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Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

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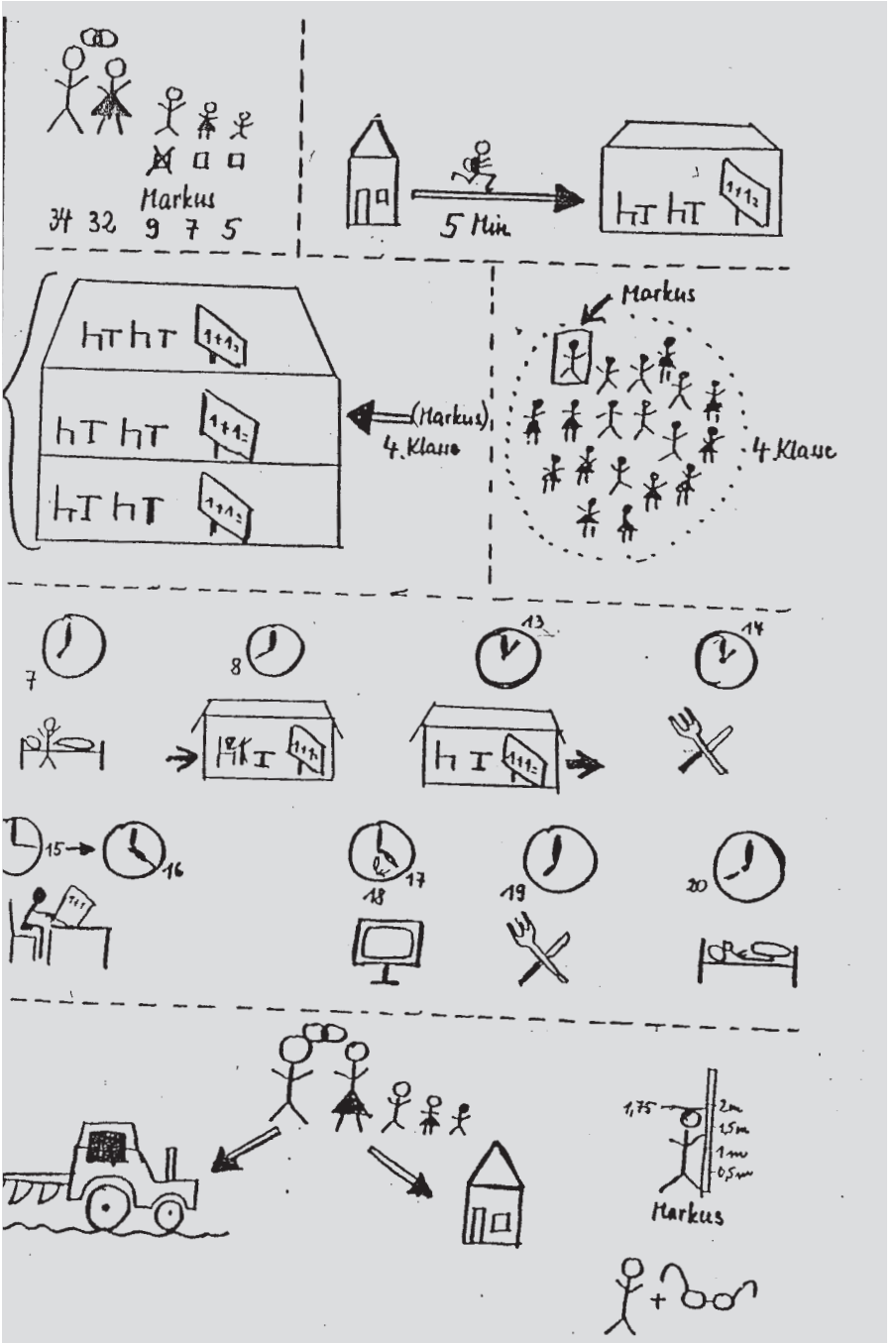
European primary pupils show their life to African peers

CHRISTOPH KODRON

In teacher training it is possible to learn and discuss much about children and pupils, their living conditions, and their schooling in different cultures. However, if we want a perspective on multicultural knowledge, so that our pupils attain an individual and authentic impression of the everyday life of their peers in a country where another language is spoken, then the discussion often seems not very advanced, because, firstly, our pupils need some knowledge of the relevant foreign language for this and, secondly, their foreign peers should also have learnt the corresponding language of our pupils for some years. This line of argumentation has been put forward especially by secondary schools and their teachers which have a long tradition in using communication and exchange with schools and school classes abroad, but only with regard to helping foreign language teaching and improving the pupils' motivation to learn the respective foreign language. It must, however, be accepted that in building Europe we need to establish communication and exchange between the peoples of every language and culture. Culturally and politically it is not acceptable.....

