

Ce livre relate  
l'histoire du Jardin  
Suspendu,  
le lieu enchanté  
où le projet  
Mon(s) Invisible  
a vu le jour  
durant l'été 2015,  
à Mons (Belgique),  
Capitale  
Européenne  
de la Culture 2015.

# Index

Ce Livre Invisible est conçu comme une promenade dans le Jardin Suspendu, le lieu du projet Mon(s) Invisible. De chapitre en chapitre, vous évoluerez de structure en structure au sein du projet. Chacune de ces structures est racontée par des participants de Mon(s) Invisible, qui s'attachent soit à sa face visible (pages blanches), soit à sa face invisible (pages jaunes). De par l'aspect international du projet et de ses participants, chaque texte - à l'exception des recettes et de la transcription d'un événement en anglais - est disponible en français (fr) et en anglais (en). La narration d'une fiction également invisible tisse sa trame au long du livre. Bonne promenade !

This Invisible Book is imagined as a walk in the Hanging Garden, the location of the Mon(s) Invisible project. Chapter by chapter, you will progress through the structures at the heart of the project. Accounts of each of these structures have been given by the participants of Mon(s) Invisible; on the white pages are those pertaining to the visible side of the project, and on the yellow pages you have the invisible. Given the international scope of the project and its participants, each text - excluding the recipes and the transcription of an event in English - is printed in French (fr) and in English (en). The narrative threads of an invisible imaginary are also woven in throughout the book. Enjoy your walk!

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lement à exécuter vos tâches dans le système dominant : enseigner, construire des structures, présenter des recherches ou rédiger des textes. Mais vous les comprendrez comme des actes de libre arbitre, inspirés, alimentés et dirigés par vos efforts en dehors du système, vous permettant d'inonder le cadre obsolète du système éducatif de nouveaux contenus, de rompre les structures et les terminologies rouillées et de les réutiliser selon vos conditions.

Il est impératif d'ancrer dans les consciences la nécessité d'encourager et d'entretenir les écoles. Faites-en une partie de votre intention au quotidien, une habitude, un besoin et une obligation. Initions des écoles : dans les villes ou la campagne, à l'extérieur ou à l'intérieur, pour quelques heures par semaine ou à temps plein. Le maintien de cet objectif partagé doit être à la base commune de vos efforts. La méthode utilisée dépend de chacun d'entre nous.

## Notes:

1. Illich, Ivan. 1971. *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 72.
2. Avanesian, Armen (Ed.). 2013. #Akzeleration. Berlin: Merve, 71–77. ([https://www.academia.edu/4779206/Criticism\\_-\\_Crisis\\_-\\_Acceleration](https://www.academia.edu/4779206/Criticism_-_Crisis_-_Acceleration)) (Accessed 2016-01-20).
3. Paraskos, Michael. "TheTable Top Schools of Art," in: Paraskos, Michael. 2015. *Your Essays on Art and Anarchism*. Mitcham: Orage Press, #3.
4. Paolo Virno, *Grammar of The Multitude*, MIT Press, Chicago 2004, p. 76.
5. Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1997, p. 179.

en

REBEKKA KIESEWETTER

# Mons on my Mind

**This text is an adapted version of "Under Trees", published on [aformalacademy.com](http://aformalacademy.com) in winter 2016.**

**What, I have been asking myself not only since the experience in Mons, is a school? What are (irrespective of legal provisions) the minimal requirements, structural and personnel fundamentals, which turn an assemblage of individuals into a school? During the week in the Jardin Suspendu my blurred vision became much clearer.**

## I.

Already while pursuing my own educational path – unquestioningly accepting the frame, the requirements, the seemingly rather arbitrary hierarchies I perceived as given – I entertained a dim suspicion: A discomfort without a name. I was not able to put a finger on its origins. But I am now: In nowadays educational landscape and in an academic context, concepts such as efficiency, visibility, marketability and consensus have become the benchmarks for institutional as well as personal and professional success. Ivan Illich quite lucidly described the power relations and the entanglement of the educational system with the neoliberal market already in his 1971 classic, *Deschooling Society*: "The (...) curriculum (...) is a bundle of planned meanings, a package of values, a commodity whose 'balanced appeal' makes it marketable to a sufficiently large number to justify the cost of production. Consumer-pupils are taught to make their desires conform to marketable values. Thus they are made to feel guilty if they do not behave according to the predictions of consumer research by getting the grades and certificates that will place them in the job category they have been led to expect." (1) In this context you find yourselves reduced to the position of producers of value in a fictional and distorted knowledge economy.

2.

Albeit being aware of them, you often neglect your complicity to those conditions, and you tend to ignore that not only institutions but also individuals have internalized a profit-driven mind-set. While pursuing their career they act as competitors, in a push for what increasingly looks like market differentiation. Acknowledging and aiming to challenge this reality forces you to question your position in the educational system: you criticize institutions from within, wish to replace them and often – bereft of the ability to imagine something that goes beyond prevalent conventions and terminologies – fall into the trap of reproducing its core mechanisms of governance under slightly different terms. You must recognize that criticism from within can only result in an illusive aloofness within affiliation to the system: “Critique seeks to limit and legitimate the very crisis under critique, instead of speculatively leave it behind,” (2) as Armen Avanesian puts it.

