



**Play, Toys and Intercultural Early Childhood Education
Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
Play, Education, Toys and Languages (PETaL)
Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey, 2023
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, European Union**

Jean-Pierre Rossie

Syllabus for the lessons with PowerPoints

- 1 An anthropological approach to intercultural early education p. 2**
- 2 An anthropological approach to learning and training p. 9**
- 3 Moroccan Children's Tangible Toy Heritage for
Intercultural Early Childhood and Informal Education p. 18**
- 4 North African Children's Intangible Play Heritage for
Intercultural Early Childhood and Informal Education p. 21**
- 5 Toy museums and North African children's play culture p. 22**

**Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies
Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Braga, Portugal
Catholic University of Portugal
2023**

Jean-Pierre Rossie

PhD sociocultural anthropologist

1 An Anthropological Approach to Intercultural Early Childhood Education

PETaL, Marmara University, Istanbul, October 2023

1 Intercultural, Multicultural and Global Education

Intercultural education promotes understanding and value cultural differences, and to develop an open-minded attitude towards different peoples, communities, and countries.

Multicultural education provides students with knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups; it assumes that the future society is pluralistic.

Global education is a more recent approach that emphasizes the unity and interdependence of human society and stimulates an active learning process based on the universal values of tolerance, solidarity, equality, justice, inclusion, co-operation, and non-violence. (Information from Wikipedia where more explanation is found).

As much as possible, I use geographical and neutral concepts like Moroccan children, African villages, rural communities.

Themes in Relation to Intercultural and Global Education

Four themes are discussed: Similarity, Diversity, Change, Environment, and two pitfalls.

1 Similarity

- Human beings seem to react in a similar way to the uncertainties related to nature and human condition (draught, floods, illness).

- People's joys and fears are not only expressed on a personal level but also on a collective level through festivities and rituals (birth, marriage, death...) and on specific times of the year (religious feasts, harvest, summer and winter solstice, New Year).
- Where people live together there seems to be a basic need to celebrate and to put on stage experiences, and beliefs.
- Using artistic and theatrical forms to express common feelings and attitudes is common worldwide.
- Children play everywhere and always, except in extreme situations of conflict, illness, hunger, or maltreatment, and even then, it happens.
- The main categories of games and toys seem to be universal. Make-believe play, construction play, games of skill, games of chance and the toys used in these can be found almost everywhere (e.g., hopscotch, building small shelters, balls, dolls, masks).

2 Diversity

- There surely is a strong common background to humans on the biological, social, and cultural level, nevertheless human groups want to create a boundary between themselves and other groups.
- Looking on TV at the way people in different countries and different continents eat, dress, travel, pray, mourn, and celebrate offers abundant examples.
- What makes games and toys different is the specific environmental, economic, and sociocultural situation of each community (desert, flat land, mountain country, river, lake, and seaside regions, rural or urban areas).
- These geographic, economic, and sociocultural situations influence children's practices like making toys oneself or using industrially made toys, being largely autonomous in deciding what to play and what toys to

use or participating mostly in adult organized entertainment and receiving toys as gifts from adults.

3 Change

- All communities and countries are in evolution. A ‘primitive’ stable and unchanging ‘tribe’ does not exist and never existed.
- Every human group has its past and present, its history, and change is fundamental on the whole planet. What differs is the way in which this history is recorded (written or oral history) and experienced (openly discussed, kept secret, idealized, used in conflicts).
- The rapidity of change is also different. Until World War II one could say that change in the Western world was obviously quicker than for example in Morocco.
- But this is not the case anymore when one sees the rapid evolution from a predominantly village-based population to a situation where most of the population lives in towns and cities. According to the United Nations Population Fund more than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas in 2023. Available on (<https://www.unfpa.org/urbanization>)

4 Environment

- The natural and human environments have a fundamental influence on childhood and children’s play and toys. One example among many highlights this: the availability of open space in rural areas or its lack in crowded cities. Factors such as climate, relief, desert, rural or urban areas, availability or lack of water and vegetation directly influence the possibilities for playing and making toys. Factors related to the human environment are not less important, among which the customs, norms and beliefs of the society, the family and community organization, the means of subsistence, the role of age, sex and social group and the impact of environmental, technological, and sociocultural change.

- A topic often linked to developing countries is the lack of industrial resources. This is easily interpreted as solely negative although it may have positive effects for children's creativity and autonomy. Children being overwhelmed with sophisticated play material in consumption societies can be hampered in their independence from adult dominance and in their creativity.
- Children in developing countries, in rural as well as urban regions, are confronted with many risks but at the same time can learn about risky behavior. Something that North American and European children may lack because their parents are sometimes obsessed by creating a 'zero risk' society (Tim Gill, playground researcher www.rethinkingchildhood.com).

