships with the spaces they had designed and the people they had designed them for. The process of design development invariably took quite a long time, and the landscape architects themselves were involved in engaging children in elements of the design and construction process, in involving artists and craftspeople, and in helping to convince others (e.g., parents, school staff, out of school hours staff) of the value of approaches and values described below.



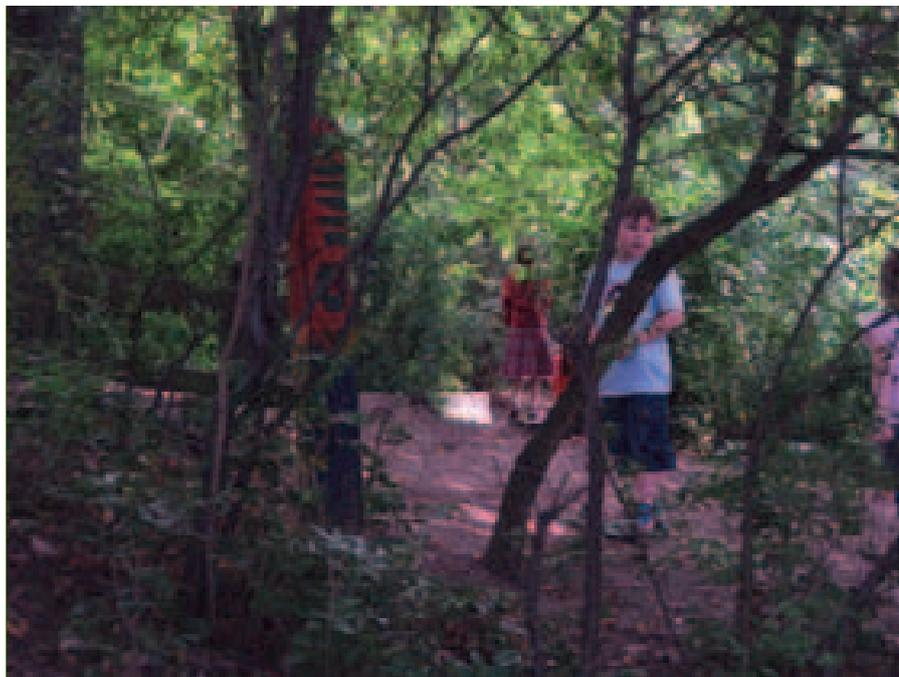
Play areas were marked by a lack of prescription in terms of the way in which topography and non-prescriptive features (such as logs, boulders, walls, planting, paths, etc.) rather than types of equipment determined the overall design of a space, by the sparing and careful selection and integration of such proprietary playground equipment as was used, and by the predominance of loose materials such as sand, bark, stones and water, both explicitly as play materials and as surfacing.

Another aspect of the lack of prescription was the explicit commitment to the flexible use of space. Children were not directed towards particular areas and types of play on the basis of age or gender, and care was taken not to brand particular areas and types of play in this way. While sports provision was generous, this did not preclude ball games, for example, going on in other parts of the space, and nor were 'non-sports' activities excluded from the sports provision. Physically, different

areas (even quite often sports areas) were usually not bounded or fenced, but flowed from each other, encouraging a natural flow of play.

All of this suggests an approach to play itself, reflected in these play spaces, that sees it not in terms of categories of 'types of play' (physical, imaginative, social, reflective, etc.) but rather as something essentially unprescribed, free-flowing, spontaneous, creative and belonging to children.

We were struck by attitudes to health and safety – namely that children need to take risks and that a certain amount of challenge and danger is intrinsic to good play space. This was seen as essential in encouraging children to take decisions and be responsible for themselves. At Fläming Grundschule the deputy head said: 'Children are allowed a lot of freedom. They should find out what an accident means and are encouraged not to complain.' In connection with this, it was a repeated claim that school



playgrounds designed in the way that these were gave rise to far fewer accidents and less fighting than the traditional acres of tarmac and grass. 'I haven't seen blood for two or three years', said the head of Grundschule an der Bäke. All of us noted the very low levels of fighting and aggression in both school and public play areas, and reflected on the degree to which this was determined by the environment.

There was a general belief that there should be no-go areas for adults – that children need their privacy, and that this should be allowed for with dens and hiding places.

The inevitability (indeed desirability) of 'mess' was acknowledged. Every school playground we visited included running water, and we saw children going back into school after breaks soaked to the skin. At Grundschule an der Bäke, the head said, 'It's no problem. We've got a lost property box full of spare clothing and no one's caught a cold yet.' Every playground also had large sand play areas, often very close to classrooms. We were told: 'teachers just have to get on with it.'

The respect for children's need for privacy and tolerance of mess did not lead to neglect or indifference on the part of adults, and good basic care and maintenance was in evidence on every site. Also, a lot of emphasis was placed on the importance of involving children in practical ways in elements of design and construction, for example, bringing in artists and craftspeople to work with children on ceramics, wood and stone sculpture projects.

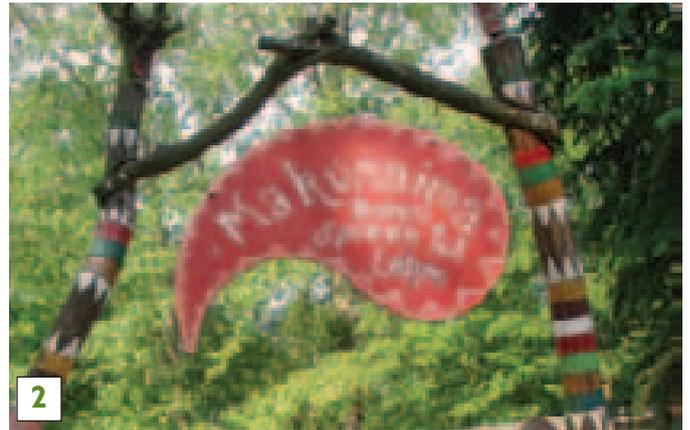
Offering opportunities for children to connect with nature was seen as one of the purposes of play areas, and the inclusion of features that would encourage this, such as all kinds of planting, long grass, etc., was evident everywhere.

Overall, we were struck by the long-standing commitment and continuity of almost everyone we came across. The fact that many of the people we met had been in their various posts for more than ten years meant that they had long-standing relationships with their establishments, with communities and with each other, and had had the chance to see what could be difficult and long-term physical projects through and to develop and build on them.

What We Observed

Signage and atmosphere at entrance

Signs were individual and attractive and created a welcoming atmosphere. Signs at entrances to schools, while identifying the school as belonging to the city of Berlin, were not overwhelmingly 'corporate' and conveyed a sense of the individual character of that particular place.



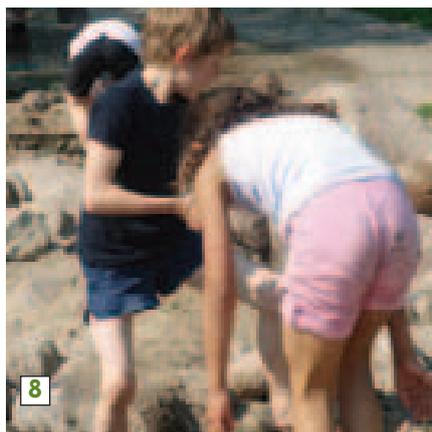
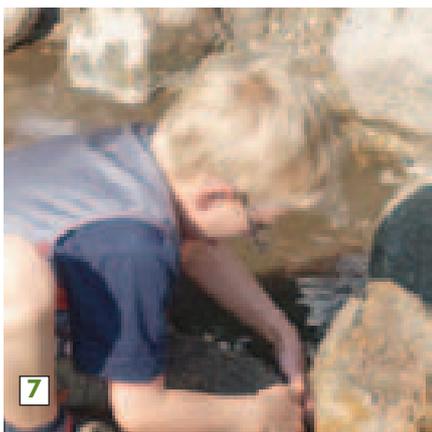
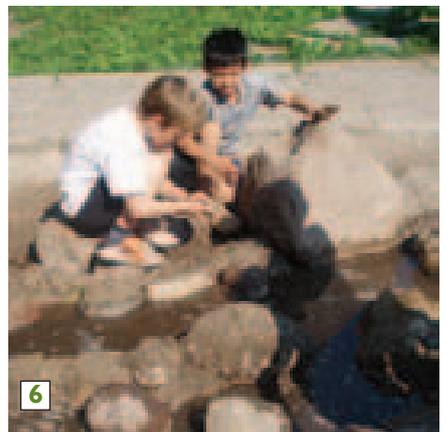
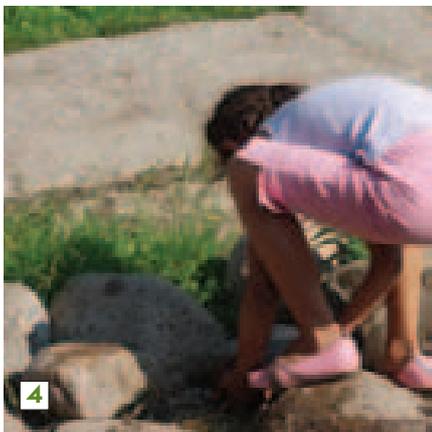
- 1 An der Bäke Grundschule an der Bäke
- 2 Makunaima, Britzer Garden
- 3 Kollé 37
- 4 Approaching Fläming Grundschule
- 5 Fläming Grundschule

