

# International Play Association Triennial Conference

Calgary, Canada, 13-16 September 2017

**LUDI - Play for children with disabilities.**  
Making the right to play of children with disabilities a  
reality: the COST Action LUDI



Serenella Besio  
Pedro Encarnação

# What is play?

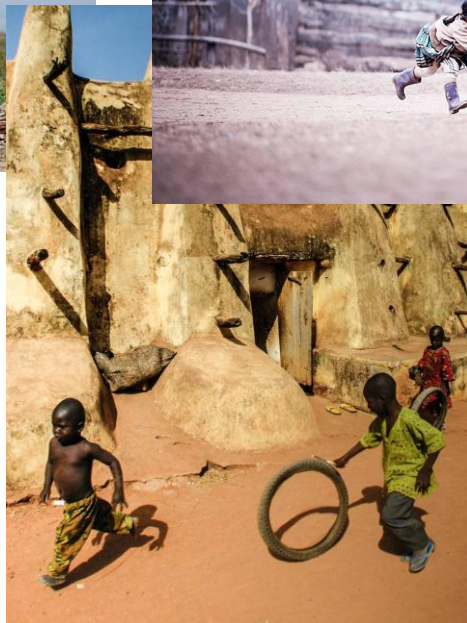


# What is play?



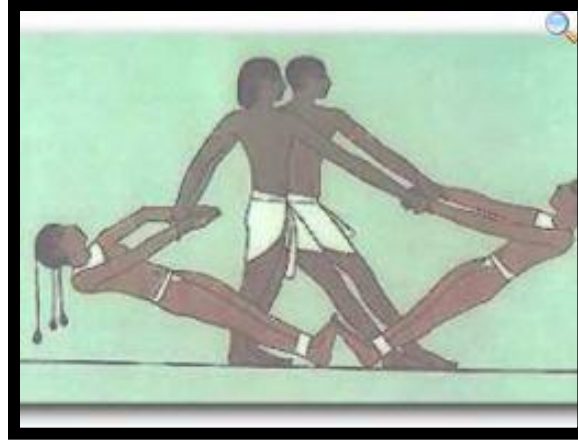
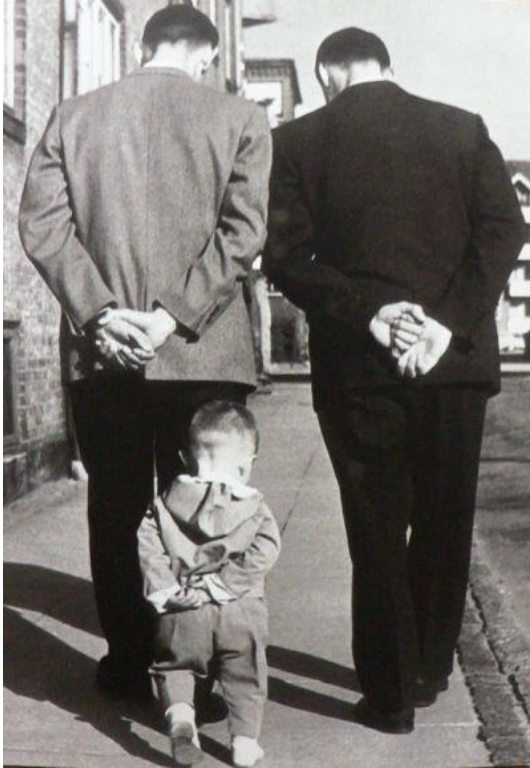
- An oasis of joy
- A child's need, a human need
- A natural instinct
- A diverse domain of experience
- The engine of development
- It is getting lost, fun, pleasure, attention, concentration, angry, anxiety, mental straining...
- It makes it possible to hide oneself, to change one's role, to put oneself to the proof, to risk...

