Public Condenser
Low-cost flexible university building, Paris, France

Main authors
Gilles Delalex, Yves Moreau and Thomas Wessel-Cessieux, architects, Muoto, Paris, France

Summary by the jury
The project is a public facility, situated on the new university campus of Paris-Saclay, France which aims to become a top international hub in the innovation economy. The building hosts a mix of activities including indoor and outdoor sports facilities, a restaurant, cafeteria, and various public spaces: a pedestrian square, street terraces, and parking areas for deliveries, bikes and cars. Conceived as a minimal structure using rough materials, robust and long lasting techniques, the building is organized vertically with its different activities superimposed on one another, using the roof as a panoramic playground for football and basketball games. The different areas are linked by an open staircase allowing for independent accesses. A place to live, taking the form of an urban shelf, accessible to all campus visitors, day or night.

Appraisal by the jury
The project’s minimal deployment of architectural and technical means was considered a remarkable contribution to sustainable construction by the members of the jury. The elegant design merges economic and aesthetic considerations – a low-cost structure turning a limitation into a quality. The proposed scheme offers a robust framework that is adaptable to future needs – a form of resilient architecture, both in view of its management of resources as well as formal appearance.

Project data
Context: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Etablissement Public Paris Saclay (EPPS)
Background: Public commission
Planned start: May 2014

Further authors
Igrec Ingénierie, Paris, France; Bollinger + Grohmann Ingenieure, Paris, France; Alternative Acoustic & Lighting Consulting, Paris, France; Novorest Ingénierie, Montreuil, France
Image 3: South façade on the plaza.

Image 4: North façade.

Image 5: East façade.

Image 6: East façade.

Image 7: Inside view of the restaurant toward the staircase.

Image 8: The staircase offers a continuous public space to connect the layering of independent programs.

Image 9: Floor plans.

Image 10: Sections.

More at www.holcimawards.org/projects/public-condenser