What We Observed

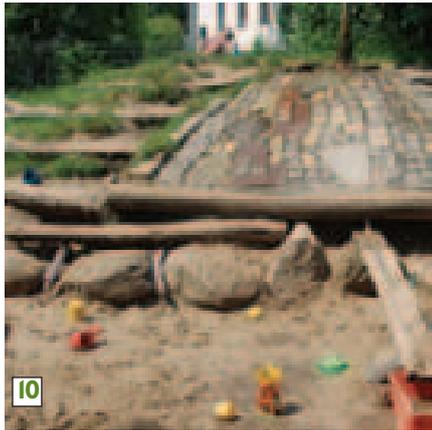
Sand and water

Almost every site we visited, whether school grounds, adventure playground or public park, included sand and water. These appeared to be the staples of play provision and everywhere we went we saw children of all ages playing alone and together in a huge variety of ways with sand, water and other materials in various combinations.

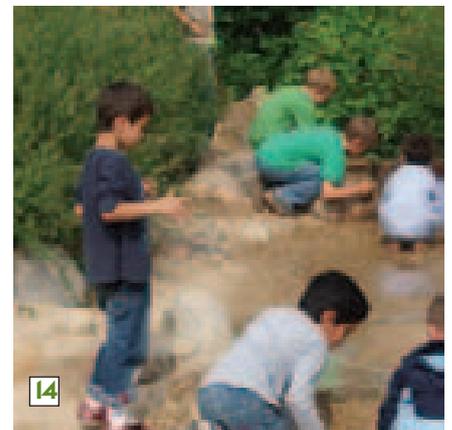
The series of pictures below (1 - 9) show an der Bake Grundschule an der Bäke, where a major inspiration for the redesign of the school grounds was the actual 'der Bake' stream that runs near the school. This is replicated in the school grounds in the form of a dry river bed running through the centre of the grounds, fed by a water pump on higher ground at one end. The river bed is filled with boulders, stones and gravel that can all be moved around to form dams, change the course of the water, etc.



The following pictures (10– 12) are of Adventure Playground Kolle 37. The younger brothers and sisters of the users of this adventure playground had wanted an area that they could use too. Children, parents and staff were involved in developing the designs for this sand and water area, which was implemented one summer by an international youth camp. Adjacent and connected to the adventure playground, it's used much as a public play area by young children accompanied by carers. It has an ingenious system of pipes and 'gutters' for the mixing of sand and water, and children added various loose materials to extend these possibilities.



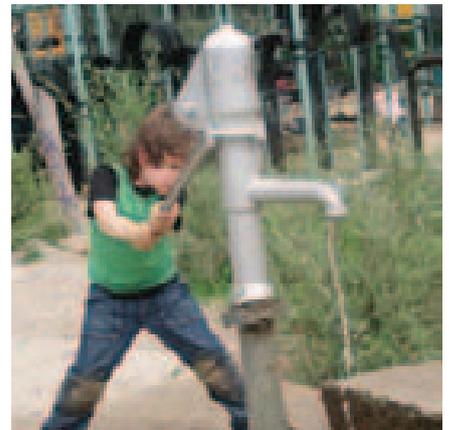
The next series of pictures (13– 16) show the sand and water play at Fläming Grundschule, where the water is again controlled by the children operating a pump at the top of a series of steps and boulders that are thickly planted on both sides. The water descends to a 'beach' of sand, creating a stream as it runs through it, forming an endlessly fascinating environment for play



At Winterfeld Platz Park the water and sand area forms a coherent part of an extensive space that includes 'jungle' and open space as well climbing and swinging equipment. It operates simultaneously as a public park and as school grounds, with a gate opening directly from the school into the park at break times. The park is terraced, with the levels divided by broad and rough stone steps (though accessible too by a grassy ramp). A pump at the top of the steps propels water through a channel between the steps to a huge sand area at the bottom



The pump is robust and positioned so that it can accommodate groups as well as individual children.



The sand table and the steps provide focus, and alternative surfaces for playing on or under. The sand is deep enough for serious digging.



What We Observed

Rocks and boulders

Rocks and boulders were seen everywhere, as boundaries, stepping stones, sculpted features, etc. Huge rough slabs formed steps and surfaces. Artists worked with children to carve blocks of sandstone.

1, 2 Children at Grundschule an der Bäke used the top of this stone block to make red 'dye' from berries they'd found.

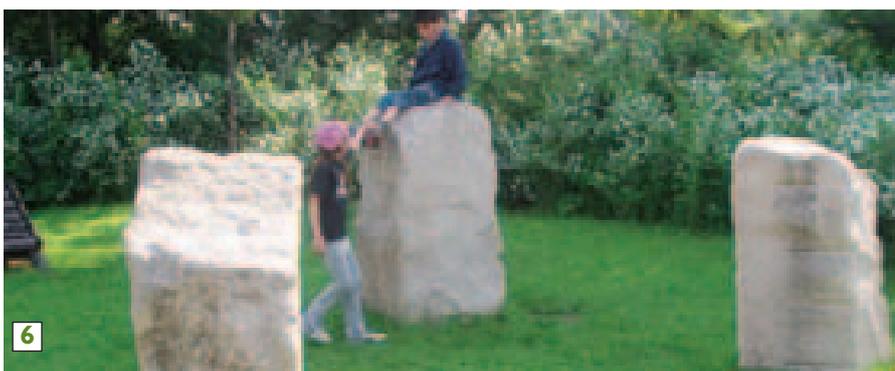
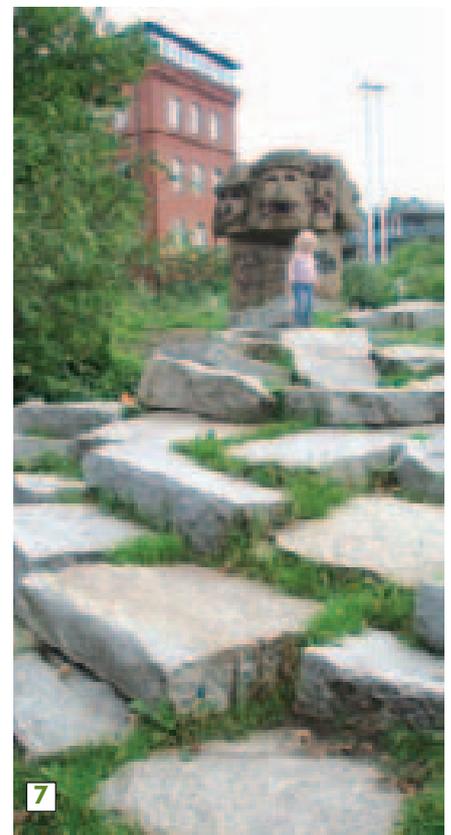
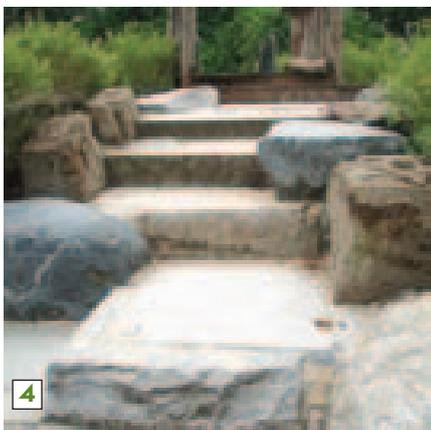
3 Slabbed area at Galileo GS

