Riccardo Rapparini
**Practical instructions for dreaming about school.
Interview with Beate Weyland**

Abstract
From the very first reflections on how to structure this issue of FAM, the need arose to talk about school architecture while also talking about *something else*, *another thing*, which, in truth, has existed for too long and perhaps has an air of guilt about it. In the case of this interview, then, considering that this *other thing* means pedagogy, architecture's guilt in having omitted the discipline which is the protagonist of scholastic processes emerges in an even sharper light. It is in an attempt to mend the relationship between architectural and pedagogical disciplines that we are including this interview with Beate Weyland, a Professor of Educational Sciences at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, and long committed to deepening and developing shared design processes through which to maieutically lead participants towards an awareness which makes them active in building their own "dream school".

Riccardo Rapparini: *For me it would be interesting to begin this interview by recognizing a common* arkhé *between architecture and pedagogy that can be summed up by the word* 'formation'. *In pedagogical terms,* formation *implies the construction of a path of maturation and growth for the learner; in architectural ones, the act of leading a design idea to become a* form. *Do you think this is an appropriate starting point to discuss these two disciplines in the same breath?*

Beate Weyland: In the book *Between Pedagogy And Architecture*, written together with Sandy Attia and published in 2015, we wanted to indicate five keywords at the intersection between pedagogy and architecture, which are often interpreted differently by the two worlds, and which can make it easier to understand how necessary it is to create a common language. *Form, space, flexibility, beauty, innovation*, are terms widely used in both the pedagogical and architectural fields, especially when it comes to school projects. But what meaning do they have for the school world and what for designers? Starting from the simple etymological data of the word, we've deepened its specific values for our respective disciplines, we've compared them with the meanings of everyday life, we've sought them among research data, in a dialogue with the various individuals who gravitate around a school. Lastly, we've built a bridge between pedagogy and architecture precisely through this appraisal, identifying the common meaning we wished to give these terms.
As regards the words FORM and formation, if by the latter term we mean the *process of formation*, it has an active value and mainly refers to the genesis of physical and material structures (the formation of minerals, the

formation of clouds…). In more figurative uses, it can refer to psycho-physical and intellectual development or, in an active sense, to the civil, spiritual and moral education of a person. In an absolute use, always with reference to the Treccani dictionary [of Italian, t/n], the result is also indicated, namely, the baggage of knowledge acquired in a given specific sector (e.g.: having a good educational formation in...). In common parlance, this term means whatever constitutes the effect, the result, of forming or being formed, therefore, generally, a *structure*, a more or less uniform and compact union of *material elements*.

I agree with you that the concept of "formation" is an opportunity to create a dialogue between pedagogy and architecture. But we must be careful: this word can have two meanings. One being that of forming as in *giving a form*, therefore as used in the architectural discipline, the other instead alluding to the concept of *being educated* with a pedagogical approach oriented to the theme of *Bildung*. I would avoid thinking of the combinations with "giving formation, providing formation" which hark back to an overly-outmoded reading of planning oneself in the world. Form and formation both offer us the element of concreteness and consistency on the one hand, the generative and heuristic, ethical and aesthetic dimension on the other. In both fields, we're concerned with *giving form to a content*, with *carrying out a formative action* which is intimately linked to the broad concept and to *learning*, which only in English has a complete meaning in itself, a meaning which the Italian word "*apprendere*" lacks. Therefore, formation as *Bildung*, as *learning*, not as a transitive verb ("learning what?"), which indicates learning one thing rather than another, but as an undertaking of continuous and vital growth, expansion, cultural enrichment, being in touch with research, respect for people's becoming in every educational activity.

RR: *The first question suggested a semantic root common to pedagogy and architecture. The theme of language, however, also plays an important operational role in the participatory processes on which your own research is based. The first step in drafting a pedagogical concept[1] is the sharing of the needs and aspirations that each* inhabitant *of a school (managers, teachers but also parents and students) has developed with their own experience. In these terms it seems to me that, metaphorically, you are covering the role of the interpreter in a* frontier *space in which each* inhabitant *tries to express him/herself with his/her own language, encountering inevitable but fertile communication difficulties.*
How do you help to build *a common language capable of becoming a communication tool which everyone can understand?*

