

Title of the proposal: “School Building Policies in Comparative Perspective. A Transatlantic Dialogue on Current Challenges”.

Key words: school building, policy, interdisciplinarity, educational architecture, informal school building

Abstract:

In their recent study on the inclusiveness of school building in Spain, Julia María Crespo Comesaña and Maria del Mar Lorenzo Moledo argue that policy, as a pivotal legislative act that shapes school architecture, is a document that results from combining different fields of knowledge and interests ("The Spaces of Inclusive Primary School: Connections and Disharmony between Regulations Concerning School Buildings and the Objectives of the Educational System", 2016). As such, policy gathers and prioritizes some types of knowledge, while omitting others. According to the researchers, in Spain school building policies have successfully integrated contributions from engineering and universal design on structural safety, accessibility, health factors, and technological advances among other data. However, research on the relevance of school density, size, location, community impact as well as contributions from pedagogical models of Montessori, Froebel or Reggio Emilia continues to be omitted. The researchers further point to the lack of channels of communication and cooperation between different stakeholders as one of the most important challenges for the advancement of the field. One of the most prominent voices of the 21st school design across the Atlantic, Prakash Nair, echoes the same concern on the gravity of the situation in American and international school building industries. He emphasizes that traditional schools are designed for *teaching*, as opposed to *learning*. The architect attributes this to a significant break-up in the educational system, where different agents function autonomously and under different sets of principles. As a consequence, "[The] school's most important -purpose- and their most important clients- children and the local community -are largely disregarded in the process of its creation" ("But Are They Learning? School Buildings- The Important Unasked Questions", 2002). This paper seeks to bring these cross-cultural concerns into one through a comparative analysis of school building policies and their current challenges in Spain, Russia and the US.

Through the examination of a set of selected criteria - the relevance of location, contributions from educational research on community impact and engagement, levels and types of cooperations between the agents- paper offers a critical examination of recurrent patterns of approaches and criticism in school building policies in different cultural contexts. The study is augmented by a contrastive analysis of traditional school building policies with informal experiences in international cooperation projects (school building projects by "Architects without Borders"). Mapping informal experiences in international school building is essential for two reasons. First, it enables knowledge and methodology transfer between the policy and the real life contexts. Secondly, it provides relevant insights on the important challenge of making a shift from *teaching* to *learning* and from "*building for*" to the "*building with*" approach in school architecture.

Biodata:

Kseniya Fiaduta is a graduate student at the University Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) where she is working on an interdisciplinary thesis " Soviet Schools, their makers and users: notes on the intersections of architecture, space and pedagogical thought". In addition to research, Kseniya is also a project collaborator at "Architects without Borders" (Spain) and "TECHO" (Panamá). In 2015, she co-founded with Professor Teresa Romaña (UB) a non-profit organization

"_Education_Architecture_" - an initiative that brings together architects, researchers, educators and community to reflect on the nature of learning spaces and educational architecture. She speaks Russian, Belarusian, English and Spanish.

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