4 Slab steps bordered by boulders – water course at Neumark GS

5 Sand and water on broad steps at Winterfeld Platz

6 Stone pillars at Galileo GS

7 Rough slab steps at Winterfeld Platz

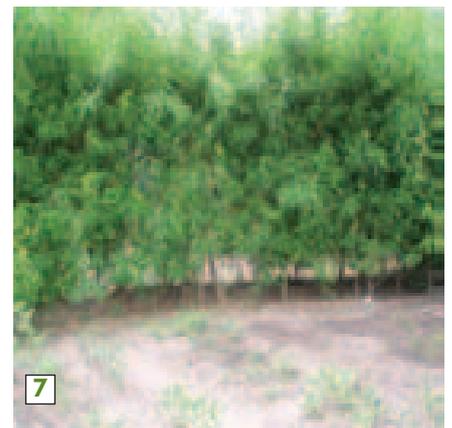
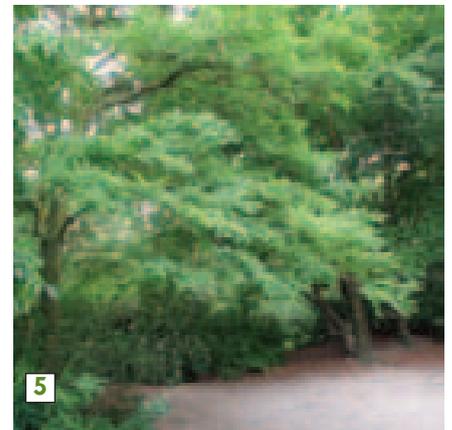
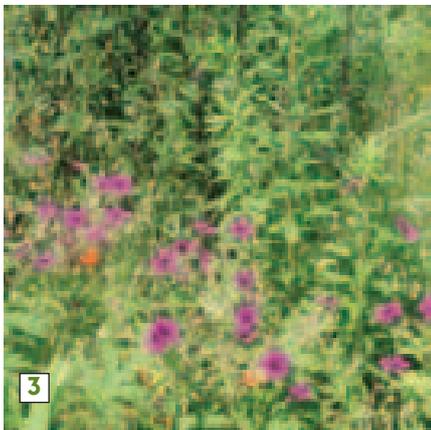
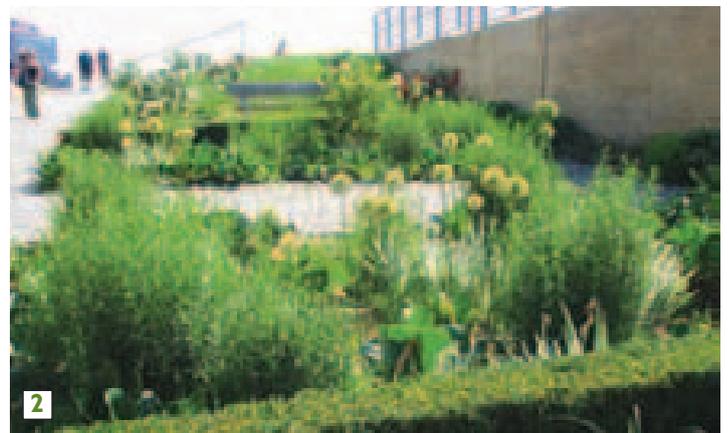


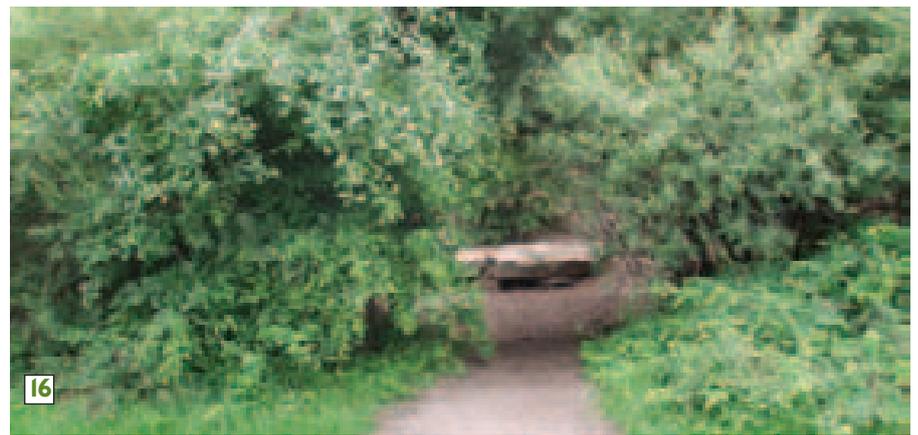
What We Observed

Planting

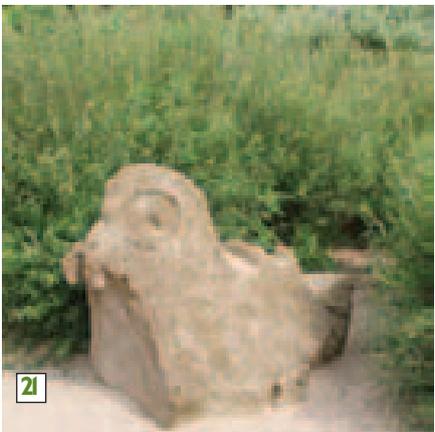
It is impossible to overestimate the importance of planting in all of the parks, play areas and school grounds that we saw, reflecting the general greenness of Berlin. Every effort was made to keep trees and other planting that already existed on sites that were being redesigned as well as adding to it, and planting was a significant aspect of almost every element of a site. The amount and range of planting more than anything else gave these sites their dynamic and organic qualities.

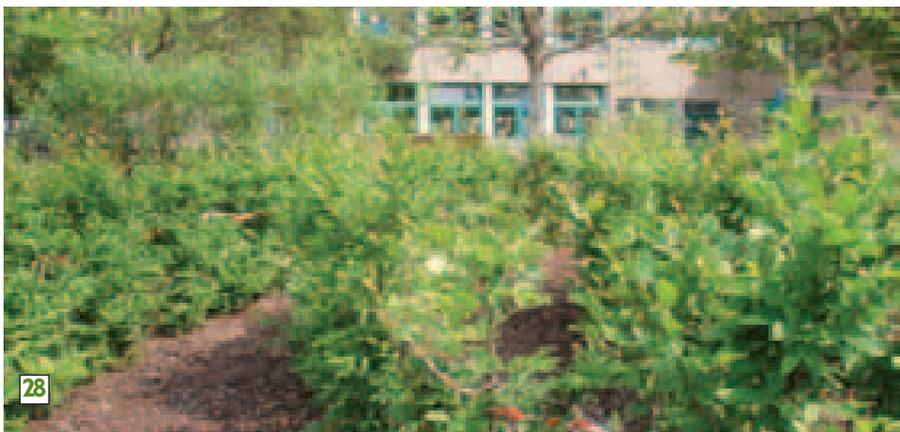
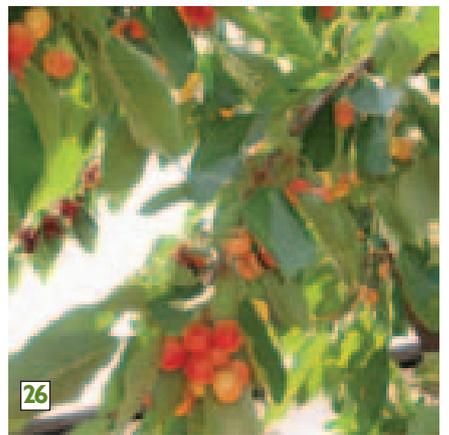
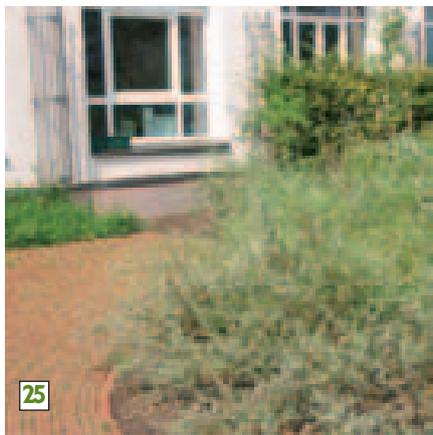
- 1 unmanicured Berlin road verge, encouraging wildlife
- 2, 3, 4 contrasting treatments of the banks of the Spree
- 5 existing planting at Bewegung
- 6 entrance to skatepark area at Bewegung
- 7 tree border at Gartenarbeitsschule
- 8 tree and shrub corridor at Schweizerhof GS
- 9, 10 Boundaries at Fläming GS
- 11 Edge of GalileoGS
- 12 Green sports pitch fence at Neumark GS
- 13, 14 jungle planting at Fläming GS
- 15 massive willow at Fläming GS
- 16 jungle planting at Winterfeld Platz





- 17 Grass island in sand area at Bewegung
- 18, 19, 20 Trees providing shade and social focus at Fläming GS
- 21 Planting and sculpture in sandplay area at Fläming GS
- 22 Open grassy space at Winterfeld Platz
- 23, 24, 25, 26 Features of classroom 'streets' at Galileo GS
- 27, 28 Beech maze at Reinhardtswald GS





What We Observed

Sports facilities

All of the school grounds we saw had excellent and high quality sports facilities. We saw none of the metal 'cages' so prevalent in the UK. Instead, sports facilities were designed in to the space as a whole, encouraging unprescribed and varied use of these areas by both boys and girls of all ages during break times.