BW: I believe I carry out a maieutic activity on the one hand while on the other I encourage awareness of the different points of view of the school project, with the idea that everyone's contribution can lead to the best response for the school in the making.
Let me explain: the first job I do with the school communities involved in the processes of developing a new school idea is to give everyone the floor. Both in the maieutic sense – so that everyone can clearly express their own vision – and also to create a climate of collaboration and mutual respect. Taking the floor, explaining positions, indicating problems, responsibilities, the different points of view in a dynamic arena which stimulates communication, allows everyone to become aware of the separate roles and tasks that each has in a school project. Clients have economic responsibilities, schools have pedagogical and organizational responsibilities (with a series of specs), architects have compositional and structural responsibilities. Knowledge of the distinct roles that each plays, ranged side by side on the drawing board, offers a different basis for beginning.
Later on, when they all know one another and recognize one another in the tasks and in the different points of view on the school project, my work becomes profoundly maieutic: I invite everyone to express a dream for school. I use a methodology inspired by Christopher Alexander, asking everyone to close their eyes and imagine the new school, looking for a place within it that the person imagining would want. What is this place like from which you are looking at your new school? How is it linked to everything else? What happens in this new school? In my maieutic work, I create a space in which everyone feels entitled to express their dream in turn. The mayor, the child, the teacher, the mother, the manager, the janitor, and the architect all speak. Everyone listens and discovers that they are great dreamers, but above all they become aware that they have a lot in common, that they are not really so different from one another. Everyone is surprised, they light up, they discover themselves. Everyone becomes curious, and when I ask them to work in groups to summarize their proposals, they tend to respect the different dreams and seek out points of convergence. This is a process which always moves me, so much so that they call me "the midwife" of new school ideas. A new idea of a school is born, just as a child is born. It's young, helpless, needs to be cared for and nurtured in order to grow.

RR: *For me, one of the most critical issues of participatory processes is the democratic one. This was already maintained by Giancarlo De Carlo who saw participatory planning as a tool to build a kind of architecture that is «multiple and meaningful for all, in the sense that everyone should*

find an answer to what they ask for in architecture» (De Carlo 1989) and, therefore, the reflection of a society that aspires to be democratic.
As in De Carlo, the processes you propose intend participation not only as the construction tool of a tectonic architecture, but also of a community capable of subsequently recognizing itself in a project capable of translating ambitions and needs. In what way does participation build a community? And why, in this sense, is it important for a school to return to having a core civic value as well as an educational one?

BW: In reality, we no longer speak of participation, but of sharing[2]. You participate in a party, meeting, or event, and if you leave early, nothing happens. You can also not participate; the event will take place anyway. In shared planning, all are organizers of the event. If an individual is missing, a piece is missing. It cannot be done without him/her. It's done together. Everyone feels empowered and active, each capable of responding with their own skills.
For me, it's vital to work in this way so that my world, the pedagogical one, represented by teachers, managers, parents, and children, is fully active in the process which leads to the birth of a school. We are no longer living in a time, like that of De Carlo, when users were involved by architects (always architects) to understand how such users think, how they live, what they want. Nowadays, it's a question of working in a particular area of responsibility. It's the users themselves who need to understand how they live now and how they want to live in the future. A school must be fully empowered in a process of developing its own identity. In addition, it's necessary to learn to deal with the budget (client problems) and with the various structural, compositional and aesthetic problems (architect's thoughts). I'm committed to ensuring that my world nurtures knowledge and competence in these fields as well; we're talking about a basic ABC which, however, can deeply contribute to developing a new culture of designing and inhabiting schools.

RR: *Just recently, Professor Franco Lorenzoni, during a* lectio magistralis[3] *for the awarding of an Honorary Degree in Primary Education Sciences, proposed a very interesting example to describe how space influences human actions. Borrowing the words of Jean-Pierre Vernant, he defined the foundation of the city Megara Iblea as the first example of democracy, given that the architects chose to place a public square in the centre of the* polis, *a place dedicated to sharing and speaking. So, in some way, democracy is recognized as having a spatial genesis.*
Consequently, if space has such a profound influence on a community, how does designing a school space contribute to making the school a "peda-

gogical device", as, for example, theorized by Loris Malaguzzi or more recently planned by Giancarlo Mazzanti?

BW: The theme of space as a pedagogical device is very important. As such it implies a heuristic and propositional quality. It offers the user the opportunity to do or not do something, to discover and create situations, to generate encounters and exchanges, and so on. Malaguzzi taught the exploration of space to children and the encounter with space for teachers to understand what space talks about and what its potential for education can be. This interest in the quality of space is not widespread in a pedagogical context, a lot of work still needs to be done.

More often than not, architects are able to read the pedagogical universe and therefore offer a possible scenario in which to live with the didactic processes and experience the educational relationship. When it comes to a public, community space, there is no shortage of experiences and experiments. On the contrary, when it comes to a space for teaching (classrooms, laboratories), architects simply give up. The fantasy is interrupted and the script of the classroom forcefully "breaks through", like a timeless monad. I'm working with Giancarlo Mazzanti, a dear friend, more than just a colleague, to understand whether it's possible to develop together a discourse on "play" as a tool for dialogue between pedagogy and architecture. Play is a right expressed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Free, self-determined play. A school is not a place where many children's rights are safeguarded, least of all that of play.

