

# EDENLAB & EDENSPACES: Educational spaces as ecosystems

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How can educational spaces be designed as vibrant, co-evolutionary ecosystems in which people and plants work together to shape processes of learning, research and transformation?

The lecture provides an insight into EDENLAB, an interdisciplinary research laboratory at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, which operates at the intersection of design, education and architecture and serves as an experimental and innovative platform for design research within the university context. EDENLAB views education as a spatial and cultural process and develops new connections between design, art, culture, technology, architecture and landscape.

Within this framework, the international Master's programme EDENSPACES will also be presented; as a forward-looking educational model, it explores new formats of learning and design. Through transdisciplinary approaches, project-based learning and the close integration of research and practice, EDENSPACES creates an innovative space in which students actively contribute to the transformation of educational spaces.

Educational spaces are conceived here in a broader sense – as open, dynamic structures that integrate growth, temporal rhythms and social interactions. Plants play an active role: they shape atmospheres, structure time and influence ways of living together and learning.

The new publication *\*Dwelling Schools\** (Peter Lang, 2025), which brings together fifteen years of research, presents imaginary and real learning landscapes in which the coexistence of humans and plants is conceived as a concrete spatial and cultural practice. Drawing on selected projects, the article demonstrates how the integration of nature, open planning processes and experimental teaching formats open up new perspectives for the ecologically responsible and, at the same time, innovative design of university educational spaces.

## References:

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**Beate Weyland** is Professor of General Didactics at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the Free University of Bolzano. Her research explores the relationship between pedagogy, architecture and design in the planning and development of educational institutions. At an international level, she promotes studies, exhibitions and conferences to raise awareness of the important relationship between learning and space, including through the use of plants, which convey the spatial and temporal dimensions within which pedagogical and architectural projects of doing and being in education unfold. She is the founder and director of the EDEN research laboratory – Educational Environments with Nature – which focuses on investigating ecological and sustainable solutions for the development of educational approaches and spaces through an interdisciplinary approach in which plants act as exceptional mediators. <https://edenlab.unibz.it/>