Discovering Spaces for Play in Schools. Exploring the Role of Play in Primary School Education

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Abstract

This article examines how play influences educational processes in primary school students. Conventional playful learning concepts often distort the phenomenological essence of play in an effort to enhance children's learning outcomes. The primary focus of this paper is to argue that genuine play occurs when children are not constrained by external objectives, and instead engage in activities that emerge organically. This article presents critical theoretical perspectives that address the institutional forces at work within schools, which prioritize structured learning environments over spaces that are conducive to playful self-development. The role of an artist-in-residence-programme is emphasized because it is characterized by an open structure for exploring the school environment and the analysis outlines how this framework promotes learning objectives that encourage students to engage with and reflect upon their lived experiences rather than reflecting their learning achievements of the school curriculum.

1. Playing at School: Two Different Approaches

The concept of play is a multifaceted and significant topic, and has been an integral aspect of human experience across cultures and throughout history. This raises several pertinent questions: Where should the exploration of play begin? To what extent should its complexity be elaborated? Further, how can the educational environment be conceptualized as a playful space that is not limited to a playground during breaks? At the same time, the abundance of

Part of
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potential avenues for explorations can be overwhelming, leading to what Simone Kosica describes as a "surplus of possibilities" (Kosica, 2020, p. 107) in the context of school space experiences.

This observation raises a critical question about the role of educational institutions: What opportunities exist for schools to redefine themselves as spaces conducive to play? To address these questions, I will present an examination of the concept of play with the aim of analyzing the educational framework through this theoretical lens. Before dealing with children's play and its theoretical classifications, however, I will give two examples to briefly outline the spectrum of thought processes to be examined: 1) experimental artistic interventions and 2) educational games in the conventional sense.

1.1 An Artist-In-Residence-Programme: "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard"[1]

In recent research on artists' programmes in German schools, as reported in *Cultural Education Programmes*[2], a great emphasis is placed on the educational transfer that arises when artists work in schools with students (Rittelmeyer, 2017). They do so, both as artists and as teachers, crossing professional boundaries and representing a *double profile* (see also Ludwig & Ittner, 2019)[3] in the process. As Berner (2020) points out, arts education is also becoming increasingly important for educational issues: Arts education is being taken up more strongly again in the current education debate and is considered relevant for learning in the twenty-first century (p. 21). Artistic approaches are typically associated with playful experiences, that emphasize exploration

1 The title "Embodied experience in the schoolyard" alludes to the original title of the work of artist Willi Dorner, "Bodies in Urban Spaces". However, I am paraphrasing the title of the artist-in residence-programme described here, which originally was "Bodies in the Schoolyard" (Berner, 2020, p. 67). I feel that "Embodied experience in the schoolyard" is unambigious and clearly points to the core practice that the project initiated: experiencing the school with the body.

2 Cultural Education has been promoted not only by the Mercator Foundation in Germany but also by all 16 German federal states. Since 2022 the foundation has successfully completed its project. Schools having participated in the programme are adopting arts programmes such as the artist-in-residence-programme discussed here. (https://www.stiftung-mercator.de/content/uploads/2020/12/Stiftung_Mercator_Kulturelle_Bildung_2020.pdf

3 In a 2016 survey on the economic and social situation of visual artists the importance of the income field of artistic teaching was emphasized. Almost half of the visual artists of the representative survey were teaching in 2015. (Jebe, 2019, p. 67).

and creativity rather than adherence to a conventional pedagogical framework. This perspective invites a reconceptualization of schools as environments where the institutional objective of acquiring knowledge in specific subjects can coexist with opportunities for engagement through playful strategies. In this context, learning and personal development can occur concurrently, fostering an integrative approach to education that values both structured learning and experiential discovery.

The following section focuses on a collaborative cultural education project which was run by MUTIK gGmbH in partnership with Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences and the University of Education at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland. The project, funded by the Mercator Foundation[4], was implemented from 2016 to 2019 as an artist-in-residence programme, in which artists spent a year working in primary school having their own arts space. The programme aimed to integrate artistic practices into primary education, fostering creativity and enhancing students' spatial awareness and body consciousness (Berner, 2020, pp. 21–51).