Surely, teachers need a "lingua franca" for communication in planning; in this case it was French. The teachers agreed to use a simple drawing technique and both sides accepted the main themes and/or information to be communicated through the drawings. At first, an introduction of every pupil which should show their family, school and perhaps a typical school day, then games or sports which children like to play was completed. It was clear that the production of the drawings by the pupils themselves needed careful, well thought out preparation. Not only by putting forward the question "How do people show things to others without speaking or writing?" or by introducing, for example, traffic signs or the pictograms used for the Olympic Games, but also through discussions and the development of a clear idea of what should and could be shown by the drawings of a pupils' family and the landmarks of a school day.

Taking the example drawn by Daniela (see pictures), we can see a lot of information and interesting details. However, not everything is clear, and in some cases we would like to have even more information. In the first square she depicts her family; her father who is 39 years old, her mother – 34 years old, herself Daniela – 9 years old, and also that she has a sister of 6 years and a newly born brother. The following three squares tell us that she gets up at 6.55 a.m., and probably has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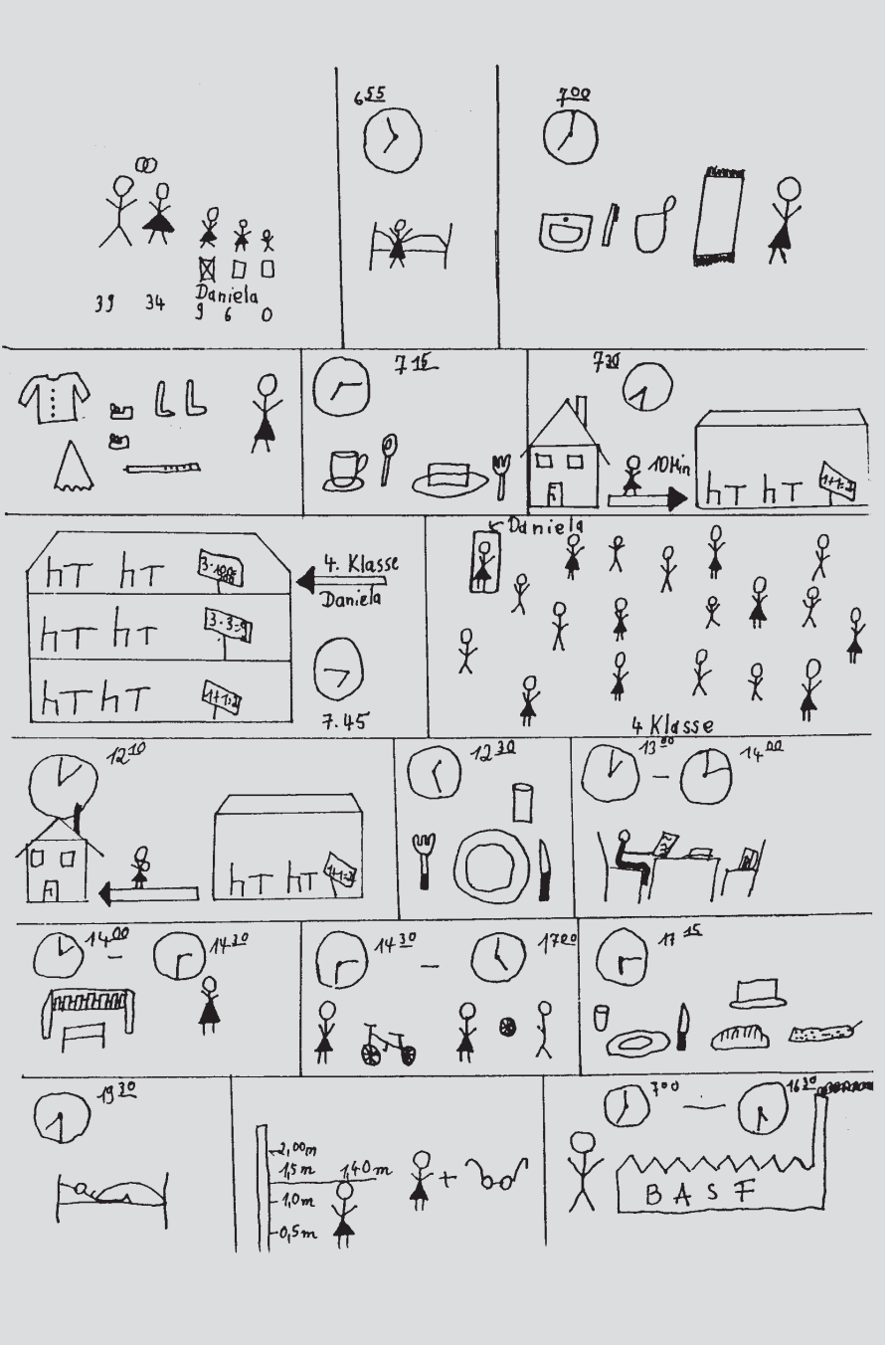
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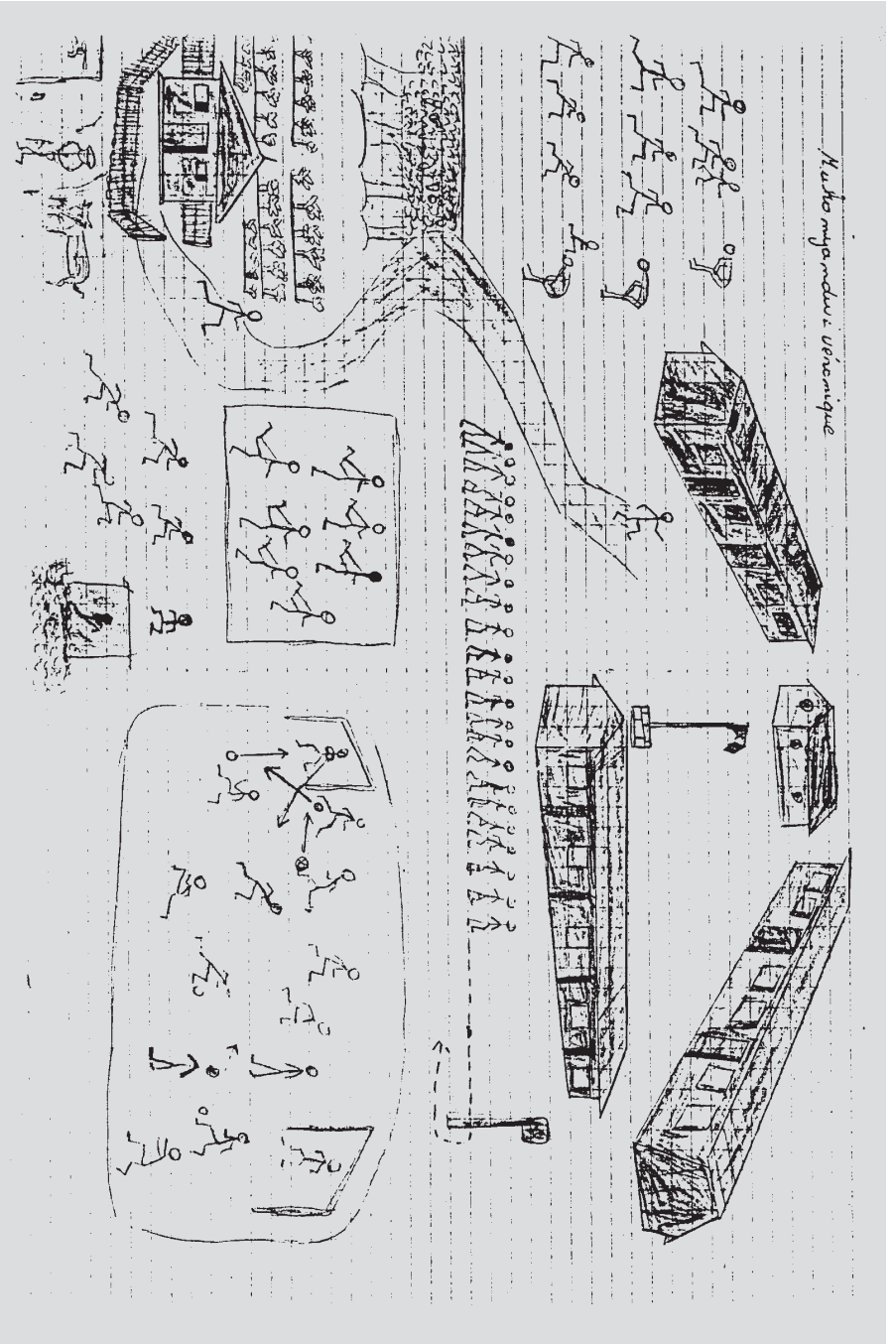
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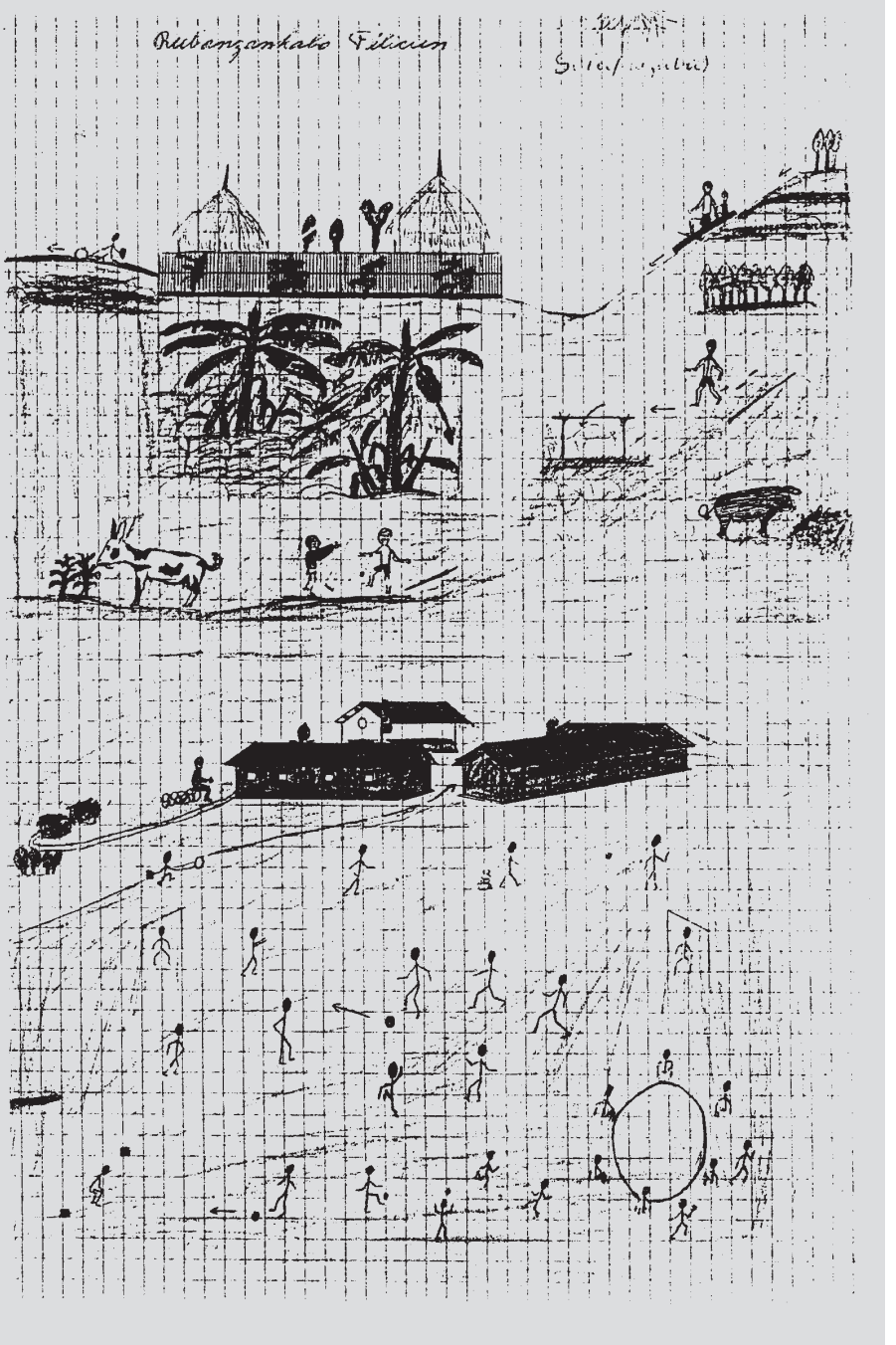

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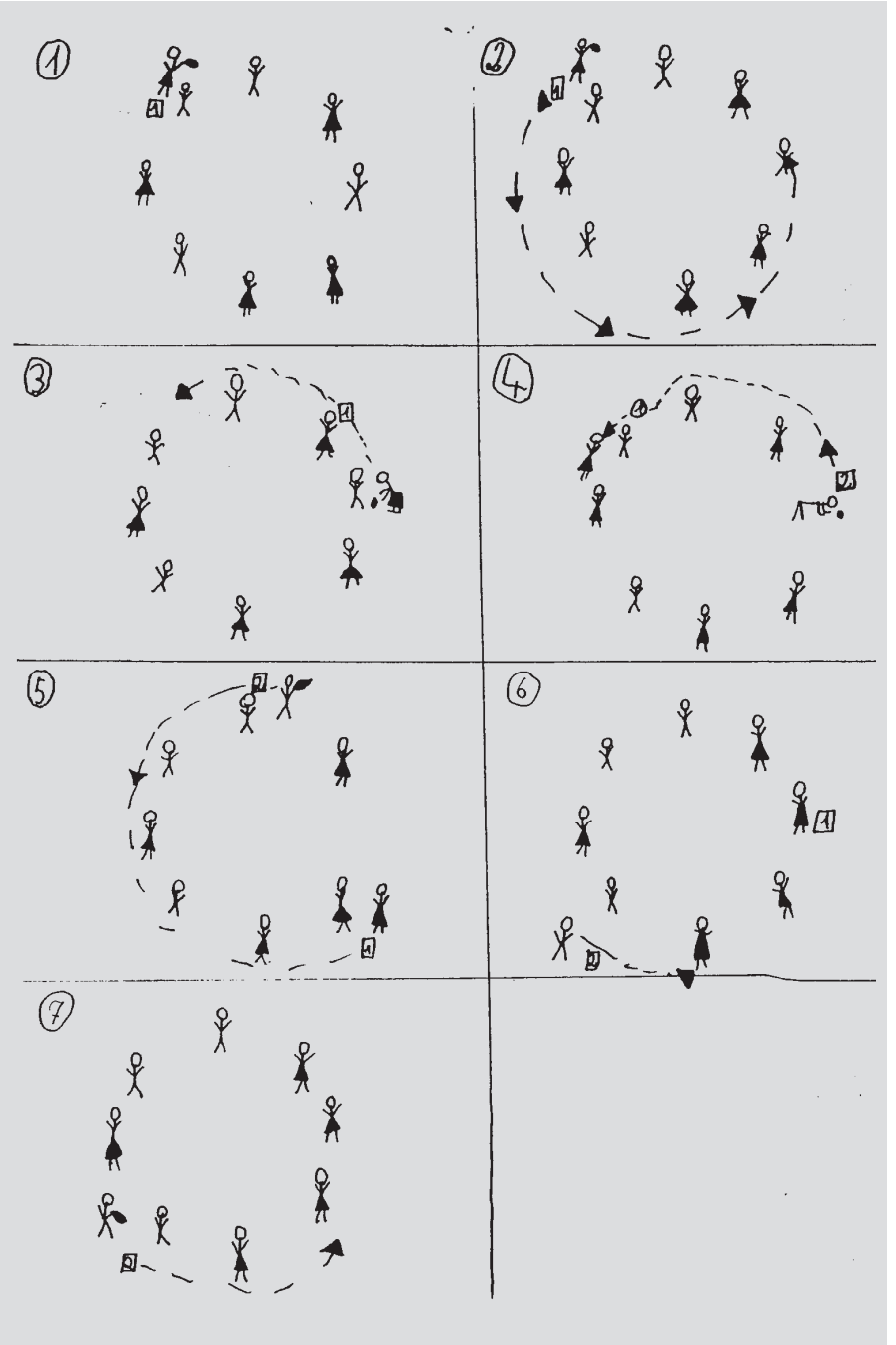
