

## 5 When Children Plan a Trip on Their Own

---

What ideas do children have and what do they imagine when allowed to plan a trip on their own? In the following case study, a father makes the gift of a one-week travel voucher to each of his two sons, with the proviso that the two boys must individually plan a summer vacation trip to take separately with the father. The father takes notes on the planning process that soon gets under way. The object under examination is a 360-page journal, made available by the family in question and kept jointly by the father with his two sons (13 years and 9 years old) for an entire calendar year, starting with the Christmas when the children received the travel voucher as presents. The journal records everything from detailed notes on the preliminary thinking to daily entries during both trips.

As both boys gradually develop ideas for their respective trips and discuss them with their father, they reread journals kept during past years and reflect on them. The father made the following entries: »Jack had stacked up the older journals of our previous father-son travels next to his bed and began to read in them. He called my attention to a drawing that I made in the harbor of Cagliari on Sardinia: ›I can still remember exactly when you did that, he says ... ›Look, dad, here is what I wrote down in South Tyrol when I was just 8 years old (reading now): ›For breakfast I had a pot of hot chocolate and dad ordered English tea. It was

a little comfort in view of the thick rainclouds outside our window. Hiking was still out of the question... so we sat in the inn's public room and played checkers (February 21).«

These older journals also cover travels undertaken by this West German family as a unit and include impressions recorded on those occasions by the mother, e.g., during a trip to France three years earlier. The mother made these entries: »I had looked forward to it for a long time. I was really excited when we saw the city limit sign for Giverny. Then we entered the village where Claude Monet bought a house and set out a garden. This is also where he painted his famous pictures of water lilies. Just the place by itself is beautiful. Hollyhocks line all the streets, in white, pink, and dark red... Then finally came the big moment: The pink stucco house with the green shutters and doors, the garden terrace... flowers everywhere, in the most gorgeous colors. Roses and hollyhocks in chaotic profusion on the flower beds. We were in luck, for the sun was shining and made the colors glow... .«

These insights from the older journals, retroactively worked into the text made available by the family, furnish information about the familial and cultural backdrop against which the boys developed the two trips described in this article. To begin with, it was necessary to distill out of the whole set of materials that which had relevance for the planning and execution of the two father-son journeys facilitated by the voucher gifts. To this end, the material was examined using qualitative content analytical methods to filter »themes« from the journal text (Patton 2002).

First, the text of 88,500 words was divided into smaller units. Next, the intertwined narrative threads, i.e., the alternating retrospectives, descriptions of the present, and plans for the future, were disentangled, examined one by one, and then reintegrated. This step also involved labeling themes and assigning the material to overarching thematic categories identified, namely: retrospectives of earlier travels by the father with his first-born son, retrospectives of earlier travels by the whole family, descriptions of the family's current day to day life, current processes of planning and reflecting as they relate to the two father-son trips in the

planning stage, as well as subsequent documentation and retrospectives for these two trips planned by the children that are in focus here.

The next step consisted of finding »patterns« (Patton 2002) within these two thematic areas constituted by the newly-planned father-son trips with the travel vouchers as their starting points. While the father's and older son's Ireland trip is documented exclusively with summarizing notes, i.e. daily reports, the journal contains close to 150 pages of transcribed tape recordings of the Berlin trip with the younger son. These transcripts contain alternating summary reports, but mostly scenic impressions from the Berlin explorations and dialogues between father and son. The father made the following entry in this connection: »We had the idea to pack a voice recorder so we could record our impressions and observations, questions and thoughts on tape as we roamed through Berlin... to give us authentic notes that would reflect something of actual experience in the specific situation (August 8).«

Therefore, for the Ireland trip, a more synoptic type of text was created that is hence less voluminous, while exceptionally comprehensive, richly detailed documentations exist for the Berlin explorations. In structuring and categorizing the material bearing on both trips in focus here, particular attention was paid to the approach that each boy now took in planning and implementing his trip.

Now let us look at how thirteen year old Jack planned his trip. Already that December, the boy formulated first tentative thoughts for an in-depth exploration of the British Isles. As we learn from the journal, this interest was awakened by a Scotland trip that Jack had made as an eight year old together with his father. As January went by, Ireland crystallized as the travel destination. Jack envisioned being in the fresh air all day long and hiking by the Atlantic. In February, they booked flights to Kerry. In April, they bought a guidebook to the Kerry Way and became familiar with the individual stages of their trek. They booked first-night accommodations in June. All the rest was left to serendipity.

In late July, father and son flew to Kerry and hiked from Killarney to Waterville, by way of Kenmare, Sneem and Caherdaniel. Every day,

they backpacked all their gear and turned in at guest houses in the evenings (Fig. 5.1). They passed the day in Sneem on account of steady rainfall, spending the time reading, having tea, and journaling.