The project "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard" began with minimal preliminary explanation rather than departing from its focus on experiential learning. Participating students were introduced to a short film showing a performance by Willi Dorner, which provided a conceptual framework for the subsequent activities. Willi Dorner, an Austrian artist, performer and activist, developed the performance series "Bodies in Urban Spaces", which has been staged in various cities worldwide. In these performances, local youth positioned their bodies in spaces that are not normally noticed by passersby, such as areas between columns of buildings or traffic signs and walls. In this way, public spaces were transformed for both the participating youth and the incidental observers. These performances prompted a re-evaluation of how individuals perceive otherwise overlooked spaces. Aesthetically, public space was both appropriated and simultaneously revealed in its unique aesthetic characteristics.

4 Over the past two decades, the Mercator Foundation has played an important role in the nationwide implementation of cultural education in schools throughout Germany. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has provided substantial funding for projects over the past ten years. Also see https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/kulturelle-bildung/kulturelle-bildung_node.html

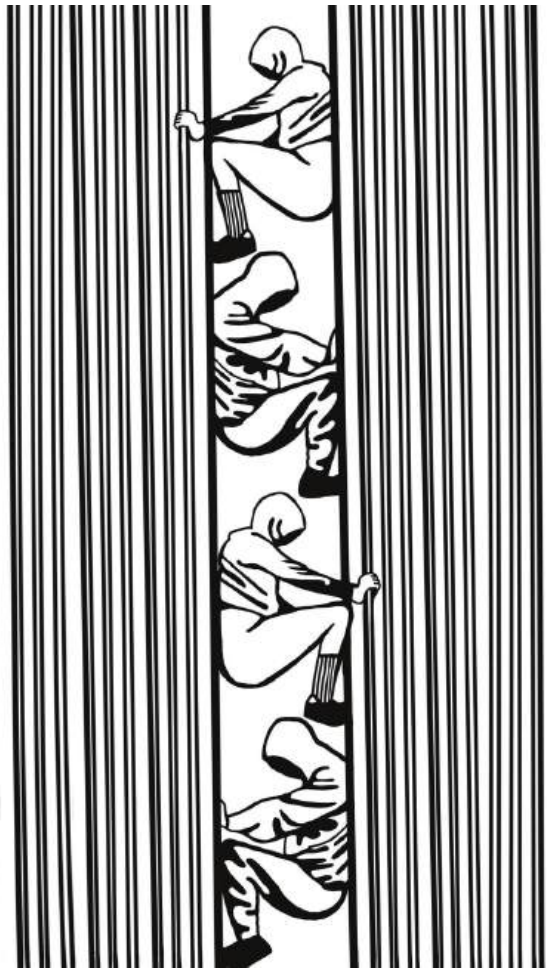

Figure 1 – Sketch of a video still “Bodies in Urban Spaces” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxwXNLQW3ds. Copyright 2025 by Anna-May Lohfeld.

In the school-project, students were encouraged to follow the artists example: after a brief safety orientation, students were devided into small groups of three to four individuals and given tasks to explore their school environment from a new perspective. After a twenty-minute exploration phase, the groups met for a joint journey of discovery, documenting their artistic exploration of the school using GoPro cameras and other recording devices. In the process,

the students experienced their school in a different way through play. They focused on aesthetic perceptions and assessments of whether or not their bodies fitted into unfamiliar spaces, and how to integrate bodies into certain undefined, previously unperceived spaces and interstitial areas.

Figure 2 – Sketch of a printed photo in Berner (2020, p. 68). Copyright 2025 by Anna-May Lohfeld.

