

**Context:**

<b>Pre-School location</b>	Kindergarten Neumarkt (Haus Unterland), South Tyrol Italy
<b>Details about students</b>	age range: 2-7 years approximate number on roll: 100 children (5 groups), 16 educators
<b>School premises</b>	size, age, typology: ? m <sup>2</sup> , build 1970, redevelopment & new construction planned The kindergarten building is part of the Haus Unterland, a larger building complex used for cultural purposes. The building as a whole, as well as the kindergarten, stands out because of its architectural feature. Based on squares or multiples of a square, the building sections are structured, and each section is crowned by a glass roof peak. Due to this planning, each group room is built in parallel and has the same size. All group rooms open onto the garden with a glass front and a French door. In each group room there are a play gallery, a cloakroom and a bathroom. The building was built in 1970 and the kindergarten started operating in 1974 with three groups. In the meantime, the kindergarten has five groups and two groups had to be relocated to an adjacent building. An enlargement of the kindergarten building by adding a storey is planned as part of the renovation.
<b>School context</b>	(small) city, everyday language: German
<b>Type of activity</b>	Workshops with the participation of the pedagogical team
<b>Stage in design process:</b>	in use reflection, POE



## Tool used: Diamond Ranking

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/tools/diamond-ranking/>

The instrument is first tested with the pedagogical staff and then carried out with the children on specific design issues concerning the use of space.

Dates of implementation:

- September 28, 2021 with the pedagogical staff
- April 5, 2022 Discussion of the results with the pedagogical staff
- June 9, 2022 Final meeting (communicative validation) with the kindergarten head, reflection on the use of the instrument in pedagogical practice.

## Rationale for activity and tool adopted

In the kindergarten district of Neumarkt, space and room design have been a topic in the pedagogical work for a long time and are actively supported by the kindergarten district director. Since the pedagogical concept of opening is applied in principle, themes and functions are assigned to the individual rooms or parts of rooms. Thus, in all kindergartens there is a room for language education, a room for science or mathematics education, a movement room and studios for artistic work. The design of the rooms in each kindergarten is adapted to the structural conditions. In the kindergartens Neumarkt the thematic attributions and the corresponding room design are more or less completed and are adapted annually to the needs of the children and the team. The entrance area and the access routes, as well as the outdoor area, have great potential for development. Here, the pedagogical staff would like to have suggestions and discussions on how to use these areas. For this reason, photos of these areas are used for the "Diamond Ranking" tool. Due to the diversity of the areas, two sets of photos will be compiled per kindergarten and two Diamond Rankings will be created in the meetings with the pedagogical staff.

In the main building, which appears very structured and clear due to its architecture, there are three group rooms, the kitchen with a dining area for the children and the office of the kindergarten management. The square basic pattern is striking. This makes each area appear similar in size and is crowned by a pyramid-shaped glass roof. The interior design is also special: the walls are covered with a textured plaster typical of the 1970s and the corners of the rooms, as well as the window struts, are made of metal and highlighted in yellow.

At the moment, the kindergarten also has to use an outbuilding. There, the space situation is completely different. Here, two groups are accommodated on the first floor above a supermarket, which are also comparable in size. The annex has a kitchen, a cloakroom in the entrance area and a movement room. The access situation to the adjoining building, which leads across the supermarket car park, is problematic. Only when accompanied can the children move from one building to the other. According to the current situation, the pedagogical concept of opening up can only be implemented in the respective building and not in the whole kindergarten. Both children and pedagogical staff are waiting for the renovation and extension of the original kindergarten building.

By comparing these two locations in one kindergarten, different approaches, pedagogical beliefs and spatial conditions can be shown. From the perspective of educational science, the question arises as to which factor is more effective, the pedagogical convictions of the educators or the possibilities of spatial design in the respective buildings. The shared space of experience of the kindergarten teachers is the confrontation with the space as a third educator in their everyday work, but also in the elaboration of the annual plans with the kindergarten management.

## Case study description: Process

**Participants: Kindergarten management, team and a representative of the district management.**

In a preparatory meeting with the kindergarten management and a representative of the kindergarten district management, the steps of the joint work with the instrument were determined and photographs of the kindergarten (the interior and exterior) were taken by the researcher from the CoReD project. Ideas of the room design as a whole were discussed, but also the special framework conditions of the pedagogical work due to the regulations during the pandemic.

