

The Expanded School Centre for Special Education. Madrid, Spain Invited Competition. First Prize. 2016

MARCOS PARGA

Syracuse University

A mass media channel is a transmission medium, a system in which information travels between an emitter and a receiver. The main broadcast media are writing, radio, television and internet, and are the “places” where opinions are exchanged, critical thinking is built, previous knowledge is transmitted and visual and textual contents are distributed. Therefore, we can assert that, for better or worse, mass media are able to represent and reflect on the world in which we live and the people who inhabit it.

When designing our proposal for the new Centre for Special Education in Madrid, our intention, beyond creating a building, has been to build a new “channel;” A space for exchange designed to explore and promote new educational trends, to enable experimental pedagogical strategies development and generate a suitable and unique environment that reinforces intellectual and physical growth of disabled children and children with special educational needs.

As a result, our building will perform as a kind of test pattern, a fixed sign that was displayed when the transmitter was active but waiting to broadcast a new program. The new School will operate as a base frame of open configuration pending of programming. Our School will be a new media channel waiting to be loaded with content and capable of supporting subsequent updates.

Throughout this process the main variable that finally drove our work arose when incorporating the reality of an uncertain future as a raw material. In order to deal with the unexpected, we focused on a sort of neutral architecture, repeatable and standardized (modular), released from the tyranny of the present and based on concepts such as unstable identity or programmed imperfection. The final goal is to design a building to-be-done, whose real construction will begin the opening day.

The New School therefore will be an urban scale building but with a certain rural component related to domesticated natures, an antidote to monotony, to immobility, to “comfort zones,” becoming a catalyst for non-conformist and proactive attitudes. We seek for an environment where nothing is as it is expected to be (or maybe...), where thinking and doing differently, where being a student, teacher or neighbor involves participating, and where the prevailing heterogeneity will be able to accommodate any teaching strategy. The idea is to avoid predictability, designing a space to project ourselves into the unexpected and the unfinished that the user must discover.

This strategy will allow us to deal with a large and complex program for 1700 all-age pupils including, among other functions, secure lobby, parents room, large hall, multipurpose space, dining room, kitchen and formative kitchen, classrooms, early years rooms, life skills room, hydrotherapy pool, gym, physio room, psychomotor education room, winter garden, sensory garden, cropping areas, outdoor playgrounds, and sports facilities, and parking areas.

The new building will be built combining concepts such as adaptability, creative participation, continuous updating, domestication of scale, typological decoding, constructive standardization, spatial and functional recycling, urban interaction and progressive specialization, to shape to a new typology of educational environment: the EXPANDED SCHOOL.

The Expanded School

Center for Special Education, Madrid, Spain

Estudio MAPAA / Invited Competition. First Prize. 2016 / Client: Juan XXIII-Foncalli Foundation / Site Area: 6264358.20sf / Gross Area: 69104.30sf / Budget: 7.000.000\$



A New Channel

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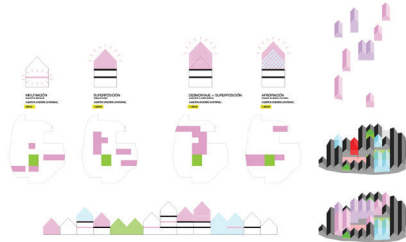
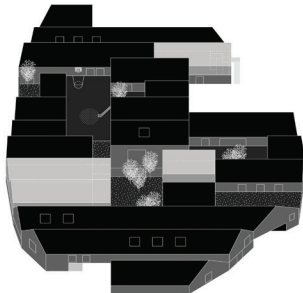
Complex adaptive system

The building incorporates some of the properties of the so-called "complex adaptive systems": it is complex in the sense that it is diverse and conformed by multiple interconnected elements; and adaptive, because it has the ability to change and learn from experience, responding to the new requirements at any time. This requires the development of a generic open-source configuration system that will allow us to test different results to get the most appropriate according to the needs of the client.



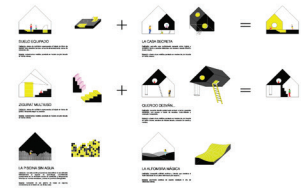
Species of spaces: a possible future

For us, the foreseeable future will be shaped as deocoded spaces that will allow us to opening up the function and erase the imposed signs, to blurring the codes in favor of a greater versatility. This type of operations will also foster the emergence of opportunity spaces, so necessary for our general strategy based on the generic. Thus, we integrate new spatial typologies such as the Active Star (vertical connection structure turned into a meeting and interaction place capable of accommodate the unexpected), or the Polyvalent Greenhouse (a multipurpose decompression space that takes advantage of the benefits of the traditional Winter Gardens to exploit its particular sensory components).



Strategies for a gradual (and sustainable) expansion

To promote and enable change, adaptability and gradual growth, the base structure of the building incorporates several options that allow future modifications of greater or lesser impact depending on the degree of intervention. These are the most relevant ones: **Intelligent, progressive occupation of double-height spaces** (Subterranean, vertical growth on the courtyards); **Disassembly & Overlay**, demanding the existing roof to grow in height, modifying the general section / Appropriation: progressive colonization of greenhouse spaces.



Acupuncture for specialization

In parallel, the proposal incorporates a series of infiltrated objects (combinable and mass produced) that adhere to the main architecture framework, complement and specialize it. As small "Trigon Horses", they activate the neutral spaces where they are placed, turning them into something new, unexpected and surprising. In collaboration with the future people in charge of the Center, we have developed some of these low-tech pieces labeled with writing names like The Equipped Floor, The Secret House or The Magic Carpet.

