

**ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE LANDSCAPE,
IN SEARCH FOR A COMMON GROUND IN ALL CITY/ALL
LAND**

*Case the urbanized territory of the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-
Ham*

ARCHITECTURE & TERRITORY

framed in the ADO Landscape, Ecology and Design

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with the support of Bruno Notteboom and Bart Van Gassen

MARG/MAIG 24

2022-2023

THE DESIGN STUDIO

“To produce comprehensive “site-space” designs that will address human needs and yet respect the constraints and opportunities of the processes of nature.”

Reuben M.Rainy in “Garrett Eckbo’s Landscape for Living”

The design studio focusses on punctual architectural interventions in the horizontal metropolis.

The design studio is a laboratory where possible architectures are tested and discussed. Experimentation always starts from an understanding of a concrete site, of a material, of a structure, of a system (social, cultural, ecological...) ... Through this understanding experimentation is embedded in what is already there, in existing forces and dynamics. This is the dialogue with 'the known'. At the same time experimentation is also speculative. A design also deals with the unknown: unknown users, the unknown future... Through the design a possible real future is imagined. This is the dialogue with the unknown.

The design studio links theory to practice. The relation between theory and practice is crucial in architecture. Good architecture can only be realized through a continuous interaction between theory and practice. By reading and discussing texts in the design studio a complex and multifarious relation between theory and practice is accomplished in the studio context.

The design studio functions as a collaborative team. It combines individual and collective efforts. Students will collaborate to expose and to create an understanding of the 'the known' of the territory, by performing fieldwork and joint analyses, ... At the same time there is room for individual expression in the making of design proposals. The projects of all the students are brought together in one collective drawing to express a joint effort of punctual architectural interventions to transform a territory.

THE ASSIGNMENT

The focus of this studio is to develop punctual and precise architectural interventions in the (landscape of the) ‘horizontally’ urbanized territory of Flanders and more specifically the neighbourhood Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham part of the city of Ghent. We will investigate and mobilize spatial, social and ecological forces that can support a sustainable transformation of the territory. These forces live as well in the small scale daily experienced reality of the neighbourhood of today, as in the large scale urban challenges of the city as climate change, ecological decline, social polarisation ...

Our architectural interventions will be driven by all these forces and will address existing and new collectives – human and non-human – in the urbanized territory. This to transform the physical condition of the city, to boost its cultural and social imagination and to strengthen our link with the given world (the soil, water, animals, plants...). Through this, one contributes to a real democratic and a more “terrestrial” territory.





THE SITE

The district Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham is located to the north-east of the medieval city center of the city of Ghent. The district arose after the construction of a second city wall. The swampy grounds, crossed by the river branches of the Leie and canals, gave space to shipyards and homes for skippers and harbor workers. From the 18th century, the city of Ghent experienced a migration from the countryside to the city. This effect was increased by the upcoming industrial revolution in the city of Ghent. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the port developed together with the food, textile and metallurgy industry, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham and the surrounding neighbourhoods into the 19th century belt neighbourhoods around the city of Ghent. Under the influence of these dynamics, a residential development with minimal living quality arose. The neighbourhood was overcrowded by the city's poorest and located the largest number of "slum housing" in the city.

After WWII, many of the watercourses were filled, the first factories disappeared from the district and the worst slums were demolished. This led to a first wave of urban renewal, which today can be seen as the care campus and various social housing projects. These projects were sandwiched between the characteristic urban fabric of the 19th century belt districts in Ghent. These neighbourhoods are characterized by a dense urban fabric of narrow streets, compact city blocks with small workers' row houses, alternating with large-scale (post-)industrial zones. This housing typology is popular as a first stepping stone in the housing pathway of the middle class, and it is often the only option for rental or urgency-buying for inhabitants with low income and no access to social housing. The physical space of houses and the adjacent public spaces offer limited quality of life. Especially in these dense neighbourhoods the public space plays an important role in the recreational life of the residents.

