



# TECHNICAL MISSION TO GERMANY

A child-friendly city  
is good for everyone

2019

# FRANKFURT, GREISHEIM, COLOGNE AND FREIBURG

June 30<sup>th</sup> to  
July 6<sup>th</sup> 2019

## CHILDREN AND NATURE TECHNICAL MISSION TO GERMANY

Initiative



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# INTRODUCTION

The Children and Nature program aims to promote child-nature connection, as a means of innovative socio-environmental technology, for the well-being of childhood and for the planet's health. To this end, we have drawn up strategies in which different areas, such as health, education, environment and cities, can act with the purpose of provide a better life quality for children and greater access to natural spaces, investing in the construction of greener and child-friendly cities.

The Technical Mission is a study trip specially designed for public managers and professionals committed to improve the quality of children's lives in the cities. In its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition ([click here and know the first one](#)) it gathered a delegation with different social and political actors to visit Freiburg and Griesheim, Germany. For a few days, the participants had the opportunity to explore the public spaces in these cities, engage with children experiences, talk to experts and share impressions within the group about sustainability and child-friendly policies.

The Technical Mission is an experiential training trip which has the purpose of enabling individual learning through situations that demonstrate the achievements implemented by cities in order to improve children life. The idea is that the participants experience the city with the "children's eyes". We invest in training social actors so that they can **contribute to the formulation of public policies that may enhance greener cities and child-friendly initiatives in Brazil, through actions that ensure the presence of the child in the public space and its access to urban nature.**



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical Mission organized by the Children and Nature program of Alana Institute took place in Griesheim and Freiburg, Germany, between June 30 and July 6, 2019. The program provided contact with places, institutions and initiatives that act in favor of children's relationship with nature in the city. The program was developed with the goal to provide scenarios that would allow participants to perceive how urban planning can help to restore and expose nature, so that all children may have attractive, accessible, public and nature-rich places to play and live in their daily life.

Learn more about this experience in the report below:



# GRIESHEIM - THE PLAYFUL CITY



Our Technical Mission started with a visit to the city of [Griesheim](#) to find out closely what makes this city known in the world as the "Playful City".



Professor [Bernhard Meyer](#), the man behind the playful paths initiative, took us to visit the facilities located in the city's streets.



The school paths of the friendly city of Griesheim, with about 28,000 inhabitants, were born from the mapping of home-school chalk paths made by the students of the municipality. The observation and identification of the crossing points gave the north to the creation of the “**path play buddies**”, playful structures arranged every 300m, approximately. The distance between structures was based on research that shown how to meet children’s demand for stimuli along a walking path.

The name “path play buddies” came from the idea that these are not mere toys, but a constituent part of home-to-school routes, making them attractive for children to want to walk and spend more time outdoors. They are a strategy to encourage active mobility, help regulate traffic and make up what Prof. Meyer calls a “playful city”.

The playful city can be considered a grown up project designed from the children’s point of view. It shifts perspectives, considering the specific view of boys and girls in urban planning, including elements that benefit and attract children as a magnet.

The project drew the participants attention because it was relatively simple to replicate and did not involve a high cost. Measures such as: painting the street where a dangerous intersection is located, drawing the attention of drivers and children; the creation of a character (Griesheim doll) painted on the sidewalks to signal places of crossing; and the use of natural materials, are attractive ways to include the child in the city space, offering greater safety in the road network, in a playful way and appropriate to how children relate to the world.



The measures have contributed to road safety and to enabling children free roam. Since its beginning in 2007, there have not been traffic accidents involving children. The playful paths show the existence of children circulating in the area and therefore warns drivers that they need to be more careful when driving. The alert is revealed in the traffic signalling and in about 70 other elements that the make up the project.



In the city's playful paths, other objects for the elderly were also installed, such as places to lean and sit, making Griesheim, besides a playful city, a "seated city", as Prof. Meyer



**New perspectives  
for a playful city**

[Click here](#)

called it. The city is looking for solutions for the elderly to move around and take the necessary rest breaks along the way.

# REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING INITIATIVES AND INSTRUMENTS FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY URBAN DESIGN AND MOBILITY

The group traveled to [Cologne](#), which is approximately 1:30 by train from Frankfurt. Cologne was chosen as a meeting point between the group and the organizations that volunteered to present their work. There, we had three presentations: Peter Apel from Stadtkinder (based in Dortmund), Doris Bäumer (ZM-NRW) from State Campaign and Henning about school paths (VRS).