However, one should be aware of two pitfalls.

- To idealize the situation of children from popular milieus in African countries by emphasizing solely that they create remarkable toys at no costs, are masters in recycling, have many friends to play with. This is a one-sided vision hiding for example that in rural areas where self-made toys are common, the children making them and their families also suffer from a lack of health, medical, educational and employment opportunities.
- To lament on African children by looking only at the negative side of their situation, namely that according to the standards of a Western consumer society they are poor and miserable, live in bad conditions and have no 'real' toys.

The living conditions of these children, just as those of children living in consumption societies, have advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, the positive as well as the negative aspects in both situations should be considered.

Ignorance about foreign peoples and cultures in a world where one eats and buys things from many far away nations is a contradiction. With the global economy and market of today also travel ideas and behaviours. Remaining ignorant can become a breeding ground for fear, distrust and rejection of the unfamiliar and the strange. Luckily, younger children still have an open mind

and using children's entertainments, play activities and toys to talk about how children live in African and other countries is a pleasant and non-threatening approach.

2 Using indigenous play and toy heritages for pedagogical and sociocultural purposes

International organizations promoting the development of rural world children and stimulating a locally adapted educational system put forward the following principles:

- Respecting local children's and families' identities and cultures.
- Relating actions to families and local environments in which children grow up.
- Using young children's mother tongue.
- Involving children in their development by considering their experiences.
- Stimulating children's resilience.
- Helping children to develop physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and morally through playful activities.

These principles clearly demonstrate the need to respect, study, promote and use children's cultures not only in education, but also in the strategies of organizations addressing children, women, and families. So, I like to add to the saying *children are the future of a country* another one, namely *development neglecting children's participation has no future*. Knowing that games and toys as well as other forms of entertainment like storytelling, music, dance, and feasts, are important in children's lives, one should recognize their value for an educationally adapted development.

“Play as a source of insight into the child and the society” in “Play, education and child welfare”. p. 19-31. In Rossie, Jean-Pierre (1984). *Games and Toys: Anthropological Research on Their Practical Contribution to Child Development. Aids to Programming UNICEF Assistance to Education*. Paris: UNESCO, Unit for Co-operation with UNICEF and World Food Programme. *Notes. Comments... Child, Family, Community, Pre-school N.S.* 147, 71 p., 64 ills. Available on <https://www.academia.edu/6536206>

Information and photos on Moroccan and other North African and Saharan children's play and toys are found in my books and PowerPoints available on *Academia.edu*: <https://ucp.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie>

Intercultural and global education, a pedagogical field of growing importance, is discussed through the author's attempts of using North African and Saharan children's play, games, and toys for workshops with children, children and adult family members, pupils, students, teachers in training, appointed teachers, and volunteers. These activities took place in museums, toy libraries, children's libraries, preschools, primary and high schools and in sociocultural associations in Argentina, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal (Rossie, 2005/2013, 205-209; Rossie, 2013, 269-289).

Article "Using North African toys and play locally and in a multicultural context". In *Play and Folklore*, Museum Victoria (Victoria, Australia), December 2016, no. 66, p. 19-24. Available on <https://www.academia.edu/42323958>

After showing African children's play and toy making activities in Europe or elsewhere, it has been useful to involve the participating children, something I started in 1989 with 4-5-year-old children in my hometown Ghent (Belgium). For example, one can ask the participating children what they like or do not like about the living conditions and the entertainments of the children they have seen in the PowerPoint presentation and what they like or do not like in their own situation.

The universality of the major categories of games such as pretend play, construction play, games of skill, games of chance and of the toys used in these games, favours a comparative approach. During workshops it has been quite easy to stimulate insight, empathy and creativity in children, adolescents, and adults by showing them the diversity and creativity in the Atlas Mountains and other rural children's play culture. The positive image of African children transmitted in such workshops contrasts with the negative images of miserable or starving African children often shown in the media.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise the necessity to link an *intercultural approach to play*, into which fits my research, to a *playful approach to the intercultural*. This is essential, because today's individuals cannot survive in a multicultural and interdependent world if they do not understand the universality *and* the specificity of the living conditions in their own group and in other societies. Using children's play and toy heritages from all over the world for pedagogical and sociocultural activities offers a nonthreatening, positive, and joyful way to relate children, adolescents and even adults to other ways of life and to the natural and sociocultural environments in which populations thrive.