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a wash with a face cloth and towel, cleans her teeth, and puts on her clothes. She has breakfast at 7.15 a.m., it being only clear that she drinks something from a cup, but what does she eat from her plate? (If it is muesli or cornflakes, this could be easily shown by a sort of collage or an extra sheet of paper taken from the package on which you often find information about the ingredients or even a receipt in different languages). The next square shows her leaving home at 7.30 a.m. and spending 10 minutes getting to school where we then interpret "1+1=2" as a blackboard. She might arrive five minutes before school starts but her place at school seems not at all clear without the written indication that she is in the 4th grade. The flash with her name shows to the upper class where the blackboard indicates 3x100 = 300, a comprehensible sign that she will not be one with top grades. We do not know if the African pupils have spontaneously interpreted the 8th square as depicting Daniela's class consisting of 19 pupils, 9 of them being girls.The following square contains much detailed information not always easily interpreted, but, in contrast to her breakfast and lunch depictions, supper at 5.15 p.m. shows her eating other things, but it may not be clear to an African child that it intends to show her eating bread with cheese and sausage. The one hour of homework (square 11) seemed to be not always understood along with the half an hour of piano practice following (square 12), but bed time at 7.30 p.m. was correctly interpreted as well as her height of 1.40 m, the fact that she wears glasses, and that her father works in a factory with the name BASF. Based on several comparable drawings, the pupils put forward many questions and a teacher can easily develop questions; e.g. about the differences and similarities in daily rhythm or the size of families.

Making the rules for games or sport comprehensible showed up to be more difficult. Firstly, it took a long time to identify clear rules, the children knowing a lot variations and wanting to bring them in. Then it was discovered rules are not easily drawn in such a way that the games could be played by those who did not know them before. For this, it was necessary to introduce colours to mark every player which cannot be reproduced here. But at least this exercise showed us that a lot of the drawn rules were not even able to be understood by the teachers of the partner school, and writing a letter to get more detailed information takes time. This was not really necessary as the pupils had no problem with it. They spontaneously developed a lot of rules from their interpretation of the drawings which they then put straight into practice. Try to interpret the example of an easy game given here yourself. In German this game is called "Der Plumpsack geht um".