# In every part of the world





# In every age of humankind



# At any age of human development



# Who owns play?



Play is observed in different species  
It has been carefully studied in Mammals, Birds,  
Reptiles and even Insects





# Learning to play is possible: with adults



Children with Disabilities



# Learning to play is possible: with peers



# Learning to play is possible: with tools



# What is play in infancy?



- Pleasure
- The main road to learning (Vygotskij, 1930; Bruner, 1983)
- The most important tool for socialization (Sutton-Smith, 2008)
- Playfulness (Bundy, 1997)
- A frame to separate different experiences (Bateson, 1956)
- Tension, intensity (Piaget, 1932)
- Concealment (Montessori, 1952)
- The engine of development (Piaget, 1932)
- The boundary between Self and not-Self (Winnicott, 1971)
- A dream (Klein, 1929)

No single definition could contain it (Sutton-Smith, 2008)



# How can play be defined?



Play is a range of voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities normally associated with recreational pleasure and enjoyment (Garvey, 1990)



- activities**
  - ☐ **playful**
  - ☐ **self-directed**
  - ☐ **intrinsically guided**

# “Functions” of play



- ◎ Many functions of play are described: socialization, physical exercise, cognitive development, energetic regulation...
- ◎ A noticeable inter-individual variability exists, in relation to: species, age, gender, social status, play experience, state of wellness and energy level, degree of permissivity of carers, environment where play happens
- ◎ A functional cost-benefit analysis is difficult to be demonstrated; both costs and benefits in the short and the long term should be considered

# Descriptions, classifications...



- ◎ **Social dimension**: solitary play, parallel play, imitation play, interactive play, cooperative, in group...
- ◎ **Cognitive dimension**: play stages (senso-motor, symbolic – pretend play - construction...), play functions (exercise, experimentation, invention, pretend...)
- ◎ **Psychological dimension**: the main road to the inner self
- ◎ **Typology dimension**: with objects, psychomotor, rule play, off-the-shelf game, videogame, electronic game, robot...
- ◎ **Developmental dimension**: play changes in relation to development, age, contexts, situations, playmates...



# Since almost 30 years



**A conviction has  
spread at  
international level**

# UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

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**Play is a right  
for all children  
in the world**

## Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



**Play describes  
and represents infancy**

**Children are such stuff as  
play is made on**



# What does it happen in the case of children with disabilities?



# Children with disabilities...

...have exactly the same right to play of their peers!





## International Convention on the Rights for the Child

As any child, the child with disability

- has a fundamental RIGHT to play
- has the RIGHT to participate and to live in inclusive contexts

## International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006

- Any child with a disability
  - has the RIGHT to enjoy recreational and sport activities
  - has the RIGHT to the breaking-down of material and cultural barriers which prevent from living in inclusive contexts



# IPA Position Statement, May 2015



**International Play Association**  
Promoting the Child's Right to Play

## The Play Rights of Disabled Children

IPA Position Statement (May 2015)



Every child is different. To enable any child to enjoy their right to play, pro-active measures are needed to remove disabling barriers and promote accessibility, such as:

- Awareness raising amongst adults and peers
- Age-appropriate support and assistance
- Accessible and inclusive environments, facilities and transport
- Provision of information, education and training that support children's right to play



# Children with disabilities...



- ⊙ may not be able to play
  - ⊙ may not want to play
  - ⊙ may not know how to play
  - ⊙ may not recognize a play situation, a play object
  - ⊙ may isolate themselves from the others' play
  - ⊙ may be scared by a play situation
  - ⊙ may prefer to repeat the same play, in the same way, in the same site....
- ⊙ *because of their impairments*
  - ⊙ *because playgrounds, toys and other play tools are not accessible and usable*
  - ⊙ *because environments and contexts are not accessible nor inclusive*
  - ⊙ *because of a lack of educational awareness and intentionality*
  - ⊙ *because of a lack of specific psycho-pedagogical and rehabilitative competence*
  - ⊙ *because of a lack of effective intervention methodologies*

# In addition...



- Many times, parents, professionals, teachers in this case are mainly interested in addressing rehabilitative objectives, while other aspects of the “normal” life are confined to the background
- Often these children’s parents are worried, anxious and are not able to play with them: they simply don’t know which toys they can offer or buy, how they can propose a play activity

# As a consequence...



Children with disabilities' lives are dominated by medical and rehabilitative practices...

....and play is most often an activity “**to**” reach an objective, “**to**” provoke an improvement

there is no time for  
*play for the sake of play*

***play for the sake of play***  
is considered a waste of  
time



THIS IS **NOT** THE ANSWER OF THE

COST ACTION TD1309

“LUDI – Play for Children with  
Disabilities”

But why play is difficult for these  
children?

