

World Radio Switzerland

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Living in a Swiss eco-house

Since the beginning of the 'Green' era, achieving the sustainable house has been somewhat like the quest for the Holy Grail. There have been many drastic attempts at energy-efficiency, including houses covered in solar panels and photovoltaic cells. However these sometimes radical approaches often do not take into account different lifestyles and the varying environmental conditions that people live in. But here in alpine Switzerland they've learned to make use of simple designs that passively collect energy. Now many foreign architects are realizing that this more subtle approach may be the answer. WRS video journalist Amy Wong spoke to Swiss architect, Davide Macullo and spent the day in one of his award-winning eco-houses.

By [Amy Wong](#), World Radio Switzerland

If you can't see the video, [click here](#)

Welcome to the Feldini's. They've been living here for the past five years. And I'm filming them because this is an award-winning eco-house. Simona Feldini was born and raised in this region and always knew she wanted to build a house here. But being eco-friendly was not the first thing on their list. It was having an Italian-style walk-out patio.

SIMONA FELDINI: We have a lot of sun in this area of Switzerland. That's why from the beginning we said from our architect just to think about a patio.

The house is a very simple cube-like structure. The concrete skeleton is

insulated with a protective layer of brick and an air space in between. Inside the box, the living quarters are open and connected, which suits the small family of three. But it's this glass patio that has caught the attention of sustainable architects all over. Much like a greenhouse, light and heat is collected straight from the sun through the patio to keep the house well-lit and at the right temperature. No fancy solar panels or expensive photovoltaic systems, just a well positioned glass façade, with some rotating blinds for minor adjustments. Davide Macullo is the architect and has been designing eco-structures like this for over a decade. He explains to me that while the many countries have been focusing on radical new eco-technologies and designs, Swiss architects have used good old-fashioned common sense to tackle sustainability issues.

DAVIDE MACULLO: This is something that is in the mentality of the Swiss people because of the difficulty in our regions to build. So if you think when you make a house in the United States it should last 25 years, which is enough. When you build here, in Switzerland particularly due to the mountains and the difficult ground where you are going to place the constructions, we think, we have the mentality that we have to build for eternity. So we have a quite sensitive mentality towards the care of the territory compared to other places

In Switzerland, acquiring land is very difficult and construction costs are not cheap. The Feldini's paid 300,000 francs just for their plot and over a million to build the house. Because of this, sustainability is often designed into the house rather than by adding state of the art technologies.

MACULLO: All around the world, what the people are more concerned about is the trend, and the idea of sustainability is just a pretext to sell politically an object, a project or an image of what you are doing. So every country has a completely different attitude towards sustainability. It's very nice to build houses, because you are in touch with ambition, the expectation, the needs of the ones that will live in the house. And you balance all those things. And of course, during this, you never forget that you need to be fresh in summer and to be hot in winter. It's very easy.

As for the Feldini's, they seem quite happy with their house, and being green just makes them feel better.

Amy Wong, World Radio Switzerland, in Muzzano

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