The lead artist in the project, Theresa Herzog, said in a post-project interview: "There was a lot of laughter, but also a great deal of focused work. And

what definitely happened was that the students walked around their own school with a completely different view and body awareness" (cited in Berner, 2020, p. 68). Moreover, the observations revealed notable changes in the students' perceptions of their educational environment, marked by increased body awareness and a shift in perspectives. The students' interactions with their educational space were transformed by playing within it, using artistic strategies under the guidance of an artist. Ultimately, the "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard" project exemplified the potential of integrating artistic practices within primary education to enhance students' cognitive and sensory experiences. The findings based on the accompanying research of the artis-in-residence-program (including qualitative content analysis of interviews and questionnaires) suggest that such initiatives can foster a deeper understanding of one's environment and promote creative expression among young learners. (Berner, 2020, p. 231 ff.)

Willi Dorner commented on his work as follows: "I invite people to rediscover their city through this work, to see it again, to take time to look at the city again and to analyze it for themselves" (Dorner in DW Deutsch, sec. 0:26–0:36)

1.2 Learning Through Play – "I Spy With my Little Eye"

A significantly different scenario emerges when teachers engage students in interactive games designed to promote the acquisition of specific academic skills, such as numeracy, literacy, or, as exemplified in the following instance, vocabulary extension. In an observational study conducted in 2019 by a student as part of a research project on disciplinary strategies in primary education, a group of second-grade students (ages 7–8) participated in the game "I Spy With My Little Eye" during class[5].

> Observation Protocol:
> The children are playing the game "I Spy With My Little Eye" and have to describe objects that are lying in the middle of the circle of seats. The teacher mentions that they are looking for a blue object. A girl raises her hand but is not chosen and then remains quiet. Another child then describes an object.

5 See also Lohfeld (2019, 2022).

> The girl raises her hand again, is chosen this time, points to the object they are looking for and says that it is a bowl. The teacher agrees with her answer and mentions that the girl has already learned many new German words in a short time. The girl smiles. Then she is allowed to describe a new object. She mentions that the object is purple and immediately several children raise their hands. She passes the word on to another girl, who recognizes the correct object. The process of playing is continuously repeated.

An initial analysis suggests that participation in this activity promotes the improvement of both language development and observational skills in the children. This interaction highlights the importance of peer engagement and social recognition, as evidenced by a female student who was initially overlooked successfully identifying a blue bowl and then receiving positive reinforcement from her teacher. Not only is her self-confidence strengthened but her extended vocabulary in German is also evident. The collaborative nature of the game, where children take turns and help each other identify objects, encourages them to be intellectually playful by gently introducing them to learning, have fun competing, and show or hide their knowledge as well as their not-knowing. On the one hand, the game introduced by the teacher works as it should: it encourages the children to engage freely in the process. On the other hand, the context makes it abundantly clear to the players that they have to fulfil the goal of learning the vocabulary not as a game but as learning, or, in other words, as work.

2. Play: Approaches and Theories

In the following section, the discussion turns to various approaches that are concerned with a comprehensive exploration of the concept of play, particularly in the context of childhood and education. The underlying view is that play is a fundamental human drive, that is present in all cultures and throughout history. Stenger (2012) argues that certain games show remarkable longevity, persisting over time and appearing in different cultural contexts, while others are more closely tied to specific historical periods and may fall out of favour. For instance, activities such as ball games, swings, see-

saws, and pushing small carts were already popular in ancient Greece (see also Parmentier 2004, pp. 929–945). Additionally, mother-child role-playing games have a timeless quality that transcends cultural boundaries. Besides the obvious historical evidence for the phenomenon of "play" overcoming cultural and temporal boundaries, it will be of relevance for the subject of this paper to outline its impact on the development and nature of the individual, especially given the concerns of the educational system regarding the development of the individual. Therefore, this line of arguments highlights key characteristics of play such as 1) its distinction from work, 2) its nature as free action, and 3) its self-sufficiency. All three characteristics are derived from discourses on children's play in various disciplines, from phenomenology and cultural anthropology to developmental theory to psychoanalysis (see also Parmentier 2004).