1, 2, 3, 4 The running track at GS an der Bäke curves round three sides of the grounds. It encompasses many activities as well as running, and the landing pitch doubles as a sand play area.

5 Part of the large sports pitch at GS an der Bäke accommodating small groups.

6 Social gathering on pitch at Fläming GS

7 Informal off pitch ball game at GS an der Bäke

8, 9 Contrasting views of the adjacent (8) ex - American school grounds and (9) the grounds at Scheizerhof GS

10 Pitch bordering on sand area at Fläming GS

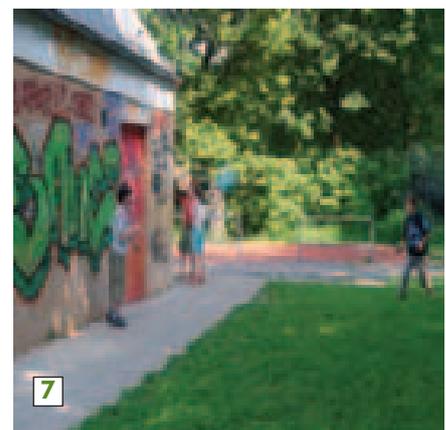
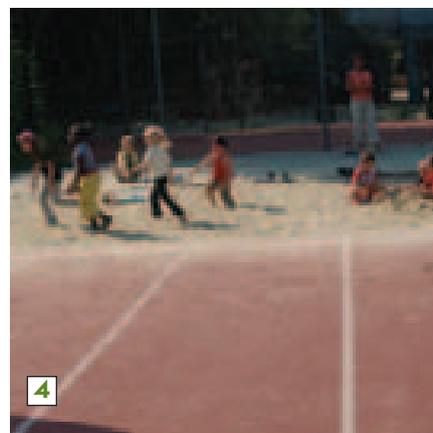
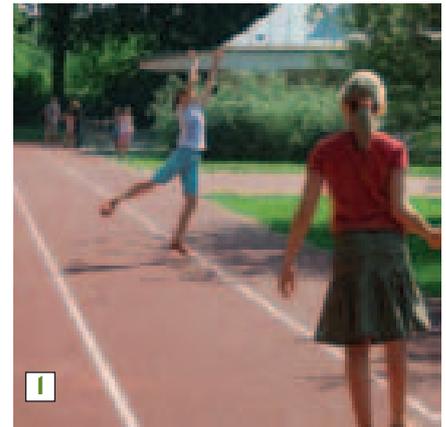
11 Every school grounds had a permanent concrete table tennis table. This one is at Fläming GS. Children invented many group games round them.

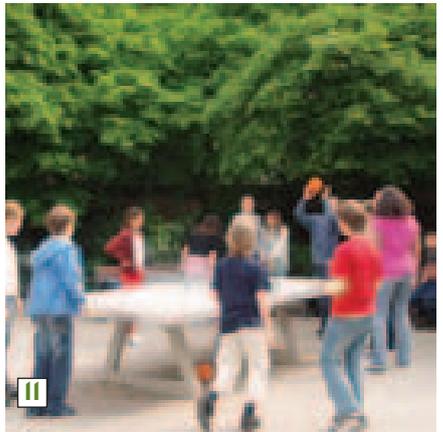
12 Beautiful netted sports pitch in confined space at Spreewald GS. Note greenery even in small space.

13 giant exercise bars at Britzer Garden

14 skate park at Bewegung

15 climbing wall at Mauer Park





What We Observed

Paths, borders, boundaries and fences

We saw many examples of paths, borders and boundaries that encouraged exploration of these play spaces and both signified and linked different kinds of spaces and activities. Paths, borders and boundaries were not just functional, but in the range and juxtaposition of materials used formed an intrinsic part of the landscape and were aesthetic and interesting in their own right. In some cases, they incorporated artist-led work with children.

1, 2 A log path at Schweizerhof GS makes an interesting route right around the grounds through the shrubby areas.

3 At Grundschule an der Bäke an occasionally stepped path leads through grass areas and another verged path takes you round the edge of the site.

4 Sett-bordered bark path with occasional platforms at Reinhardtswald GS

5 Sett-bordered slab path at Winterfeld Platz

6 At Winterfeldplatz paths cut through ivy form enticing routes through the trees.

7 Patchwork path, Grundschule an der Bäke

8 Mosaic star path, Schweizerhof GS

9 Concrete and grass path Grundschule an der Bäke.

10 Bricks and setts path, Schweizerhof GS.

11 Detail at junction of paths, Reinhardtswald GS

12 Detail of border with drainage of sports pitch, Fläming GS

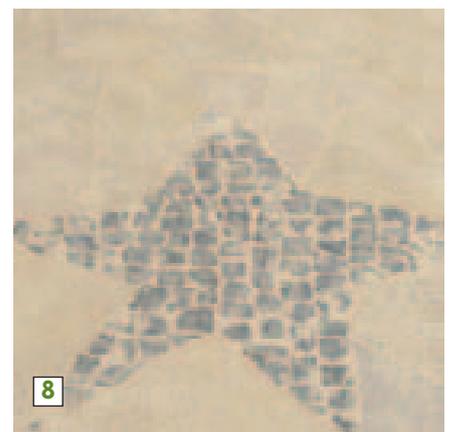
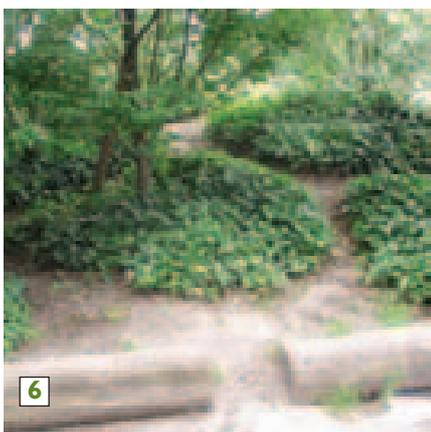
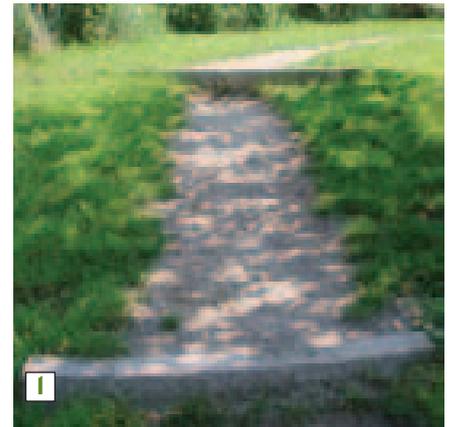
13 Sand area edge, ReinhardtswaldGS

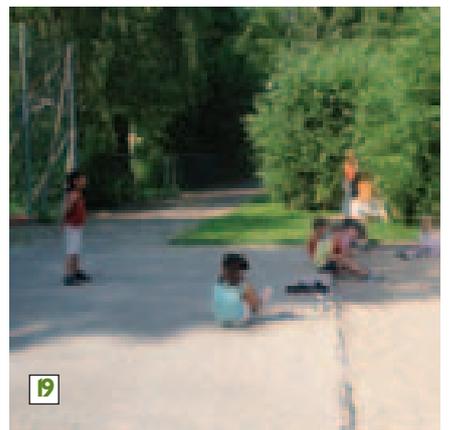
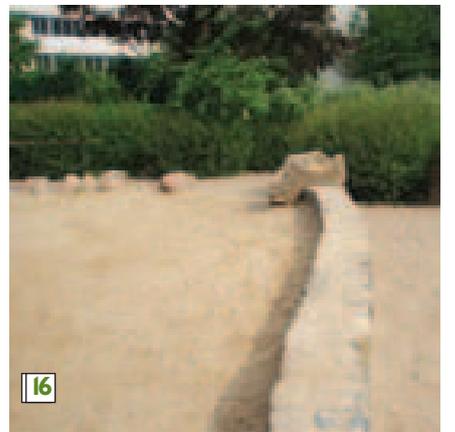
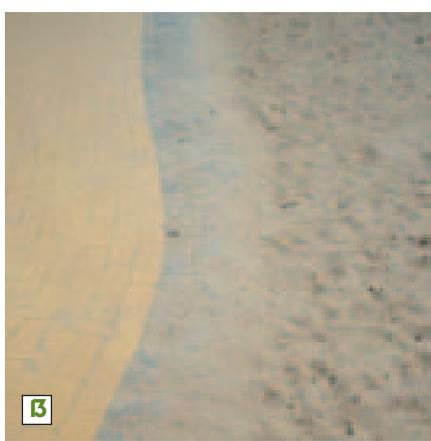
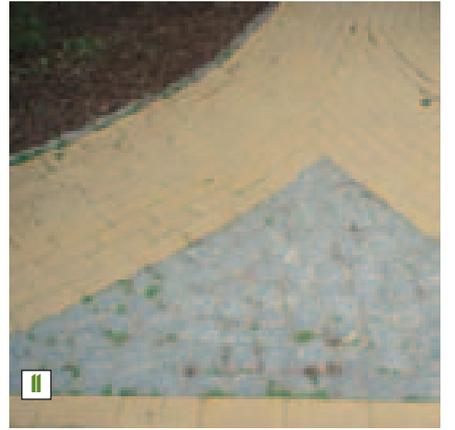
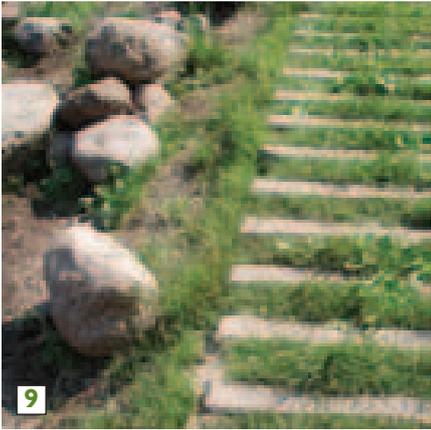
14 Sett edge separating sand and grass, Reinhardtswald GS