PowerPoint: North African Toys and Play in an Intercultural Context, 2021, slides 1-50, available on <https://www.academia.edu/47772606>

Attention should be given to highlight similarities between Moroccan children's customs and those still existing in Great Britain and other European countries. Some examples are mentioned below.

Moroccan practices versus European practices

- In rural Morocco playing with self-made dolls versus in Europe playing with dolls from toy industry.
- In Morocco singing and playing music and in Europe singing and playing music.
- In Morocco Ashura door to door collection versus in Europe Magi feast, Halloween, door to door collection.
- In Morocco spraying water and also in Europe spraying water
- In Morocco firing sparks oneself versus Europe firework with bought projectiles.
- In Morocco creating personages for masquerades versus in Europe creating personages for carnival, Halloween.

Jean-Pierre Rossie

PhD sociocultural anthropologist

2 An Anthropological Approach to Learning and Training

PETaL, Marmara University, Istanbul, November 2023

1 Anthropology of Learning and Training

The **sociology of education** has been more oriented towards formal learning within the Western school system where adults are the organizers and authorities, and pupils the subjects. Children's entertainment in these countries is often organized and controlled by adults. On the contrary, the **anthropology of education** searches more for learning processes in African, Asian and South American indigenous communities where informal learning by adults is supplemented by learning through the impact of older children and child organized groups, regularly in the context of play, toy making and toy using activities.

Brian Sutton-Smith wrote: "Playing games is always playing games for the sake of games in a particular social context with its own particular social arrangements" (*The Ambiguity of Play*, 1997: 120).

Toys, Play, Culture and Society. An anthropological approach with reference to North Africa and the Sahara is the title of a book I published in 2005 (reworked digital version 2013) and that resumes my information and point of views. Putting these first four terms on the same level means that there is a direct interaction between them. It is to say that play activities and toys are not only determined by cultures and societies but that eventually play activities and toys also influence cultural and social evolution.

In the document "International Master's Programme for the Education of 21st Century Early Childhood Teachers" it is written that "Children everywhere need to socialize, run about, investigate their environment, create new words... Play should be integrated throughout as an effective means to support all domains of development... (2017, p. 123). I totally agree, however, I would like to remark that rural children do all this but that

it is less possible for children who live in overcrowded popular quarters of cities all over the world.

Themes in Relation to an Anthropological Approach to Education

Three themes are discussed: creativity in play and toy making activities, indigenous learning and training, and multilingualism in rural Morocco.

1 Creativity in play and toy making activities

(Rossie et al., 2021, p. 427-433).

One of the basic concepts of the term ‘creativity’ is the act of making, forming, producing, or bringing into existence, for example a toy or a game. I would add the idea of doing something unusual, new, and even aesthetic. However, from the point of view of children, such classifications do not make sense because what interests them is to indulge in the pleasure of playing and creating. What I have seen in the Tunisian Sahara and in Morocco seems to me to correspond to the notion of practical creativity as well as to doing something personal and independent of adult interference (Rossie et al., 2021, p. 427-433).

Some girls and boys from these regions stand out because of their individuality and personal initiative. Children can develop certain tendencies and play some roles that set them apart from other children. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize not only the differences between playgroups but also between players. Playgroup leaders and children recognized by other children as specialists in making toys or in organizing play activities are such people. Those children who rarely play alone also show personal initiative. However, creativity as an individual phenomenon needs to be broadened to include the fact that there also exists collective creativity manifest in playgroups where several children work together to solve problems and build toys. An excellent example of this collective creativity is found when clay is used to make figurines and utensils (Rossie et al., 2021, p. 546-599).

Every toy made by a child and every play activity is a creation, an original act resulting from the child’s personality combined with influences from the physical and human environment in which the child lives. Children's

inventiveness in the use of natural materials of mineral, vegetable, animal and even human (hair) origin is omnipresent. North African and Saharan children have also shown to play creatively with waste material and material produced by the toy industry or other industries.

I want to stress that these children's creativity can be expressed in different ways: by using new material for elaborating traditional concepts as when a plastic doll becomes an indigenous bride, by using traditional material for elaborating new concepts, as when Ghrib boys make telephone lines in the sand, and by transferring new meanings to generation-old toys by using them in a totally new context, as when toy-animals of palm-leaves were made to sell them to tourists. One can find examples of creativity in all types of rural children's play such as motor, visual, verbal, non-verbal and musical expressions, alone or in combination as in pretend play, games of skill, singing and dancing.

