

A10



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Start

- Service station of the future
- Business park, Tyrol
- Apartment building, Moscow
- Transformation of a power station, Vockerode
- House, Almere
- Centre for health education, Copenhagen

Ready

- Weekend house, Zurndorf
- School, Pederobba
- Apartment building, Tallinn
- Supreme Court, Nicosia
- Weekend retreat, Carreço
- Extension of School of Pharmacy, Madrid
- Offices, London
- Police station, Barcelona
- House, Chabrey
- Shopping centre, Celje
- House in garden, Mosta

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- Interview with Flemish architect Christian Kieckens
- The spirit of adaptation in Southern Italy
- Swedish architecture: there's more to a bore
- Nizhny Novgorod, Russia's unofficial capital of architecture
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Terminal architecture

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Small town Europe

HANS IBELINGS

Most architects and critics have more affinity with big cities than with the countryside. The inappropriate urban entries for village locations in the latest European competition are only one illustration of this contention. The motto of architectural insiders seems to be, 'the bigger the city, the better and more beautiful it is'. Another indicator is terminology: any reasonably big city or even an amalgamation of two or more medium-sized cities, is all too readily dubbed a metropolis while the same linguistic inflation quickly promotes what used to be called a metropolis to the status of megacity or metacity.

One consequence of the almost obsessive affinity with the big city is a tendency to detect urbanity everywhere, even where there is no city to be found. This was borne in upon me when I read *Città di Iatta* (1997) in which Italian architect Paolo Desideri described how, on his weekly journey from Rome to Pescara, driving across one of the least populated areas of Italy, he noticed that there were always some evidence of habitation. This led him to conclude that the contemporary city is everywhere. Similar perceptions of the unending city can be found all over Europe: the Randstad in the Netherlands, the Flemish 'nebular city', the double city of Vienna-Bratislava, Actar's interpretation of Catalonia as Hypercity,

the west coast of Portugal as linear city and so on. In USE (Uncertain State of Europe), Stefano Boeri's Multiplicity has extended this way of seeing to the entire continent: Europe as a city that never ends.

The idea of Europe as one big urban region reflects a way of looking at things that bears all the hallmarks of professional tunnel vision, comparable to that of the economist who sees rational transactions in every aspect of daily life. The reality is that although 75% of Europeans live in urban areas, the continent makes a very poor showing in global metropolitan tables. In Arjan van Susteren's 2005 *Metropolitan World Atlas*, only 20 of the 101 metropolises featured are European and that includes three artificial constructions – Antwerp-Brussels, Randstad Holland and Rhine-Ruhr – as well as a number of cities that are not usually regarded as metropolises, such as Oslo, Le Havre and Genoa. The only European cities to make it into Van Susteren's fifty biggest cities are London (no. 11), Moscow (18), Rhine-Ruhr (19), Paris (23), Istanbul (24), Randstad (38) and St Petersburg (50).

However much professionals would like to see Europe as a region of metropolitan allure, the reality is that the European territory consists for the most part of cities that from a global perspective are medium-sized or small. While that is no reason for architects and critics to quell their fascination with the dynamism of mega- and metacities like Sao Paulo, New York and Tokyo, it does suggest that it is time they recognized that the specific European condition needs to be looked at and managed in a different way. ←

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62 Out of obscurity

A new section focusing on buildings in the margins of modern architectural history. First up, one of the editor's favorites: Koen van der Gaast's Tilburg railway station of 1965.





↑ The school is much less minimalist than it first appears.

School, Pederobba

C+S Associati use multiple colours to good effect in their school design.

ITALY — TEXT: LUIGI PRESTINENZA

It is difficult to place this elementary school, designed by C+S Associati for the town of Pederobba in the province of Treviso, within a stylistic category. At first glance the project appears to belong to the world of minimalism, like the other completed works of this young studio, which is chiefly active in the Veneto area. In support of this interpretation one could point to the low profile of the building, the almost perfectly rectangular plan and the essential and elegant openings on the main facade that protect the glazing in front of the nursery school spaces.