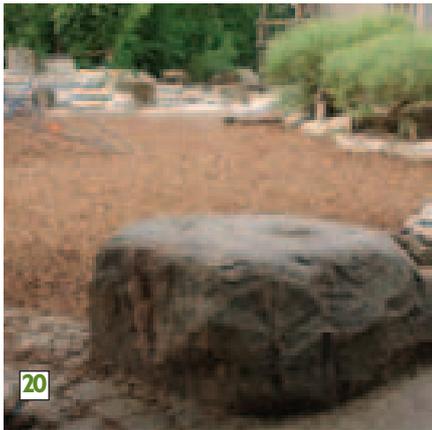
15 Sett edge separating sand and paved surface, FlämingGS

16, 17, 18 Block and boulder sand separators, Fläming GS

19 Sand/concrete, Grundschule an der Bäke



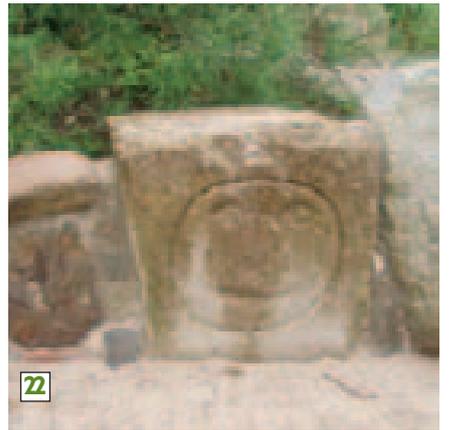




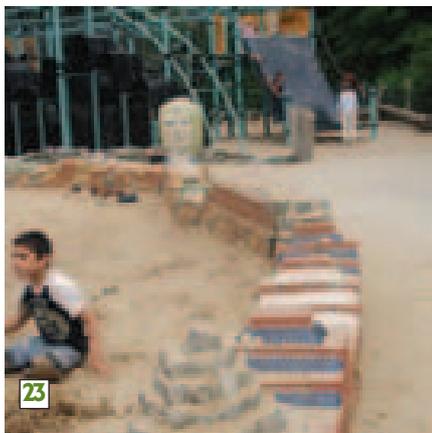
20



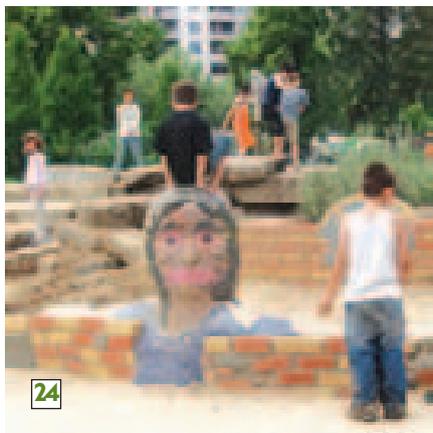
21



22



23



24



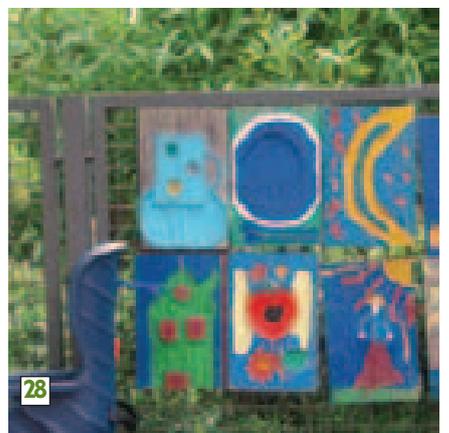
25



26



27

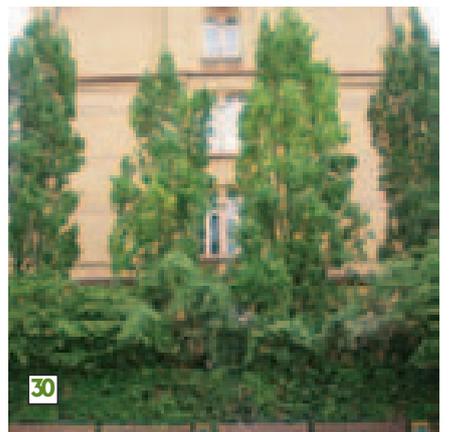


28

20 Log and boulder boundary, Neumark GS
 21, 22 Carved sandstone boundary to sand area, Neumark GS
 23, 24, 25 Ceramic wall of sand area at Winterfeld Platz. Artist and children involved in design and execution. Note water/sand channel detail along top of wall.
 26,27, 28 Decorated fences at Flaming GS
 29, 30 High Sports pitch fences smothered in greenery at Newmark GS



29



30

What We Observed

Dens and hiding places

Dens and hiding places abounded everywhere we visited. Children's need for privacy and 'invisibility' was recognised and built into the concept and design of every site and was another illustration of the completely different attitude to safety, risk and danger that we encountered. Constant surveillance of children by adults was not considered desirable or necessary either in school or public settings. However, the 'wild' areas were not unmanaged, impenetrable or unsavoury.

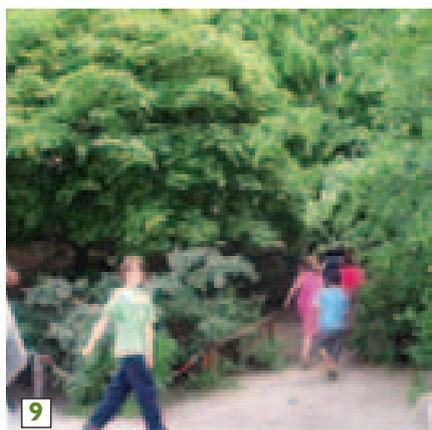
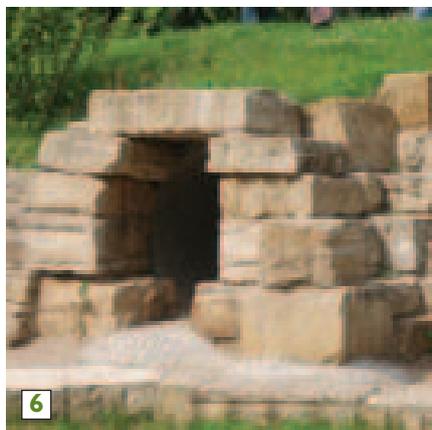
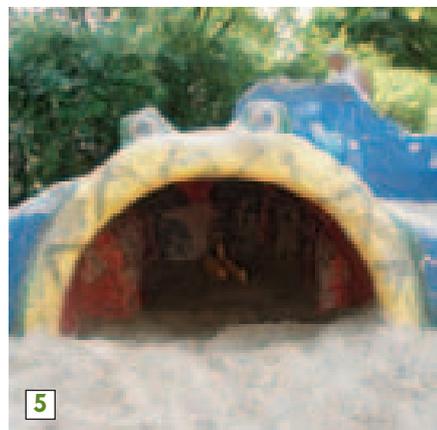
1, 2, 3, 4 Grundschule an der Bäke a (1) willow den provides an enticing hiding place and in another part of the grounds (2) shrub planting forms a secret corner. On an open space next to the running track (3) there's an encampment of wooden wigwams.

5 A cave in the Teutoberger Platz public park sand area build in hiding places.

6 A tunnel through a mound at Reinhardtswald Grundschule

7, 8, 9 Fläming Grundschule where existing trees and shrubs on the site were kept and added to in the redesign.