Upon arrival in Waterville, their end stage destination, they spent one last day by the sea. They enjoyed the breathtaking scenery of the summery Atlantic and its very gentle August surf. They waded in the water, perched on rocks or took in the ever-changing pastel colors of the evening sky, father and son, each in himself, following his own thoughts, now and then conversing, as for example over dinner in the pub. The journal describes it all in detail:

»We slowly made our way up into the mountains. For a while, it was a karstic, rough landscape... then came blooming, lush meadows again with a rich diversity of grasses and flowers. Small creeks bubbled from the hills. Often the old Kenmare Road would lead through marshy terrain... we encountered not a living soul from this point on... small rivers blocked our way that we had ... to leap across on boulders... (August 1). After leaving Kenmare, crossing an old stone bridge we headed up into the hills again. The way led through brush, past hedgerows, thistles, and ferns. Often, we had to go over fences and stone walls with the help of step ladders put there for the purpose... across pastures, past grazing cattle we went, all the time heading up the mountain. But once we arrived on the summit, we were rewarded by the incomparable view of the Kenmare River, an elongated sea lough. Under the bright summer sky, the soft green hills stretched all around us; those farther in the distance were a bluish grey. The fresh breeze blowing here dried the sweaty brow... Mr. Teahan welcomed us in the friendliest of ways to the Derry East farmhouse. We took a twin room in the attic and were then invited to tea and crumpets in the lounge. We chatted briefly... signed up for the evening's dinner... (August 2). Late in the afternoon we stood in a narrow street with tightly packed houses... a quaint pub, a small grocery store... fortunately, a guesthouse... this time Jack asked for the room... in the pub, it was rustic and relaxed... some Irish families tarried by the bar, a passel of children revolving around them, licking green water ices (August 4).«

Now we turn to how nine-year old Peter approached his trip planning. In late December the boy started to develop ideas for his one week trip that were inspired by lesson content from his elementary school general studies class: »Take a look in your room, Dad«, Peter called out to me from upstairs, just as I walked in the front door... on my desk lay a folded-up letter... »Dear Dad, when we were studying North Rhine-Westphalia in school, I thought about visiting monuments. I don't know if we can get there by train; if not, we can always take our car. Where do I want to go? Hint: Check the Travel Box in your room! Peter.« I went over to the file and in it I found his elementary school general studies textbook... with a bookmark sticking out of it. I picked up the book and opened it to the marked page. There, in large block letters was written »E 4«... just then, Peter entered my room, came over to me and flipped to the next page in the book to show me a photo of the »Egge Rocks«. Peter: »Could be really interesting.« He pointed to a map just below the picture. »Here, these are the hiking trails in red. And there is also a youth hostel. We could stay there and in the morning hike up that red trail to the Egge Rocks. And here are some burial mounds...«, all the while his finger moved across the map grids (December 27).«

With undiminished enthusiasm, the nine year old continues planning, even if ultimately the focus on this first travel destination would dissolve into a Berlin trip. On multiple occasions in the ensuing weeks, father and son would talk about Berlin, about historical and political problems that had to do with the former zones that divided the city after the Second World War, the »Airlift«, the GDR or the »Wall«. They pull books off the shelves, look things up and talk about them. Sometimes it is Peter and at other times his father driving the talks and the research. They listen to Marlene Dietrich sing »I still keep a suitcase in Berlin« and conclude that it is full of longing. They phone a Russian lady from whom they rent a pied à terre on Brüderstraße for a week (Fig. 5.2). Peter studies the city map to find out how best to get from the Zoo train station to Brüderstraße.

During the actual Berlin exploration then accumulates a dense staccato of tape-recorded observations, thoughts and questions, an ongoing

dialogue between father and son. The following scene reflects this in exemplary fashion. It is late evening. Father and son have just returned to their flat from the Museum at Checkpoint Charlie: »We helped ourselves to something to drink from the refrigerator and sank into the arm-chairs in the living room. Father: ›All the things that people used in escaping from the GDR!‹ Peter: ›I would never have done that.‹ Father: ›Why not?‹ Peter: ›It would have been too dangerous for me.‹ Father: ›And you would have stayed in the GDR?‹ Peter: ›Not really all that much either.‹ Father: ›Could you get used to the restrictions on people there? I know you are also someone who loves his freedom very much.‹ Peter: ›It's hard to say.‹ Father: ›Unbelievable, all the things they came up with: homemade airplanes....‹ Peter: ›....a hot air balloon sown together out of many cloth strips. That must have been a lot of work.‹ Father: ›The two families that drifted across the border in the homemade balloon. I have a lot of respect for that much courage!‹ Peter: ›And the balloon even caught fire on one side.‹ Father: ›But the boy put out the fire with a fire extinguisher. A real hero!‹ Peter: ›And they just made it (August 18).«