The Stadtkinder has been working for 30 years with practices, methodology development, research and child participation in German states. One of the objectives of this agency is to provide the right of child participation in municipal planning.

## Stadtkinderbüro

**“Creating spaces for life” is the motto of the Stadtkinderbüro (which means “Children’s City”), a pioneer in the 1990s and now a reference throughout Germany for child-friendly urban planning. And who takes it seriously, of course, don’t work only in front a computer. The team develops and applies participative processes as a technical component of spatial planning, which eventually leads to the creation of unique and innovative concepts. In addition, they were responsible for developing the “Play Master Plan”, which is both a process and an instrument of municipal planning oriented to the needs and perspectives of children and adolescents.**

More information (in German), [click here](#).

Peter Apel, the director of the Stadtkinder, pointed out that we often create **"islands for children"**, as a result of dramatic growth in city traffic. How can children be provided with areas that are not specifically designed for play? By limiting children's play to playgrounds and school grounds alone, we are telling them: you can play here, and not in the rest of the city.



Children are not only in school or playgrounds, they must occupy the city free spaces, such as streets, neighborhood parks, bus stops. The possibility of playing in urban public space is a fundamental step for children healthy development. Play and roam in a large territory, independent and free from parents and educators, influence children's concept and perception of

community, self-confidence and the ability to recognize true danger and beauty. The Play Master Plan seeks to map and connect playable areas of the city.

In order to map these paths and connect areas and play equipment it is necessary to **listen to what children say and express.** "What do children do in cities?" is an important question that must be answered by them. Peter indicates how he has been working: "First of all the children show us which spaces they choose to play in. Children take what they need, they don't just play with ready-made toys. For example, they go to a sculpture and explore how to play with it."