In a second meeting, the instrument was tested. In the run-up to the meeting, the project staff selected photographs corresponding to the impressions and agreements from the preparatory meeting. This resulted in one overarching theme for the Diamond Ranking: Connections of indoor and outdoor areas of the three rooms and their design possibilities. The central question for the Diamond Ranking is where the greatest development potential of a space is seen. Or which room should be changed immediately.

The work of the pedagogical team and the kindergarten children with the Diamond Ranking was recorded, transcribed and used for the results of the use of the instrument. The poster with the Diamond Rankings is also photographed.

In another pedagogical workshop, the results of the Diamond Rankings were discussed and validated with the team.

## Photo \* documentation - Diamond Ranking Selection

### INDOORS



Fig. 1: Entrance area



Fig. 2: cloakroom



Fig. 3: group room, garden view



Fig. 4: Storage space,  
between cloakroom and  
group room



Fig. 5: View into office



Fig. 6: Educators' desk in the group room



Fig. 7: Play area in the access

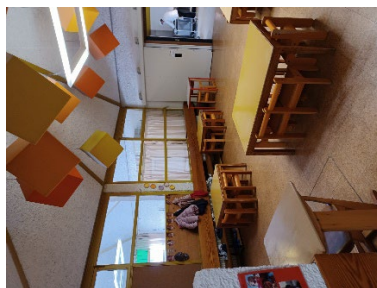


Fig. 8: Children's dining area

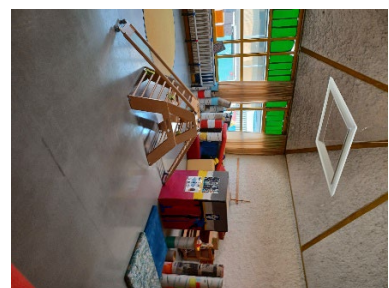


Fig. 9: Movement area

### OUTDOOR AREA



Fig. 1: Landscaped Garden section  
in front of a group room

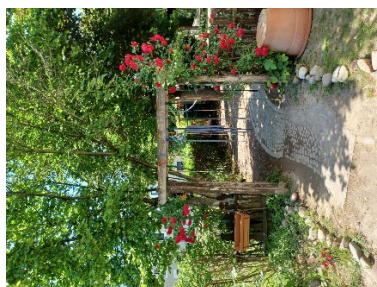


Fig. 2: separate "fairy tale garden"



Fig. 3: outdoor craft area



Fig. 4: Garden in front of group room



Fig. 5: Bed in front of group room



Fig. 6: Path to the outbuilding (still within the kindergarten area)