**Simply because of their functional limitations?**

# According to LUDI

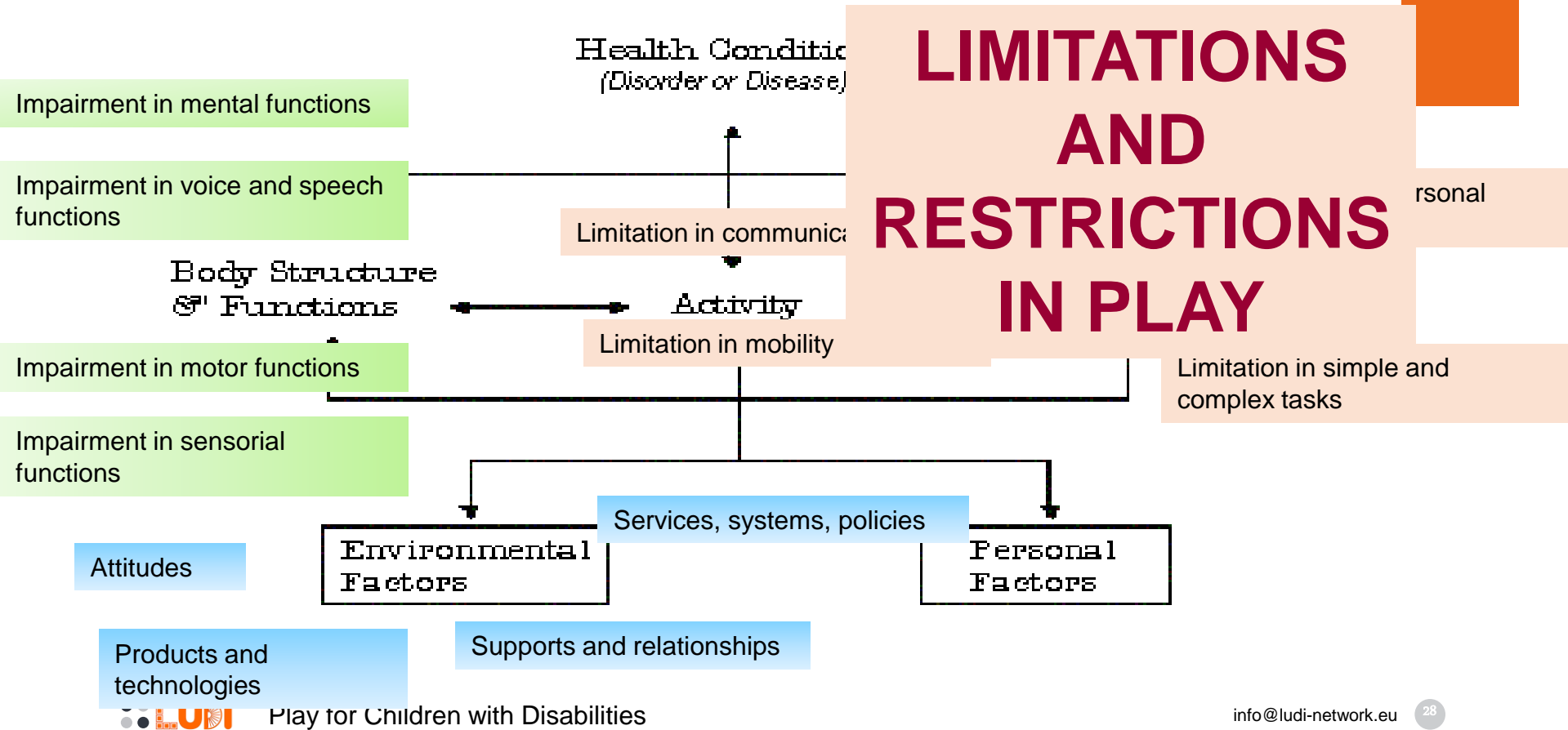


The play difficulties are due to a wrong or incorrect or unfruitful relationship between

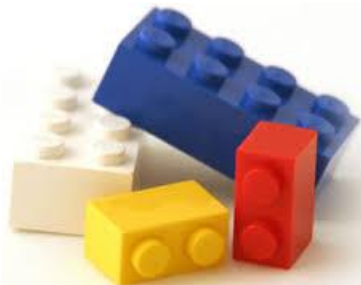
- the peculiar mode of functioning of these children
- and what the contexts of life can offer to them