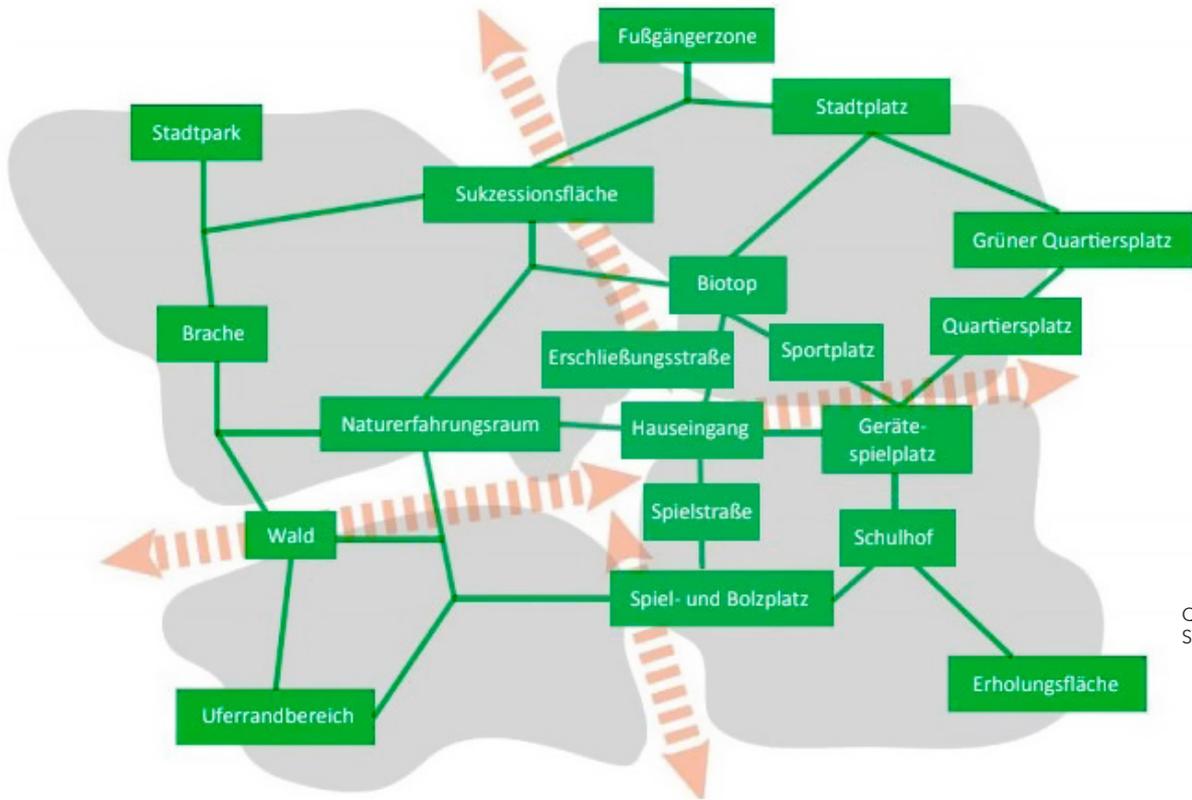




Another point made was about free movement. Children walk differently than adults. They balance themselves, they use all their potential motor skills. Natural stones are used, for example, so that children are able to explore paths in another way. And how children deal with natural spaces? They need these areas to climb and move. Children pass more time playing in cities paths and sidewalks than in parks and

designated play areas. This is the rationale behind a play master plan.

It's important to understand how children use the city. When the children show us their city, we can see serious mobility problems that are a stress factor for them and also for the elderly. Research has shown that an attractive place for a child to play is a place that encourage he or she to spend two hours away from home playing.



## Mobility Network for the Future, with the participation of Doris Baumer, coordinator of the campaign “More Free Space for Children in the City”.

The network is an advisory initiative of the municipalities of five German states and is supported by the Ministry of Transport. There are 169 municipalities participating in the Mobility Network for the Future, which is an action of sustainable development of urban transport. It is very common to realize that the city recognizes that it needs to change the model, but has difficulty changing the system. See the network proposed model in this [video](#).

One of the network’s concrete measures was the campaign “[More free space for children, more space for all](#)”, which engaged the municipality not only punctually, but also to work systematically on the urban road and street network with a focus on school routes, to build foundations for safer

and more autonomous mobility, and to take improvement measures to make these networks more walkable.

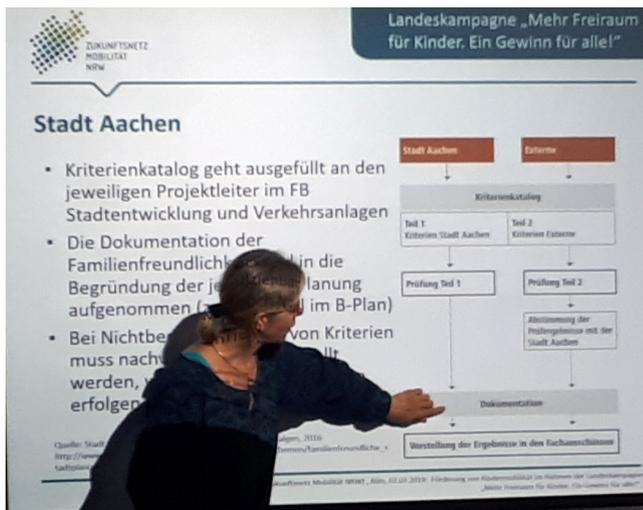
### ASPECTS TO GUIDE AND EVALUATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS:

- Safety
- Social interaction
- Usability/ functionality
- Experience richness
- Flexibility (ability to change)
- Participation
- Independent mobility

The guidelines may be incorporated into the construction and renovation code, and the approved plans may be enforced. The result is a Participative Mobility Plan.

The focus on childhood, in the context of this campaign, came mainly from the school paths and the analysis of the traffic during entrance and dismissal. The increase in vehicles traffic over the last thirty years has turned these hours into a mess in front of the schools. That’s due what has been called the “parent-taxis.”

The campaign related to school routes had the following goals:



- Foster children's mobility and safe autonomy
- Greater movement
- Health
- Social competence in transport
- Children as role models of good practices, influencing parents, teachers and young people

## Campaign more free spaces for children, a win for all - box

[Click here](#) to read the full report

The mobility of school paths is articulated with play spaces and urban planning should include them (municipal administration + secretariats + press + residents + schools + security + works + associations + politicians).

