



BELGIAN ARCHITECTURE BEYOND BELGIUM

TEXT Cécile Vandernoot

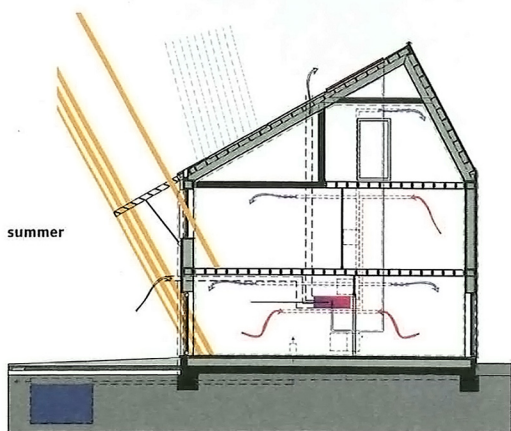
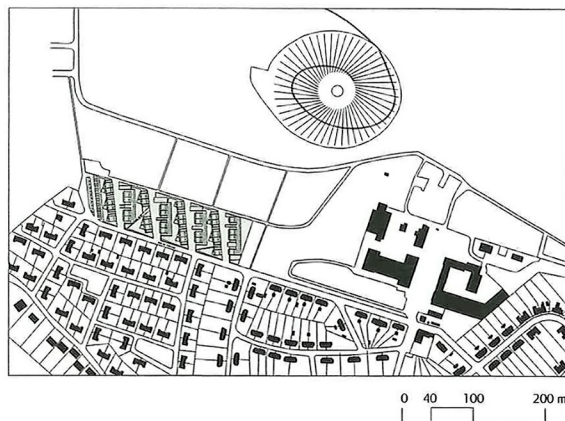
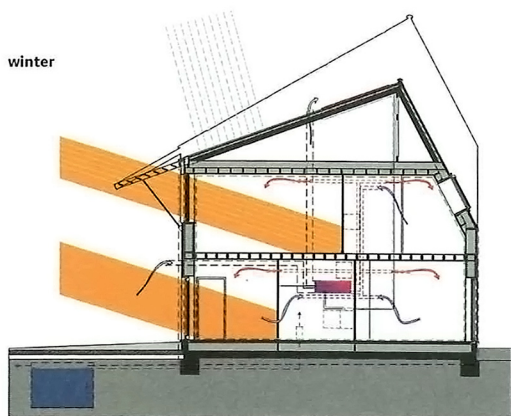
PHOTOGRAPHY R²D² Architecture

The firm's participation in the competition was quite unusual: delegates of the project manager (Pas-de-Calais Habitat) travelled to Brussels to assess the work of several firms with buildings setting new levels of excellence in terms of passive architecture. R²D² was soon invited to enter the competition, and that is how the firm was first confronted with the strict building regulations applied in France. "The site is a listed historical monument and a candidate for the Unesco World Heritage list. An open dialogue preceded the submission of the building permit application, which was, surprisingly, obtained without any difficulty. However", Vincent Szpirer recognizes, "I was not expecting to have to follow surface and budget requirements so drastically. We called on an economist, the equivalent of a quantity surveyor, to help guide us". The project is located on a former mining site, and the local economic revival is drawing new inhabitants, hence the competition. Its theme – 'living in a park' – refers essentially to the landscaping that was necessary to develop the area – a plot of land located between the slag heap and the Declercq garden-city – and its access points. The firm had to be creative without losing sight of the site's essential elements. "The position of the terraced houses was influenced by the decision to retain cones of vision and paths leading to the listed landscape. It was stipulated that the notion of private property was to be erased and

that this type of housing be achieved, although increased density would have been recommended for passive architecture". That is why the small houses are semi-detached, in order to optimize surfaces and thereby save money. "The budget is well below what is done in Belgium, although it is a costly project for this public-housing authority". In terms of volume, the houses form a symbolic extension of the land. The north-facing sides are covered in dark grey zinc with regular openings. The south-facing sides feature large windows, and the living room gives out onto the park, and not onto a private garden. The mineralized pathways fade into the landscape, which literally absorbs those elements that are too domesticated. The vegetalization of the houses' sides also contributes to the integration of the houses in the landscape. "We drew on the exemplary local expertise in matters of rain-water management. As regards the market procurement, established in a competitive dialogue, there are also many things we could learn. The building contractors receive extremely detailed plans, but can consider building the project according to the method they believe is most effective, depending on the budget/objective defined by the client. This puts them under the obligation to achieve the goals that have been set. The choice of the building contractor then follows the same procedure as for public architecture markets in Belgium".



“35 passive council houses to be built in Oignies, Pas-de-Calais”: a public architecture competition won by R²D² Architecture, a firm that has made passive architecture its speciality.



Passive council houses

PROGRAMME sustainable district for 35 passive council houses
 PROCEDURE competition ARCHITECT | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT R²D²
 Architecture CLIENT Pas-de-Calais Habitat
 EPB Energelio | Synapse Ingénierie
 BUILDING CONTRACTOR Entreprise Sueur
 MONITORING OFFICE Socotec ROADS SYSTEM AND
 URBAN PUBLIC UTILITIES B&R Ingénierie Pas-de-Calais
 AREA 5730 m² (gross) BUDGET (excluding VAT and fees) 6 500 000 euro
 COMPLETED 2013
www.r2d2architecture.be