However, contradicting this impression, even before entering the building, is the use of colour: vivid red is to be found on the wall in the large, central common space, inside the skylights, in strips on the entry wall and on the inner walls of the courtyard behind the building. As ostentatious as it may seem, the red

colour is no mere attention-getter here, but actually manages to create a dialogue with the green of the surrounding fields, evoking the colours of some of the typical elements of the landscapes of Treviso. What is more, it enhances the otherwise dull tonality of the concrete, recalling Barragan's brightly coloured buildings in Mexico. It also reminds those who see it from a distance that the building houses a school for young children which, by its very nature, must not be sad or severe, but should instead communicate a sense of vitality and youthful energy.

Inside the building, any suspicion of a minimalist approach disappears, at least in the strict sense of the term. The use of colour, limited on the exterior to contrasting grey and red, becomes a dominant element of the interior design. The spaces for physical activities are painted bright purple, the nursery classrooms brilliant yellow, while other spaces are blue or green. The result is a vibrant polychrome effect in those spaces that connect with two or more different areas. In the hallways, moreover, coloured stripes mark the routes to the different classrooms and the exit.

The objective is now clear: the colours constitute a directional system suitable for young children who find it much easier to memorize a colour than to learn the icons or abstract images used in adult signage systems.

Carlo Cappai and Alessandra Segantini have produced more than a simple visual alphabet, however. A play of light and trans-

parency reveals the organization of the spaces, their functions and different colours, thereby opening up a universe of multiple relationships for the children: 'We grew up in 19th-century schools based on such rigid and elementary principles that they now appear to be reductive. Our children must learn to relate, from early childhood, to a more attractive and complex universe.'

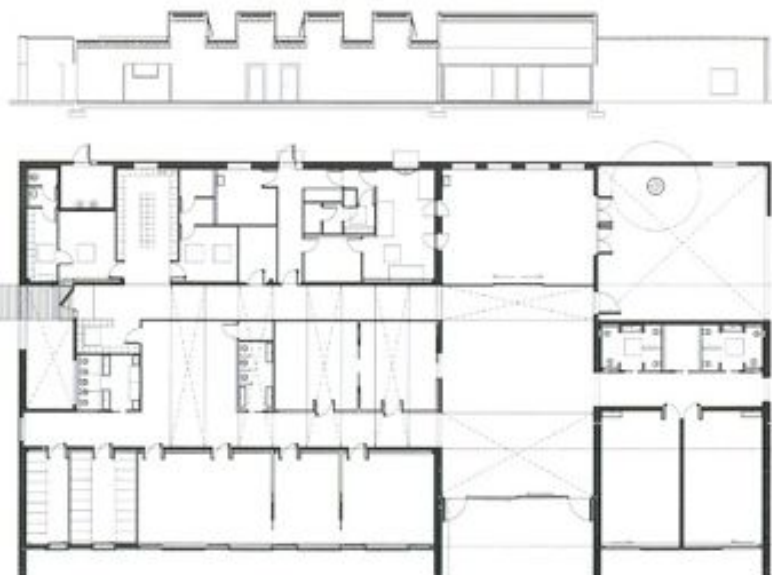
The result is a strategic role for light. As in most buildings by Cappai and Segantini, light enters not only through windows and vertical glazing but also through skylights placed directly above the large central space and the inner part of the building that contains the hallways and classrooms that do not directly face the exterior. The overhead light animates the different wall colours while also offering the practical benefit of reducing the use of artificial lighting when the sun is shining. The glass wall that divides the central space allows for direct observation from the hallway of the activities taking place in the adjacent classrooms for physical activities, making the use of this main room more interesting from a spatial point of view. When open, the sliding panels that divide the nursery school rooms give rise to a single continuous space with a view through to the garden behind the school. ←

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 2003-2005

Architect: C+S Associati
Client: Comune di Pederobba (Treviso)
Address: Pederobba, province of Treviso, Italy
Info: www.cipiuisse.it



↓ Section ↓↓ Ground floor



↓ The skylit central space

Light plays a strategic role in this Barraganesque building. ↑

