



**get involved**

International Symposium 19th and 20th october 2012  
architectural & built environment education for young people  
International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia

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Architectural education as a process of mutual learning

The authors both are educators according to their practical experiences. We started teaching by mutual learning intuitively based on our experiences more then on theory, wondering what happens within the workshop, the class and wondering how unexpected reactions from all involved partners create much more constructive possibilities. So this brief perspective will show aspects of our teaching-program according to social capital and mutual learning.

It can be taken as a documentation of something which has not been made to be documented: Based on one side on our workshop "Architectural Summer Academy for Children", which is held for one week every year in Innsbruck at the university by aut. architektur und tirol in cooperation with Junge Uni, and on the other side on the famous article of Patricia A. Wilson "Building of Social Capital: A learning Agenda for the Twenty-first Century (1997)" we like to give a summary of values and approaches, which are important by teaching especially in built environment education for young people.



**aut. architectur and tirol**

... as a house of architecture – it has been organizing exhibitions, debates and lectures on local and international architecture since 1993. Beside the general program we established a complementary program for young people in 2006. There is a continuously program out of school like aut: kids for children 7 to 13 years old and aut: minikids for children 4 to 6 years old. Contemporaneously we offer a wide range of architecture and school programs like workshops, excursions and lectures

Our latest work is based on the development of teaching materials for school and kindergarden like tutorials, booklets, posters, games etc.  
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### Young University' - Junge Uni Innsbruck (JUI)

The "Junge Uni Innsbruck" – Science, Technology and Humanities for children and young people ([jungeuni.uibk.ac.at](http://jungeuni.uibk.ac.at)) is an initiative of the University of Innsbruck with the object to raise the interest and the motivation of children and young people between 6 and 18 years in science, technology and humanities to develop and administrate science communication activities and to work together with other institutions in the field of science communication.

A special point in our work is also to attract children and young people from underprivileged context to science. The activities of the JUI are visited by more than 10.000 visitors every year. More than 400 scientists, technicians and students of the university cooperate with the JUI.

The "Junge Uni Innsbruck" was started in 2001, it was one of the first children's universities in the German speaking countries and the first children university in Austria and works together with more than 40 local, regional and international partners.

We offer programs for quite young children of elementary schools and secondary schools, because we think, that these children are very capable of enthusiasm for science, and we want to plant an early seed for the understanding of science.

Children are very curious, the same are scientists, and we connect scientists with children, so that they get early an easy insight. We also focus in stimulating children for science who have less contact to university education because of their social background and we also offer courses for highly talented children.

Main objectives are:

- a) Stimulating young people on local and regional levels to become involved in science by showing that science is a natural human activity, which is fun and exciting,
- b) Presenting research and its results in common language, and using simple methods that the audience can apply at school or at home,
- c) Demonstrating how scientific investigations work and can solve well-defined problems, such as those facing modern society,
- d) We encourage a 'hands-on, brains-on' approach to the pedagogy. The method is based on mutual learning and enquiry based teaching. The integrated methodology should help to develop critical thinking skills e.g. argumentation and discussion, and materials to encourage children to really 'work like scientists',
- e) Increasing the public understanding for science, technology and humanities

Activities are:

Based on our substantial experience we have developed a wide range of different programs specialised on several target groups:

- a) Festival of Science ("Young University Action Days/ Aktionstage der Jungen Uni" and Researchers Night) – a yearly event organized from 2001 on for children, teenagers, but also for families.
- b) Kinder-Sommer-Uni: Science-programs for children during the summer-holidays with "young-researcher-diploma",
- c) Science program for children with migration background in cooperation with the "Integrationshaus der Caritas" (Junge Uni multi culti),
- d) Project activities – BiPolar (Project of sensitisation for cold environments), Sparkling Science,
- e) Youth into Science – Scientific week for young people (15-19 years) at the university research station in Obergurgl, Ötztal,
- f) Search for young Researchers! Science contest for young people from Tyrol, South Tyrol, Trentino and Graubünden (Switzerland).
- g) uni.com – knowledge for kids!: cooperation with the Volkshochschule Tyrol. Science programs for children during the school year.

All those kinds of activities are accompanied by selected evaluation measures and by development of targeted pedagogical expertise. The JUI is also member and participant of the Mentoring Partnerships program of the European Network of Children's Universities - (EUCU.NET, [www.eucu.net](http://www.eucu.net)) and partner in the EU-Project "SIS Catalyst – Children as change agents in Science in Society" ([www.siscatalyst.eu](http://www.siscatalyst.eu)). JUI was awarded the Sparkling Science Award of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research in 2008 and 2009, the IMST-Award 2009 of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture and the Arthur-Haidl-Preis 2009 of the city of Innsbruck.

### Architectural education as a process of mutual learning

Why is mutual learning so important?

Social Capital



Mutual learning must be seen as an important task concerning Social Capital (Wilson, 1997): Social capital concerns the civil society and the building of a successful community, and the quality and efficacy of civic engagement in a community. Social Capital has been first used to describe what the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville observed in the US in 1835 – the joy for individuals to join together to address mutual needs and to pursue common interest.

