

The Play Cafe Project

Co-curating Play Cafes *in* Greece



Funded by:



Early childhood play experiences have a vital role in shaping children's present and future development (Bruce 2018; Ginsburg 2007; Bendini et al 2022). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states (Article 31) that all children have a right to leisure, play, and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

Children have a right to play not just in early learning and childcare provisions but also in everyday public life.

The importance of child-led and free play, particularly within the early years, has been acknowledged at least in Scottish policy and practice rhetoric. However, the opportunities and challenges of child-led and free flow play are less understood in everyday public spaces, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), third sector and community based initiatives.





Do all children have access to high quality free and child-led/self-directed play and learning environments?

How is quality and child-led play conceptualized across different contexts?

The recent community - based research about young children, play and public life, including play cafes in **Scotland** and **Greece** <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/playcafe/> funded by the Froebel Trust, has shown the importance of children and families participating in 'high quality', free and child-led play and social spaces in everyday public life.

Play cafes, in particular have the potential to be **innovative informal high-quality and accessible learning, play, and social environments for all children and families, which could provide further spaces for community engagement, research, training/sharing of knowledge, co-working, collaborations and co-production with children, practitioners, other childhood professionals and students. Play Cafes could also be life-affirming spaces and spaces for intergenerational and intersectional activism.**

Some children lack access to public spaces and experiences.

For instance, recent refugee or migrant families who do not speak English (in the Scottish context), or autistic/neurodivergent children from migrant backgrounds, often experience isolation and violence, and thus avoid public spaces due to discrimination and racism. Hence, there is an urgent need for the creation of high-quality play cafes/spaces in various communities and neighborhoods, where children regardless of backgrounds are able to experience themselves creatively, share their co-created knowledge and ideas and feel part of an engaging and social just community (Konstantoni 2022).

The play cafe project led by the University of Edinburgh, is based on **Froebelian approaches and principles** and aims to co-design an equitable, child – community – centered space that promotes equitable play and learning opportunities, and fosters community connectivity and social justice (Konstantoni et al. 2024).



It has been argued that conceptions and experiences of play from the Global North are often universalising, receiving more attention than those from the Global South - effecting both global debates and how inclusive our public spaces are of different communities. However, neither can we universalise childhoods within global South and global North realities (Rizzini 2023; Balagopalan 2019; Twum-Danso Imoh and Ame 2012).

Thus, in this context of what makes ideal play cafe spaces, how they are perceived, created, experienced, challenged and developed **within their historically and socially situated contexts** are important (Tisdall and Konstantoni 2023; Twum-Danso Imoh et al 2018; Liebel 2020).



Play Cafe *in* Greece

How would ideal social and play spaces for young children and their communities look and feel like in Greece?

Taking into consideration the rich and diverse Greek cultural and social environment/context, the local diverse traditions, the rich histories, as well as the current needs and aspirations of children, parents/ carers, families and practitioners, a pop up play cafe inspired by Froebelian principles will be co-curated in the city of Athens.

In collaboration with the Network for children's rights the play cafe will take place in an outdoor space, a garden, that will be co-designed with families, young children and practitioners. As part of the play cafe research project in Greece and Scotland, families, children and practitioners have shared with us what matters for them when we create and design play cafes.

Designing a Play Cafe from children and their communities' perspectives



Ingredients *to* designing a Play Cafe

We have named these the **'ingredients to designing a play cafe'** which you can see in the picture on the left (for more information see Konstantoni et al 2024). We will be guided by these and at the same time dynamically and critically develop these further, as we continue our learning and unlearning through the research with families and practitioners.

The main objective of this pop up play cafe curation in Greece, Athens, is to create a welcoming, warm, inspiring, accessible, enriching, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist play and social environment for children and their families. An informal drop in, stay and play experience, free and open to all.

Play Cafe in Greece



Pop Up Play Cafe

21 Ιουνίου 2024

Δωρεάν συμμετοχή για παιδιά ηλικίας 0 -7 ετών

Αθήνα

“Το παιχνίδι είναι η υψηλότερη έκφραση της ανθρώπινης ανάπτυξης στην παιδική ηλικία, αφού είναι η μόνη ελεύθερη έκφραση της παιδικής ψυχής.”

Friedrich Froebel, Founder of the kindergarten (1826)

Ώρες λειτουργίας του
play café:

Παρασκευή 21
Ιουνίου 2024

5PM - 8:30PM

Ένα υπέροχο, δωρεάν pop - up play café για παιδιά ηλικίας 0-7 ετών και τις οικογένειές τους στο **Pepsaee Garden**

Σας περιμένουμε για ένα δροσερό ρόφημα και πολλές και ποικίλες παιχνιδο-εμπειρίες για παιδιά βρεφικής και προσχολικής ηλικίας - με εθελοντές που θα σας βοηθήσουν να ενισχύσετε τη γονεϊκή αυτοπεποίθηση και τα θετικά ερεθίσματα του παιδιού σας μέσα από το παιχνίδι, σε ένα ζεστό, φιλικό περιβάλλον.

Κατασκευές, αφηγήσεις, αισθητηριακό παιχνίδι, μαγειρική, παιχνίδι ρόλων και μεταμπίσης, πηλός, ζωγραφική, είναι κάποιες από τις δράσεις που θα σχεδιαστούν για τα παιδιά σε συνεργασία με εσάς.

(διατίθενται δωρεάν υγιεινά snacks, καθώς και ροφήματα; Όποιος επιθυμεί μπορεί να φέρει το δικό του φαγητό και ρόφημα).