Father and son are constantly on the go through the city, snap pictures, make sketches and take notes. Peter can't get enough of the program. He is curious about everything and enjoys the kaleidoscopic activities, although he also very much likes kicking back in the apartment (Fig. 5.5). The spectrum of their explorations covers roughly the following: The Natural History Museum with its dinosaur skeletons and mineral collections; the Museum of Technology with its »Rosinenbomber« (Raisin Bomber) (Fig. 5.8), steam locomotives (Fig. 5.10), Imperial Train, antique train tickets and historical windmills (Fig. 5.6), TV sets, and radios (Fig. 5.9); the Wall Museum with multimedia of the risky escape attempts from the GDR (Fig. 5.11 and 5.12); the Jewish Museum, Pergamon Museum, Old National Gallery, and Düppel, the medieval museum village. Other objects they explore include the boarded-up GDR Palace of the Republic (it was the year 2003) (Fig. 5.3), the Imperial Palace Square, the Brandenburg Gate, and the Reichstag building.

In late evening, father and son lie on the latter's roof under the glass cupola, looking up into the starry skies and ruminating about politics (Fig. 5.4). They tour the Potsdam palaces and reconstruct Voltaire's sojourn at Sanssouci. While walking down the street named Unter den Linden, the father explains the classical building style to the son. Sipping cool drinks, they sit in their prefab building apartment late into the night, with the windows open to the warm summer breeze, debating if it would be better to reconstruct the Imperial Palace in its original form or to restore the Palace of the Republic instead.

Stimulated by their visit to the Märkisches Museum, they try to imagine what the Brüderstraße, where they are staying, would have looked like 100 or 200 years ago, with its milliner's shops, small workshops, and horse-drawn wagons, and what the contemporary mindset would have been in the neighboring Nicolaihaus. Mornings, they sleep in a bit late and eat a leisurely breakfast, but soon they are filling a back-pack for the day, and then they dive once more into the cultural and historical universe that is Berlin. On two evenings, Peter and his father go swimming at the legendary Wannsee beach, humming the lyrics from the song »Pack' die Badehose ein...« (Pack your swimming trunks...).

The Third Reich is a key subject complex that Peter and his father repeatedly grapple with during the week. The journal documents the following dialogue from the Museum of Technology: »Peter: ›Can we listen to number 11 now?‹ Father: ›That is about the burning of the books.‹ Peter: ›Why did they do that?‹ Father: ›The Nazis fought against freedom of the mind and wanted to stifle any kind of criticism. That is why they burned books.‹ (A voice shouting ...) ›I give into the fire the writings of Heinrich Mann ... Erich Kästner...‹ Peter: ›They burned Erich Kästner's books, too? What was so bad about ›Emil and the Detectives‹?‹ Father: ›Not a thing. But Kästner also published some other, critical texts. That was the problem‹ (August 16).«

Another exchange regarding the Third Reich that takes place in the Jewish Museum: »Father: ›The Freudenheim family of Berlin emigrated in 1938... And Fritz, 12 years old, recorded it. He drew a world map, in

color even, and he drew in the route by which they traveled... via Hamburg... Lisbon... Casablanca...« Peter: »The first thing he drew was a locomotive.« Father: »That's right, they went by train.« Peter: »From Berlin.« Father: »...Then they crossed the ocean to Brazil... and finally to Montevideo, in Uruguay... That is how the boy dealt with his eventful childhood, by writing down everything...« Peter: »There, in front, he also signed his picture. See that? Fritz Freudenheim« (August 19).«

A special highpoint for Peter during their Berlin explorations is the post windmill (Fig. 5.6) on the open air grounds of the Museum of Technology. Father and son engage in an intensive conversation with the museum docent in charge of the mill, delving into the historical background and functioning of this mill type. Using a sophisticated mechanism, the mill can be turned to face into the wind. The journal reveals the following scene: »Mill docent: »No, they couldn't afford a horse for turning the mill. Peter can actually do it... Peter... will turn the 30 tons.« Peter: »The mill weighs 30 tons?« Mill docent: »Yes... (He turns to Peter). Ok, man of action, are you ready?« We climb down the steep wooden stairs. The museum man gets a few things ready outside... pulls the sledlike wooden frame away from the boom. To keep it from skidding, the frame is held in place by a post, one of many driven into the ground in a circle around the mill. Next, he hooks up an iron chain between the boom and a rotatable wooden post that sticks up vertically in the frame. Lastly, the docent horizontally inserts a kind of lever, a two-by-four that is about 2.5 meters long and rounded on one end to allow a better grip, into the vertical post. Peter walks in a circle, pushes, the chain rattles, tightens, and winds around the vertical post and soon there is an intense, loud creaking above the mill's king post. The giant mill turns (Fig. 5.7)... Father: »Did you have to use a lot of force?« Peter: »No, not much. But you have to weigh something; otherwise the wood knocks you back« (August 17).«

Let us now consider the question if such trips impact family relationships. The research (Agate et al., 2009; Durko and Petrick, 2013; Shaw et al., 2008; West and Merriam, 2009; Zabriskie and Cormick, 2003) attributes positive effects on family relationships to shared recreational activities in general and shared travel experiences in particular.