### MOBILITY FOR THE FUTURE

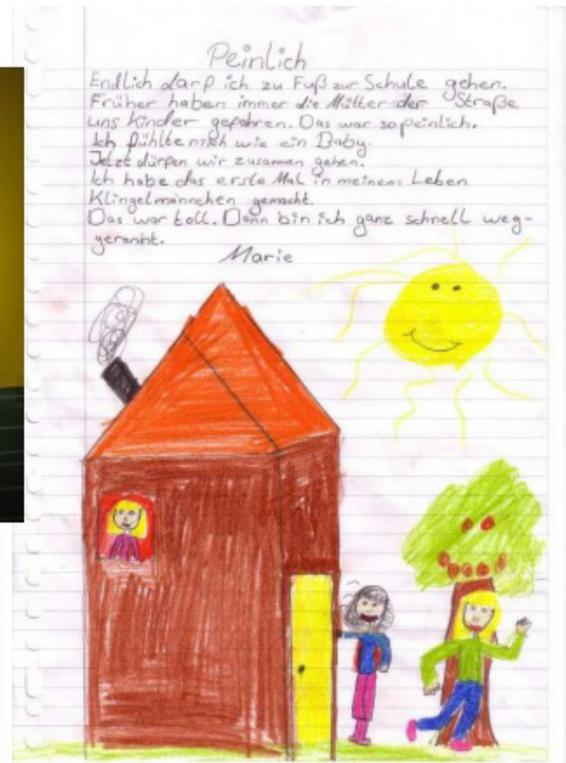
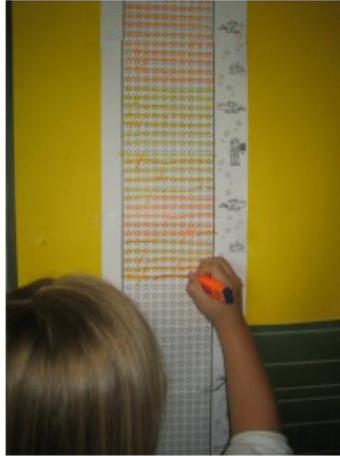
A legal decision encouraged the education secretariat of several municipalities **to adopt mobility as a study topic in all schools - mobility for the future**. The schools provided education about mobility in order to contribute to sustainability.

#### Actions at schools:

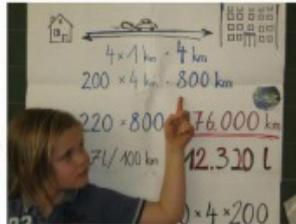
- Mobility for the future day
- Teacher training
- Materials for children at Elementary School
- Material for parents
- "Buses on foot"
- Fun (the pleasure of walking instead of parent-taxi)

[Click here](#) to see a video about the solutions implemented.

# Verkehrszähler



Wir haben ungefähr  
 200 Tage im Jahr Schule.  
 4 km x 200 Schultage = 800 km.  
 Um ein einziges Kind  
 in die Schule zu bringen, 800 km!  
 Was dabei aus dem Auspuff kommt!!



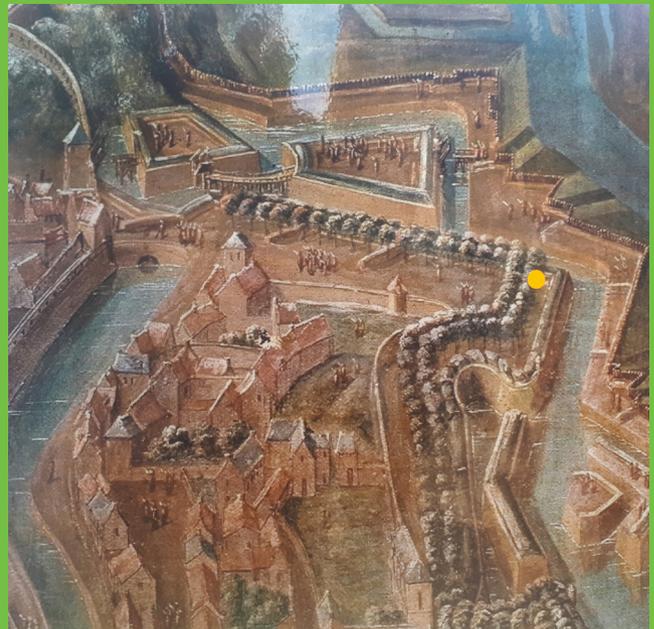
# INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN

The first appointment in [Freiburg](#) was a visit to the construction site of a park for children, with the presence of Christina Buchmann, representative of the Department of Construction and Gardens of Freiburg. Focusing on the sustainable development of free spaces in the city, and covering intergenerational aspects, this visit provided a broad look at the decision-making processes and social participation in municipal policy for these areas.

According to Buchmann, in Middle Age, the city had fortresses that surrounded it and controlled its access. The area visited has historical value, close to ruins of one of the portals of the city, and therefore is protected. This region, composed of paths full of stairs and inaccessible rocks, was becoming vulnerable and lack social control.

