Residential tower in Antwerp

C.F. Møller and Brut have won the competition for a new residential and mix-use tower in the Nieuw Zuid area in Antwerp, with a proposal that redefines the residential high-rise as a vertical social community.

The architectural idea of the building is derived from an inside–out perspective, where the social qualities of the building are a dominant driver for the design: Often in tall buildings, the sense of community amongst the occupants is challenged by the fact that you hardly ever meet your neighbours, except coming and going via the lobby and at the lifts.

In contrast, this design proposes to become a sustainable and collective community, where social interaction is enabled and encouraged in numerous ways without compromising the need for privacy. The proposal contains a large selection of apartments reaching out to a diverse group of inhabitants, from small types suitable for student co-housing to larger family and live-work types, all grouped into vertical mini-communities.

The development plan for Nieuw Zuid, a new urban area close to the river Schelde south of the historic centre of Antwerp, defined the outline and height of the tower. By increasing the efficiency of the floor plans, the proposal manages to create more space for the individual homes as well as attractive shared facilities within the same volume – summed up by the motto “Bigger & Cheaper”.

<b>Visible communities</b>

The 24 storey, 15.000 m2 complex with 116 homes, shops, offices and collective spaces is thus augmented by an extra 5.000 m2 in the form of balconies, glass winter gardens and roof terraces, adding extra living qualities and mediating the scale of the building between the urban and the human scale.

The result is a light grid enveloping the volume, structuring the facades and connecting the vertical mini-communities - every visible compartment represents a cluster of similar apartments opening towards the balcony spaces. At the end gables of the tower, the grid forms glass-enclosed winter gardens serving as green semi-outdoor living spaces, and the common spaces for all residents include a bike-repair and dining room at the foot of the tower, a shared 5th floor facility with a landscaped roof terrace for residents and office-workers alike, and a triple-height green oasis at the top with spectacular views over Antwerp and the river Schelde.

The building will be made of pleasant and durable materials; predominantly warm grey-brown brick contrasted by white concrete, and is designed to achieve the passive-house standard, thus altogether omitting the need for a central heating system. Great care is taken to mitigate the possible negative effects that tall buildings can have on the local microclimate, and to ensure a positive contribution at street level.

The jury report stated: <i>“The jury was very impressed by the design. The architecture presents interesting proposals for how to strengthen the community and identity for the Nieuw Zuid towers, and how to unfold the sustainability ambitions. The design enables a new form of collective living in tall buildings, and makes its inner dynamics and diversity visible in the facades without sacrificing the overall expression. (…) The grid structure results in a slender and elegant architecture. The way the grid is subdivided and defines the smaller communities is fascinating.”</i>

The client is SAZ (Stadsontwikkeling Antwerpen Zuid), and the team behind the winning design consists of C.F. Møller Architects and Brut, in collaboration with ABT, Deerns Technieken and Peritas EPB.

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It is the goal of the building to become a fully sustainable and collective “living machine”.

This projects seeks to introduce both a variety of flat-typologies, hence reaching out to a variety of user-groups ranging from the young students studios, the general family flats, flats for the elderly as well as untraditional flats like duplex-flats- but also to add special social programs, which will offer a variety of common meeting places and space for common activities.

The project suggests to exploit this meeting point more, by connecting the lobby to a common room as well as to common laundry and a bike repair area. The flats above the common space (+1,+2,+3) are special typologies, which fx makes it possible for two student to co-live together. The common space as well as the local laundry, makes it possible to stay connected to friends and neighbors you share the building with.

We have chosen to use the “Bigger and Cheaper”-elements as a device for “downscaling” the Tower and thus introduced a net of “shelves” covering the full façade. This net is furthermore representing the placement, the “grouping” and the sizes of the flats in the inner tower.

have its own identity and express “life”, “diversity” and “variety”, without losing its sharp elegance of the main building volume in the master plan.

Each net-cubicle represents a group of similar flats stacked on top of each other, and serves as social “cubicles” with common scale, thus every flat is defined as a member of its own mini-community of neighbors, vertically linked via the façade.

The added glassed – in “greenhouses” of the “Bigger and Cheaper” elements of the gables of the tower building will serve as passive solar gaining areas which will prevent heat loss from the facades, but more so, add a special social and behavioral surplus to the flats on the gable part of the building. In the spring/autumn/winter seasons – the non-heated greenhouse areas will serve as a semi-outdoor living space and thereby prolonged the time of year spend in these special vertical social spaces.

One at the ground floor for the young inhabitants, including a bike repair facility, one above the offices onto a roof garden and one at the complete top of the tower overlooking the River and the great views of Antwerpen.

The building consist of a dark, grey brown, brick faced inner building, which is surrounded by a contrasting white net of "shelves" forming part of the "bigger and cheaper"-elements, which is constructed by a steel structure, clad in light fiber concrete, whitewashed or plastered in bright white color.

*Juryen var meget begejstret for forslaget.*

*Arkitekturen er interessant på den måde, at et første skridt i retning af sammenhold og identitet*

*kan give højhus arkitektur i New South og den måde, hvorpå den bæredygtige*

*ambition i arkitektur er repræsenteret (større og billigere).* *Udkastet til forslag letter*

*'Ny' kollektive ieven i højhus og afspejler den dynamik og mangfoldighed i*

*facader, uden den billeddannende evne og magt i et tårn til at glemme.* *Bygningen*

*har en stærk identitet.* *Gitteret struktur giver et slankt og elegant arkitektur.*

*Fascinerende er den måde, nettet er delt, og en række små samfund (jf.*

*gade} afgrænser.* *Indtræffer inden for dette fælles Biggers og cheapers*

*"Kvarterer", hvor sociale interaktioner er mulige ved spil af forskudte altaner.*

The site, Nieuw Zuid, is a new urban area under development south of the centre of Antwerpen close to the river Schelde. The area is envisioned as a series of urban blocks, interspersed with a total of five towers positioned on prominent corners.