



**University of Banja Luka**  
**Faculty of Mechanical Engineering**



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## OPTIMIZATION OF THE FREE FACADE OF THE EARTH-SHELTERED HOUSES IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE FINAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION DURING THE HEATING SEASON

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Ivana Terzić<sup>5</sup>

**Summary:** *The use of earth-sheltered houses in the building industry on the territory of Serbia is very modest, even though such facilities have excellent energy performance and a positive impact on the environment. Earth-sheltered houses could also be a good solution to the problem of building density in urban environments where the field configuration allows their application. In this paper, using the Energy Plus software, an earth-sheltered house in the territory of Kragujevac was analyzed from the aspect of final energy consumption for its heating during the heating season, whereby a geothermal heat pump in combination with floor panels was used as the active heating system. At the same time, in order to minimize the final energy consumption for heating, it was also analyzed how the dimensions and layers of transparent elements (windows) affect the production of electricity if the non-transparent surface of the free (southern) facade of the earth-sheltered house were completely covered by PV panels.*

*The results showed that the final energy consumption for the heating of the given earth-sheltered house can be reduced from 19.36 to 4.61 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a.*

**Key words:** *earth-sheltered house, geothermal heat pump, free facade, PV panels, transparent elements, Energy Plus.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Earth-sheltered houses can be defined as buildings that are covered by earth from one or more sides. A more precise definition is that they are buildings with at least 50% of its thermal coating in direct contact with earth [1]. Typically, all earth-sheltered

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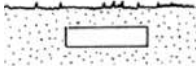
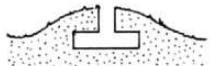
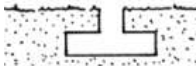
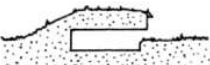

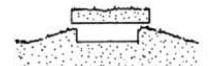
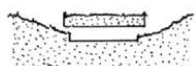
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houses can be classified into the following two groups (Table 1).

Table 1 *Types of earth-sheltered houses* [2-4]

Type	Artificial (Terrain configuration is adapted)	Natural (Natural terrain configuration with minimal adjustments)
Buried		
Open		
Elevational		
Infiltrate		

Today, earth-sheltered houses are used for several other reasons [2-3, 5-9]: the need for thermal energy in winter and cooling energy is reduced, the greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, they have a favorable impact on the construction density in urban areas, thermal islands in urban areas are avoided, pollution of water and soil is regulated, the noise level is reduced. It is known that the final energy consumption for heating earth-sheltered houses during the heating season can be further reduced by exposing the southern (northern hemisphere) or the northern (southern hemisphere) facade to the outside. This effect can be further enhanced if the proportion of transparent to non-transparent surfaces on said facades is increased.

However, if the non-transparent part of the facade were completely covered by PV panels, an increase in the surface of transparent elements would reduce the area for collecting solar energy, resulting in lower electricity production. Due to all of the above, an estimate was carried out in this paper in order to determine the optimum ratio of transparent to non-transparent surfaces on the free (southern) facade of an elevational earth-sheltered house in a field with a natural decline, with the aim of reducing the final energy consumption for heating during the heating season. The non-transparent surface is taken to be completely covered with PV panels. The earth-sheltered house is located on the territory of the city of Kragujevac, Serbia. The research was conducted in the Energy Plus program. The effect of the window glazing on the mentioned effect is also considered.

## 2. SUBJECT OF STUDY

### 2.1 LOCATION

The city of Kragujevac is located in Central Serbia, about a hundred kilometers south of Belgrade (44°22' N and 20°56' E). It was built on the banks of the Lepenica river, in the basin between the final branches of the Rudnik, Crni Vrh and Gledicke mountains, at an altitude of 209 m. This area is characterized by moderate continental climate with pronounced seasons [10].

## 2.2 HOUSE DESCRIPTION

The subject of the research is an elevational earth-sheltered house in a field with a natural decline (Fig. 1), intended for permanent stay of a four-member family.



Fig. 1 Isometric view

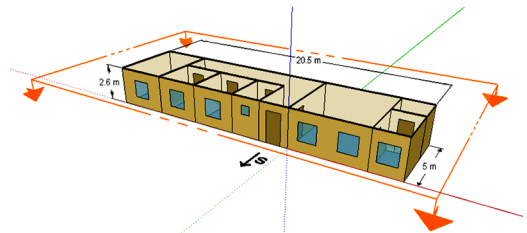


Fig. 2 Room arrangement

As you can see from the attached image, the free facade (where the entrance door is located) is oriented towards the south. The net area of the house is  $102.5 \text{ m}^2$ . The room arrangement is given in Fig. 2. A description of the building elements constituting the thermal coating is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Building physics

Building element		A [ $\text{m}^2$ ]	U [ $\text{W}/\text{m}^2\text{K}$ ]
South facade	Wall	44.95	0.295
	Window	6.25	5.855
	Exterior door	2.1	4
North facade		53.3	0.298
East facade		13	
West facade		13	
Floor		102.5	0.235
Roof		102.5	0.312

## 2.3 GSHP

In order to provide thermal comfort during the heating season, a REHAU GEO 7 [11] heat pump was used, which is coupled with vertical probes (primary heating circuit) on one side, and on the other with underfloor heating (secondary heating circuit).

## 2.4 PV panels

The surface occupied by the PV panels represents the complete non-transparent surface of the southern facade. Active solar cells occupy 70% of this area. The efficiency of the solar cells is 12%, and the efficiency of the inverter is 75% [12].

