

365 DAYS OF STEEL



BRUNO DURSIN

Agrotopia

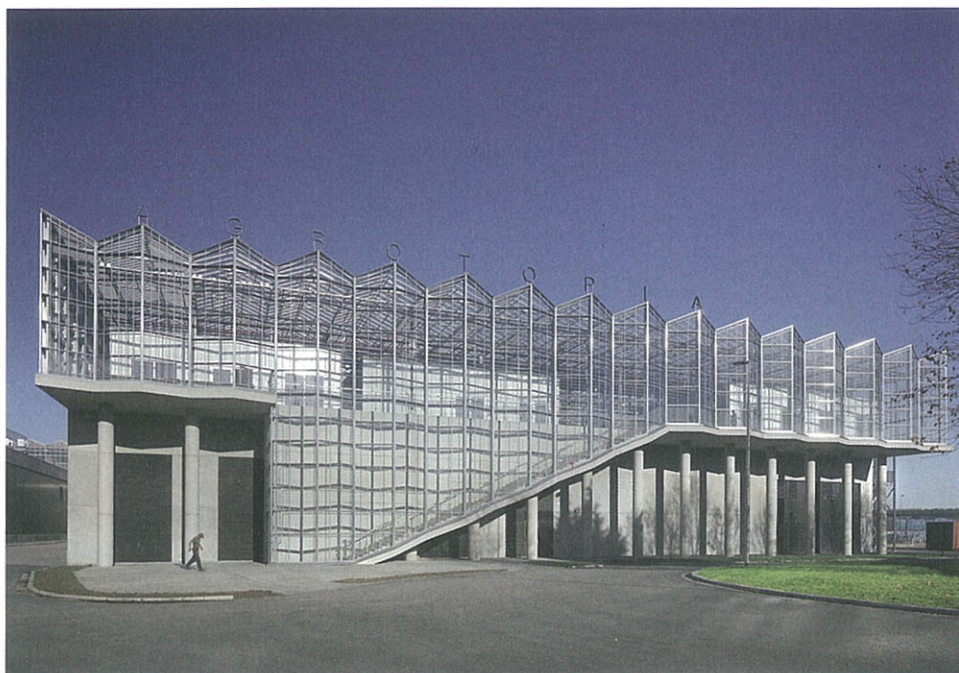
On **29 September 2021**, his Majesty King Filip of Belgium visited Agrotopia. With the rooftop greenhouse Agrotopia in Roeselare, **META architectuurbureau** and **van Bergen Kolpa Architecten** have delivered Europe's largest public building dedicated to urban food production. The urgent need to use space as sustainably, efficiently and economically as possible has created a growing trend for urban agriculture as a way of activating residual space in the city. In the rooftop greenhouse Agrotopia, two previously independent worlds – architecture and agriculture – are united.

In the 9500 m² building, high-tech research facilities for the cultivation of fruit and leafy vegetables are surrounded by an educational trail for visitors. Agrotopia is a transparent sculpture of steel and glass, which underscores both its agricultural and its public function.

To this end, the architecture is composed of a slender greenhouse construction that stands out against the sky and rests on the concrete base of the crate sheds. The entrance, with a broad ascending staircase, leads to the urban horticulture square in the heart of the building where the visitor facilities are located. A double-height greenhouse for innovative vertical cultivation can be found in the facade greenhouse along the ring road.

The choice of hot dip galvanizing instead of the initial preference for painted steel was triggered by functional and cost concerns on the part of the steel fabricator. The architects should be praised for entering dialogue with the builders, who are familiar with the benefits of hot dip galvanizing in greenhouse construction. Moreover, they repeated the characteristic gray tones of hot dip galvanized steel in the aluminium facade and the roof

profiles. This created a calm and aesthetic colour image in combination with the existing concrete structure.



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