

School under construction - Eva Kotatkova



Project author or developer:
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Where:
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Website:
www.visibleproject.org/blog/project/school-under-construction/

The project School under construction attempts to search and propose new possibilities and forms of education.

Its role in the society using its potential to connect people of different age and profession and spread not only knowledge but also ability of mutual understanding, sensitive approach to the surrounding and need of collaboration. It questions the system of formal education, prevailing in most of the countries and its impact on the development and formation of the individual and his/her ability to find a place in the society. School is understood not only as a specific space where children are collectively taught by adults, accepting and following their rules, communication patterns etc. It is often the first structured community which (after family) influences crucially their future integration and functioning in other social structures. Education can be (and also was in the past in several countries including Czech republic) misused as a powerful tool of social control, manipulation and dissemination of unifying thoughts and propagandistic ideas. The history can easily be played with and modified, facts drastically changed, parts of school books erased when not fitting to the official version declared by the regime. Even though education methods in my country developed for better during the last 22 years both in the less authoritarian approach to the children as well as in the uncensored content and different structure of the study programs school (just with a few exceptions) still remains rather an isolated complex filled with blackboards, benches, inner rules and restrictions rather than fulfilling the role of an open structure based on a non hierarchical dialogue. In the past I was focusing on destructive aspect of education which restricts, traps and manipulate the individual rather than supporting the individuality against collectively accepted mental schemes. From the study of my nearest surrounding and focus on very personal themes questioning memory and constructing one's biography I moved to bigger scale projects which besides constructing and visualizing social schemes integrated active participation of various groups of people. This project lies on the border between these two approaches-proposes my utopian vision of a school which would play active and influential role in the society and question its main themes. It consists of a two month series of lessons, workshops, actions and exercises where no classical subjects are being taught but where one can learn how to look differently on his/her surrounding, understand how a community of diverse people can cooperate together etc. Various groups of people will in collaboration with each other and in confrontation with various social themes and staged situations attend courses of this new temporary institution which does not impose ideas but create a rich base for being able to create our own ones. School under construction involves pupils of the approached school, their parents, current as well as retired teachers, former students, old people from the area as well as specialists in this field-students of pedagogic faculty, sociologists etc. It sets up a temporary school which is physically attached to the existing old school building. It has the same ground plan as the original building just compressed and placed in a mirror reflection to the original. There is no facade, furnishing and details-it is just a skeleton of the building with almost no walls and ceilings. In this fragmented scaffolding, improvisational theatre stage which reminds a building in its very construction process there is an alternative education program being held. The education program runs on concrete days for the period of 2 months and offers various collaborative models, diverse ways of social interactions