It emerges from this family's journal that the father-son trips contributed substantially to improving the family climate, by helping to defuse occasional rivalries and conflicts arising between the two brothers. The journal contains a few passages that allude to the two boys' rivalries and quarrels. The father noted something to this effect: »At supper, I put on some Irish folk music in reference to the Ireland trip. Jack did not have much of a reaction to it. I believe he was not in a good mood because he had quarreled with his brother shortly before. Well, they'll put some distance between them soon enough (July 22).«

And harking back to earlier hiking trips in Italy's Cinque Terre area, the father made this entry: »Fishing boats bobbing... colorful, closely packed houses... Jack and Peter were always scooting ahead, with their telescoping poles ... They were so busy exploring the centuries-old stone path's twists and turns through the Cinque Terre hills that they had no time to fight. Still, these trips by the whole family are coming to an end. The boys' diverging interests barely are still reconcilable with one another (August 14).« The concept that both parents are acting on in concert is to separate the two boys for a week, with each child getting the father's or mother's undivided attention. The father made this entry: »The boy who is on a trip enjoys the father's exclusive devotion and the one staying at home has the mother's full attention (January 12).«

In addition, when it is the father only who takes off into the world with the sons, it helps relieve stress on the mother. The journal contains the following passage penned by the father on this topic: »The stress on my wife Laura from her many responsibilities at work, in the home, and raising children is currently very high. She is in favor of my pedagogic travel philosophy, namely by shifting parts of child raising into the world outside. She is absolutely convinced of the value of these undertakings and looks forward to catching her breath during our absence (January 20).« Even 9 year old Peter sees it as a chance for the mother's to catch her breath when one of the boys is on the road with the father: »Then mom has a whole week to relax and recover (February 22).«

When the father-son duos return home, there are many adventures to relate and experiences to share with the other family members. This gives all family members a chance to encounter each other in a new way and to learn from one another. Here is what the father wrote about it: »During supper, Jack told about their adventuresome hikes on the Kerry Way and how we sank up to our calves in mud or how we were pursued by peculiar insect swarms, with Peter listening to him spellbound... and Peter told about evening swims at the Wannsee bathing beach, with Jack prompting him for details. One brother pays renewed attention to the other and listens intently to him, while Mama smiles, enjoys the stories, and is glad to have her boys home again (September 2).«

There is much to suggest that traveling in a parent-child dyad fosters familial cohesion, especially when the parents succeed in embedding the individual experiences in an overall family narrative that integrates everyone. The father gives a pertinent example for this, when nine year old Peter asks him which travel experiences he, the father, views as especially positive ones? »Peter: ›So, what do you like to remember most?‹ Father: ›The youth hostel in Clichy. I recall the sweltering heat... how the beds sagged... and all of us in one room, and four nights at that! Exploring Paris, in mid-summer! It was so hot that even a sheet was too much as cover. Remember, I took my mattress off the metal frame and put it by the wide-open window. And all of us together on it finished reading Preußler's Krabat. Wasn't that great? And Mama always looked forward so much to her ›café au lait in the morning‹ (July 21).«

The travel experiences generated by the separate father-son dyads are thus stretched by the father into a larger whole by bringing in background experiences that all of them took part in, such as their explorations of the city of Paris. This is where the journal reveals that father-son travel can complement travels undertaken by the entire family. Traveling in individual father-son dyads thus serves to sustain familial cohesion and helps the parents achieve their pedagogical objectives, i.e., to foster each of their children's optimal development.

The research also suggests that travel has additional positive effects on children's intellectual or academic learning (e.g., Byrnes 2001; New-

man 1996). This can happen through active exploration by children, of museums especially (e.g., Chang 2006, 2012; Gutwill and Allen, 2012; Haden 2010; Piscitelli 2001). These processes also have interactive dimensions involving the parents into which flow parental thinking and knowledge (Thomas and Anderson, 2013). Such positive effects are particularly underlined by the Berlin explorations of nine year old Peter. These explorations lead to the boy starting to develop pertinent questions, which is already an important step toward deeper academic learning.