10 Children at Schweizerhof Grundschule in the corridor between the fence and the woodpile.



What We Observed

Play equipment

The topography and planting formed the structure and context of the sites. Play equipment was carefully chosen and integrated, its value enhanced by the settings.

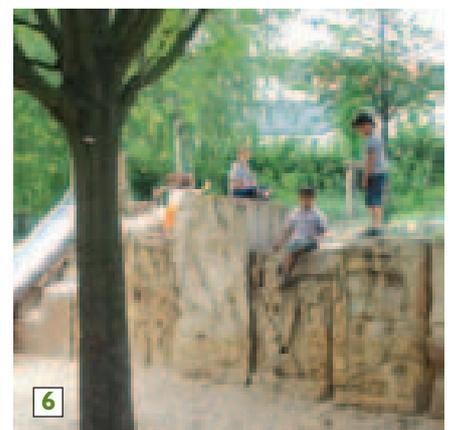
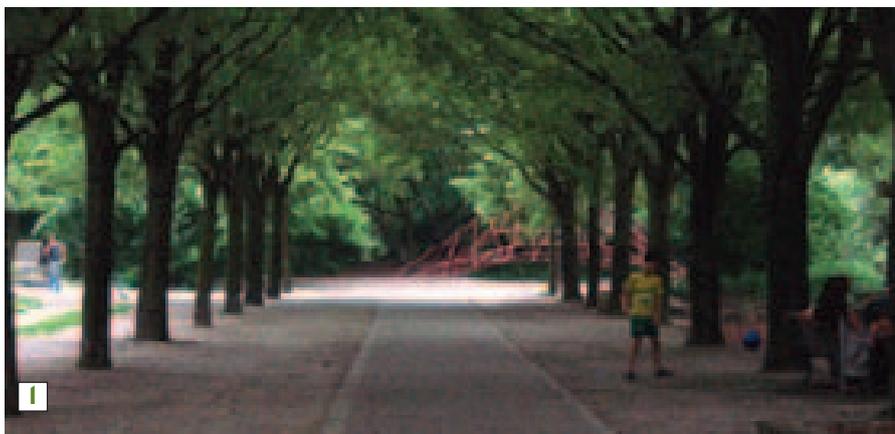
There was an absence of the many glaring colours often seen on British playgrounds. Manufactured equipment was usually made of wood – often the very robust and knobby Robini.

1 Approach to net climber at Bewegung

2 Climbing equipment at Fläming GS

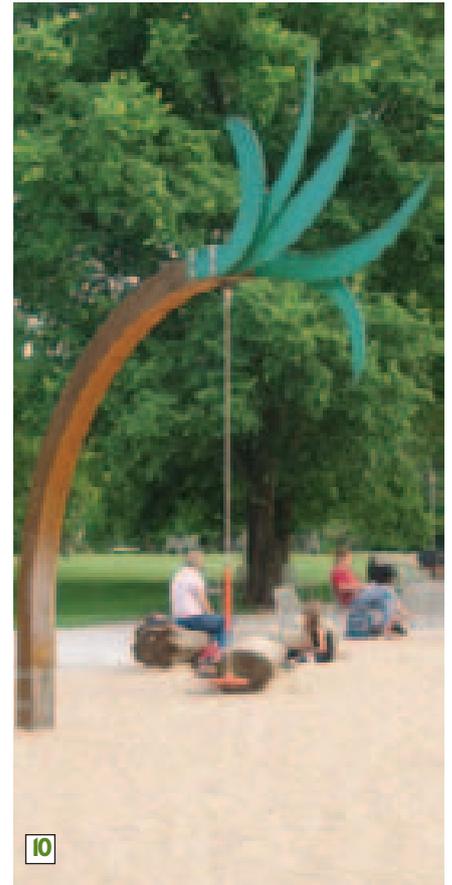
3 Close-up of net climber, Bewegung

4, 5, 6 Climbing wall at Galileo GS from various perspectives





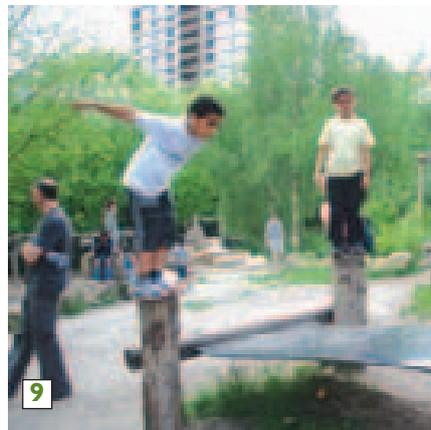
7



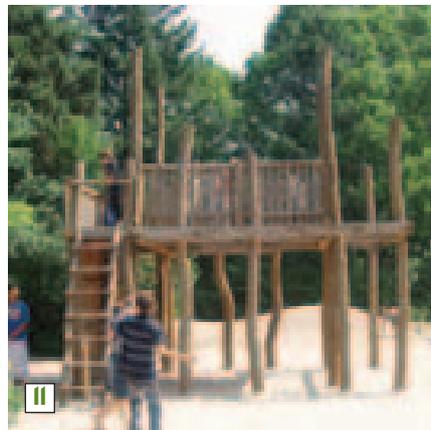
10



8



9



11



12

7 Climbing equipment at Grundschule an der Bäke

8, 9 The effective trampolines at Galileo GS contrast with (11) the trampoline at the top of a climbing frame at Schweizerhof GS. Nice idea, but not practicable.

10 palm-tree swing pole, Britzer Garden play area

12 Climbing sliding pyramid at Britzer Garden play area

What We Observed

Seating

Conventional benches were rare – we heard the view ‘benches don’t work’. There were many incidental sitting, perching and leaning places such as steps, rocks, boulders, low walls, logs. Specially constructed platforms worked well for sitting, lying and playing on. There were amphitheatres for large groups, and stone terraces incorporating seating

- 1, 2 Platform seating at Neumark GS
- 3 Stone and wood amphitheatre, Neumark GS
- 4, 5 Platform seating at Galileo GS
- 6 Stone amphitheatre, Galileo GS
- 7 Stone and grass terracing, Winterfeld Platz
- 8 Sitting on the climbing wall, Galileo GS
- 9 Log seating Fläming GS



What We Observed

Elements of school and nursery architecture

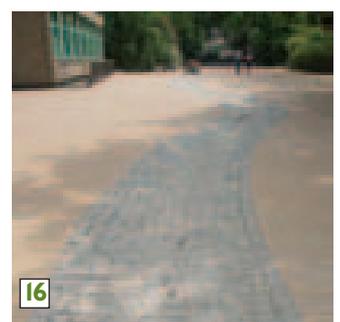
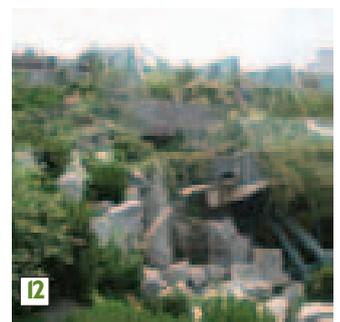
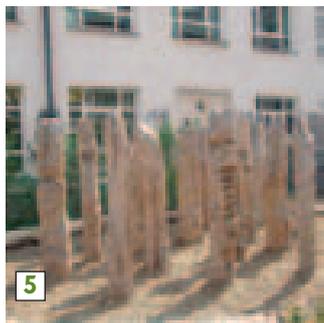
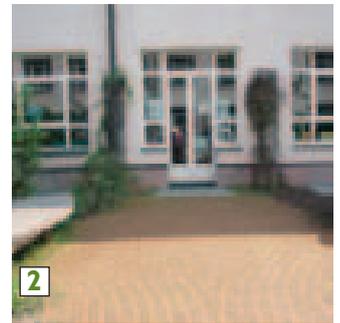
We saw examples of school and nursery architecture that integrated indoor and outdoor spaces in innovative and attractive ways and in some cases incorporated sustainable water drainage systems.

1 – 8 The 'street' of classrooms for younger children at Galileo GS, each with direct access to its own individual outdoor space

9 – 12 Originally a nursery, now an annexe linked by a bridge to Spreewald GS with glass roofs and extensive terraces and roof gardens

13 Easy inside/outside flow at Reinhardtswald GS

14, 15, 16 Water drainage system at Galileo GS (14,15) and Reinhardtswald GS (16) that takes water from roofs and through the grounds.



What We Observed

The involvement of people

The long - term involvement and commitment of adults to children's play and play space was striking. This occurred on a number of different levels – in the quality of the staffed play provision that we saw, in the way in which children contributed to features of the grounds, in the sustained interest and involvement over time of key adults, and in the evidence of the continuing practical commitment to thoughtful maintenance.