**Let's explain this with the ICF model of the WHO (2001)**

# + According to ICF...

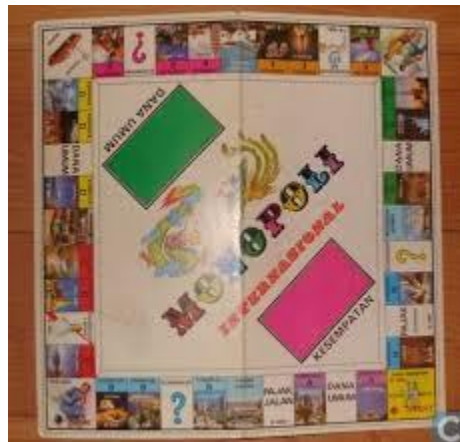


# + When a child has a motor impairment..





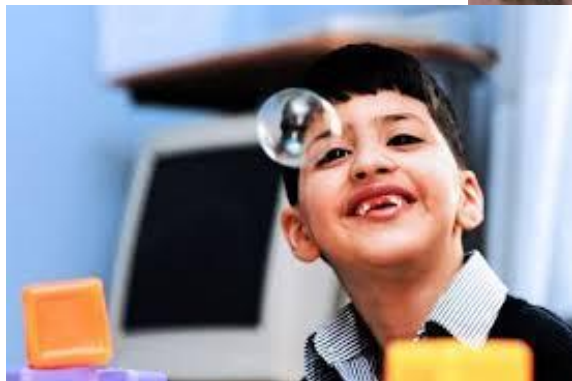
# When a child has an intellectual impairment..







# In case of Autism Spectrum Disorders...





# In case of vision impairment...





# In case of hearing impairment...





**WHAT CAN BE DONE ?**

**WHAT ARE WE DOING ?**

# LUDI challenge

to spread the belief that children with functional limitations are first and foremost children with specific needs and

to spread awareness on the importance of giving children with disabilities the opportunity to play

to assure children with disabilities the full opportunity to claim the accomplishment of their right to play

to put play at the center of a multidisciplinary intervention regarding children with disabilities

to establish the need for a further more specific General Comment to ART. 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

to increase the visibility and authority of “play for children with disabilities” the scientific and social