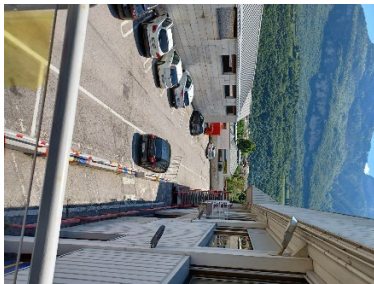


Fig. 7: Access to the outbuilding

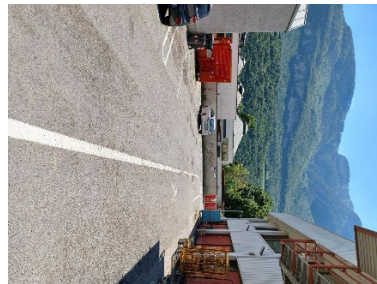


Fig. 8: Children's path through the car park

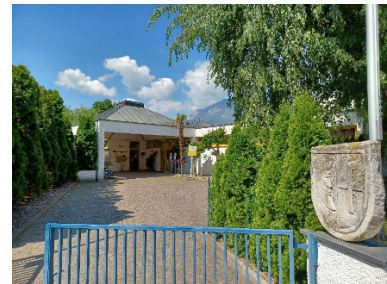


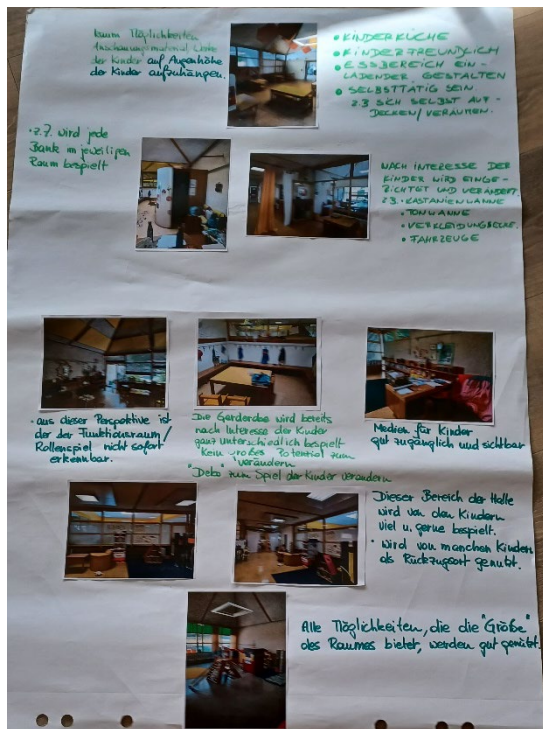
Fig. 9: Kindergarten entrance

# Case study description: Outcomes

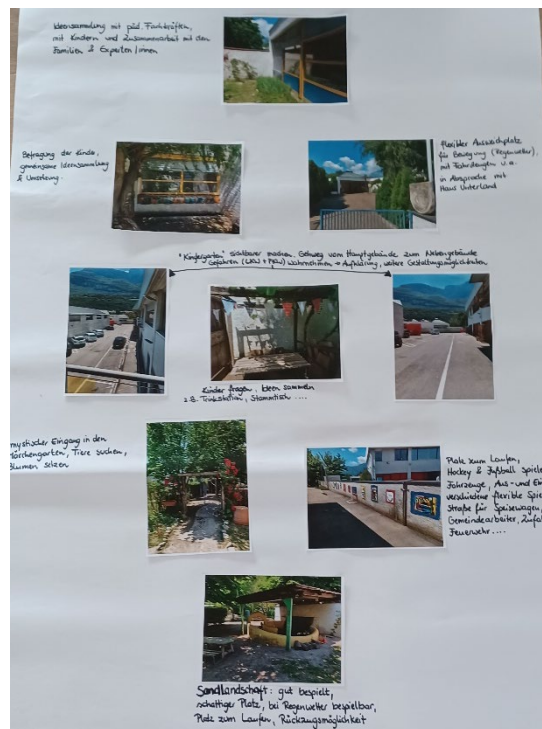
## Results from the Diamond Rankings made by the pedagogical staff

The objective of this workshop with the pedagogical staff was to get to know the Diamond Ranking tool and to plan further cooperation in the project. For this purpose, the pedagogical staff in the kindergartens created Diamond Rankings themselves. The task was to put the room situation at the top of the Diamond Ranking, which absolutely has to be changed. In other words, the greatest potential for change would have to be defined. In order to document the discussion and the decision-making process and to analyze them afterwards, the conversations of the pedagogical professionals were recorded and transcribed. In addition to the discussion of the content, the pedagogical professionals were also asked about their impression regarding the use of the tool. This feedback was also recorded and transcribed.

In the kindergarten Neumarkt, a total of 16 pedagogical professionals, including the kindergarten management and a representative of the kindergarten board participated in the first joint meeting within the framework of the project. The workshop was held on 28 September 2021 from 15:00 to 17:00. First results are these Diamond Rankings:



DR: Indoors



DR: Outdoors

## Comments and notes on the Diamond Ranking interiors

Fig. 1: Entrance area

*This area of the hall is played with a lot and with pleasure by the children / is used by the children as a place of retreat*

Fig. 2: cloakroom

*The cloakroom is already played with in very different ways according to the children's interests / no great potential for change / change "decoration" for the children's play*

Fig. 3: group room, garden view

*From this perspective, the functional space/role play is not immediately recognisable*

Fig. 4: Storage space, between cloakroom and group room

*At present, every bench in the respective room is played on*

Fig. 5: View into office

*According to the children's interests, furniture is set up and changed, e.g. chestnut tub, clay tub, dress-up corner, vehicles.*

Fig. 6: Educators' desk in the group room

*Media easily accessible and visible for children*

Fig. 7: Play area in the access

*// belongs to image 1*

Fig. 8: Children's dining area

*Hardly any possibilities to hang up children's visual material at children's eye level/ children's kitchen / child-friendly / make dining area more inviting / be self-active, e.g. uncover & put away yourself*

Fig. 9: Movement area

*The possibilities offered by the "size" of the room are well used*

On the Diamond Ranking poster and in the comments, it is clear that the educators take the children's perspective when looking at the pictures. They think carefully about how the children use the space and how it can be improved in terms of children's use.

Their own daily work as educators and the question of whether and how the space meets the needs of adults is not addressed.