Δήλωση
συμμετοχής

Δεν είναι απαραίτητη η ενημέρωσή μας για τη συμμετοχή σας, αλλά θα ήταν πολύ βοηθητική για την αποτελεσματικότερη οργάνωση του χώρου. Αν έχετε λοιπόν, λίγο χρόνο μπορείτε να επιβεβαιώσετε την συμμετοχή σας, επικοινωνώντας μαζί μας στο email:

a.dimoulia@ddp.gr.

Σε συνεργασία με:

The Play Café Project, University of Edinburgh

Δίκτυο για τα Δικαιώματα του Παιδιού

Μια ευγενική χορηγία του Froebel Trust www.froebel.org.uk

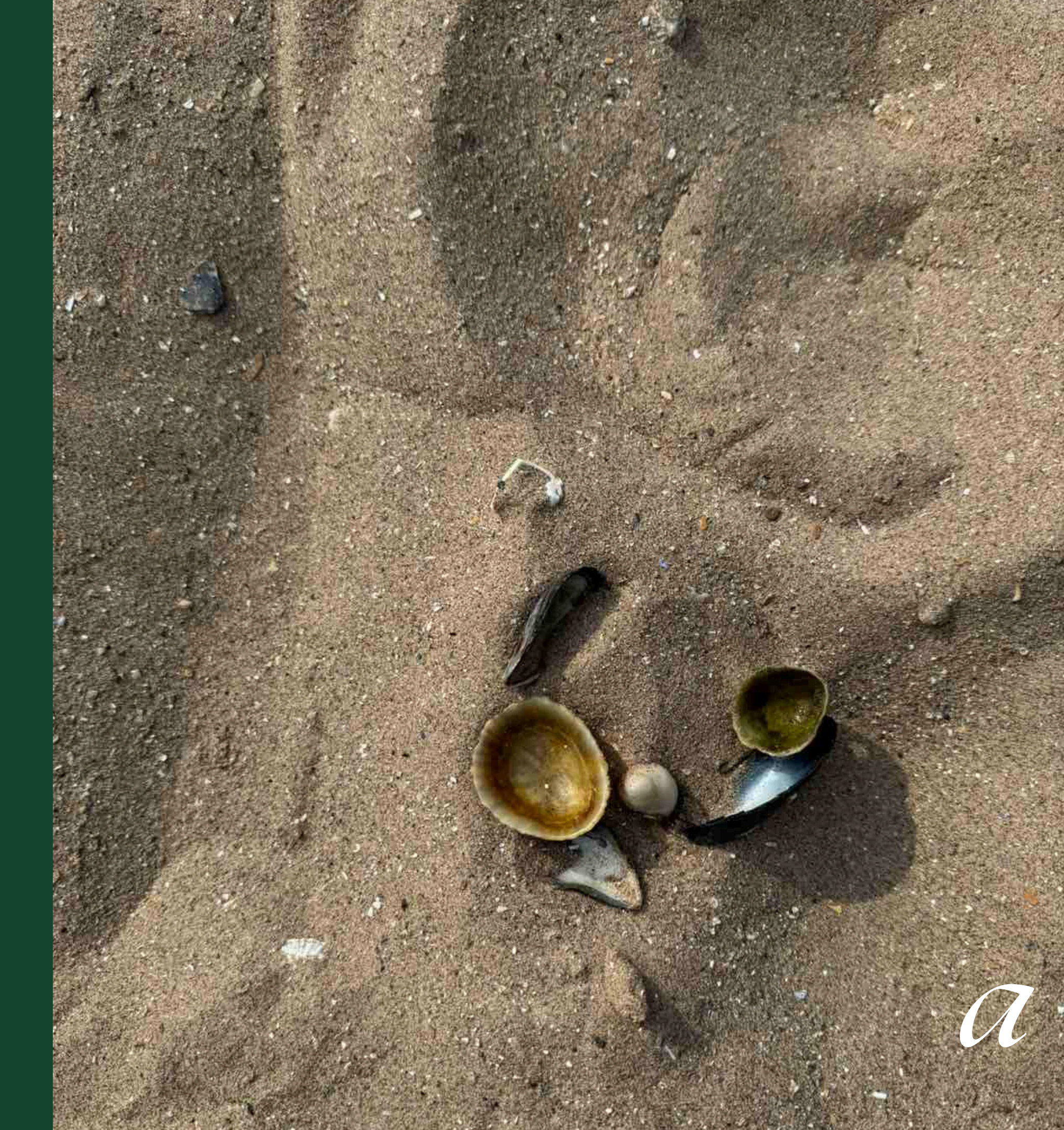


Our first Greek pop up play cafe will take place in June 2024- stay tuned!

a space...

A space that is based on children's, families' and practitioners' views and curiosities and enables enriching and deep play, social and learning opportunities through its resources and rich experiences. A space which will have knowledgeable and nurturing adults (a mixture of parents/carers, practitioners, researchers, community partners, volunteers) to be alongside children ('freedom with guidance'). A space for families with young children from different socio – economic backgrounds to come together, through play, social gatherings and food, and to connect, play and express their inner and outer worlds both formally and informally, share ideas and support each other (Konstantoni et al. 2024).





A space to offer each other or signpost support; a shared space to deepen our collective skills in supporting children's free and child-led play in a supportive practice community. The play cafe works towards being anti-racist and anti-discriminatory and towards building solidarity amongst spaces and people. Community cohesion also involves working through any conflict that may arise, recognising biases and systemic advantages and challenging white hegemonic narratives and dominant thinking. As part of the pop up play cafe we will also facilitate a co-design creative gathering with families, young children and practitioners to develop further our developing conceptualisations of what makes an ideal social and play space in this specific context.

a space...

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Το βαλς των χαμένων ονείρων

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q9H2cd36RU)

[v=5q9H2cd36RU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q9H2cd36RU)

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