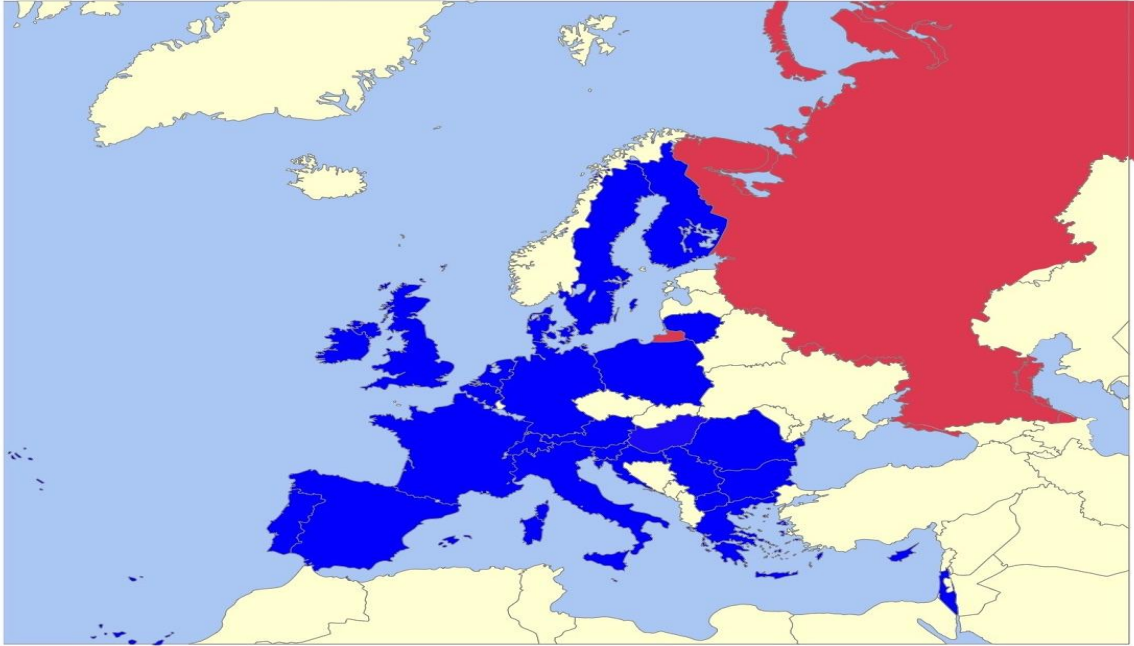
# LUDI adopted frameworks

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

that means

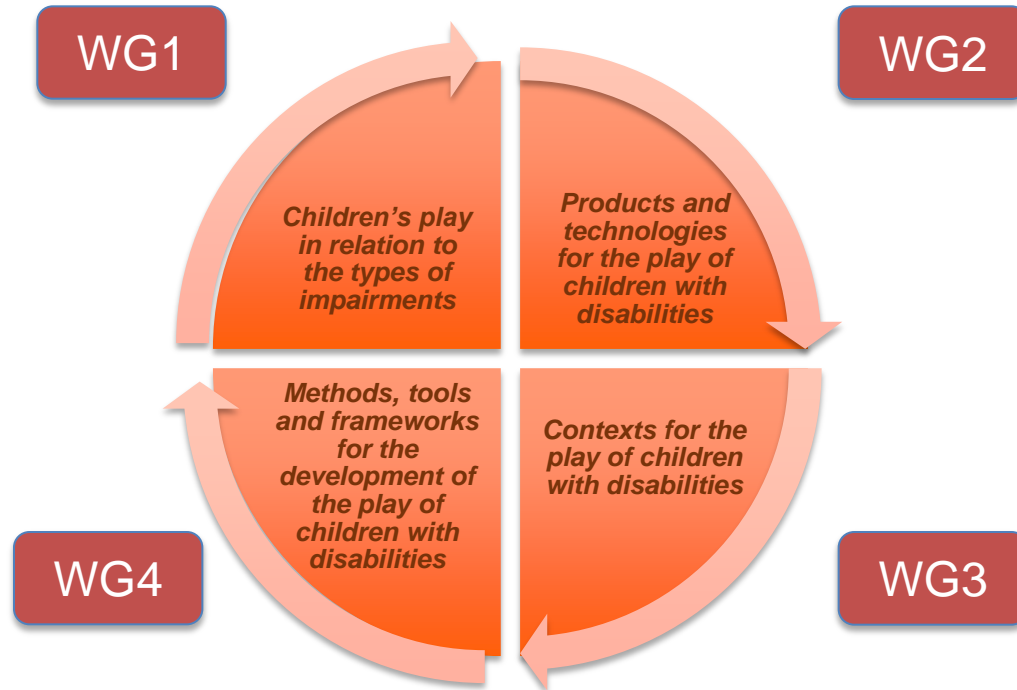
- The inclusive approach, for a full and effective participation and inclusion in society, in particular during childhood
- The claim for the childhood of a child with disabilities “simply” as the time of childhood
- The awareness of the role played by environmental factors in the life of children with some kinds of impairments, and the need to positively influence both contextual and personal factors

# A picture of the COST Action LUDI (2014-2018)



- a multidisciplinary network of 32 countries and almost 100 researchers and practitioners
- belonging to the humanistic and technological fields
- to study the topic of play for children with disabilities

# Organizational aspects



Advisory Board  
of persons with  
disabilities and  
families'  
representatives

# LUDI expected results - 1

## ***Societal impact***

to spread to clinical, educational and family contexts the idea of a child who, despite his/her disability, can rely on play as the strongest spring of his/her own development

but also the idea that play must be supported, encouraged, and enhanced through appropriate relationships, contexts and effective tools

# LUDI expected results - 2

## *Scientific impact*

to develop tools and theoretical-critical methodologies of effective intervention for children with disabilities

to reach new knowledge in the psycho-pedagogical, medical, rehabilitative sciences

new knowledge, hopefully, will in its turn contribute to change practices and interventions as well as the current thinking on every child's play



# LUDI expected results - 3

## *Technological impact*

an increased usability of tools and technologies for play available on the market

jointly to availability of assistive technologies and knowledge about their use

will be hopefully the consequence of increased awareness in the field

will allow inclusive play situations among children with disabilities and those with typical development

# LUDI expected results - 4

## ***Policy impact***

the widespread awareness that will result from the dissemination and the application of LUDI results

will have a positive impact also on the recognition of the right to play for children with disabilities  
and on the adoption of measures to allow the exercise of this right