A conceptual definition of play takes up almost 50 columns in the Grimm dictionary alone, which is why Michael Parmentier (2004) says that the term remains a "vibrant collective term" (p. 929). Generally speaking, the term *play* encompasses a wide range of meanings, from dance, music and acting to entertainment, amusement and pleasure. "People play to play," says Ursula Stenger (2012) from an anthropological perspective. She draws on a description by Frederik Buytendijk (1933) and states, "For him, the dynamics of play are just as important (…) as the transformational aspect, which occurs when the player not only actively engages with the game, but is also captured by the game with the images themselves» (Stenger, 2012, pp. 134–142) «As a player, the human being reaches beyond him/herself as an individual by participating in a greater event," she continues. This also means that the game has endured across generations and epochs. This is precisely what can be observed over time when games like *chess* or *playing with dolls* are repeated.

Moreover, in traditional educational science and pedagogy, play is mainly considered in terms of children's play, which, according to Michael Parmentier (2004), best represents "even the general cultural-anthropological dimensions of the phenomenon of play" (p. 930).

I will now summarize some thought on individual aspects, I am aware that this compilation is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, the most important characteristics of play will be explained below, which will in turn facilitate the classification of the initial two examples.

1.3 Three Key Characteristics of Play

1. Play versus work: In contrast to work, play occupies a unique ontological status. Johan Huzinga (1938/1997), in his seminal work *Homo Ludens* posits that play exists outside the process of the immediate satisfaction of needs (p. 16). This demarcation underscores the extraordinary nature of play, which serves to disrupt the routine activities of daily life. Moreover, play is characterized by its own distinct domain, separate from conventional reality, and operates according to its own set of rules. Jean Piaget (1966/2009), from a cognitive theoretical perspective, emphasizes this notion by asserting that play possesses a unique structure that differentiates it from other forms of human activity. He explains that specific characteristics from reality are imitated in play (p. 170). For Piaget, however, it is crucial that the composition of the characteristics is imaginary (p. 170). For instance, when a child pushes a box across the floor, the box serves as a symbolic representation of a car; nevertheless, it is an *imaginative* construct that embodies a car. Further, the child exercises autonomy and freedom in this process, engaging with the world and its objects in a manner that is uniquely his/her own. It is through play that the child constructs and organizes an understanding of his/her surroundings and the world, by using imaginative frameworks to reinterpret the environment and with it, his/her own relationship to it. Work, in contrast, repeats routines of everyday life, leaves the environment untouched, and is rarely reinterpreted. Work repeats the ordinary or real life (Huzinga, 1938/1997, p. 16) which, according to Huzinga, is *not* play.
2. Freedom in play: Play is characterized by freedom – and here, too, Johan Huizinga (1938/1997) aptly writes, as do many other authors, that all play is, first and foremost, a free activity. A game that is ordered is no longer a game (p. 15). In play, the child becomes the decision maker. There is agreement throughout the discourse on the freedom for self-determination associated with this; for instance, Sigmund Freud (1920/1975) emphasizes in his work that through play, children become masters of the situation (p. 226), which enables them to explore and navigate their experiences. Jean Piaget (1966/2009) further elaborates on this by outlining the child's empowerment in relation to the world by involving him or her in the process

of assimilation through play. He shows that role-playing activities, for instance, serve to freely reproduce and process observations and experiences. He asks, "Why does the child play being a shopkeeper, a driver or a doctor? Why does (a child) play at pretending being dead to represent a dead duck that was lying plucked on the table?" (p. 198). Most games would have the function of reproducing what has *impressed*, what has *pleased*, and they have the function of experiencing the environment as accurately as possible, in short, of creating a wide network of dispositions that enable the ego to assimilate the whole of reality, i.e. to incorporate it so that it can be relived, mastered or compensated (p. 198). And further: even playing with a doll is often less a preliminary exercise of maternal instincts than an infinitely nuanced symbolic system that provides the child with all the means of assimilation to relive the reality experienced (pp. 198/199). For the child, dealing with symbols is a way of making the world, which s/he cannot yet grasp with its thoughts and words, more tangible. Through play, s/he can approach the world free of external/practical purposes. The doll, for example, plays along; there is no effect on the child's real life when s/he plays with it. It is a game that is self-sufficient and does not require adaption to reality.