In the last decennia, there was a strong focus on the redevelopment of the post-industrial zones in these districts. According to the Master Plan that OMA developed in 2004 for the Docks of the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham district, a combination of a shopping mall, new residential developments of the more expensive segment and office space was created. This 2nd wave of urban development took place on zones that did not belong to the mental map of the neighbourhood at the time of development. And for the current inhabitants of the 19th century belt fabric, nothing has changed to this day: these new developments have nothing to offer for them, no new functions, homes and no public spaces.

Today, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham is, despite large monofunctional sites such as the care campus, Dok Noord and active industrial zones, the 3rd most densely populated district of the city. It is a super diverse neighbourhood, where 60% of the residents have a non-Belgian background. Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham and especially the Sleepstraat are known for the large Turkish community. The district also has a remarkably young population with a high percentage of residents between the ages of 0 and 40 years old. Almost half of the inhabitants are single. Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham shows the symptoms of an arrival district. The district is the 3rd worst district in the city in the wealth index, despite the new residential developments that attract many wealthy residents to the district.

Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham has a building rate of 40.8% and is the 3rd densely built-up district of the city. Based on the current green policy, the district needs 5 hectares of extra parks. Due to the limited private housing quality, the need for public space is high, but the current supply is very limited. In addition, the

current lack of qualitative public spaces will be further reinforced by further densification of this district. On the one hand this leads to tensions in the public domain, but on the other hand it also leads to creative use of space by residents.

Urban renewal

In the coming years, the city of Ghent plans the start-up of an urban renewal project aiming at Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham. An urban renewal project is described by the Flemish cities policy in the 'Urban Policy White Paper' delineating an approach driven by the dynamic interplay between concrete 'urban projects' ('city projects') and long-term urban visioning ('city vision'), termed 'Urban Debate' (Boudry et al., 2003).

This approach aims to have a socio-spatial impact through projects that transcends the project boundaries. In other words, we can describe urban renewal as project-driven interventions in the existing urban fabric, which act as levers for the realization of the long-term vision of the city.

This urban renewal project is currently in a preparatory phase, exploring the urgencies and opportunities of today's neighborhood from both the social, spatial and ecological perspective. This design studio aims to contribute to the preparation of an urban renewal project based on research by design. This studio is the result of a close involvement of the department 'urban renewal', which will support the studio. The research and designs the studio will result, will contribute to the development of the framework for a future urban renewal project. The designs make a possible contribution to the perception and imagination of residents of what an urban renewal project could deliver in their neighbourhood.



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THREE TRACKS

The studio assignment is divided into three tracks. Track 1 consists of a first quick scan of the site and investigates an oeuvre of a key architect/landscape architect. Track 2 explores the larger territory in its existing state and in the (unknown) future in combination with close encounters with human and non-human actors on site. Track 3 develops punctual architectural interventions. Track 1, 2 are partially explored in groups. Track 3 is an individual track.

“Mapping is a collective enabling enterprise, a project that both reveals and realizes hidden potentials...” - James Corner in *The Agency of Mapping*

The common ground between the different tracks is the approach of an ‘urbanistica descrittiva’ (SECCHI, 1992). In this approach we take the site and its territory as a starting point. A good design starts with a thorough and critical reading of the site. A good reading transcends a sterile description and inventory of “facts and figures” of a site, a city, a landscape (CORNER, 1999). A good reading engages with the site by making visible hidden potentials and qualities. Therefore a (subjective) reading is a critical approach of ‘what is already there’ on the one hand revealing hidden qualities and potentials of a site, landscape or a territory, on the other making us understand the manoeuvring space one has.

Track 1: The exploration of an oeuvre (week 1 – week 3)

In the first weeks we explore the framework of the assignment. We will visit the neighborhood. We will observe, make maps, sketches, photos, we will measure, have conversations with residents, to create our first understanding of the neighbourhood.

The City of Ghent will explain the challenges and opportunities of the district and will provide insight into the ambitions that Ghent is developing for this district in the short and long term. We will discuss previous and ongoing research. We will relate our project to the larger urban renewal ambitions of the city of Ghent.