2 Indigenous learning and training

The example of indigenous learning and multilingualism refers to the Amazigh population in Morocco. This population, before called Berber, is part of the large group of Amazigh peoples living in North Africa and the Sahara. The Amazigh are the native inhabitants of these areas who before the beginning of the Christian area where in contact with the Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans. The Tuareg are the best know group living in the Sahara and the Sahel. The populations mentioned here are the Moroccan Anti-Atlas, High Atlas, and Middle Atlas Amazigh. The information on Amazigh-speaking children's toy and play cultures comes from my fieldwork in the Atlas Mountains (1992-present). Fortunately, I could rely since 2005 on the collaboration of Khalija Jariaa, an Anti-Atlas woman, who became a mainstay for my research on children in this region.

The play and toy cultures of Amazigh peoples belong to the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity. The communication to the next generation of these heritages is largely the responsibility of older children and peers. This communication not only includes games and toys but also the non-verbal and verbal transmission of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, skills, sensibilities, and emotions related to toy-making and play activities.

These children's play is important for their informal learning and for their integration into the family and community.

When making toys children must look for specific material in relation to special purposes. So, they not only learn about the properties of the objects but also about the techniques needed to create toys with them.

These children's toys and games are inspired by the world of the adults living in their communities. However, I view their play activities not as imitation of the adult world but as an interpretation through children's eyes.

Non-verbal communication such as visual communication, gestures, and movements, play a great role in the playful transmission of knowledge and skills between Amazigh children but verbal communication through monologues, dialogues and songs is also present.

In dolls and doll play, for example, a lot of symbols, significations, aesthetic, social and moral values are transmitted from one generation to the next and interiorized by the children. Traditional toys and games still made and played today in the Anti-Atlas rural areas show that the communication of the local toy and play culture between older and younger children still functions well.

Through their toy making and play activities Amazigh and other North African and Saharan children developed and develop their interpretation of the adult material world, of female and male roles and duties, of festivities and rituals, of convictions, beliefs, and morals. Yet, children are not only quickly adapting to internal and external changes but sometimes even advancing these changes. In 2002 for example, in a make-believe play about the wedding feast the bride doll refers to traditional preoccupations. However, during this game two Anti-Atlas village children use a toy mobile phone, so doing referring to high tech preoccupations at a time when no mobile phone network was locally available.

The basic role in this communication does not belong to adults but to children. It occurs between older and younger children and between peers, whereby long-lasting playgroups based on family and neighbour relationships play an important role. Play areas in villages and popular

neighbourhood streets of towns are real laboratories for development. It is there that children from the age of about three daily mixes with children of their own age, older children and sometimes adolescents. Yet, in this process verbal instruction is rather seldom and learning how to do and how to behave is largely dependent on observation, participation, and demonstration.

What young children experience and learn through their playful relations with same age or older children is without any doubt of fundamental importance for their development and for the relationships they will build out as adolescents and adults. Moreover, the close contacts between children in playgroups strongly influence their socialization and the development of skills, intelligence, communication, worldviews, beliefs, and morals. In such children's societies girls and boys learn most games, venture to make toys, integrate the rules managing playgroups and gender differences, learn the non-verbal and verbal child culture, and so on. In small children's playgroups supervised by an older girl or possibly an older boy as well as in playgroups formed by children of primary school age, situations of informal learning regularly occur especially when creating toys.

About the age of six years children progressively escape the control of an older child and start organising their own playgroups with peers, although there can be some difference in age in such peer groups. The fact that peer groups are based on kinship and neighbourhood strengthens the cohesion between its members. From that moment on, comrades of age become an important reference group and long-lasting friendships are built that may continue into adulthood.

The intergenerational transmission of Amazigh children's culture is based on contacts between older children and young children, seldom between adults and children because adults rarely interfere in children's play.

In Amazigh children's play from the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the relation between play on the one hand and reality on the other is strong. From rural Morocco, I can offer no examples of games and toys referring to a fantasy or virtual world. In opposition to this, it can be said that the inspiration for pretend play comes, today more than in the past, from situations and information that are not related to local life. Television

and Smartphones bring Amazigh children in contact with the way people eat, dress, play, go to school, travel, and celebrate in North African and foreign countries. Watching news items from all over the world and movies and comics from Brazil, Egypt, France, Japan, Turkey, and the United States expose them to divergent multicultural information. European tourists and tourists of Moroccan origin living abroad also influence these children's ideas and behaviour. Their influence is obvious in recent Anti-Atlas girls' doll play. Notwithstanding the evolution of Atlas children's play heritage away from tradition, many play and toy-making activities popular among their grandparents are nowadays regularly found in these rural communities. However, it remains to be seen what the result will be in one or two decades of recent technological and sociocultural changes.