3. Self-Sufficiency of play: The self-sufficiency of play is described by Immanuel Kant (1790), Eugen Fink (1960), Johan Huizinga (1938) and Hans Scheuerl (1954) as its end in itself[6]. This implies that play creates its own temporality and presents itself in reality as a structure distinct from time and space. For the psychoanalyst Winnicott (1971/1989), building on Freud (1920/1975), play functions as an intermediary between an inner reality and the external world. He refers to it as an "area of experiences into which both inner reality and external life flow equally" (p. 11). It constitutes a potential space whose dynamics allow creative engagement and expression. This process can be profoundly satisfying; however, as Huizinga (1938/1997) aptly states, it is superfluous (p. 16) and tends to absorb the players. This observation becomes understandable when you look at children, building a cave with enthusiasm and without regard for physi-

6 The article by Parmentier (2004), which serves as a basis here, presents the discourse contexts for the concept of play in detail. Therefore, only the main lines are briefly outlined here and no detailed conceptual classification in the discourse is undertaken.

> cal fatigue, hunger or similar needs: they carry materials, make arrangements, think about constructions and design, only to find themselves sitting in a structure that differs from the original plans, is shaky and that has to be dismantled by the end of the day, as external constraints are being asserted. However, the children were so captivated by the game that they continued their activities independently of all other concerns not related to the game itself. Moreover, the game transported them to a state outside of everyday tasks (e.g. homework, physical hygiene, going to bed). Rather, they felt an intense pleasure that was characterized by exhilarations and captivation.

These initial explorations of the phenomenon of play shed light on several additional aspects which will be briefly mentioned in the following paragraph:

Firstly, play has an enviable liberating effect in that it counteracts the pressure to act in reality. Secondly, it provides the opportunity to engage with reality through individual subjective lenses. Individuals may explore, discover and experience reality and their self-world-relation in unique and personal ways, or, alternatively, play may be used to compensate, modify, or align external reality to inner needs and desires. And thirdly, play is satisfying and open to new experiences, which was taken up by Winnicott (1971/1989) with the term "potential space". Other authors speak of play as a "wellspring of the new" (Sutton-Smith, 1973, p. 33) or as an existential basic phenomenon (Fink, 1957, p. 17). To complete the list of relevant authors, Friedrich Schiller should be mentioned, who, in his *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), wrote one of the most famous sentences about the relationship between play and human nature: Man only plays where he is fully human in the fullest sense of the word, and he is only fully human where he plays (15th letter). The importance of Schiller's *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* for pedagogy is generally recognized. In this context, the work of Christian Rittelmeyer (2005) is particularly noteworthy. In his view, children's play is a propaedeutic for later aesthetic competence (p. 11), which is why it would be a misconception to assume that the aesthetic alphabetization of the child takes place only in the practice of, for example, musical, drawing or acting activities and not also in children's play (p. 11).

4. School: Institutional Alienation of Play

In the following section the project "Embodied Experiences in the Schoolyard" in which students had the opportunity to explore their school environment and its alien spaces, will be examined more closely and compared to the second example, the learning game "I Spy With My Little Eye".