### **Comments and notes on the Diamond Ranking outdoors**

Fig. 1: Landscaped Garden section in front of a group room

*Sand landscape: well played / shady place / playable in rainy weather / space for running / retreat possibilities*

Fig. 2: separate "fairy tale garden"

*Mystical entrance to the fairytale garden / Search for animals / Set flowers*

Fig. 3: outdoor craft area

*Ask children / collect ideas, e.g. drinking station, regulars' table ...*

Fig. 4: Garden in front of group

*Consultation of the children / joint collection of ideas / implementation*

Fig. 5: Bed in front of group room



*Collection of ideas with educational professionals, with children and cooperation with families & experts*

Fig. 6: Path to the outbuilding (still within the kindergarten area)

*Space for running / playing hockey & football / exit and entrance / various, flexible games / road for food trucks, community workers, access for the fire brigade ...*

Fig. 7: Access to the outbuilding the car park

*Make "kindergarten" visible / walkway from the main building to the annexe / perceive dangers (lorries + cars) Educate / further design possibilities (photo linked by arrow to image 8)*

Fig. 8: Children's path through

*Belongs to image 7 (photo connected to image 8 by arrow)*

Fig. 9: Kindergarten entrance

*Flexible alternative space for exercise (rainy weather), with rides etc. / in consultation with Haus Unterland*

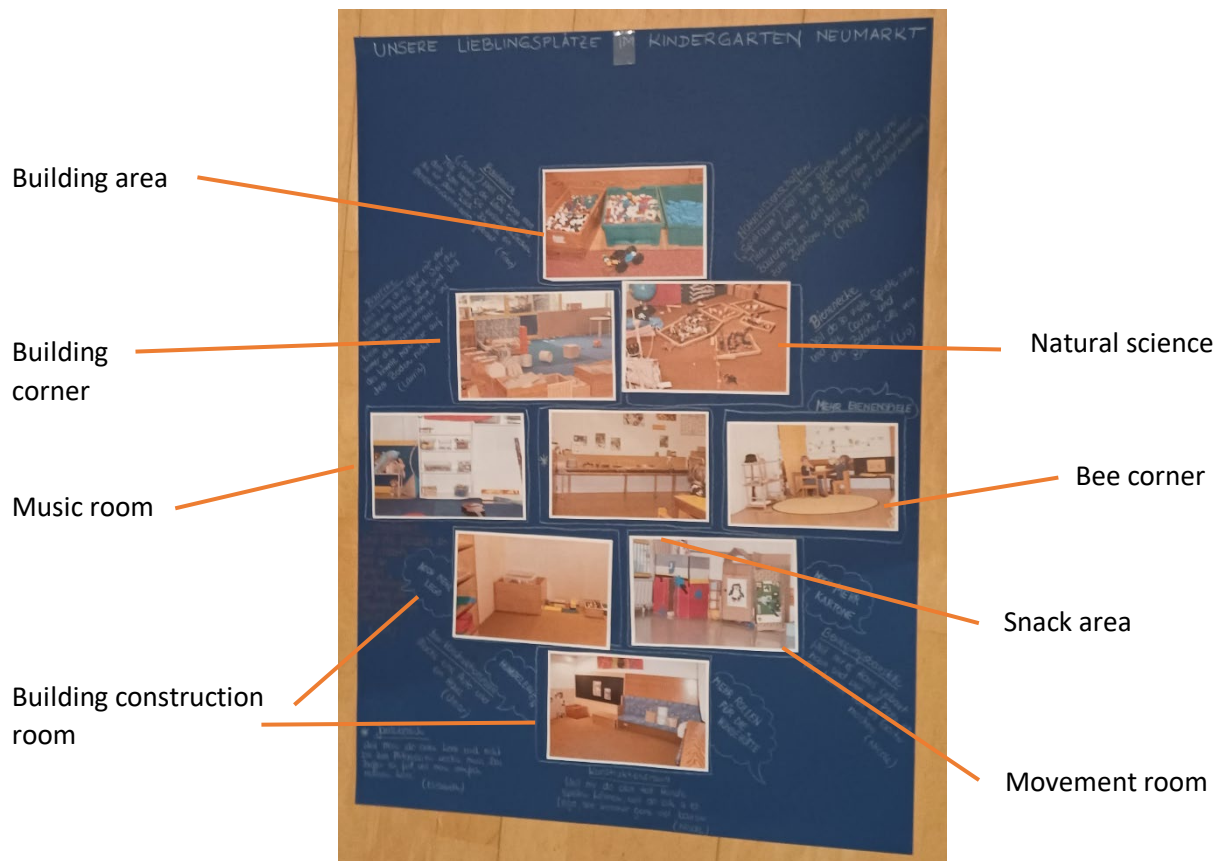
In the comments and on the poster for the Diamond Ranking, the educators clearly see a lot of potential in the redesign and reorganisation of the outdoor areas. The ideas show that here, too, the children's perspective and the design possibilities involving the children are central.