Currently, the city has 150 public squares that are taken care by the construction department, whose staff includes architects and landscapers (with an opening for a teacher), to ensure the presence and

maintenance of green areas in the face of increased demand for housing.



## **Design of play equipment and furniture in public squares:**

- They all use natural materials but also invest in the construction of specific



play structures for each public square. There is a focus on provide a diversity of play possibilities in the region. If in a nearby square there is some kind of play structure, they seek to provide a different one, so that the child experiences a variety of play possibilities.

- Although they prioritize the use of natural materials in the design of play structures and furniture, they consider that it is not enough just to use wood, sand and water. They seek to encourage the needs of the child's body, offering challenges to its development. They consider that the greater the risk involved, the greater the self regulation the child experience when playing.
- They are cautious during the process of listening to children, because they often only ask for what they already know. They seek opportunities for innovation

in the design of play spaces using the inputs from this listening process.

- They do not consider trees as play structures. There's no restriction for tree climbing, but they don't encourage it either. They argue that if trees were to be considered play structures, it would be necessary to make a protective ground around them.
- They also carry out design of play spaces on school playgrounds.
- There is a concern to provide free spaces and natural areas for unstructured play without proposals of activities, games or sports.

## MOBILITY IN FREIBURG

Another aspect studied by the group was the characteristics that make Freiburg a more child-friendly city. The study included an exploratory walk with the company Aiforia through Freiburg downtown and [Vauban](#) neighborhood, recognized worldwide as a model of a sustainable and child-friendly housing district. Andreas, who accompanied us, emphasized that in order to **think of a city it is necessary to think about families experiences**. It is necessary to think about families routines in order to favor independent mobility and the journeys of children and adults to school and work. **Being able to go to school alone can be a timewise support for parents and also an indicator of a child-**



### **friendly city. The child-friendly city is a city friendly for everyone.**

Another important factor in the city's core planning was **the ban of shopping malls, as a strategy to activate local or central commerce**. The development of local commerce in neighborhoods enhance children's access and autonomy.

### **VAUBAN - THE MODEL HOUSING DISTRICT**

The district is located in a region where there was an old French base, established during the Second World War. After the war ended and especially after the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, the former French soldiers left the area. Soon the empty houses began to be occupied, as people took advantage of the established

structure, and there was a mobilization for the construction of a new neighborhood in the area of 41 hectares, planned based on a sustainable housing project.

There are currently about 5,500 people living in this area. There is a high population density, so the occupation is very compact. There is no parking spaces inside the houses and no places to park cars in the neighborhood internal streets. Only places for loading and unloading. There is a parking lot that concentrates the vehicles of people who choose to have a car, but the space is bought separately and the cost is quite significant. This measure had the effect of reducing the number of families with cars. The neighborhood has 18 vehicles per 100 inhabitants, while the average in Germany is 65 vehicles per 100 inhabitants.

The houses open its front doors to the streets and to internal courtyards (green inner gardens), with sustainable construction from wood and cement. Already in the late 1990s the neighborhood invested in mechanisms of low energy use (passive), avoiding the use of oil and play structures made of plastic and synthetic materials. There is a construction system designed to retain human heat, using thick walls with large windows facing north and small windows facing south. **The internal speed limit for cars is 7 km/ hour, which corresponds to the human walking speed.**

There are natural areas designated to gardening and others to be shared, where the natural play spaces are located, interwoven with internal streets signed as shared streets for

children and bicycles. **Green areas are planned in a collective and personalized way, and their uniqueness facilitates children's freedom because they are easier to identify. In Vauban, children have access to housing, commerce and natural play areas.**

These are some of the features that allow families to enjoy the neighborhood. We saw an intense bike traffic and many children walking freely between public spaces and natural areas of Vauban.



At neighborhood far end there is a clean river with its original forest preserved, where there is a patch of rural area, with adventure play sites, stalls for horses and an urban agriculture project that promotes the socio-environmental integration of refugees.

After our walk through Vauban district we went to a meeting with the founders of **Zusammen Gärtern - a project of intercultural integration through gardening.**

Zusammen Gärtern works with refugees who went to Germany because of the war in Syria. The garden is open to everyone who wants to participate. The site has no walls



and was designed by the land owner, who gave access to the space for anyone wishing to help and enjoy. In addition to the vegetable gardens, there are different activities going on, such as lunches, dinners, bonfires and several educational projects. People can contribute to the site with voluntary donations or working time in the gardens.