The artist Willi Dorner described his art project as an invitation to participants to re-engage with their city and analyze it for themselves from their own perspectives. Theresa Herzog, encouraged the students in a similar way to engage with their everyday environment: the school space. They explored the school playfully: running, testing boundaries and identifying areas that could serve as seating, where their own bodies could fit, and where spatial boundaries might be redefined. This approach not only guided the students through their institutional surroundings, but also functioned as a kind of embodied analysis in which they could reflect on the relationship between their bodies and the spaces they inhabit. The students were familiar with their school, its institutional rules, and its spaces. They walked daily through the corridors and doors, brushed against the walls, opened the lockers, etc. Through playful experimentation, as proposed by Willi Dorner, they experienced their habitual physical actions in school in a new way. Beyond that, the school environment could be recontextualized through the lens of the project and even transformed into a space where children can actively and critically obtain a position. Play, as well as the artistic exploration of space through embodied experience, eludes everyday life, which becomes clear when one considers the above-mentioned key characteristics of play. Projects like the one described, "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard", are not part of school curricula in Germany as they are not readily compatible with the institutional goal of activities. Exploring the school space through artistic strategies, as shown here, only plays a role in extracurricular bonus programmes in the current landscape of the educational system, e.g. through funding for larger state programmes for cultural education. Therefore, there are no predetermined expectations or measurable outcomes that are subject to evaluation. Instead, what emerges is a sense of freedom: an open, exploratory process that fosters the creative potential and critical positioning of the students. As a result, students become empowered.

While Winnicott (1971/1989) asserts that play, as a potential space "naturally leads to cultural experience" (p. 123), Schiller (1794), as a key figure of the Enlightenment, had already laid groundwork for this notion. In particular, Schiller demonstrated that freedom can be experienced through and in the aesthetic. Given that the aesthetic dimension in Schiller's work has, in part, been absorbed into what I have previously described as play, it seems reasonable to argue that artistic activity and the reception of art have their origin in play. This insight thus underpins the development of classroom practices that incorporate artistic approaches, as exemplified in the project "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard"[7].

Turning to the second example, I will argue in a different direction. The game "I Spy With My Little Eye" is a well-known game that is a familiar companion for many families on long car journeys. In the context of the previously mentioned observation, the game involves the students on a playful level, but instead of actually playing the game, the school's regulatory framework is applied. The practice observed by a student teacher as part of the research project shows that the rules mirror those of the classroom: rather than spontaneously announcing the object that they have identified, players must wait their turn and speak only when permitted to do so. Even if the children's inner excitement tempts them to shout, "I saw it! Yippie!", as they would when playing, the institutional context will simultaneously evoke the internalized social rules of the classroom during the game. We can see that the familiar game, typically used to pass the time and create excitement, is redefined and becomes a *patience* or *learning game*. In this process, the teacher changed the objective: it is to say the correct word, not to identify the object. Therefore, it is not the rules inherent to the game process that take precedence, but the institutional rules that govern the space and the game. This raises the question: What are the participants doing in this observed situation? Are they playing? Learning? Behaving? Learning to play? Or learning through play?

7 As early as 2008, the authors of *Learning Culture and Cultural Education* (Hill, B., Biburger, T., Wenzlik, A.) pointed out that aesthetic practice, which is at the heart of cultural education, would not only change school development but also learning cultures in the long term. After almost two decades of intensive funding of cultural education in Germany, cultural education, e.g. artist-in-residence-programmes, culture-school curriculums, dance and theatre programmes etc., has become widely established in the German school landscape (see also https://bildungsklick.de/anbieter/rat-fuer-kulturelle-bildung)

The answer, of course, is complex. However, one argument can be used: the game encourages active participation in which the children engage in play as well as deduction, combining the information from their peers with what they observe in the middle of the circle. This process allows for a mental space of free associations and evokes moments of "inner" freedom filled with imaginative impulses that are devoid of any specific external objective, which is play at its best.[8]

But at this point, external reality intervenes. Drawing on Winnicott's approach, one could argue that the intermediate space dissolves and external reality successively displaces elements of inner reality. With the shift towards external reality, a state of tension and imbalance disrupts the child's play experience. Due to overarching institutional regulations that play a role in the observed situation, this state of imbalance and tension arises, so that one can say that play is systematically alienated in the process. These regulations have nothing to do with play itself, but are deeply rooted in the school context, such as classroom structure, power dynamics and peer relations, all of which systematically restrict the freedom of play.