The fascinating thing about social capital is that it is free, it requires no natural resources, no machines, it is invisible, but it is real and is a resource, which is not limited. And it is proofed, f.e. in lots of research papers listed up by Patricia A. Wilson in her famous paper "Building Social Capital: A Learning Agenda for the Twenty-first Century", that a higher social capital increases a community's productive potential, and also it creates local economic prosperity.

Mutual learning and social capital are combined.

Parameters for successful mutual learning:

#### Trust

One of the most important parameters for mutual learning is trust: trust to yourself, to your skills, to one's inner knowing and as a professional educator trust in the person you work with: for example – children



#### Workshop-experience

When children start to develop ideas, they have their own focus on it. We have to find out, what the mean intention is in order to give the right input. If we got the point we can be sure, that children will accept helpful guidelines because they feel understood.

They will go on a self-confident way, they will ask if they need to and we can see, how concentrated they act, how fast they learn and grow.

Trust comes to respect and motivation.

Our role as professional educators is to be a catalyst, a facilitator, communicator or team – player. We are responsible for an open minded atmosphere, in which the children are free to learn. A professional educator is not the boss, who knows everything and solves every problem, he or she should generate an atmosphere of understanding, compassion, trust and inclusive concept of community. She or he should not fancy with fear and mistrust, but should learn to listen to one another and to overcome barriers of fear and suspicion, should motivate without controlling; should relinquish authority role while assisting the children to take over their own learning process.

### Reciprocity and Esteem

Concerning children – they are taken as serious, equal partners. Generalised reciprocity is based on a sense of belonging to a larger circle and a long-time-cycle, which trust in ultimate equity.

Esteem means to accept partners just like they are. In an open minded atmosphere everything is possible, everybody is an expert in its field.

The professional educator should change its role from an expert towards a reflective practitioner. The difference is: whereas the expert is presumed to know and must claim to know, the reflective practitioner assume both, the client – f.e. the child.

The expert keeps distance, the reflective seeks out connections to the client's thoughts and feelings and allows the children/clients to discover their own thoughts and feelings.

Learning becomes a mutual learning in action!!

Mutual learning allows children to be visualized as actors and subjects, not as reactors and objects.



### Workshop-experience

How do we establish an atmosphere of an active partnership between children and teachers?

We have to work on the same point of interests.

We have to ask for the same questions.

We have to start a process of listening to each other, of perceiving individual knowledge. So we will find common abilities. Out of this we generate a pool of skills, which can be used by each partner.

Because we are working on a common job, we need all available skills - never mind if they are skills by adults or children.

Reciprocity and esteem come to acceptance and tolerance.



### eye level

Mutual learning means learning from each other on eye level

A professional educator has to accept and to esteem the opinion of others and is asked for tolerance and sympathy not for it's single (not unreflected in the group) opinion. There are equal partners, all opinions and ideas are on an equal level and have to be recognized and not judged and refused.

Children are not supervised by the teachers, educators should care for them. Learning needs participation, experience-reflection-in-action, embedded in a framework of democratic values and personal development.



### Workshop-experience

In our workshops we always start with an active part. An action, where everybody is involved on an equal level no matter if the partners are experts, professors, children, students, parents or teachers. To be together, acting within the same community, we feel somehow like being in a collective atmosphere - Out of this the communication will be easier to each other.

For example it helps to establish a scenery around the "building site" - there are protagonists like humans, animals, plants and buildings, every partner is asked to represent one of those elements by their one person. It helps to get a deeper feeling for the situation, to be more conscious and it demonstrate how many different elements are creating environment.

### Curiosity

... in a sense of "research". Being curious about what is going on, what are partners interested in, who will act in which way, what do we discover, find out and create, ... all questions asked every time again, every workshop and every new situation again is our basis of discovering and development. It keeps our work exciting and alive.

Curiosity comes to an interesting trip through methods and strategies.



### Personal development

No self-display, more self-withdraw should be practiced.

An educator should be strong enough to step aside and listen, listening means withdraw yourself!! And personal development means also character development: the continuous, long-term process of becoming self-aware: inner work, continual learning, reframing and changing mental maps about one's self and one's relationship to the current situation.



### Community building

Careful educators model the skills of community-building between individuals, create an open and collaborative environment that fosters belonging, caring, mutual respect, stewardship, generosity, service and responsibility.



### Conclusion

Trust, reciprocity, esteem, eye level, personal development, curiosity and community building are important parameters in built environment education as it is for education processes in society. Personal development and an open mind is required from each educator. We should create an open and collaborative community, that enables children to find their own creative way and to take part in the common process of designing built environment.

#### 1. Literature

Patricia A. Wilson (1997): Building Social Capital: A Learning Agenda for the Twenty-first Century. – Urban Studies, Vol. 34, Nos 5-6, 745-760.