



## Designing the learning space

Why is the form of places important? To indicate individual actions and modes of social interaction: architectural form has this power. In doing so, it reminds people of the deeper essence of the activities that the form itself accommodates. What essence or meaning, should the form of a learning space, for example, remind people of? Two distinct trajectories can help answer this question. On the one hand, the verb to control, on the other, the verb to grow. The school designed to cumulatively construct productive knowledge, to prepare the child for adulthood, cannot but take on the appearance of a disciplinary device. In producing performance, learning is aimed at making the subject increasingly 'skilled', in a hypothetical and illusory linear progression.

The form mirrors that of the barracks and the Fordist factory, while its internal organization is reminiscent of those bureaucratic constructions that – as Max Weber had well guessed – do not promote knowledge but discomfort and despair.

On the other hand, a school designed to help grow is centred on failure. Growing is nothing but a continuous attempt at change to which failure, error and crisis are integral .

A school designed for play, which is simulation and projection of the future, which also includes error, accompanies the brain development of the Sapiens pup perfectly. The body is the main character in this growth process. The growth of a small human being involves the body and

brain together.

As Telmo Pievani points out, referring to the studies of anthropologist Ian Tattersall (*Homo Sapiens. Il cammino dell'umanità* 2012), some research suggests that, during evolution, language may have been refined by children. They were, in fact, ideally placed to pretend, simulate, experiment, and play with sounds, things, and gestures. The creative potential in the developmental stage is at its highest.

The organization of space, and its form, can suggest different ways of teaching. A cellular space neither allows, nor suggests, inter-actions outside a pre-determined schedule. Differently, experimenting implies a space articulated by enabling a plurality of actions, even indeterminate, individual and for small/large groups. A space designed for growth suggests and feeds on the movement of the body, adopts colours and materials that respond to doubts, accepts crisis and failure, and does not create altars from which to pass judgment. External and internal space merge, calling bodies to play and to fall. The plastic phase par excellence of cerebral growth needs this architectural setting to find the right fit.

This section, dedicated to neuroscience and architecture, will recount this line of thought in the next two months. We will start with an interview with Upali Nanda, research leader within the US group HKS, and continue with the case of a small school in Peru, in Ica. We will return to the topic with a beautiful book by Barbara Wolf 'Atmospheres of Learning' and close with a summary of some thesis research dedicated to the topic of school design.

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