Finally, we study the design attitudes of (well known) designers that combine a strong and broad engagement in society as a whole with sensitive and precise architectural interventions, and /or design strategies of relevant reference projects.

This exploration is made individually and in group.

Track 2: Jumping scales (week 4- week 7)

Track 2 explores the larger territory of Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham. Developing insights in the existing condition of the larger territory and speculating on different territorial transitions linked to mobility, energy, climate, ecology, demographics ... And develops in depth knowledge of the specificity of the site with a focus on social and ecological aspects.

The exploration of the larger territory aims at an understanding of the given territory through on the one hand a characterisation of different complementary places and on the other hand the characterisation of the specificities of the structuring layers (water, soil, topography, vegetation, urbanization, mobility ...). In this exploration a spatial and a systemic approach are combined. In a first step the focus is on what is already there. In a second step we speculate on how the given territory can evolve towards a more sustainable urbanized territory. Territorial transitions are explored towards a zero carbon and climate robust territory. Which means working on more sustainable ways of energy production and consumption, a focus on green mobility, on ecological restoration, on urban agriculture, on socially just urban transformations ...

At the same time the students will develop a thorough 'social' and 'ecological' terrain knowledge through fieldwork and meetings with local actors. By this existing human and non-human agencies present and working on site will be detected and can be used as an important driving force of the design process. A more intimate knowledge off the site by (physical) contact with people, plants, animals, soil, water, air... will generate crucial bottom-up insights and will result in interventions that are embedded in the "terrestrial". A collaboration with the City of Ghent and interactions with local actors on site will help in achieving this knowledges.

This exploration is made in groups of 3 or 4 students. Each group will be given two entry points for their exploration. On the one hand a specific layer. On the other hand a specific site/frame of the territory.

Track 3 detailed design of punctual interventions (week 6 – week 14)

Track 3 focuses on the detailed design of a punctual intervention in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham. The design of punctual and precise architectural interventions that can transform the given urbanized territory of Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham and helps it to evolve towards a more sustainable condition. Interventions that link with the challenges and transitions explored in track 1 and track 2. These interventions go far beyond architecture as object. With these interventions we would like to introduce new perspectives to improve spatial structures – water and ecological systems, public space, green infrastructure, neighbourhoods ... – and social/cultural practices in the city. We want to develop true “landscapes for living”.

METHODOLOGICAL ELEMENTS OF THE DESIGN
STUDIO

Methodological elements of the design studio: Comparative research on case studies | Discussions linked to texts of the Reader Architecture & Territory | Walks on site (individual/in group) | Talks with inhabitants and local actors | Focus on the making of key drawings to express the design (the architecture, the relation architecture & territory, triangle ecology/people/design) | Site visit | Design sessions: individual and in group | In between reviews with invited critics | Feedback from local actors on the design proposals | A sequence of formal and informal meetings allowing students to explore and experiment

Good architecture is built on a broad set of interests, needs, perspectives, lines of thought ... In this studio we want to strengthen ways of seeing and thinking that are often overlooked, often left out due to a lack of time, a lack of focus or – the opposite – a lack of distraction. We try to synthesise what we mean in three approaches that can help you to develop a good project, good architecture. We leave it open to you where you find the right balance between the different lines but we hope that you take the time to explore them all. And we hope by doing this your architecture – and your daily life! – can become more rich and interesting since you will shift from drawing, to walking, to reading and thinking and so on ... Maybe one day you walk, one day you read, and one day you draw ... You can test proportions and variations in the organisation of your time and do what feels best.

Walk and observe

This starts from what is already there on a site. Taking time to walk and taking time to become sensitive to what you experience and what you see by walking, by being in a place, by using a site... Taking pictures. Taking measurements. Talk to people. Listen to animals.

Read and Write

There is a quote of Gilles Deleuze that states “no practice without theory, and no theory without practice”. This means that an architect also needs to develop an understanding of theory if he wants to build. We invite you to read and reflect on what you read. Select quotes. And then start to write to reflect on what you have read. And in doing this relate it to your design.