Adventure playground Kolle 37:

1, 2, 3 Examples of construction and construction materials

4 Fire site

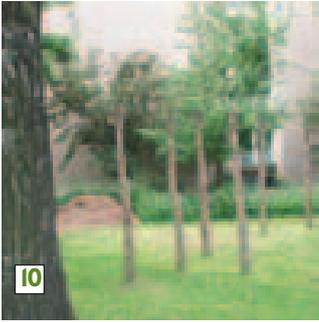
5 Firewood store

6 Outdoor oven

Makunaima in the Britzer Garden

7,8,9 Clay brick oven and clay construction play equipment.





10



11



12



13

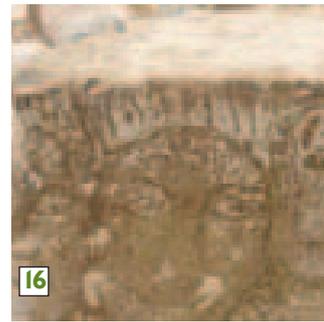
At Gartenarbeitsschule (10 - 13) children from local schools grow things, make things and generally use and develop the grounds.
 10 children's 'constructions'.
 11 Signs indicating school allotments
 12 Bee 'hotel'
 13 School plot vegetables
 14, 15 Children in their last year at Reinhardtswald GS contribute to a special 'sculpture garden'.
 16 Carved sandstone block at Neumark GS
 17 Ceramic wall at Neumark GS
 18 Ceramic sand wall at Winterfeld Platz
 19 Sculpted heads at Winterfeld Platz
 20 Coloured brick wall at Galileo GS
 21 Pillar prepared for children's ceramic inserts at Neumark GS



14



15



16



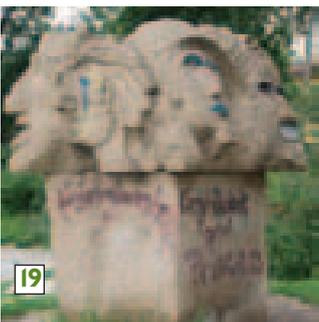
17



18



21



19



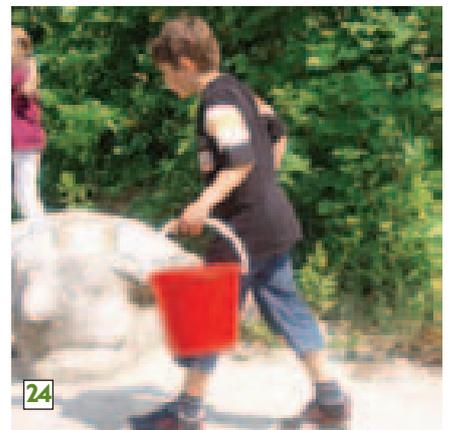
20



22



23



24

22, 23 Regular sweeping of grounds at Fläming GS
24 Children looking after grounds at Schweizerhof GS
25 Reseeding, Reinhardtswald GS
26 Plant maintenance, Fläming GS



25



26

And finally...

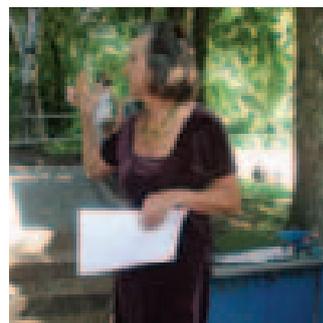
Often, children's play areas and school grounds in the UK look forlorn and uncared for. Even those that are not actually neglected can look cared for in a sterile and unchanging way. Underpinning the active and vibrant spaces that we saw was the extraordinary continuity and continuing interest and commitment of the people who'd been responsible for initiating these projects in the first place – often 10 or 15 years earlier. They included heads or deputy heads of schools, landscape architects, Grün macht Schule staff and project leaders. It is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of this longstanding involvement in keeping alive and developing and communicating the spirit and reality of the lovely places that we visited. Their generosity, warmth and knowledge inspired us all and gave our visit its substance. Some of them are pictured here.



Frode Svane
Grün macht Schule



Herr Raase
Head, GS an der Bäke



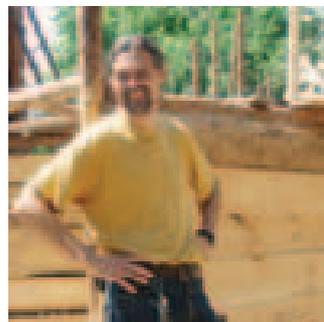
Barbara Hanke
Landscape architect,
GS an der Bäke



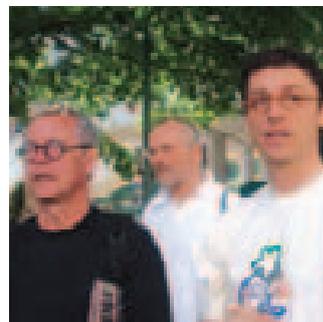
Hartmuth Meyer-Buck
Landscape architect,
Grün macht Schule



Ursua Muller
Manager, Freilandlabor Britz



Martyn Sorge
Director, Kolle 37



Frode Svane & Oliver Ginsberg
Grün macht Schule



Rainer Warzecha
Artist at Makunaima,
Britzer Garden



End-of-the-day hospitality at the Britzer Garden

Evaluation and Possible Next Steps

What did we think about it and what do we do next?

Our good intentions had been to have a debriefing meeting at the end of each day. As we were on the road by eight o'clock, and most days didn't end till eight, nine or ten o'clock, by which time we were only interested in food, drink and sleep, this was not possible. On the final day of the programme we had a fairly brief group discussion which was minuted, and after we got back National Park participants all returned paper evaluations. Evaluations were also received from Aileen Shackell (London-based landscape architect), Mike Hyatt (Scottish landscape architect) and Kevin Lafferty (Forestry Commission Scotland).

General views about the visit

The general feedback about the study visit and the group was extremely positive.

...the programme over the three days made the whole visit most enjoyable.

...the organisation throughout was excellent...The hotel was great too, as was the company: it was good to spend time with others trying to achieve the same goals.

I personally enjoyed everything about the visit. It was a well-balanced group with a variety of experiences...I felt that that the group really gelled together and from their different backgrounds gave a better all-round picture, so that we had a chance of looking at things from a different perspective.

...Frode organised a terrific programme and I'm sure that we all left Berlin as enthusiastic as he is about the programmes...The hotel was good and the staff very attentive.

I returned from the Berlin trip energised and full of hope for the future of this stupid mad society. There are still principled people out there with a vision of how it should be, especially for our young. I feel privileged to have been part of a super team. I enjoyed the mixed discipline element as much as the mixed nationalities.

... very well-organised trip...

I enjoyed meeting other participants and the mix of volunteers and professionals on the tour. I benefited from the wide variety of sites visited..., including play spaces, school grounds and parks. The information and insights given by the tour leaders and hosts at each site was really valuable. They were able to answer our questions and give us the low-down on the challenges and barriers they faced and how they managed to overcome them.



Observations on attitudes

Adults' attitudes to children and to play

No one was heard to say 'don't do that!' or 'come down!'

I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the teaching staff, telling us about and then showing us their playground projects. Their attitude was so positive. The question was asked 'Is it a problem that children are covered in sand or wet after playtime?' 'It is not a problem', was the reply.

We did not hear anyone, parent or teacher, telling the children 'don't'.

In all the schools we went into, the head teachers were really enthusiastic about the play facilities for the children; it was an integral part of education and the school day, not just a time when the teachers got a break.

...the overall impression was the attitude taken that play plays a big part in the educational process in German schools.

Attitudes to risk and danger

Danger elements are allowed in play, e.g., the climbing rocks, the jumping area in one particular school. Children learn of the dangers and manage them appropriately.

We were constantly told that there far fewer accidents in the natural play areas: by and large children do not attempt to do things until they feel ready to do so...children are capable of learning to deal with risk when confronted with the real world.

....another learning point to be adopted is to let children take risks instead of wrapping them up in cotton wool.

Parents and teachers have a good attitude to children's play; they are not protecting them from the supposed 'dangers', and it has been proved that there are fewer accidents when children are aware of the risks.

Children's attitudes and behaviour

We never saw any bad behaviour or fighting among the children, or any children being told off by teachers.

The children worked as teams to fulfil the ideas they were creating...We were told there was less bullying, the children are more independent and confident...

In terms of actual local projects that you're involved with at the moment, how has the visit affected your thinking and your plans?

All of the National Park participants currently involved in play area projects felt the impact of the study visit.