Much could be said about this, but what I would like to explore with Giancarlo is how we can design a free play space for children and teenagers in a school. If space can be a pedagogical device designed by both educator and architect, then how is a play space configured? As a place of absolute and free fun, where learning is built through relationships with others.

RR: *The next question I would like to ask you is more closely related to the themes of architectural design. As happens in almost all disciplines, by now architecture seems to have become accessible only to those who are a part of it, producing in the inexperienced a condition of illiteracy which makes it difficult to understand the criticality and potential of the space they inhabit. How do you enable participants to see architecture – paraphrasing Zevi – as the only way to participate in the choices of the future school project actively and consciously?*

BW: We need to teach architecture to teachers as well as to children. There are many proposals to teach the quality of spaces to the younger generations, using playful, exploratory approaches. I'm contacting various institutions, such as the Biennale Education, imagining that I'm also making proposals for my own world, which would need them so much. Future first-year architects receive the rudiments of architectural language in the same way. Paths should also be developed for the world of schools, in order to bring the culture of space into dialogue with pedagogy.

Consider that the training of an architect is in any case multidisciplinary. You are aware that you are designing for people, who are multiform, multifaceted, and complex. The architect is preparing to understand the needs of extremely diverse clientèle and needs a kind of thinking which is as open to influences and rich as possible.

The training of teachers currently does not have this richness. An educator from *Reggio Children* once told us during a visit: «Remember that our training is the least interdisciplinary of all». Currently, the training of prospective teachers is aimed at having enough culture and knowledge to manage the triadic educational relationship between teacher, learner, and knowledge. A relationship which generates a triangle that, depending on where the attractive force moves, from equilateral, can become isosceles, and even end up becoming a straight line. While learning the most current cooperative and enabling educational techniques, a lot of training is strictly disciplinary. There are no broad-spectrum cultural insights, and in no way are the themes of spatiality and aesthetics considered.

We work with teachers to become aware of the spaces they have in a straightforward way. A phenomenological analysis of the educational space. What do we find at the entrance? What do we see in the classroom? What is or isn't there in the communal areas? Without passing judgement, we proceed space by space to see what it says and whether this story corresponds to what we would like to experience or do in the various environments. Most of the time, it's the teachers themselves who discover that their spaces do not at all expound the values and principles that they would like to champion.

RR: *The urgency of setting school projects on the basis of shared pedagogical foundations would call for the use of participatory processes on an urban or even regional scale, like the* Torino Fa Scuola *project[4] for example. What critical issues do you think the generalization of processes based on such subjective and specific principles can present? In other words, is it possible to maintain the same degree of sensibility in understanding and translating the needs of each school community by systematizing participatory processes?*

BW: Shared, non-participatory planning is a question of method, not of systematization. In my career I've spent a lot of time carrying out courses with school communities geared to testing a potential method. In my latest publications I've explained this road, which was the same one that I tried out in the *Torino Fa Scuola* project. Each school has its own made-to-measure suit. It all begins with a sharing of intentions and an acknowledgement

of the different viewpoints and roles in the project. We continue with a needs survey (on participation) and with a collegial analysis of the status quo. We may continue with visits to cases of excellence, or by looking at proposals which show ways of teaching/learning (both pedagogically and architecturally) that are very different from those we are used to. The dream then develops and work is done to summarize it in the compulsory themes which emerge. The last steps focus on matching the dream to the budget, with the development of functional schemes and general quantifications. The law is a theme, it's interpreted. Money is a theme; we do what we can. However, we have a clear idea of where we want to go and what we want to do. It's rather like being with the family and discussing our new home together.

RR: *Right from his or her formative years*, *any designer ends up dealing with the combination of* form and function. *Even if the term 'function', having picked up a negative reputation, has been replaced by that of 'use', the debate around this dichotomy remains fundamental. Therefore, starting from the relationship of these two terms, I do wonder whether rooting an architectural project so specifically in its uses can cause difficulties when it's inherited by new inhabitants. When a member of the school, for example a manager or teacher, with his/her own beliefs and visions, takes over from a predecessor, can he or she experience difficulty settling in? Or if not, how can this risk be avoided?*