Formal and informal education can surely benefit from a well-considered use of play, games, and toys. If this is true for Moroccan schools, where Arabic is the language used, this is even more so when the educational system needs to adapt to Amazigh-speaking children enrolled in preschool or primary school. It certainly is indicated to start from the knowledge children acquired about their natural and human environment to teach lessons about these topics. The information on children's play, teachers can gather can be used to develop lessons on many subjects. The verbal component of games, such as specific words and expressions, riddles, dialogues, and songs represent a gold mine for learning languages. Several games of skill developing dexterity, equilibrium, suppleness, speed, strength, and self-control can be included in the curriculum.

An evaluation by the Moroccan Ministry of Education and UNICEF in 2014 states that in about 80 % of the Moroccan preschools, play is not a priority contrary to reading and writing (2014, 13). In the conclusions one reads that a major obstacle for a high quality and generalised preschool education in Morocco comes from a policy lacking educational principles and clear values appropriate for these children, and where learning through play is not a pedagogical priority.

3 Multilingualism in rural Morocco

The general idea is that everyone speaks Arabic in Morocco, but the linguistic reality is quite different as especially in rural areas people often speak one of the three now recognized Amazigh languages: Tarifit in the Rif, Tamazight in the Middle and High Atlas and Tashelhit in the Anti-Atlas. Moroccan Arabic is the language of education and French is quite often used. A multilingual situation is the normal one in Moroccan Amazigh families.

The special but not exceptional case of a multilingual situation in two Moroccan households can offer an insight in the linguistic complexity in which younger and older children from the Anti-Atlas grow up. As an example, I discuss the following real multilingual situation, a linguistic situation that may be different for different children in the same household. In 2016, Yousef, a three-year-old boy, returned with his parents to the Anti-Atlas village Ikenwen. The basics of Hassaniya Arabic that he learned while living in Bir Gandouz Jdid near the Mauritanian border are quickly forgotten. In Bir Gandouz he already learned Tashelhit as his parents spoke it at home. Now that he has been living for a year in Ikenwèn, where everyone speaks Tashelhit, this language has become his mother tongue. In Ikenwèn, Yousef goes to a *rawd el atfal*, the kindergarten where Moroccan Arabic, the language of instruction in primary school, is strongly promoted. In the process, he becomes bilingual. Kelthoum's linguistic situation is different. Having lived in Bir Gandouz Jdid up to about four years of age, she learned the basics of Tashelhit through her parents, partly Hassaniya Arabic because this was spoken by three older children living in the same household, as well as Moroccan Arabic she learned in the kindergarten since the age of two and a half. Now that she lived a year in Ikenwèn, Tashelhit has become her predominant language. A fourth language slowly comes into play because in the kindergarten, some French is taught, French words that Kelthoum likes to use when she meets tourists who spend the night in their camper near the house where she lives in Ikenwèn.

Although Kelthoum's multilingual experience and that of other children in similar situations is special, almost all Amazigh children and youth are at least bilingual. They speak one of the three Amazigh languages in Morocco (Tashelhit, Tamazight or Tarifit) and Moroccan Arabic they learn at school.

In addition, they also learn French from a young age and English in the secondary school. Although the level of spoken French is very variable, at least a basic knowledge exists. Regarding English, one can say that some adolescents make more efforts to learn this language than to learn French. In February 2017, I met in the fields near an Anti-Atlas village, now integrated in the town Tiznit, with a group of five about sixteen-year-old boys from popular families attending a secondary school in Tiznit. Although I started to speak in Moroccan Arabic, three youngsters preferred to continue speaking English with me instead of French. Monolingual Amazigh people are mostly elderly women living in villages who did not have the opportunity to go to primary school during their childhood.

PowerPoint: North African Toys and Play in an Intercultural Context, 2021, slides 51-91, available on <https://www.academia.edu/47772606>

PowerPoint & text: Comparing Greco-Roman and North African play and toys.

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2020). *Comparing play and toys from Greco-Roman antiquity with traditional play and toys from rural North Africa*. 31 p. & PowerPoint, 49 slides. In website ERC Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity (741520).

<https://www.academia.edu/41747435> (text),

<https://www.academia.edu/41746970> (PowerPoint).