Drumkinnon Wood, Loch Lomond Shores

Small play zones are part of the project, and I will be telling and showing all involved in the project the photos taken during the trip with a view to incorporating more adventurous natural play elements. For once the area is not owned by the council, but SED, who I think will be more flexible (Jim Biddulph, Balloch and Haldane Community Council)

Lochgoilhead

Seeing so many excellent play areas and so many obviously happy and enthusiastic children was a real fillip and has rekindled my enthusiasm on the home front. Our subcommittee was thinking of downgrading our excellent plans (which fit exactly with the Grün macht Schule principles) after our application to the Big Lottery was refused, but they certainly won't be allowed to now! I foresee more form filling (Caroline Wilson, Lochgoil Community Trust)

Sandbank

Our trust has had plans from suppliers of play park equipment to select down to three in order that they bid for the contract to supply the equipment. I am having second thoughts about this after the visit and am considering putting a presentation together to see if I can change the minds not only of the trust but also of Argyll and Bute Council. (John Massey, Sandbank Community Development Trust)

Crianlarich

I think if we get permission to develop the Lower Station Yard then we will rethink the play facilities, but maintain the sports that are planned. We will have to take the parents, planners and Stirling Council with us to get some of the basic ideas approved because the fact that there are risks involved will need a change in direction in policy. (Moir Robertson, Strathfillan Community Development Trust and Community Council).

Graham's Point, Kilmun

This is a project in progress. Janette Valentine has resigned as chair of Kilmun Community Development Trust but is remaining involved with the Friends of Graham's Point.

Forestry Commission Scotland

The visit helped inform my thinking in terms of natural play development I have planned for central Scotland. It has given me a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the issues and highlighted the importance of choosing the right type of site for a natural play development. I am reconsidering the original venue I had in mind and will now try to locate the play space in a slightly different setting. This may be a partially wooded site adjacent to a primary school in a community setting.

What do you think are the main learning points regarding the National Park strategy for play space?

Reaffirmation of the value of what is being termed 'natural play'

... the visit highlighted that natural play is what the children want. For example, the water features proved that, provide water, rocks and sand, and the children use their own imagination as to what they want to do.

Natural is best; all the play areas had plenty of trees and some grass/shrub areas, and most of the equipment was constructed from wood, stone and other natural materials. Children do not need to be confronted with coloured metal and plastic to play on.

Equipment was made of natural products such as wood and stone.

Planting was also valued for the opportunities it gave for hiding and for a sense of privacy.

...there are areas where the children can 'hide', such as mazes and bushes.

An important aspect is to provide 'private' spaces where children can separate themselves from others.

Play areas as evolving spaces

A play area will continually evolve, so should never be seen as a finished product. Things will wear out and need replacing – maybe with something different.

Involving children

I think that proven designs in which children were part of the consultation are a basis to start from.

All the play areas we saw were planned with input from the local children.

Children were involved from the start, and ...were also involved in the construction.

Risk and danger (also see above)

Life is full of dangers. What better place to learn of danger by experience, watching others, listening to others, than in the playground?

Let children take risks instead of wrapping them up in cotton wool.

Children who are aware of risks suffer fewer accidents than those who play in areas with no risks. The type of equipment we saw teaches the children about risk.

General

The main learning points for the National Park Strategy in my opinion would be to adopt the design approach used in Balmaha and by Stirling Council to play spaces. This approach has been developed from best practice from Germany, Norway and other parts of Europe. The National Park Strategy can advocate this style of play space development and help to fund future developments in partnership with local communities and Environment Trusts.

What do you think would be the best way of communicating what we've experienced and learnt, both locally and in terms of the National Park as a whole?

... I feel that the most effective would be a road-show type of event going round communities and schools in and around the National Park. The road show could consist of presentations, games and events for children, to include some of the things we have experienced. If the children have fun with a certain amount of risk attached and parents see this, most of the battle will be won, as there will then be a larger group of people all demanding a change for the better.

...create a play park with all of these concepts as a pilot and invite councils and community groups along to see the benefits.

...a seminar with council directors, local councillors and MSPs.

Tackle the Scottish Executive and Westminster at the same time as lobbying the National Park councils on the specific topics of risk/danger and of the health benefits of play.

Presentation to policy-makers [who these were was not defined] followed by presentations to local councillors and MSPs.

resentations and reports to the National Park community councils and ACCs.

Message board/online forum attached to the National Park website.

Annual Natural Play conference/seminar in the National Park, including site visits.

Develop link with Edinburgh Art College landscape course to introduce a 'play space design module' and offer students the chance to work on real sites. Not enough work in landscape courses on play...we need to indoctrinate students before they are 'got at' by play equipment suppliers.

A short summary report showcasing best practice and how to adopt this style of design (a beginner's guide). Supported by pictures demonstrating key features and examples of successful play space in Stirling and Balmaha.

Feedback at national conferences and local events would also be beneficial.

School grounds

The fact that so many of the sites we visited were school grounds set some people thinking about the potential for school grounds within the National Park area, both as resources for children while they were at school, and also for general community use.

Fintry, Buchlyvie and Buchanan primary schools were all noted as schools where parents had already expressed an interest in this kind of development.

I am really keen to have some kind of presentation format for the things we heard and saw, and I would like to try to present it to a cluster meeting in the autumn. [Cluster meetings are periodic meetings of all the school heads within a particular area.]

SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS . . .

- Devise individual effective support for each of the local projects named (Drumkinnon Wood, Lochgoilhead, Sandbank, Crianlarich, Graham's Point).
- Presentations and reports to National Park community councils and ACCs
- Presentations/seminars for invited audiences, e.g., local authority chief executives, directors and heads of services; MSPs; local councillors
- Annual Natural Play conference/seminar in the National Park, including site visits
- How to do it guide with examples of best practice, including local as well as European examples
- Road show to tour National Park communities
- Message board/online forum attached to National Park website
- Link with Edinburgh Art College landscape course to introduce a 'play space design' module.
- Introduce ideas to National Park schools initially via presentation to heads' cluster group meeting in autumn 2007.

At our group debriefing there had been quite a lot of discussion about how these ideas could and should be taken to the national level (see appendix), with the Scottish Parliament, Forestry Commission Scotland, Play Scotland and the NHS all mentioned as relevant bodies.

Appendix I

Participants

BERLIN PLAY SPACE STUDY TOUR

5–9 June 2007

Organiser and Guides

Frode Svane	Study tour organiser, Grün macht Schule
Hartmuth Meyer-Back	
Oliver Ginsberg	
Georg Coenen	
Ortrud Kuhl	

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Participants

Jim Biddulph	Balloch and Haldane Community Council
Hannah Dinneen	Sustainable Development Officer, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority
Sue Gutteridge	Play Services Manager, Stirling Council
John Massey	Sandbank Community Development Trust
Karen Merrick	Buchanan Community Partnership
Caroline Richmond	Lochgoil Community Trust
Moira Robertson	Strathfillan Community Development Trust and Community Council
Janette Valentine	Kilmun Community Development Trust

Other Participants

Mike Hyatt	Landscape Architect, Mike Hyatt Landscape Architects
Kevin Lafferty	Central Scotland Health Advisor, Forestry Commission Scotland
Nicole Collomb	Senior Enabling Officer, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment Space, London
Lisa Davis	Policy Officer, Play England
Aileen Shackell	Landscape Architect Land Use Consultants, London

Appendix 2.1

Evaluation Requests

NATIONAL PARK PARTICIPANTS

Berlin Play Space Study Tour

5 – 9 June 2007

Evaluation and reflections

Name

Please could you write a few points/paragraphs covering the following topics.

- What did you enjoy about the visit?
- What did you not enjoy about the visit?
- In terms of actual local projects that you're involved with at the moment, how has the visit affected your thinking and your plans ?
- What do you think are the main learning points from the visit regarding the National Park strategy for play space ?
- What do you think would be the best ways of communicating what we've experienced and learnt, both locally and in terms of the National Park area as a whole?
- Please feel free to make any other comments and observations

Appendix 2.2

Evaluation Requests

ENGLISH PARTICIPANTS

Berlin Play Space Study Tour
5 – 9 June 2007
Evaluation and reflections

Dear Nicole, Lisa and Aileen,

I hope you enjoyed the Berlin visit and felt that it was a worthwhile experience. If you have the time and inclination it would be really valuable to have feedback from you on :

- **What you felt you got out of the visit.**
- **How you think you might want to apply what you've learned to your own work.**
- **Whether you have ideas about effective ways in which to continue to develop ideas and disseminate our experiences to others.**
- **Any general comments .**

Look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Sue Gutteridge

playⁱⁿ the park

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, National Park Headquarters, The Old Station, Balloch, Scotland G83 8BF
Tel: +44(0)1389 722600 Fax: +44(0)1389 722633 E-mail: info@lochlomond-trossachs.org Web: www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Designed and produced by the Communications Unit