5. Conclusion: Identifying Alienation of Play in School

In conclusion, I will briefly address the educational relevance of play in the two examples discussed and attempt to draw on the thesis of the institutional alienation of play. As Parmentier (2004) summarizes, play is a free activity that disrupts the purposeful context of everyday life and, with no external material or other use, is self-sufficient (p. 930). This conceptualization highlights the tension between the inherent characteristics of play and the institutional structures that tend to restrict its autonomy.

Both examples take place in a regulated school environment and are subject to its rules and associated objectives. Even the artists in residence have to adhere to these institutional constraints.[9] While the game "I Spy With My Lit-

8 According to Hans Scheuerl (1954/1994), the game does not pursue any purpose outside itself (p. 67).

9 The shifts in the artists' self-perceptions, resulting from these constraints were taken into account in the evaluation of the project, as they were in another state project, "To every Child his Art" (see also Westphal, K., et. al., 2018). Bilstein (2018) also makes clear that artists

tle Eye" directly refers to the school context and incorporates into the game, the artistic work with the students can critically focus on the institutional framework itself. Therefore, the ability to break out of the conservative school context, to independently create new events and to engage in the free play of spatial relationships is of significant value in the educational process. In its structure, the freedom that is given and experienced resembles the essence of play, and, despite the confines of institutionalized education, offers a space for creativity and exploration.

Drawing on the anthropology of Schiller, Rittelmeyer (2005) concludes that play – as a free aesthetic state – represents the decisive stage from which comprehending thinking can first emerge automatically (p. 115). In other words, a genuine relationship to the world can only be experienced from the subject's own nature. In the project presented here, there is no mere reproduction of existing knowledge, since the students themselves are actively experiencing the field from their own playful state. Even if the project "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard" in considered an imitation of the project "Bodies in Urban Spaces", it is still the children who actively participate shaping the topic. For Christian Rittelmeyer (2005), this reflects the importance of spontaneous, pedagogically uncontrolled children's play for the educational process of adolescents (p. 114) and emphasizes that this promotes independence in playful experiential learning.

Institutionalized play pedagogy has been criticized in German-speaking countries for a long time (see also Heinsohn & Knieper, 1975; Riemer, 1998; Lohfeld, 2012 & 2014; Stenger, 2014). Parmentier (2005), for example, concludes that play pedagogy, particul,arly that in which intervention in play is based on a complete misunderstanding of the nature of children's play (p. 945) does not exploit the potential of play activities. However, both examples also point to possible ways in which the school space can be opened up to recognize the potential of play, especially when it comes to implementing artistic strategies in class. When artists work in schools, they introduce their strategies to both teachers and students, encouraging them to play with new and sometimes surprising rules. Although they still operate within the boundaries of the in-

in particular are aware of the contradictions associated with working in the school system. He states, "They are well aware of the paradox that in artistic forms of expression, e.g. in dance, you have to produce spontaneity that you can't plan for" (p. 85).

stitutional framework, artistic strategies offer the opportunity to go beyond traditional pedagogical models and methods (Lohfeld & Schittler, 2014, p. 140). Artistic interventions initiate opportunities for play, as presented in the cultural-anthropological line of argument, which takes up the nature of children's play. They can create intermediate spaces and potentially transform the school environment into what can be described as a "potential space" (Winnicott, 1971/1989) – by conceptualizing artistic strategies to promote creative exploration and children's autonomy.

It should be noted, however, that the playful nature of unconventional rules and strategies fostered by artists when they apply their notions of play and arts in schools represents a real challenge to the system. The scientific evaluation of "Embodied Experience in the Schoolyard" as one of many art laboratories states, "It should not be neglected that a studio in the school challenges the system-related institutional boundaries and can thus question, break open and further develop system-immanent structures" (Berner, 2020, p. 131). This suggests that the question of play in schools extends beyond the educational processes of children and also has implications for the broader development of the school as an institution. Indeed, artistic strategies and play in educational settings can reveal unrecognized aspects of school culture and structure, as was evident in the game "I Spy With My Little Eye", and can function as a catalyst not only for pedagogical processes but also for school transformation.

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