

Innovative Learning Environments: A Selection of Inspiring School Buildings

While the ideas and tips regarding democratic spaces, which were presented in the other materials, can also be applied to traditional school buildings, it is always worthwhile taking a closer look at schools that are already taking new paths in terms of architectural structure, usage of space, learning furniture etc. Such schools can serve as an inspiration when it comes to ensuring transparency and openness in everyday school life – something that can be experienced best first hand, by visiting them on site.

In this section, you can find a selection of Innovative Learning Environments that in various ways symbolise the ideal of a modern school oriented towards democratic principles.

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| Name of school | Ørestad Gymnasium |
| Description | Copenhagen's Ørestad Gymnasium is one of the most famous new school buildings in Europe. Built by 3XN architects, it is known for its innovative architecture that favours open learning environments instead of traditional classrooms. The entire building is characterised by a large, multi-storey interior space that accommodates all of the school's important functions: from teaching to retreat areas to the assembly of the entire school community. |



Photograph: Christian Timo Zenke

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|----------------------|---|
| Country | Denmark |
| Address | Ørestads Blvd. 75, 2300 København |
| Year of construction | 2007 |
| Website | http://www.oerestadgym.dk |
| Learn more | https://www.architonic.com/de/project/3xn-orestad-college/5100079 |

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| Name of school | University of Cambridge Primary School |
| Description | The University of Cambridge Primary School building is based on a circular-plan formed by three classroom clusters of six classrooms, plus an early-years cluster and a two-storey block of all the common parts, thus creating a unifying central courtyard where the whole school can gather. The courtyard is also a nod to Cambridge's historic College courtyards, but differs in that it opens up to the playground and landscape beyond. It is enclosed, yet open. Every classroom has no doors and opens on one side to a shared learning street and on the other onto a covered outdoor learning space. (Biddulph et al. 2023) |



Photograph: University of Cambridge Primary School


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|----------------------|---|
| Country | United Kingdom |
| Address | Eddington Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 0QZ |
| Year of construction | 2015 |
| Website | https://universityprimaryschool.org.uk |
| Learn more | <p>Biddulph, James; Rolls, Luke; Durning, Aimee; Natale, Elena; Millar, & Ellen (2023): The University of Cambridge Primary School: releasing the imagination of a new democratic education. In: Benedict Kurz & Christian Timo Zenke (Eds.): <i>LabSchoolsEurope: Participatory Research for Democratic Education</i>. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.</p> <p>Burke, Catherine; Barfield, Julia; Peacock, Alison (2016): Creating a space for irresistible learning. In: Peter Gronn & James Biddulph (Eds.): <i>A University's Challenge. Cambridge's Primary School for the Nation</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 59–79.</p> |

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| Name of school | Lernhaus im Campus |
| Description | The Lernhaus im Campus ("Learning House on the Campus") impresses with its learning areas designed as "open learning landscapes", in which three groups are always grouped into a cluster. In addition, the school also forms the core of the so-called "Campus": an inclusive place for lifelong learning and togetherness for the entire city, within which the school serves as an open centre of a democratic society |



Photograph: Christian Timo Zenke

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|----------------------|---|
| Country | Germany |
| Address | Am Barkhof 7, 27711 Osterholz-Scharmbeck |
| Year of construction | 2014 |
| Website | https://www.lernhaus-im-campus.de |
| Learn more | https://fk-architekten.de/portfolio/lernhaus |

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|---|---|
| Name of school | Laborschule Bielefeld |
| Description | As the oldest open-plan school in Germany, Laborschule Bielefeld has a learning space specifically designed to enable democratic learning. The students here learn in a large common "learning landscape" and can perceive the school community as a whole every day. |
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| Photograph: Dimitrie Harder | |
| Country | Germany |
| Address | Universitätsstraße 21, 33615 Bielefeld |
| Year of construction | 1974 |
| Website | http://laborschule-bielefeld.de/de/home |
| Learn more | <p>Dorniak, Marlena; Zenke, Christian Timo (2019): Öffnung von Pädagogik und Architektur: Die Laborschule Bielefeld. In: Raum & Bildung (5), S. 38–53. Online verfügbar unter https://ebooks.kphvie.ac.at/RaumBildung-5/</p> <p>Zenke, Christian Timo (2018): The Challenge of Open Space. Lessons from a Pioneering School Building Layout in Germany. In: IALS-Journal VIII (1), S. 9–16</p> |

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