The problematic path situation is only partly relevant, as the groups that have been moved out are to return to the renovated and expanded main building in the foreseeable future. However, it is not yet clear when this will become reality. At the moment, it is rather the dangers of crossing the supermarket car park that are being considered and what the children can learn in this situation.

It was agreed that the Diamond Ranking would now be carried out by the preschool teachers themselves with the children, without project support. The plan is for the children to take their own photos, for nine photos to be selected from them for a Diamond Ranking, and for the children to create a Diamond Ranking. The kindergarten team will be responsible for the documentation of the implementation.

## Results from the Diamond Rankings with the kindergarten children

In spring 2021, the teachers sent three groups of children to photograph their favorite places in the kindergarten. All groups took many photos and independently, with a little help from the kindergarten teacher, selected nine photos each for the Diamond Ranking. The children had to decide which area in the kindergarten was their favorite place to play (top in the DR). The other eight pictures were arranged accordingly. Three Diamond Rankings were created, each with the heading "Our Favorite Places".



**DR 1: Our Favorite Places**

The following comments from the children can be found on the poster:

### Building area

Boy: *Weil do kann man Teile suchen, die klein sind und dann kann man sie zusammenstecken, das tut dann „klick“. Ich hab' ein Monstertruckrennauto gebaut. (Because do you can look for parts that are small and then you can put them together, it goes "click". I built a monster truck race car.)*

### Building corner

Boy: *Weil i hem drin öfter mit der Elisabeth Hunde spiel. Weil die Kisten die Mauer schon sind. Und beim Teppich ziehen wir uns immer die Patschen aus, des könnte man nur auf dem Boden nicht. (Because I play inside more often with the Elisabeth dogs. Because the boxes are already the wall. And at the carpet we always take off the slippers, you could not only on the floor.)*

### Music room

Girl: *Weil die Rasseln so toll rasseln, weil so schön aufgeräumt ist und der Teppichboden weich ist. NOCH MEHR LEGO. (Because the rattles rattle so great, because so nice and tidy and the carpet is soft. EVEN MORE LEGO.)*

### Building construction room

Boy: *Mache eine Auto und ein Haus. HUNDELEINEN (Make a car and a house. DOG LINE)*

Girl: *Weil mir do ollm toll Hunde spielen können, weil do isch a es Lego, sem kemmer ganz viel bauen. MEHR ROLLEN FÜR DIE HUNDEHÜTTE (Because we can play with dogs, because there is a Lego, we can build a lot. MORE WHEELS FOR THE DOGHOUSE)*

### Natural science

Boy: *(„Spielraum“) Weil sem gfalln mir die Tiere, sem kann i an Zoo bauen und an Bauernhof mit die Hölzer. Sem brauch merzum Zuation, dass sie nit außer kemmen. ("Playroom") Because I like the animals, I can build a zoo and a farm with the woods. We need them to keep them happy so that they don't get out.)*

### Bee corner

Girl: *Weil do so viele Spiele sein und die Couch und die Bücher, alls von Bienen. MEHR BIENENSPIELE (Because do be so many games and the couch and the books, alls of bees. MORE BEE GAMES)*

