

# The City with Colourful Windows: Developing Creativity Through Architectural Activities for Children and Youth

Liliana-Mihaela PETROVICI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer Architect PhD, Technical University “Gheorghe Asachi”, Faculty of Architecture “G.M. Cantacuzino”, Iasi, Romania, e-mail:

[liliana.petrovici@yahoo.com](mailto:liliana.petrovici@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** The current article presents education and creativity developing benefits of non-formal architecture activities for children and young people. The research is based on some wonderful experiences within an educational project that the author of the article has started over the last years. "The city with colorful windows" comprises educational activities for the quality of the built environment within the school program “Different School” (“Școala Altfel”).

Experiencing the architectural spaces together with manufacturing models and artworks provide participants at these educational projects with a creative understanding of the built environment. Concurrently, they discover the valuable and rich in meanings architecture of their home city enhancing their sense of identity and sharing common values over generations.

Heritage awareness of the young public together with acquiring the basics of architecture in school contributes to forming a creative and responsible generation capable to mold a quality living environment, with harmonious relations between old and new urban segments.

**Keywords:** *creative learning; creativity; architecture; education; identity*

**How to cite:** Petrovici, L, M. (2020). The City with Colourful Windows: Developing Creativity Through Architectural Activities for Children and Youth. *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, 12(3), 66-72. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/12.3/309>

## 1. Introduction

First sight, being creative seems to be a quality that is necessary for artworks, associated with aesthetic or formal innovation. Creativity and visual communication are necessary for the artistic disciplines, but also in the technical and scientific ones, and can be considered as abilities to observe and analyze, to solve problems through an intuitive and innovative approach. Creativity is essential to manage new situations, to find and capitalize on appropriate solutions adapted to different working or learning contexts.

Creativity is often regarded as a less formal way of presenting or doing something, perhaps in a more inventive, ingenious way. It seems to be “a different arrangement of the same elements” - notes Viola Spolin in her work "Improvisation for the theater", presenting her definition of this term: "Creativity does not mean just building or doing something, it is not just a variation of form. Creativity is an attitude, a certain way of working or investigating, maybe a way of life - and it can be discovered on roads that we have not yet walked. Creativity is curiosity, joy, communion. It is a process - transformation - process" (Spolin, 2014).

To be creative is indeed an attitude regarding life and work, it means to be free, passionate and involved. A creator is curious, attentive and free-minded, he/she does not interpret rules as a strict end in itself, but as reference points for the development of new shapes and ideas. Creativity can be developed by observing, understanding and interpreting the surrounding environment. It can also be seen as the ability to originally use languages of shapes, words, and colors.

The formation of creative capacities is necessary throughout all education and training processes of a modern, creative individual. As Rădulescu Andra Elena assesses, the creator is “the one who solves problems, is an artist, an innovator, an entrepreneur. Creative people have fast and efficient answers that help them reach their goals and allow them to enjoy their life journey” (Rădulescu, 2018).

Creativity is needed in everyone's becoming and all areas of activity, knowledge and life. It helps us solve problems, innovate and develop. It generates inventiveness and progress, being the engine of social, technical, economic, cultural development.

## **2. Content: Developing creativity through architectural education**

For architects and professors in Architecture, from the beginning of their professional training and throughout teaching and design activity, creativity is an essential requirement, a way of learning and working. Architects imagine, visualize and propose new forms and concepts in creating the living environment, through a process of adaptation and interaction with cities and people.

Unlike other artistic fields, architectural creation has a strong impact on the quality of life and is determined by multiple technical, economic, social, political, cultural and psychological coercion. Responsibility for the quality of the built environment belongs not only to architects and urbanists but also to the public and authorities which influence the development of cities. For these reasons, it is important to form architectural culture and to promote values of the built environment.

Acquiring basics of architecture in schools and extracurricular contributes to a better understanding of the relation between the human and the own built environment, and also at the development of creativity and abilities of three-dimensional visualization and communication.

## **3. Materials and methods**

The need for developing communication and creative abilities in schools requires new updates and approaches in education. As Androshchuk, I.V. assesses, "new models and methods of the educational process are very necessary and, last but not least, update the content of training" (Androshchuk, 2020).

The current paper presents the methods and results of non-formal architectural education activities for children and youth that have been coordinated by the author of this article - "The city with colorful windows", non-formal activities for architecture and the quality of the environment within the program "Different School" ("Școala Altfel"). This architectural project aims to foster imagination, visual communication, and sense of observation of the built environment. It comprises these 3 types of learning activities:

- Overview and interactive discussions for understanding basic notions and principles in the field of architecture and urbanism adapted for pupils;
- Observation of built environment, learning by exploration, discovering and understanding the architectural spaces;

- Practical activity for making models with urban arrangements and buildings (fig. 1, 2).