References

All the publications of Rossie are available on (<https://ucp.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie>)

Heugh, K. (2017). Lessons from Africa prove the incredible value of mother tongue learning. Retrieved on 6.4.2019 from <http://theconversation.com/lessons-from-africa-prove-the-incredible-value-of-mother-tongue-learning-73307>

Lester, S. & Russel, W. (2010). *Children's right to play. An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*. Working Papers

- in Early Childhood Development, volume 57, The Hague, NL: Bernard van Leer Foundation. Retrieved on 6.4.2019 from <http://ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BvLF-IPAWorkingPaper-Childrens-Right-to-Play-Dec2010f.pdf>
- Lancy D. F., Bock J. & Gaskins S., (2010). *The Anthropology of learning in Childhood*. London: AltaMira Press.
- Mawere, M. (2012). *The Struggle of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in an Age of Globalization: A Case for Children's Traditional Games in South-Eastern Zimbabwe*. Langaa RPCIG, CM: African Books Collective. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.ph/books?id=XH35Y3A6rGEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=south+african+indigenous+toys&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjT3ZX305ThAhXk6XMBHfwcCVc4ChDoAQhPMAg#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Rossie, J.-P. (2008). *Ashura: a children's feast in Morocco*. PowerPoint presentation with 29 slides made for a project in Global Education of Humanities Education Centre, London. - The texts for this PowerPoint Presentation are given in the next publication. <https://www.academia.edu/9720404>
- Rossie, J.-P. (2008). *Ashura: a children's feast in Morocco. Texts related to the PowerPoint presentation made for a project in Global Education of Humanities Education Centre, London, 12* - To be used with the foregoing PowerPoint Presentation. <https://www.academia.edu/9720271>
- Rossie, J.-P. (2019). Amazigh Children's Toys and Play Cultures. In *Fourth World Journal*, vol. 18, 1, p. 4-19, 6 ill. <https://www.academia.edu/39955496> (English) [https://www.academia.edu/39837548/Los Juguetes y las Culturas del Juego de los Ni%C3%B1os Amazigh](https://www.academia.edu/39837548/Los_Juguetes_y_las_Culturas_del_Juego_de_los_Ni%C3%B1os_Amazigh) (español).
- Rossie, J.-P., Jariaa, Kh., Daoumani, B. & Fassoulas, A. (2021). *Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures. Make-believe play among Amazigh children of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas*. Braga: Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Catholic University of Portugal, 2 volumes, 739 p., 638 ill. Volume 1: <https://www.academia.edu/42967387> Volume 2: <https://www.academia.edu/42968584>
- Sutton-Smith, Brian (1986). *Toys as Culture*. New York, London: Gardner Press Inc., XII + 292 p.

Jean-Pierre Rossie

PhD sociocultural anthropologist

3 Moroccan Children's Tangible Toy Heritage for Intercultural Early Childhood and Informal Education

PETaL, Marmara University, Istanbul, November 2023

1 This toy theme is discussed through a PowerPoint bearing the above-mentioned title, 2022, available on <https://www.academia.edu/106691390>

2 Questions from Isik Kamaraj (Istanbul) to Jean-Pierre Rossie (Ghent) on toys and toy libraries, April 2011

Isik: how do you define free play?

Jean-Pierre: play organized, directed by children, play that remains in the hands of the children as players, without adults organizing, intervening, or dominating this children's play.

Isik: What about children's play organized, directed by adults?

Jean-Pierre: In more 'traditional' situations, communities (in pre-industrial, early industrial communities, in Third World or rural communities etc) adult's organizing and/or directing children's play was certainly a real exception. Play and toys (including toy making activities) were very much the realm of children themselves from which adults were (very often) excluded. Adults normally only intervened in children's play when this play was disturbing them, did happen when adults needed the children to do some tasks, when children in their play broke moral rules and sociocultural norms too clearly. Apart from these limitations children had great freedom to 'invent', organize and direct their play activities. If some form of domination in play existed this came from older children playing with or looking after younger children and from 'leaders' in playgroups of peers.

Isik: How do you look at play and toys under the influence of adults?

Jean-Pierre: First I would like to stress that this (naturally, traditionally) was and should be the exception and that children's play should remain as free as possible. This is not to express a negative attitude to the pedagogical and therapeutical use of play but towards the use of the term 'children's play' in such relationships. In pedagogical situations inside or outside the school system the concept of 'children's play' can be used to hide the real purpose of the activity which is not to offer children the possibility to play but to engage them in a (playful) exercise for purposes defined by adults, purposes that are not related to play but to learning or to performing some tasks. Yet, it is sure that children's free play has a developmental and 'learning' function as well on the biological, cognitive, cultural, and social level. When using play activities for therapeutical purposes one also should not mask the adult organized play activity as (free) children's play, although free children's play can have a therapeutic effect.