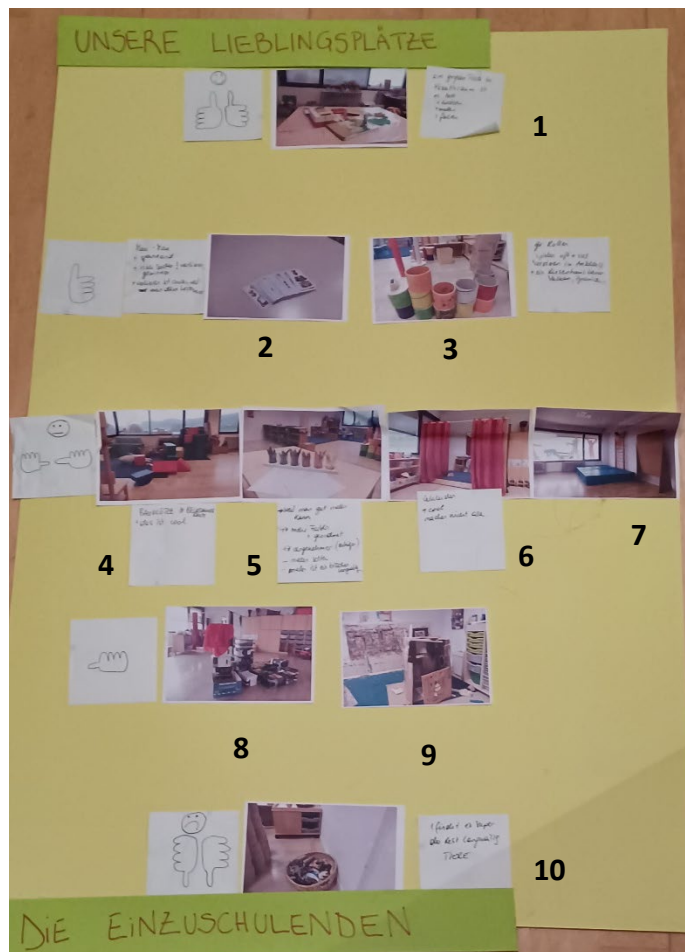
### Snack area

Girl: *Weil man do essen kann und icht bis zum Mittagessen warten muss. Das Buffett ist fein, weil man uonfach nemmen kann. (Because you can eat there and you don't have to wait until lunch. The buffet is fine, because you can easily take.)*

### Movement room

Girl: *Weil mir es Haus gebaut haben und weil viel Platz ist, mit kanntn nou an Garten mochen. NOCH MEHR KARTONE (Because I have built a house and because there is a lot of space, I can make a garden. MORE CARTONS)*

## DK 2: Our favorite places - The enrollees



- 1:** At the big table in the creative room is great, + tinker, + paint, + fold.
- 2:** Mau Mau, + exciting, + many things: losing, winning, + losing is cool because then you were best
- 3:** big roles, play often & much, + decorate afterwards, + build a giant house, volcano, pyramids
- 4:** building blocks in the movement room, + that's cool
- 5:** because you can paint well, + more colors & orderly, + more pleasant (calmer), - paint rarely, - painting is a bit boring
- 6:** dressing up, + cool, but not everyone does it
- 7:** -
- 8:** -
- 9:** -
- 10:** 1 (child) finds it great, the rest boring ANIMALS



**DK 3: Our favorite places**

The children in the three groups were able to agree quite well and arrange the areas of the kindergarten they photographed accordingly. It is striking that the children are much more concerned with the play opportunities in the areas: they immediately associate their own play behavior when they look at the pictures and comment on them.

DK 1: Although an ideal Diamond Ranking is created, the children comment positively on the pictures throughout. Apparently, the children in the group have similar play experiences and similar preferences: they all like to build and play "dogs."

DK 2: Here the children clearly rate positively and negatively. The comments were abbreviated by the educators and the evaluation was clarified by symbols. In addition, a 10th picture had to be integrated into the Diamond Ranking, because the decision which of the photos to use for the Diamond Ranking was difficult for the children.

DK 3: Is actually a pyramid. The children could not agree on which picture, which area of the kindergarten to rank negatively. It was easier to find a front runner: the computer workstation is the most popular place in this group of children.

## **Conclusions**

### **Diamond Rankings of the educators**

It became clear that the question of how to connect the indoor and outdoor areas will be the focus of further collaboration. In particular, the connecting paths between the two parts of the kindergarten should be considered.

Forgotten corners are not only found on the paths to and from the two kindergarten buildings, but also around the main building there are some areas that can still be designed. In front of the garden windows of the group rooms, there are often no play or retreat areas for the children, although there are corners in the building that could be put to good use with a tarp, for example. Since the group rooms are staggered, each group actually has its own small garden area that could also be used as a private oasis.

The planning and implementation phase of the renovation and expansion of the main building should also become a topic during further cooperation. In particular, the pedagogical specialists expect to receive argumentation support from the pedagogical perspective vis-à-vis architects and property developers.

### **Diamond Rankings of the Children**

For the children, the focus is on the play opportunities and less on the design of the rooms. This is the insight that the pedagogical professionals take away from the joint discussion of the three Diamond Rankings of the children. It also becomes clear that other materials are important to the children than to the educators. The question of whether the rooms are not too full and whether one or the other room could be cleared out a bit was also discussed. In the end, the idea arose to reorganize the rooms with the children and to put away materials for a certain time in order to create new incentives to play.