There is a great diversity of human coexistence, both intergenerational (young children to elderly) and ethnic and racial origins. Approximately 16 languages are spoken in the space, which staff provides small trai-

ning about equipment handling, conscious use of water, management of ecological pests, seed knowledge, handmade cosmetics, growing of potatoes, among others.

A project related to potatoes growing earned an award of the most successful initiative designed to promote integration. Another reported project, developed by another association for the benefit of refugee women, consists of teaching them how to ride a bicycle, from a perspective of immigrant empowerment. Being able to ride a bicycle means accessing autonomy and freedom.

# PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN URBAN DESIGN & RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ON CHILDREN'S SPACES IN THE CITY

## Social Participation of Children

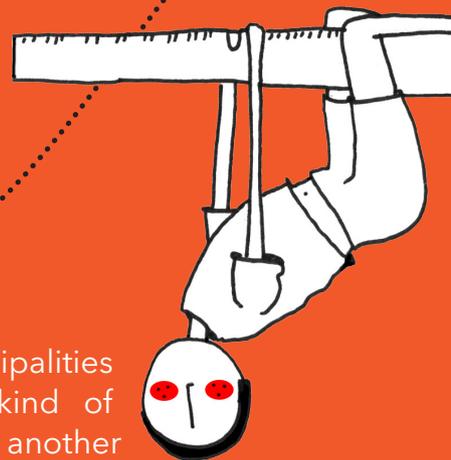
Angelina Barth, a policy and youth expert and representative of the State Central for Policy Training, introduced us to the approaches and methods for children and youth participation in city design.

Angelina has been working for 19 years with political training and has specialized in youth participation and children's councils. Of the 1,101 municipalities in the state, only 85 had these councils. In 2002, in order to understand how the municipalities that do not have this instance do to promote youth participation, Angelina conducted a survey through an online questionnaire. A total of 350 questionnaires were answered and returned, out of a total of 1,101 sent. In 2015, the year in which the state parliament passed

a law requiring municipalities to promote some kind of youth participation, another survey was conducted and the result was similar.

In the year 2018, three years after the law, they carried out - with more resources - another survey to verify if the law had changed reality. This time, 414 responded and 701 municipalities received calls from researchers. They concluded that the law has boosted youth and children participation in all sectors, as an expression of their place in society and in decision-making.

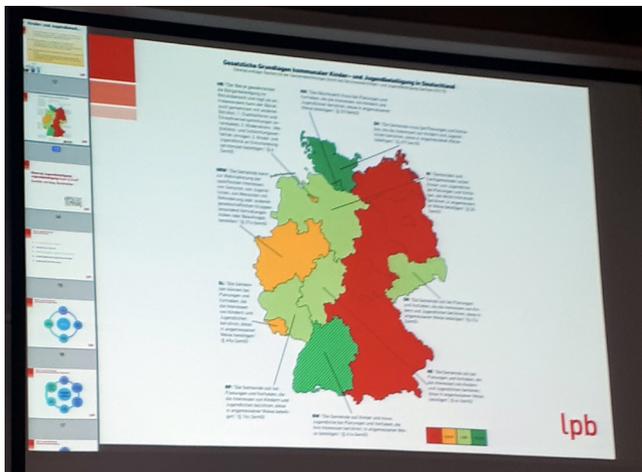
The law obliges all municipalities to establish a Youth Parliament. However, it is unevenly



implemented by German municipalities and states. Different degrees of rights and duties in relation to this parliament can be found. In some places the existence of a youth parliament is not mandatory. In others, the state has a duty to create a parliament where child or youth can participate; in others, young people have to participate, but children's participation is optional (they can participate if they want to).

participation only carry through with children up to 11 years old. The general perception is that some municipalities are concerned about the topic, some do not know how to do it (they do not have the expertise) and many municipalities have the perception that it is not necessary to promote this kind of participation.

Angelina points out that the most important thing is that children and adolescents participate truthfully.