First outcomes

# Publications



S. Besio,  
D. Bulgarelli,  
V. Stancheva-  
Popkostadinova  
(Eds.)

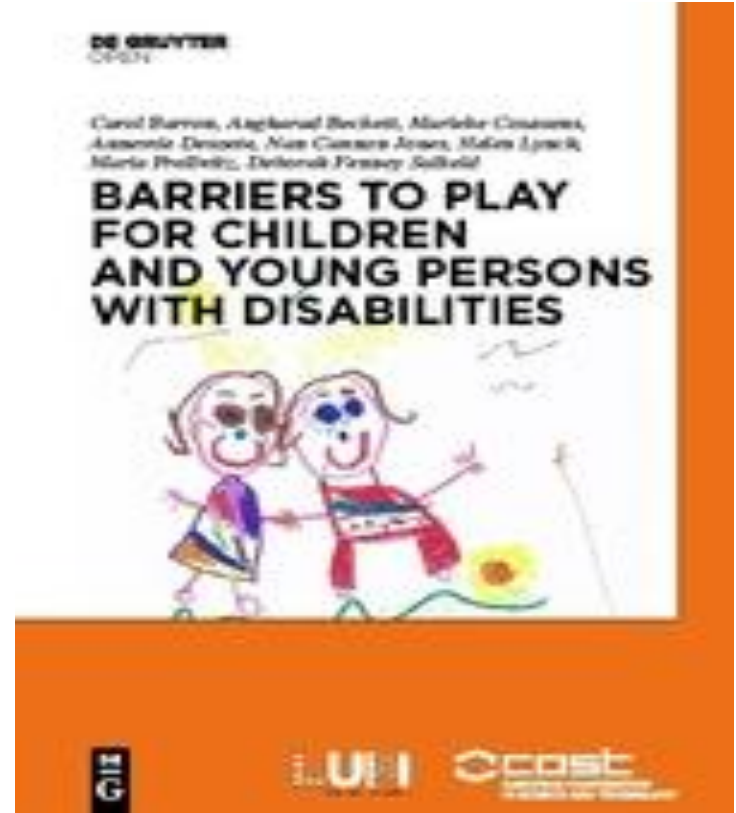
Berlin/Warsaw  
De Gruyter Open, 2017

[www.degruyter.com/view/product/481126](http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/481126)

# Publications

C. Barron,  
A. Beckett,  
M. Coussens,  
A. Desoete,  
N. Cannon Jones  
H. Lynch,  
M. Prellwitz,  
D. Fenney Salkeld

Berlin/Warsaw  
De Gruyter Open, 2017



[www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/481918?rskey=SYSCIF&result=9](http://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/481918?rskey=SYSCIF&result=9)



## + Publications in progress



*Theoretical models for the evaluation of the play of children with disabilities*

*Users' Needs Report on Play for Children with Disabilities. Parents' and Children's Views*

1<sup>ST</sup> LUDI TRAINING SCHOOL | APRIL 18-21, 2017

# PLAY&TOYS FOR ALL



located at Zuyd University  
of Applied Sciences



Heerlen - Netherlands



Training

ase



Herleen (N

# Final products (2018)

- **Training model** to support play of children with disabilities in inclusive contexts and on strategies of intervention (methods and tools)



- **Guidelines** for the play of children with disabilities. Methodologies, tools, contexts, relationships

# The LUDI Advisory Board

To collect directly the voices  
of children and their families

To be sure to answer to the  
real needs of children with  
disabilities and their families

To guarantee LUDI themes  
and work the social impact it  
is looking for and it deserves





# The LUDI Position Statement - 1

- Play for children with disabilities is not an insignificant or marginal issue.
- Play matters for **all children** – and for humankind – and consequently for *children with disabilities* since primarily they are *children*. Play matters for **human development in society** – growing, learning and socializing – because this is what play supports during childhood.
- This ultimately concerns the **future of us all**, because happy and well-rounded children will go on to be the best citizens we can envisage for the future world.

# The LUDI Position Statement - 2

## Our proposals

- That, in keeping with the above statements, new attention is devoted, **in all relevant policy fields to children**, their specific characteristics, their quality of life and wellbeing.
- That there be greater engagement of relevant bodies with existing research and increased resourcing of **research into childhood and the worlds in which children live**.
- That **research and interventions in the field of children with disabilities might experience a renaissance**, revealing their fundamental right to be respected, well-treated, considered and consulted, because they are, first of all, our children and they belong to the world.



## Children with disabilities need to play

We must give evidence to their voices

We must make the child re-emerge  
from behind the disability





**Provoking altogether  
a cultural shift  
in the play of children with disabilities**