Isik: How do you view toys and play in toy libraries?

Jean-Pierre: I have not been in contact with toy libraries and remained outside the toy library movement, and therefore have little knowledge of the origin and development of toy libraries in Europe and elsewhere. However, I think the main purpose was and probably still is to offer children in unfavourable situations (popular class children, handicapped children, migrant children, consumption society children submerged by electronic toys) the possibility to encounter so-called 'good', 'adapted', 'useful' toys. Eventually and if possible, there also is the intention to offer children space, information, and stimulation to use these toys and to inform, accompany, help, educate parents and other adults on topics such as 'good', 'adapted', 'traditional', 'multicultural', 'developmental', 'educational', 'technologic', 'electronic' toys. This stimulating, developmental or even pedagogical approach is done by more or less trained volunteer or professional workers. Still, one should keep in mind that this is a setting organized and directed by adults who are the one's deciding on what is a suitable setting, what are suitable toys and acceptable forms of play. It also remains to be seen how far free children's play is possible in this setting, what kind of participation the children themselves (and their parents) have in all this, for example in choosing the available toys, offering toys to the toy library.

Isik: Play spaces and toy libraries?

Jean-Pierre: In this context it is important if an open-air area (a schoolyard, an (adventurous) playground, a piece of natural environment) can be used by

the children adjacent or near the toy library or not. I would like to stress that for me a good play environment for children is more easily found for example in a Moroccan village (where much of my research on children's play and toy making activities has taken place) than in a high-tech community in an overcrowded city with almost no space that children can occupy freely.

However, one should not become paralyzed by an 'ideal' situation and therefore be prevented from acting for the benefit of children's play possibilities in unfavourable situations. But at the same time, one should not turn things in such a way as viewing that a toy library is a better situation for children's play and children's development than a natural rural setting where children enjoy the freedom of wandering about and creating play settings on their own.

Jean-Pierre Rossie

PhD sociocultural anthropologist

4 North African Children's Intangible Play Heritage for Intercultural Early Childhood and Informal Education

PETaL, Marmara University, Istanbul, November 2023

1 This play theme is discussed through a PowerPoint bearing the above-mentioned title. Available on <https://www.academia.edu/106692413>

2 A useful and interesting topic for intercultural and informal education is the theme of masks and masquerades that are found in many cultures and societies.

PowerPoint Masks and Masquerades in Amazigh Morocco, 2022, Available on www.academia.edu/95164348

Jean-Pierre Rossie

PhD sociocultural anthropologist

5 Toy Museum experiences and North African children's play culture

PETaL, Marmara University, Istanbul, April 2021

Next to organizing workshops, seminars, and building or participating in expositions, I donated about 1200 toys, mostly created by Moroccan rural children, to museums and sociocultural organizations in Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal. The major reasons to offer these toys to institutions outside Morocco are the preservation and disclosure of this vanishing children's culture, the lack of interest of Moroccan cultural institutions and the integration of these remarkable artefacts into the cultural heritage of humanity.

My experiences with toy museums, toy libraries, ethnographic and cultural museums reflect different objectives of this training for preschool teachers in the 21st century:

- To understand the meaning and importance of toy libraries for the continuity of toy and play cultures from the past and the present.
- To recognize the importance of World Play Day for social-cultural reproduction and continuity through toys and play.
- To understand the contribution of toys, play and games from different cultures in the formation of social identity in society.

I am convinced that it is necessary to distinguish between *children's toys* (created or adapted by children) and *toys for children* (created by adults). This is in line with the recent distinction between the anthropological and sociological concepts *culture of children and culture of childhood*.

It is important to stress that a toy is only a toy when it is used for play activities. If this is not the case it becomes a decorative object, an object of prestige, an artistic or esthetical object, a ritual or religious object, etc. Of course, objects of these categories can become toys when used for playing. Attention must be given to toy and play cultures *from the past* and *from the present* as well as to toy and play cultures from the children's own society as those from other societies. This way an intercultural approach becomes possible not only on a historical level but also on a global level. Local toy cultures but also similar and different toy cultures should be integrated in this intercultural approach. It is certainly useful to refer to toys made by children themselves in consumption societies through creative children's workshops and compare these with toys made by children in rural areas in developing countries.

