

The Salutogenetic Approach: Blue and Green for Well-Being and Health



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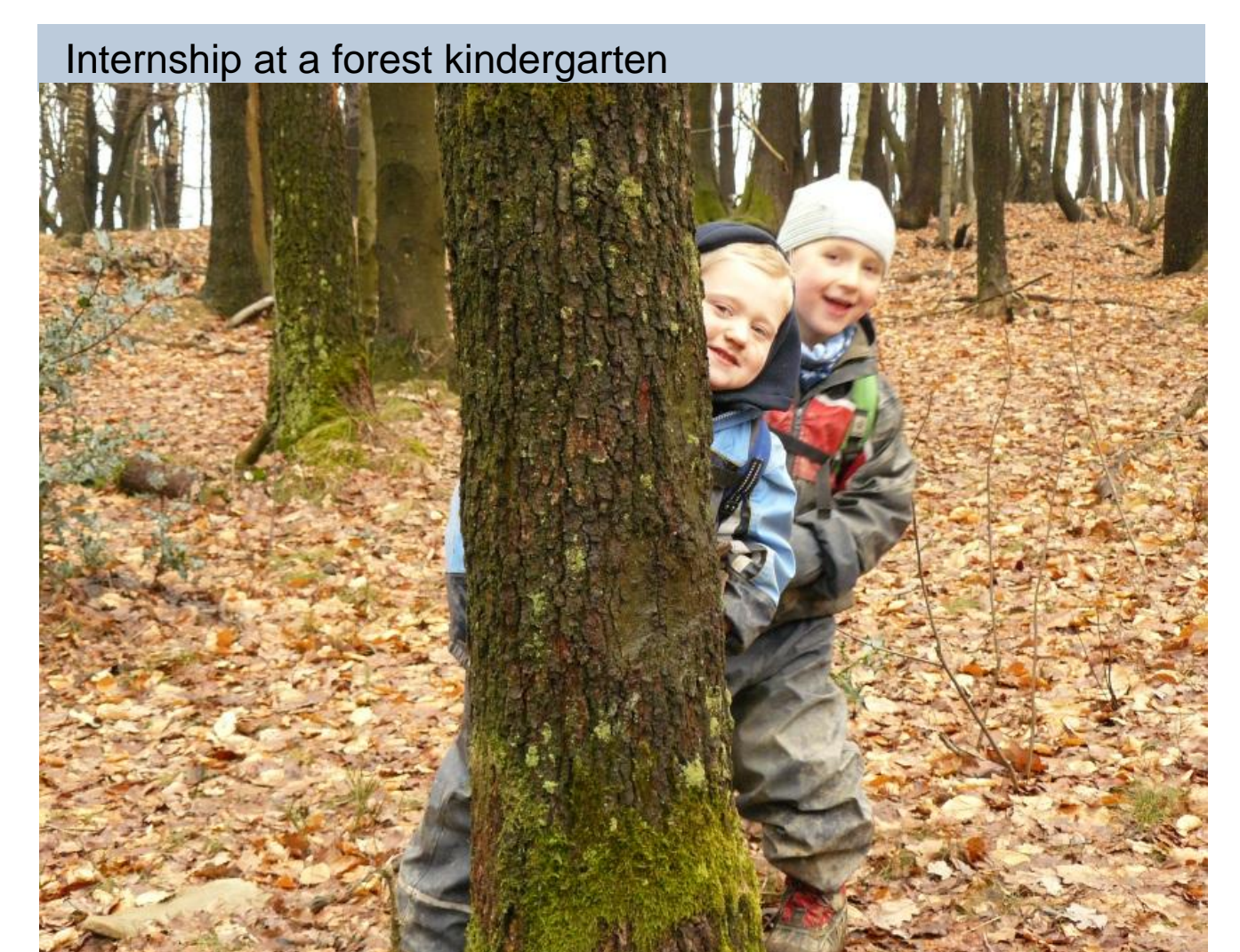
The health-related effects of nature and landscape were already known in the early modern period, and the healing properties of sites with geographic features, such as water and air, have been described in antiquity. Both, the visual observation of nature (a view from a window, nature scene on an image) and staying in nature, like sitting on a park bench or the implementation of "green" activities (hiking, cycling, gardening), shows evidence of physical, psychological and social health-promoting effects for children, adults and elderly.

Nature, whether experienced active or passive, suits not only for the compensation of (chronic) stress. It can also be used as a cheap therapy and a medical treatment for the relief of acute and chronic pain with free admission for everyone. In general, little is known about the effect of regular exposure to nature on the health of young children and the effect of blue spaces in urban contexts on human well-being. Two PhD projects currently being undertaken at the IHPH will contribute to closing these gaps.

Perception of Urban Waters and their impact on Health in city centers

The impact on health and the perception of urban blue (urban waters like rivers) in cities will be obtained by the successive use of interdisciplinary methods. Beside the spatial analysis, the empirical urban promenade and the participant observation, the qualitative guided interviews with users of the promenades in Düsseldorf and Cologne at the river Rhine should form the basis of the study to gain a multi-dimensional image of the research area. In contrast local green space with no or marginal influence of surface waters will be surveyed to highlight the potentials and their components of urban blue in comparison to urban green.

The study seeks to enhance the present research concerning therapeutic landscapes and form a contribution to the discussion about the significance of urban landscapes for human health and well-being.



The symbolic meaning of the river: "Father Rhine"



Space for activities and leisure at the promenade in Cologne



Urban blue space as a place for social contact in Düsseldorf



Experienced space in an aesthetically attractive environment

Nature Experience and Health: Subjective health assessment and motor abilities from former forest kindergarten children

The long-term effects for elementary students, who had visited forest kindergartens, had been tested with several methods. After internships in twelve German forest kindergartens in North Rhine-Westphalia, the research of health with a motor-activity test, a survey on the health-related quality of life and qualitative interviews was collected from elementary school students. In addition to a comparison with our own data collected in the control group, a comparison with the data of the German children and youth health survey (KiGGS) is provided. The results will give recommendations for health promotion for elementary school students.

Conclusion

Blue and green spaces have an impact on the health, well-being and quality of life of humans in various ways. These spaces have been identified in international research, in the sense of salutogenetic health, as a health-promoting structure. Such structures have high health-ecological benefits in ways such as the climate-ecological compensation function. Furthermore, blue environments are favourite places for city dwellers and act as a

motivating factor for exercise, social contact and recreation, and enhance urban spaces aesthetically. Forest kindergartens, as an example for green environments means especially for children a calm place for free and creative play with a constant stimulus for movement. The conservation, preservation and creation of blue and green spaces has already been claimed to support health-promotion.

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