

New places of learning in the public sphere

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of a “place of learning” has grown in importance in youth and adult education. This was (and still is) linked to the debate on new forms of teaching and learning which were (and are) expected to address the stagnation of traditional approaches to political education. In contrast to the knowledge-based approach of schools and teachers, non-school education increasingly refers to biographic, communicative/activity-oriented, project-like, multimedia and explorative learning forms related to the surrounding space. Within this context, the “discovery of the place of learning” can be regarded as a central element of education. The connection between content and the place of learning is an essential element of this educational approach. A place and its history and stories provide more than just the motivation for learning, they comprise the background that

enables the learner to approach personally. The transmission of the “materiality of memory” through the interaction of space, artefacts, and people provides a wide range of learning methods and encourages self-motivated learning. This means that learning takes place in action- and experience-oriented ways. “Learning onsite” in the form of sightseeing, guided tours, excursions, explorations, travel seminars, educational trips, city games, and thematic rallies often linked with meetings with experts or historical witnesses, enables participants to learn, reflect, and communicate their results onsite. These approaches also underline the importance of documentation; discoveries and findings should be processed and presented in various media to the participants and sometimes to a larger public.

Artistic intervention in places of learning

The discovery of the public area as a learning place leads increasingly to

Forging Connections to Intangible Cultural Heritage

Mobile Blacksmiths Laboratory

The container-sized silver anvil housing the Mobile Blacksmiths Laboratory may be a whimsical sight as it travels around Germany and abroad, but it carries rich traditions reaching back to ancient man. Since 2007 Mobile Blacksmiths Laboratory, a project created by artist Andreas Rimkus, has been protecting and cultivating an intangible aspect of culture – the creative art of blacksmithing. Within this laboratory setting children and adults have an opportunity to experiment with metal, as well as other natural materials. They also have the freedom to incorporate playing, singing, and other creative activities into the experience.

In addition to technical skills, participants in Mobile Blacksmiths

programmes develop their capacity for communication. “First Metal” programmes, which begin with the artist instructing a group of older adolescents who then become instructors to younger children on the second day, trains participants in passing knowledge to younger generations. Development of this vital communication skill has a multiplying effect, enabling students to participate in other crafts requiring the transfer of hand-on knowledge.

Supported by private firms based in the communities to which it travels as well as by public bodies, Mobile Blacksmiths Laboratory represents a model for how local private businesses can support education projects enabling people to connect to their human past.

For a full schedule of the Anvil’s travels visit www.a-rimkus.de/amboss/amboss_home.htm.

Participants at a Mobile Blacksmiths Laboratory event.