The father made the following entry: »Peter looked at the roofs of the Potsdam palace and suddenly asked about the chemical processes that gave the roofs their light green color. ›Why are some parts of the roof light green instead of ranging from dark to black? Is it because the metal is different or some other oxidation process is happening?‹ he asked... On the ride back from Potsdam, Peter threw out questions about possibilities for speeding up light rail trains, about the difference in the engines or motors of light rail trains, subways and regular trains. He observed that subways are best at accelerating rapidly. But what special motors do they use here and what are the technical elements required?‹ (August 18).«

As evidenced by the following journal passage penned by the father some seven weeks later, Peter's Berlin explorations achieved a certain long-term sustained effect in terms of academic learning: »Peter comes into my room and tells me that he has looked some more into the acceleration technology used on subway trains. He had read something about it in a book... (October 6).«

Simultaneously, we are dealing here with an interaction between this type of educational travel on the one hand and academic learning at school on the other. In the initial phase of developing ideas for his trip, Peter did after all – via the previously mentioned »Egge Rocks« he learned about in class – once again draw on stimuli from his school lessons, even if he ultimately did not pursue the idea further: »At breakfast, Peter asked me about the Wartburg. Did I suppose that the inkblot left by Martin Luther was still there? What made him ask? It was because of his

religion class. Mr. M., the religion teacher, told the story of how Luther hid from his pursuers in the Wartburg (Fig. 6.42) and how he translated the New Testament there. This inkblot happened during all that writing. It could still be seen today. He would like to explore it on the spot and maybe take a trip there (March 3).« These initial trip planning exercises of Peter's documented in the journal show the very important role that the work of primary school teachers plays in equipping children with models for exploring the world.

Now we will take into account the diversity of children's emotional, cognitive, and physical needs and developmental issues. The trip planned by the younger son is a kind of intellectual high altitude flight, a rapid fire intellectual ping pong between father and son, in which the father also functions as a role model for active explorative thinking and behavior. Take for example the following exchange between them on Berlin's Palace Square: »Father: ›There, the Palace of the Republic, you see over there, with the copper red reflective glass?« (Fig. 5.3) Peter: ›But they nailed the building shut with boards.‹ Father: ›That's right, the building has been empty for a while... I was inside it back in GDR times, sometime around 1981, having coffee. There, larger than life, is the GDR emblem: hammer, sickle, wheat garland, but the hammer and sickle are gone.‹ Peter: ›But I saw those symbols in a book‹ (August 15).« The subject of the former GDR occupies father and son at every turn. This was their dialogue at a flea market for books in front of Humboldt University: »Peter: ›FDJ? What was that?‹ Father: ›Free German Youth.‹ Peter: ›Free? In a prison?‹ Father: ›The FDJ was the big youth organization in the GDR. If you wanted to get ahead in that country, you had to belong.‹ Peter: ›Wow‹ (August 17).«

Peter and his father are walking toward the Brandenburg Gate: »Peter: ›See the angels up there?‹ Father: ›They're beautiful, silhouetted against the blue night sky... Now take a look at this facade. This, by the way, is what's called the classical style of architecture.‹ Peter: ›What is classical?‹ Father: ›This architectural style borrows elements from Greek and Roman antiquity. Those columns there, for instance. Do you

know when antiquity was?« Peter: »Yes. The time of Jesus, both just before and after... How old is the »quadriga« up there on the Brandenburg Gate? Who actually made it?« (August 15).«

The following episode dates from their time spent at Berlin's Natural History Museum: »Peter: »Here are measuring instruments!« Father: »And what are they used for?« Peter: »For measuring angles on crystals. There's so much to discover here!« Father: »It must be heaven for students studying mineralogy. It's a magic world of colors.« Peter (eyes riveted on the artifacts): »They can come anytime and look at everything« (August 15).«

Even with all the fascination that Peter's and his father's highflying intellectual exploration of Berlin holds, a child's needs can also overlap with areas of child development not involving intellectual learning, as the example of the Ireland trip makes clear. To sum up, comparatively speaking, two completely different stories or dimensions resulted from these two trips.

For 13 year old Jack, the daylong, challenging, and contemplative backpacking trek through southwest Ireland seems to be exactly the right kind of trip at the right time. It seems he had made a well thought-out plan with good awareness of his personal needs. The father reflected on this in a journal entry: »At no point did I have to do cheer Jack up with anything to boost his morale. No matter if we were outdoors hiking through the countryside or in our quarters for the night, Jack remained self-contained and in his inner world. I never heard from him: But this is boring. I want to do this or that now. Or: couldn't we just ... ? He never said: How much farther is it? Or: I don't feel like going any farther. Jack was and is a very undemanding, relaxed, entirely wonderful travel companion. He seems to take things in stride and adapt to them (August 11).«

For Jack, his trek through western Ireland's remote coastal regions is more about putting some distance between himself and the school hubbub, about being immersed in peaceful nature (Fig. 5.1). This is precisely what the father had anticipated when he noted the following a few months prior to the Ireland trip: »...and when I see Jack sit at his desk poring over math or Latin homework, I am certain that during our joint

trip he will prize engaging in as much physical activity as possible in the great outdoors» (April 4). Jack's Ireland trip is about meditating by hiking, about going into silence in which to find his self. Perhaps, other developmental issues are progressing or coming into balance during the daily contemplative hikes, processes that are not subject to being verbalized – or having to be.