One should also remain conscient that the terms *child* and *childhood* vary chronologically and geographically. Being a child and be seen as a child varies on one hand from prehistory, over the ancient worlds, the medieval worlds, the 16th – 20th centuries to the 21st century. On the other hand, there is a difference between being a child and be seen as a child when living in a nomadic, rural, agricultural, urban, industrialized or consumption and digitalized community. Therefore, it is indispensable to give background information about the communities to which the children and toys in question belong. The same remark applies to gender differentiation between girls and boys.

According to Sharon Brookshawn (2009), the material world in which [contemporary] children live belong to adults and the toys and other playthings created for children's entertainment are not controlled by children but "rather imposed" by the adults. This is in strong opposition to the situation in Moroccan rural communities where adults do not interfere much in children's play and playgroups. Although times are changing due to the influence of TV programs, consumption and toy industries, the independence from adult interference of children between about three and fifteen years old when playing and making or using toys is still prevalent.

Museums and other organizations like toy libraries, university departments, youth centres have accepted easily toys made by children with natural and waste material, like those made by Moroccan children, because toys are seen as typical examples of children's material culture. These child-made toys can be simple but also complex when made by primary school children and adolescents. However, they are often fragile and need special care when collected and stored. One of the reasons of my donation of about 600 toys made by Moroccan children was the fact that this collection could be accepted by the French Ministry of Culture as part of the "Patrimoine de France", the heritage of France. This way they could not be taken away, sold, or neglected by the museum that received them. As my donation was accepted by the scientific committee of that ministry that was a fine guarantee for the conservation of this part of the Moroccan children's heritage.

Sharon Brookshawn (2009) discusses the "difficulty in identifying objects associated with children, especially when they are from the distant past. There are many archaeological artefacts in museum collections of unknown function – often, such material becomes labelled as 'ritual'." The advantage of ethnographic research on toys and play is that the context of the children and their communities are known as well as the use of playthings by children. This is a reason why in the archaeological research project *Locus Ludi* (University of Fribourg) a comparison between play and toys in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in rural North Africa and the Sahara was welcomed.

Most toys for make-believe play are miniaturized objects although this is not a necessity. For example, there is the tall male doll used by High Atlas boys to participate from a distance in the *Ahidus* dance of young men and young women. Playthings used for games of skill do not regularly follow that rule of miniaturization as they often are real objects taken from the nature and human environment, such as ropes, elastics, knucklebones, pebbles, flat surfaces, tins, plastic, and polystyrene objects, etc.

A major difference between adult made toys given to children and toys made by children themselves is that the adult made toys represent the views, aspirations, expectations and wishes of parents, other adult family members and friends. On the contrary, child made toys in non-western and western societies reveal more the children's point of view, their interpretations, wishes and abilities. Toy museums and children's museums should show, confront, and contrast both. In her article Sharon Brookshaw offers a terminology applied to 'material culture'.

The 'material culture of children' should be applied to those items that children make themselves or adapt into their own culture from the adult world that have a different use to that intended by the adult manufacturer. The 'material culture of childhood', on the other hand, should refer only to those items made for children by adults, as such objects reflect adult attitudes towards children and not the child's world in itself. However, these very specific definitions cannot easily be applied within a museum context due to the unknown provenance and uncertain histories of many items, and the difficulties of understanding the child's use and modification of objects. It is suggested, however, that this distinction is maintained theoretically in future work in this field wherever possible. (2009, p. 381).

Ethnographic research and fieldwork on children's play and toy cultures, like the one published in the collection Saharan and North African Toy and Play Cultures, and the series of catalogues on child-made toys Morocco donated among others to toy museums could help to overcome this theoretical blockage (<https://ucp.academia.edu/JeanPierreRossie>).

I have found the article "The Material Culture of Children and Childhood: Understanding Childhood Objects in the Museum Context" interesting and stimulating. Therefore, I would suggest its reading to the participants in this lesson. The reference and URL are mentioned hereafter.

PowerPoint: North African Toys and Play in an Intercultural Context, 2021, slides 92-118, available on <https://www.academia.edu/47772606>

References

Brookshawn, Sharon (2009). The Material Culture of Children and Childhood: Understanding Childhood Objects in the Museum Context. In *Journal of Material Culture*, Sage Journals, vol. 14 (3), p. 365-383. – <https://www.academia.edu/5046615>

Rossie, Jean-Pierre (2020). *Comparing play and toys from Greco-Roman antiquity with traditional play and toys from rural North Africa*. 31 p. & PowerPoint, 49 slides. In website ERC Locus Ludi. The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity (741520). <https://www.academia.edu/41747435> (text), <https://www.academia.edu/41746970> (slides).