The workshop encourages the manifestation of creativity through handwork, artwork, and dialogue in a less formal context. The atmosphere is relaxed and children show involvement, spontaneity, and curiosity. They demonstrate an interest in architecture and are attracted by the invention of constructions and handmade three-dimensional objects.

The participants showed an opening and enthusiasm for experiencing and observing the surrounding built environment. As Oana Jitaru notes, the observation has participatory value and develops the receptivity of the pupils to the existential phenomenology (Jitaru, 2018). Indeed, children are very involving in understanding their environment. They observe essential things and understand them in their way, proving rich imagination and curiosity.

Not least, observation of architecture reveals that “places capture the sense of life” (Driscu et al., 2017) as teaches them that architecture is the expression of the people’s sensibility and way of living.

Experiencing architecture and creatively working with its fragments is related to „our responsibility to live our city in all its semantic and emotional substrates, to be able to invent and reinvent it in our becoming of any kind” (Costea, 2018).

During architectural workshops, pupils develop their capacities of three-dimensional visualization and communication. The activity “The city with colourful windows” takes advantage of the language of shapes and colors, easy to understand and use for children.

Pupils comprehend that they must follow certain rules, beyond which they are free to manifest their identity, to re-invent reality and to imagine their own story. Thus, they make unique associations, discover their potential to visualize and invent new, amazing things composing scenes from fantastic and real worlds.

#### **4. Discussion**

Architectural education contributes to the formation of aesthetic discernment. As “beauty is an inherent part of life and all that it encompasses” (Petrovici & Ivan, 2019; Petrovici, 2018), raising and increasing the aesthetic interest and education of any kind is psychologically very beneficial, bringing comfort and sense of well being in all areas of life.

The architect Teodor – Stanciu considers buildings as “the greatest and also the easiest way to travel in time” (Teodor – Stanciu, 2016). Indeed,

architecture offers to the young and old people a journey in time, and also outside time and reality, in invented amazing stories and tales. Developing our ability for traveling, dreaming and communicating through architecture generates a “sense of belonging, of spiritual connection with the environment and meanings” (Costea, 2016), and that is essential for our sense of identity and a creatively existing.

The education about architecture and heritage in schools promotes within society authentic architectural values and form new generations able to build a quality living environment with identity and harmonious relations between old and new urban segments.

## Conclusions

Learning by space experiential activities and learning by art activities are very appropriate for children and young people and stimulate their imagery and creativity. Both are training processes with emotional involvement, are memorable and have positive long-term effects.

The non-formal educational architectural activities stimulate the development of imagination and creativity. They also foster important skills such as motility, patience, and also teamwork, verbal and graphic communication.

No least, architectural workshops help the young participants to form aesthetic discernment and craftsmanship. Observing the environment, drawing and modeling stimulate their imagination by developing capacities of three-dimensional visualization and communication through a suggestive language of shapes and colors.

*Fig. 1. Model made by children at home school Covid 19, april 2020*



*Fig. 2. Models made by children at the architectural workshop “The city with colorful windows”, 2019 at the Middle School “Vasile Conta” from Iasi.*



---

## References

---

- Androshchuk, I., Androshchuk, I., & Komochkova, O. (2020). Building the Content of Teacher Training in the Context of Education for Sustainable Development. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 12(1Sup1), 19-36. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/rrem/12.1sup1/221>
- Costea, R. (2018). Iași nemaivăzut. *Reper*, 34, 50-52.
- Costea, R. (2016). The Architecture of Memory. The Memory of Architecture. *International eJournal Centro de Filosofia da Universidade de Lisboa*, 5, 119-129.
- Driscu, M., Tudora, A., & Tudora, G. (2017). Solidarity between Generations - Designing Age-Friendly. *Postmodern Openings*, 8(2), 40-50. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2017.0802.03>
- Jitaru, O. (2018). *Metode interactive pentru stimularea învățării eficiente, Performantica*.
- Rădulescu, A. E. (2018). *Imaginația și creativitatea în copilărie, rolul în educație*, <https://www.academia.edu/38128445/>
- Spolin, V. (2014). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. UNACT Press.
- Petrovici, I., & Ivan, D. (2019). Film as Aesthetic Experience and Work of Art. *Postmodern Openings*, 10(3), 135-150. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/86>
- Petrovici, I., & Szabo, L. (2018). Some Aspects of Aesthetic Creativity in Journalistic Photography. *Postmodern Openings*, 9(2), 134-144. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/24>
- Teodor-Stanciu, T. (2016), *Atelier Spre*. Art Out Street Art/Urban Art, 19, 12-17.