## 3. SIMULATION SCENARIOS

Changing the dimensions and layers of the windows on the free (southern) facade significantly affects the solar gain (on the one hand), but also the production of

electricity from the PV panels (on the other hand), under the condition that the non-transparent part of the southern facade is completely covered with PV panels.

In order to find the optimum ratio of transparent to non-transparent surfaces on the southern facade, with the goal of minimizing the final (electric) energy consumption for heating the house during the heating season, 5 simulation scenarios for 3 types of window layers were carried out: single-glazed ( $U_{SG}=5.855 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$ ) double-glazed ( $U_{DG}=2.514 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$ ) and triple-glazed windows ( $U_{TG}=1.565 \text{ W/m}^2\text{K}$ ).

Each scenario corresponds to certain dimensions of the windows (Table 3), which directly affect the surface of the facade on which the PV panels are placed (Table 4).

Table 3 *Number and dimensions of the windows by zones*

Zone	BD1	BD2	BD3	K	LR	BA
Number of windows		1			2	1
a × b [m × m]	Scenario 1	1×1				0.5×0.5
	Scenario 2	1.2×1.2				0.6×0.6
	Scenario 3	1.4×1.4				0.7×0.7
	Scenario 4	1.6×1.6				0.8×0.8
	Scenario 5	1.8×1.8				0.9×0.9

Table 4 *Non-transparent surface of the free (south) facade depending on the window surface*

A [m <sup>2</sup> ]	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5
A <sub>SF</sub>	53.3				
A <sub>W</sub>	8.35	11.1	14.35	18.1	22.35
A <sub>D</sub>	2.1				
A <sub>NT</sub>	44.95	42.2	38.95	35.2	30.95

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

After conducting the simulations, the following conclusions were drawn: if the windows on the southern facade were single-glazed (Fig 4), the final (electric) energy consumption for each examined scenario is: 19.358 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 1), 19.142 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 2), 19.041 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 3), 19.035 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 4) and 19.144 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 5). Electricity production from the PV panels for the mentioned cases is: 12.066 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 1), 11.328 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 2), 10.455 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 3), 9.448 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 4) and 8.308 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a (Scenario 5). Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the best results are achieved in case of single-glazed windows (7.292 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/a), and they are realized when the windows on the southern facade are placed with dimensions corresponding to the first case (Scenario 1).

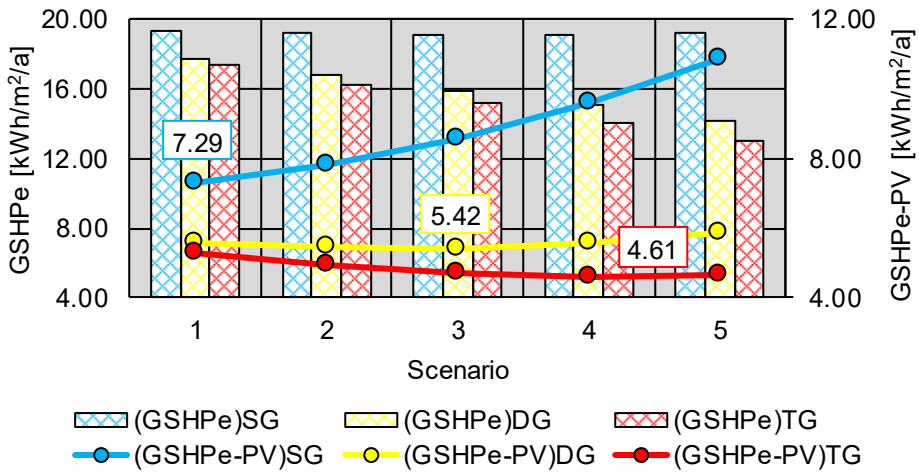


Fig. 3 Scheme of the heating system

In the case of double-glazed windows (Fig. 4), the final (electric) energy consumption for starting the GSHPe compressor decreases as the surface of the transparent elements increases. The highest consumption is in the first case, 17.668 kWh/m²/a (Scenario 1), while the smallest is in the last one (Scenario 5), 14.185 kWh/m²/a. However, the amount of electricity produced by the PV panels has the opposite behaviour, being the highest in the first case (12.066 kWh/m²/a), and the smallest in the last case (8.308 kWh/m²/a).

Considering all of the above, the best results are achieved when windows with dimensions according to Scenario 3 are placed, since the power consumption can then be reduced to 5.419 kWh/m²/a.

Triple-glazed windows give the best results (Fig. 4). The electricity consumption in Scenario 1 is smaller than in the same scenarios in case of using single-glazed or double-glazed windows. Savings of 0.339 kWh/m²/a are achieved in comparison to double-glazed windows, while savings of 2.029 kWh/m²/a are achieved in comparison to single-glazed windows. In this case (as with double-glazed windows), an increase in the surface of transparent elements is accompanied by lower final energy consumption, but also by lower electricity production from the PV panels. When all is taken into account, the best results are obtained in Scenario 4 (4.612 kWh/m²/a).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the case of single-glazed windows, the best results (7.292 kWh/m²/a) are achieved when windows with dimensions corresponding to the first case (Scenario 1) are placed on the southern facade. In the case of double-glazed windows, the best results (5.419 kWh/m²/a) are achieved when windows with dimensions corresponding to the third case (Scenario 3) are placed on the southern facade. In the case of triple-glazed windows, the best results (4.612 kWh/m²/a) are achieved when windows with dimensions corresponding to the fourth case (Scenario 4) are placed on the southern facade.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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