Recalling Hannah Arendt (1998), the nature of the Irish walks could be designated as »vita contemplativa«; that of the Berlin excursions as »vita activa«, considering how much was taken on, conquered and set in motion, a post mill weighing tons included. On the one hand, this contrast could stem from the children's differing personalities. On the other, we also assume that a 13 year old boy goes through different developmental stages than a 9 year old goes through. Previous diary entries tell us that Jack, when he was just 9 years old, roamed fascinated for an entire day through the science and technology collections in Munich's Deutsches Museum on returning from a hike with his father in South Tyrol: »Often, it was possible to do an experiment by pushing a button or lever; for example, backing up the water in a simulated river behind a small dam, opening sluice gates, or pumping water up through transparent pipes. Many experiments dealt with weights, a body's center of mass, or the lever principle. Jack was full of enthusiasm and constantly communicated his ideas, questions, and thoughts about the physical phenomena.« From all this, it can be surmised that what matters most in planning such trips is remaining sensitive to the age-appropriate developmental themes and needs of the individual child, while simultaneously reacting constructively to potential personality differences.

Very few studies to date have examined an active role by children in planning and taking trips (e.g., Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Nickerson and Jurrowski, 2001). The father in our case study, too, mostly handled the planning for earlier trips with Jack or travels with the entire family on his own. But, in this instance, linked with the idea of the two gift vouchers was the father's resolve to stay out of it this time. In the journal he wrote: »In addition, I'm going to approach the situation somewhat differently than to date... This time, the boys should take over as much of the trip

planning and required preparations as feasible or even completely. The trip will largely be constituted the way each of the two boys plans and pictures it in his mind (December 21).«

The child's planning process moves ahead in small increments and takes time. Peter experimentally steps through potential scenarios and changes his mind again. The father entered the following in the journal: »Peter said, he wasn't sure if we would actually travel to the area that he had designated. For now, the plan remains in place (January 1).« While some elements of the plan still change multiple times, others remain constant throughout. From the start, Peter remained firm on the transportation method *train* and never questioned it during the entire planning window. The father already noted at Christmas time: »Peter, after having read the voucher text, affirmed: ›By train. I would like to go by train.‹ (December 26).« It often happens that when Peter and his father talk about their joint trip that the boy fetches a book or other atlas, to get a better notion of what was said earlier: »Immediately, Peter brings an atlas over to study the geography of Iceland... We sit in front of three open atlases that the boy had carted over, and we look at the Scandinavian countries (May 21).«

Whichever direction a child takes in his personal planning, if accompanied by a loving parent's appropriate support, it turns into an exercise in self-efficacy, decision making ability and action competence. At the same time, the children's autonomy operates within a bounded framework that responsible parents must also set and that will also be accepted, as the two children demonstrated here. On that subject, the father noted: »Naturally, I won't put up with all sorts of conceivable discomforts. I'm not twenty-five any more. I will certainly look after myself and speak up for my personal needs (December 21).«

Both sons test the limits of how far-flung a trip their father will permit. On that subject, we read in the journal: »Jack: ›Does Africa qualify?‹ Father: ›With just one week, I don't want to make a long distance flight. At most, that would mean North Africa‹ (December 31). Peter: ›Could we also go to the North Pole?‹ Father: ›That could be rather dif-

ficult. Let's just stick with Europe. So, the limit would perhaps be Iceland or Norway« (May 21).« The boys not only accept such boundary setting; it actually turns out to be stimulative, as the following passage from the journal documents: »Peter immediately fetches an atlas and studies Iceland's geography. He moves his index finger over the map. Peter: ›Here is the highest mountain.‹ Father: ›It's probably a volcano. Remember ›Voyage to the Center of the Earth‹, by Jules Verne?‹ Peter: ›Oh, yeah! Now that would interest me!‹ (May 21).«

Even with all of the individual initiative, autonomy and the children's participation in the travel arrangements, the parents always retain a certain, indispensable residual pedagogical responsibility. It can range from hiking boots to what goes in the backpack; after all, Jack and his father will be carrying all their baggage on their backs for a week. We take another look at the journal: »The new hiking boots are ready, but Jack has not tried them on once. I went to his room right away and suggested he wear the boots for a few hours, or better yet, wear them to school the next day, so break them early (May 18)... The departure time for the flight to Ireland approaches. Today, we spent two hours packing both backpacks. This has to be done very carefully and in a well-thought out manner, because we will be carrying everything that we'll need during the week on our backs (July 27).«

Of course, the subject of father-son travel has a great deal to do with emotional devotion to the child (John O'Donohue 1997, 1998), over and above all rational and practical planning. A child given the chance to plan a trip independently and then take it with the parent already experiences the parent's undivided attention for his or her person, thoughts, learning interests and needs in the planning stage but even more so when embarked on it.