Although it is clear that the kind of behavior and output the system demands of you does not correspond to your desires and conditions: would leaving it completely be an alternative? No. It is impossible, I believe, to dissociate entirely from the system (no matter how narrow or broad you frame it: educational, capitalist, eco-,...) as you still need it as much as it needs you. It supports you, enables you, also protects you – albeit in an janiform and opportunist manner.

3.

But still: you wish you could disengage from it, even just for a moment. And you can. Even though – at least for now – a detachment can only be partial. It begins with a mental exercise, with training your imagination: imagination is the tool of your emancipation. Because simply, what the educational system claims to be a “truth”, the “truth” put forward by the frames, protocols and conventions of your peers, bosses and your discipline, might not be yours.

So first of all I suggest you take distance from connecting your need for recognition to an ultimately capitalist reward scheme, and not make its evaluation grids yours. No longer let yourselves and all your aspirations to learn and exchange be driven by the desire for an institutional career or a higher position on a hierarchical ladder. Once and for all you should dismiss the idea that schools are places where students strive

towards diplomas and degrees, and let's forget about prevalent concepts of knowledge distribution and reception.

Instead nourish your imagination of what a school also could be. Based on this, create temporary spaces that provide the shelter needed to experiment outside of the time-frames and impositions on content required within the system. Only by setting up these spatial and mental realities will you find a real and tangible place for recovery from the system's pressure; A place for pre-consideration, re-thinking, re-disputing themes in an in-depth manner which the prevalent system cannot foster. Think about schools in the way Michael Paraskos did (this Greek writer seemed to have had Mons in mind writing the following): “you might well say that if four individuals gather together under a tree that is a school. Similarly four individuals around a kitchen table. Or four individuals in the café or bar. By redefining the school in this way you also redefine what it means to be a student in a school or a teacher (...) who work together not for meaningless pieces of paper that certify someone is something, but in a search for experiences.” (3) Every individual can become a school free to assemble in whichever form with other individuals.

4.

Think of your school as a constellation formed by interpersonal relationships rather than by imposed institutional structures or networking requirements. See your classes as gatherings of like-minded individuals, laughing, eating, working and thinking together, sharing ideas. Your reward system should result from sharing acts and thoughts, and your innate affiliations the base of your bonds and actions. Absurdity, ephemerality, the refusal of utilitarianism, shared hope, empathy and friendship should become the base and direct your behavior and ethics. In this constellation you will acknowledge the singularity of every individual as a point of arrival, not a starting point (4); its single parts do agree not merely to the right to difference but (..) agree also to the right to opacity (5). In those constellations you will find recognition as individuals, not as architects, journalists or curators. Consider your school as a place bringing back the sense of joy and the benefits (besides money and degrees) that should be inherent in the pursuit of your practices.

If you think about the school as simply a place where individuals meet and discuss, a school

which can pop up everywhere, you don't have to search for the spectacular, the shiny buildings, the overblown promises of curricula, the technologically advanced libraries and the smart studios, let's detect, cherish and use instead what is already here: A park, trees, a wooden structure, a shelter from the rain, an oven...

## 5.

Bear in mind that the personal constellation and every personality's needs should find a spatial equivalent. Not in the sense of introducing pre-defined spatial structures or assigned zones for certain activities, but rather by ensuring the possibility to comply with a set of protocols or parameters essential to the functioning of the constellation's action such as privacy, communality, voids and blind spots. This was the main finding after the experimental journey through the area I sent my fellows on. Following a questionnaire, they mirrored their singularity and the group's collectivity in the terrain, define spatial requirements for "working and thinking as friends," and to find out on what terms – if at all – the fact of being friends and working together within a physically and mentally circumscribed terrain, leads to a sense of inter-subjectivity. They were asked to detect the parallels between the internal and external landscapes to uncover physical equivalents to the structures, dynamics and peculiarities of the group's constellation.

## 6.

Remembering that a detachment can only be temporary, you will continue performing your jobs within the prevalent system – teaching, building structures, presenting researches or writing texts. But you will understand them as acts of agency, inspired, fueled and directed by your endeavors outside the system, enabling you to flood the educational system's outdated framework with new content, break open encrusted structures and terminologies and re-purpose them.

You have to anchor the necessity of fostering and maintaining schools in your consciousness, make it a part of your agendas, a habit, a need and an obligation. Let's initiate schools: Be it in cities or the countryside, outside or inside, just for a few hours a week or full time. Maintaining this shared objective is to be the common base of your endeavors, how you get there is up to each and every one of us.

## Notes:

1. Illich, Ivan. 1971. *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper & Row, 72.
2. Avanesian, Armen (Ed.). 2013. #Akzeleration. Berlin: Merve, 71–77. ([https://www.academia.edu/4779206/Criticism\\_-\\_Crisis\\_-\\_Acceleration](https://www.academia.edu/4779206/Criticism_-_Crisis_-_Acceleration)) (Accessed 2016-01-20).
3. Paraskos, Michael. "TheTable Top Schools of Art," in: Paraskos, Michael. 2015. *F your Essays on Art and Anarchism*. Mitcham: Orage Press, #3.
4. Paolo Virno, *Grammar of The Multitude*, MIT Press, Chicago 2004, p. 76.
5. Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1997, p. 179.



Alexander	Freddy	Marc	Sumiti
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