BW: I'm always asked this question. If we give our school a strong identity, what are we going to do with newcomers? And if we leave, what are they going to say? The fact is that we're not thinking about creating an element that is completely devoid of all logic. We always talk about 'school', that is, a place where the experience of knowledge, mutual exchange, skills development, love for culture ought to become increasingly enjoyable and richer. Dreaming of a different school does no harm. We always stick to the rules dictated by school building regulations. The functions are clearly defined by the number of people (teachers and pupils), as well as by the disciplines. It's like when we dream of a new way of organizing a hotel or restaurant: the function is clear, but the way in which this is conceived and experienced can be better defined and personalized.
However different you might like it to be, the school space sets out to develop the four guidelines of global skills: orientation to demand and research, team-building and empathy, healthy relationships, responsible actions (capable of germinating in the world).
These are skills which, up until now, have not been covered in this straightforward way. School has always been the place to cultivate good answers, to work alone and not to copy (and the desk is an emblem of this); a place which does not necessarily pay attention to bodily health (moving, being in the open air, eating well), and which certainly did not develop projects with children and young people so that they can feel effective in the world. All of this is changing, and many schools are on their way precisely to IN-FORM – to make these guidelines concrete. The world is racing towards the end. They say that we have no more than 100 years ahead of us. It takes good questions, excellent team skills, great attention to everyone's health and wellbeing and a willingness to act immediately in the world to improve it even slightly. How do schools need to be made in order to use and develop these skills? Perhaps classrooms are no longer enough for us;

will systems of interconnected environments be welcoming us? Perhaps the school as an island in itself is no longer enough; will the city and the country enrich us? Maybe the gym is no longer enough; will the gardens, woods, countryside, lakes and sea give us more?

The function of the school will always be there, but we shall rename it. From a place of teaching to a cathedral of knowledge and culture. A place for meeting and exchange, a space for the empowerment of mankind, designed to generate new worlds.

I think of those films in which the reasoning is made the other way around: with the future in the hearts of our children. They know. For them we create platforms over which adults, the wise, the elderly, preside, so that these young people are free to think and create, free to share and grow in constructive confrontations and exchanges.

Conclusions

The title chosen for this interview attempts to bring together two complementary aspects which emerge strongly from the words of Beate Weyland. The first, *Practical Instructions¸* yields the scientific character at the base of the research through which Weyland has been able to cannily build a rigorous method which is still sensitive to the specific issues and subjectivity with which her processes tackle each case; the second, *Dreaming of School*, yields a further, fundamental aspect, namely, the feeling, the emotional nature which is inevitably linked to school life and which, at least in a mnemonic form, will always remain so.

Weyland straddles this fine line, poised between the scientific and the emotional, through which to build in the inhabitants of the school a strong awareness which can reveal their fantasies and desires but also their responsibilities and integrity, previously dormant in a dependence borrowed from a school structure which tends to produce more nightmares than dreams.

In fact, Weyland's processes not only build the school in tectonic terms but also – and one could even say above all – in community ones, through a constant sharing which takes on an indispensable educational character. Educational because she teaches dialogue and awakens in each of the participants a sense of community which does not disappear with the end of the project but continues in the life of the school, modifying and reinterpreting it when necessary. In this sense, it's interesting to underline the clarification on the passage from a *participatory* to a *shared planning* through which Weyland attempts to overcome a tradition which saw participation as an exclusive form of listening, emphasizing, with, on the contrary, the need for each member to feel involved, thus taking on a starring role and not that of an extra.

Notes

[1] The term *Pedagogical Concept*, in full an *Organizational Plan with a Pedagogical Goal*, identifies «the starting point for rethinking spaces based on an educational approach and to examine the problems/potential of the building from the point of view of the teacher and the school principal in relation to local needs (the municipality, the province) and those of society. It is also an opportunity to verify the quality of the school project in cultural and educational terms and to study the possibility of welcoming activities and external subjects even after school hours, in such a way as to acquire a new vitality for the fabric of towns and cities and to transform itself into a proper civic and cultural place, or a 'radiating centre' for the new educative community». See http://www.padweyland.org/programma.html

[2] To learn more about shared design issues, see the PAD (Pedagogy Architecture Design) portal run by Beate Weyland at: http://www.padweyland.org/

[3] The *lectio magistralis* held by Franco Lorenzoni at the University of Milan-Bicocca is available in full at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYXqlEHexYQ&t=122s.

[4] *Torino Fa Scuola* is a project promoted by the Giovanni Agnelli foundation in collaboration with the city of Turin and the Fondazione per la Scuola. Reflecting on the relationship between architecture and pedagogy has contributed to the creation of two schools in Turin (the Enrico Fermi and Giovanni Pascoli lower secondary schools). See https://www.torinofascuola.it/

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