Research accepts as non-controversial that children's development will be served when fathers actively and constructively engage with the upbringing and education processes of the family (e.g., Ball 2010; Downer et al., 2008; Gottzén 2011; Louv 1993; Milkie et al., 2010; Patnaik and Sriram, 2010; Sriram 2011). Treating father-son trips as a recommended model in discussions in the field of parent education hence

could encourage still more fathers to become actively involved in the family.

We can also assume that there will be positive repercussions for the father who engages in this way. He feels needed in his role as father and hence affirmed. From his engagement as father, he can realize meaning and perspective for himself during the father-son travel (e.g., Eggeben and Knoester, 2001; Harrington 2006). It also gives the father a chance to revert in a small way to being a boy again, to recall the little and great adventures of his own childhood and then in turn share this experience with his son in a real setting. In this respect, the father wrote in the journal kept four years earlier in Meran, South Tyrol: »In the tent, holding a flashlight, we read a Ludwig Thoma story about boy pranksters.«

In Ireland, Jack's quiet nature, moreover, has a healing effect on the father who is still stressed from his teaching duties. With the school year only just behind him, the teacher-father still tends to become too edgy intellectually and to start lecturing – by making an exercise for them both out of learning the English vocabulary from the Irish short stories he reads in the evening; or, after already having crafted his own poem on the day's impressions, trying to push the son also to write poetry. But there the boy, in his meditative-abstaining way, guides him gently back to what matters: The *road* that they are both on, the *silence*, and the *natural beauty* of the landscape, all things for which the child does not need a lot of words. And yet, as we discover from an older Sardinia journal, Jack, on a trip when he was all of nine years old, on his own initiative had in fact written a swash-buckling pirate story, inspired by the fort, the harbor and a mysterious tower in Cagliari where legend had it that pirates actually hid their ill-gotten gold. But now, on their hike through Ireland, this thirteen year old embodies the way of the *Tao* that means immersing yourself in the moment. Jack becomes co-therapist with an Irish landscape to help ground the father again and renew his contact with himself and his own inner world in the course of a week of back-packing.

Parents who wish to plan such an enterprise with one of their children, be it a father going on a trip with his son or his daughter, or be it a mother with her daughter or her son, may find they are not able to free

up an entire week for just the one child. Let us hope that still leaves the option of at least a weekend to be planned and spent in the manner described here! In addition, there might also be economic constraints on a family. But children will automatically plan in line with what is possible to turn the project into reality. The father in our case study also puts economic considerations in play. Jack immediately accepts the constraints and even interprets them positively, as the following journal passage demonstrates: »Father: ›Rental cars are expensive, and they have the drawback that we'll have fewer chances to start conversations with local people than if we move by train or bus, not to speak of doing lots of walking. Not having a rental car, of course, can also be more uncomfortable at times.‹ Jack: ›There's nothing wrong with a little adventure‹ (February 20).«

All that matters to the child is the caring attention: having his or her mental world taken seriously, a personal interest shown, engaging in conversation, and being made time for. There is no need for a luxurious hotel or an expensive flight. All that it basically takes are sturdy shoes and a backpack. Whatever is embarked on then – a city ramble, a nature walk, a tent put up outdoors, shared contemplation of a sky full of stars – the child will be motivated as long as father or mother are the benign and interested companions at least until adolescence sets in and other issues impinge. What matters at this stage, nine year old Peter expresses just as the journal ends: »Father: ›What advice would you give other children, based on your personal travel experiences?‹ Peter: ›Be alert and curious, observe closely, and ask questions...‹ Father: ›What should adults do to help kids in these explorations?‹ Peter: ›Just be there for the child‹ (October 21).«



Figure 5.1

»In Killarney where it starts, the Kerry Way in southwest Ireland is still a walk in a well-cared for park, but then the landscape turns wilder around Sneem, Caherdaniel, and Waterville. In some parts, you navigate bogs, scree and water-courses, in others you sink in mud and struggle through brush and across livestock pastures. Stopping in a small town in the evening, taking a room and stopping for a bite in a pub compensates for all the exertions, but nothing can beat having a happy, satisfied boy next to you at table digging with gusto into his supper« (the father's notes).



Figures 5.2 and 5.3

»That we would rent an apartment in the history-steeped Brüder Street as base for our Berlin exploration was pure happenstance. It turned out to be a prefab concrete apartment building directly adjoining the Nicolai House. This meant we had the historic transitions from Wilhelmine Prussia all the way to the GDR that was situated around us close enough to touch. Prints and city models in Berlin's museums helped us reconstruct how life was lived in Brüder Street« (Fig. 5.2)...