- Youth parliament not mandatory or do not exist
- May participate (optional)
- MUST offer, recommendation for participation

It is important to mention that large cities have more staff, more knowledge, more resources and are able to implement youth and children participation in urban matters. And that 23% of the municipalities that have initiatives of youth

## QUALITY OF CITIES SPACES AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Researcher Ellen Weaver shared with us the comparative studies she has done in places in Europe about quality aspects of spaces for children. The question that guide her research is "What makes a place/space good for children?". The mainly motivation for her research is freedom. It was inspired by childhood researcher Baldo Blinkert, a pioneer in studies about children in the city, who investigated their range of roam through research. He identified the following attributes as of good places/spaces for children:

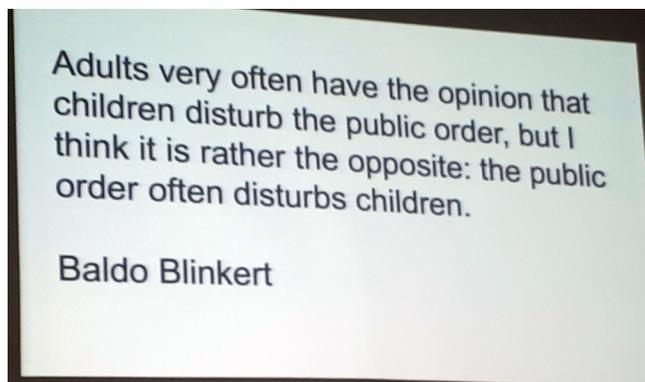
- Relatively hazard-free (but with beneficial risks to children's development)
- With access and freedom (spaces that children can go alone and independently)
- Possibility of peer encounters

A system was developed to evaluate the quality of an area for children, which involves a certain radius around the home, and which includes several aspects to be evaluated.

He argues that conventional parks are monotonous, and pointed that city traffic is a major challenge. A public square or garden can only be considered good when everyone can enjoy it, and intergenerational coexistence is a very important characteristic.

Another reference used by the researcher is [Mariana Brussoni](#), a public health specialist who study risk in childhood. She argues that autonomy is an essential aspect of childhood development. Her research involves collecting parents data of children between 5 and 9 years old, and monitoring children's movements during three days, focusing in what are the places and spaces they can go. The questions that guide the survey are:

- a. how autonomous are the children?
- b. how long do they play without supervision outside the home?



## BAGAGE: WORKSHOP OF EDUCATIONAL IDEAS



The Bagage Association is a multidisciplinary office specialized in creating play spaces. It has existed for 28 years and believes that education helps to enhance society.

### **They implement play structures in public parks, gardens and educational institutions based on the following principles:**

- Building close to nature
- Use local materials
- Bringing different generations together
- Education as an individual's real chance
- Non-standard structures, customized for each area
- Risk x benefit balance approach
- It's not just an aesthetic work, autonomy is the main goal
- Specific naming of each piece
- Verbs for thinking about equipment: climbing, sliding, crossing, feeling/overcoming fears



- Use of natural materials: wood and stones from forest management
- Use of resources and natural elements of local topography
- Insect protection as a mean of having more flowers
- Planting of fruit trees
- Gardens
- Spaces for encounters and get togethers as kitchens
- Children's participation (in planning and construction)

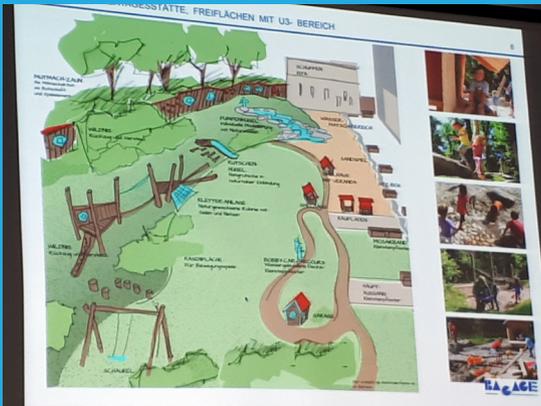
The choice of materials takes into account quality, integrating arts and crafts into the work and the possibility of sculpting.

For them it is important to have a certain "wild play", a space where children can experience challenge and discovery. They prefer to call what they do "creating natural play landscapes", respecting and interacting with each place history, always considering that "the regulations cannot prevent children from developing".

# PLAYING SPACES AND LANDSCAPES



Our technical mission ended a “playful” experience. The group experienced with its own body a public park with playing elements for children. This park was designed by Bagage and was built in an ancient Roman occupation. Therefore, the play landscape was inspired in its elements and traditions. We had the chance to see the concepts presented the day before in practice and, thus, we were able to sense how all play elements were truly integrated into the space.



Iniciativa



Realização

