

# Does size matter?

## Micro-management for macro-companies or the big SMEs

### I AM NOT A BUSINESS MAN...

I am an Architect and an Educationist and, until now, I have never had much (or any) interest on how to do businesses with Architecture. However, my knowledge on the European context and my experience with the Asian market through my position with VERITAS Design Group, pushes me (more than invites me) to know about how the Architecture Industry works out of my screen.

West, East, North and South, SMEs play a great role in societies of all sizes: I trust people are well aware of that. With the due exceptions to the rule, Architecture companies in Europe (I would not dare to tell a percentage: well, let's say 95%) tend to fit the definition of Small (more than Medium) Enterprises\*. On the other hand, many practices in Asia are allocated at the upper range of the Medium

Enterprise definition and, few of them, as VERITAS, exceed that number with above 300 employees. However, in Architecture, it is still possible to read large companies as an addition of SMEs as Macro & Micro lose their boundaries in the complexity of the Architecture Project.

*\*A worldwide accepted definition considers Small Businesses or Enterprises as those employing between 20-50 people. Medium-sized Businesses, on the other hand, usually employ up to 200 or 250 people.*

### MORE ABOUT ASIA vs. EUROPE (IN ARCHITECTURE)

Looking at the big picture (with one eye closed) there are many differences between the Architecture Industry in Europe and Asia and, not only the day-to-day Practice but, especially, Education get us

ready for it. All these differences (as well as all those similarities) have a clear, direct and unavoidable relation to the size of the projects and hence (and often) to the size of the companies. However, despite the scenario, the approach to the Architecture Project & Design remains the same regardless the scale: a journey from General to Specific, from Overall to Detail: SIZE DOES NOT MATTER.

The different sizes of many of the projects currently happening in Asia and Europe seem to talk about few realities. First of all, they talk about the momentum in their respective economies: while Europe seems to be stuck (well, Europe is definitely stuck), Asia is in the midst of a vertiginous development explosion, even though some regions are accusing a certain slowdown.\* On the other hand, different sizes of architectural interventions in

Europe and Asia seem to talk about a certain feeling of completeness. Demography in Europe is not moving, cities are not growing, "everything is there already": it is a matter or touching up here and there and keeping things as "nice" as possible. Obviously, there is still some room for certain impactful interventions. However, demography in

## Viewpoint

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From a single-cell organism to the human being's brain. Understanding the World surrounding us is a two-way trip, regardless the complexity or scale: a journey from General to Specific, from Overall to Detail, or vice versa. Our capacity to handle is anchored in our need to understand. Science & Feelings; Objective & Subjective: All need to be filtered and arranged under certain schemes in order for us to move forward. This is the main skill PhD taught him: how to deconstruct complex realities to more simple entities able to be understood and managed, and how to form from there the brainteaser of reality. This segmental approach to Architecture allows us to read large practices as an addition of SMEs.

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Asia is explosive, hungry and demanding, cities grow and grow greatly: towers, big condominiums and new malls and airports everywhere.

Even Architecture Schools get us ready for the market we will be inserted in. Despite some common bases, Architecture Schools in Spain clearly insist on the education ▶

