

## News letter 2



### Carin Smuts, winner of the 2008 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture

In his most recent book, published in 2007\*, the pioneer of political ecology André Gorz writes of his hope for a forthcoming ecological urban revolution: "It is likely that it will be South Americans or South Africans who – in the abandoned suburbs of European cities – will be the first to recreate the self-production workshops of their home favela or township."

His wish is becoming a reality, since it is the South African Carin Smuts who has today been awarded the 2008 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, on September 22 in Poissy, Villa Savoy (France).

### "our sustainability is about people"

Born in 1960 in Pretoria, Carin Smuts comes from a family of politicians and philosophers (her great-uncle Jan Christiaan Smuts was one of the renewers of holistic thought), who were unflinching in their opposition to apartheid. After early ambitions to be a doctor, Carin chose to study architecture, in the belief that "this career would enable her to make an even greater difference to society".

Since 1989, Carin Smuts has worked in the townships, now free of apartheid but still excluded from the development process going on elsewhere.

Is the architecture she practises sustainable? She says it is, emphasising how: *"a sense of economy, an intelligent use of materials, are the very ethics of architecture! But to build in the townships, people must first be able to express a need, formulate a programme, know how to put it into practice. Experience has taught me that this is impossible if people have not regained their own freedom. For me, architecture is simply the means for these people to regain charge of their own lives. Our work is about people."*

With extremely small budgets, Carin Smuts builds amenities, housing, services, not only *for* but *with* the local communities. They work with her to establish the programme, and then build and manage it themselves. A Carin Smuts project generates more cultural energy than it uses materials. Just as the Bengali Muhammad Yunus invented micro-loans, Carin Smuts has invented sustainable micro-development, an approach that she sums up in a single phrase: "Do local: materials, details, labour."

As the winner of the 2008 Global Award for Sustainable Architecture, Carin Smuts has been commissioned to build the second project in the Seine-Aval Architecture Manifesto-Collection: a multipurpose centre which will revitalise the small town of Follainville-Dennemont. The first project, a rural lodge in Chanteloup, has been commissioned from the 2007 winner Hermann Kaufmann and will open in spring 2009.

### Global Award for Sustainable architecture 2008 – Film documentaries

The 5 documentaries realized by Rebecca Levin and Jana Revedin  
Fabrizio Caròla, Naples/Mali  
CS Studio Architects, Carin Smuts, Capetown South Africa  
Elemental, Alejandro Aravena, Chile  
Rural Studio, Alabama USA  
Philippe Samyn, Belgium

Are presented on [www.global-award.org](http://www.global-award.org)

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