»In that summer of 2003, when I set out to explore Berlin with my younger son, the former GDR's cultural centerpiece, the Palace of the Republic still occupied the place where Berlin's *»Stadtschloss«* (the Imperial Palace) had formerly stood. When we found ourselves in this very spot, I told the boy about my train trip to West Berlin in 1981 with the diploma I had just received in my pocket. One day I rode over into East Berlin, changed a prescribed amount of money into German East Marks and used some of it to pay for a coffee in the Palace of the Republic bar. With the rest of the money I bought a biography of Rosa Luxemburg in a bookstore on Alexanderplatz« (the father's notes) (Fig. 5.3).



Figures 5.4 and 5.5

»Christo's wrapping of the historically significant Reichstag had already made the building the focus of familial conversations. Now to lie down ourselves under its glass dome and gaze up into the starry skies over Berlin made the experience much more intensive. But also the view down into the parliamentary room, made possible by the transparent glass architectonic design, brought in its train a long talk in our Brüder Street apartment about the importance of fair, transparent and down-to-earth politics« (Fig. 5.4)...

»Back in Brüder Street after a long, hot summer's day. Among other attractions, we had visited the Potsdam palaces and in the evening had a refreshing swim at the Wannsee lake beach. But this August, the temperature in Berlin's streets stayed at Mediterranean levels far into the night. There was so much by way of impressions and thoughts to sort through, questions to ask, and reflections to follow – for instance, regarding the ambivalent friendship between Frederick the Great and Voltaire – and what about that historic-looking empty department store building across the street? When was the last time anything was sold there and what sort of goods would they have been?« (the father's notes) (Fig. 5.5).



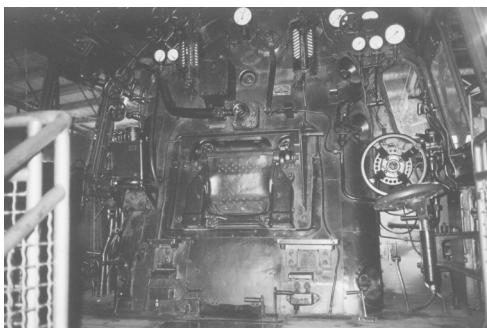
Figures 5.6 and 5.7

Peter turns the post windmill in Kreuzberg



Figure 5.8

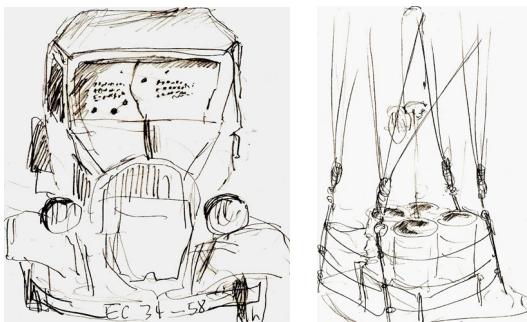
»The DC-3 Raisin Bomber on the roof of Berlin's Museum of Technology in and of itself is an attraction for a nine-year old. The background story of the ›Luftbrücke‹ (Berlin Airlift) set up by the Americans just adds that much more, and we reconstructed it step by step in the place where it happened and then in the evening in the Brüder Street apartment« (the father's notes).



Figures 5.9 and 5.10

»The Berlin lady docent who was on duty in this section of the Technology Museum deserves special mention for the technical dialog that she held with my nine-year old son and me on the development and technical state of early TV sets, even the functioning of the Brownian tube. She combined all that is helpful for a good technical instruction: knowledge, humor, mental agility, enjoyment in communicating and, even more, life wisdom« (Fig. 5.9)...

»We spent several hours just in the locomotive shops of the Berlin Museum of Technology, so that one day was not enough to do this museum justice. We returned for a second day to continue our viewing and examinations. The giant old steam locomotives were particularly fascinating and invited intensive exploration« (Fig. 5.10) (the father's notes).



Figures 5.11. and 5.12

»The Berlin Wall Museum has illustrative exhibits documenting escape attempts by people from the walled-in GDR that was secured by electric fences and death strips. Underground tunnels were a frequent if risky escape method. Late in the evening on returning to our apartment on Brüder Street, my son and I discussed what we had seen and learned, and I made a few pencil sketches. Another successful flight concept, this one above ground, was the frenzied crashing of a car through a guarded border crossing point. To this end, they would fill the body and doors of an old car with concrete and cover the windows from the inside with thick steel plates that could stop rifle bullets. A set of small holes drilled into the metal behind the windshield let them steer the car even with this armoring in place (Fig. 5.11). A spectacular escape method, albeit one that only succeeded on the second attempt, was carried out by two families taking to the air in a homemade hot air balloon they had sown together during many nights (Fig. 5.12). While today in the eastern German states there is much talk about the lost social cohesion they enjoyed during the GDR days, apparently personal freedom was so important for some people that they were willing to take the risks inherent in such escape attempts. My son and I tried to reconstruct it all down to the smallest detail and debated for a long time about the complex and basic theme of freedom, including the many politically imposed compulsions that reach into individual lives, even in what is an open and democratic society like ours is today« (the father's notes, chapter 5).