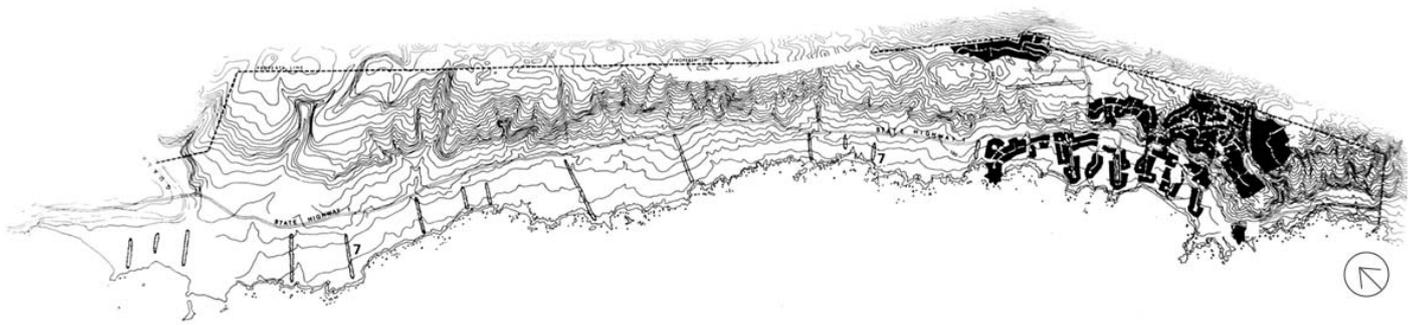
Think and Draw

This is probably what we all know best. Sometimes we just draw and it works. Sometimes we need the thinking to help us to break free from what we draw. But it can also be the other way around. When the thinking blocks you you need to start to draw, redraw and draw again. And then by trial and error you might come – unexpectedly – to a solution. Because of that: thinking and drawing!

To create room – space and time – for these different approaches we will work in the design studio with a succession of formal and informal sessions. For the formal sessions the demanded output is clearly defined and it is obligatory to develop this and bring it to the studio. For the informal sessions it is open to the student to bring whatever he likes to the studio to discuss linked to walk&observe, read&write or think&draw.

FRAME OF THE STUDIOS
ARCHITECTURE & TERRITORY

The studio is framed in the studios Architecture & Territory run by Steven Geeraert en Bart Van Gassen. It is embedded in the ADO Landscape, Ecology and Design (with Bruno Notteboom, Jolein Bergers, Koenraad Danneels and Sis Pillen) and the research program All City/All Land. Studio Architecture & Territory focuses on the engagement of the architect with the territory. A sensitivity partly lost during the last century – although an undercurrent was always present! – and now becoming step by step again key to any relevant design practice. By using this sensitivity in the design of buildings. And in this studio even one step further, by engaging in a field of design broader than the design of buildings in focusing on public spaces and infrastructure of different kinds and nature ... More concrete: the design of platforms, pavilions, bridges, streets, squares, water systems, energy networks, riverbanks, promenades ... We believe that an experience in this broader field of design is key in an educative trajectory nowadays.



sea ranch - lawrence halprin

CROSS SCALAR AND CROSS SECTORAL | Studio Architecture & Territory stands for crossing scales and crossing dimensions. From the territorial scale to the material detail. From an interest in space, construction and materials to an interest in the social, cultural, ecological...

“... the land and public space as an expression of ancient culture, or as a palimpsest that evidences all of the activities that contributed to the shaping of that particular landscape and no other. Upon the tracks overlaid by the march of time, site interpretation detects potentialities to be nurtured and passed on. The reading is thus that of an inheritance and the eventual project a bequest.”

Sébastien Marot in The reclaiming of sites

SITE AS DRIVER | In the studio we will consider the (constructed) site – and not the program! – as the driver of the design. Every intervention starts from what is already there – the so-called ‘As Found’ (A. en P SMITHSON, 1990) – on the site and in the larger territory: real and imaginary, material and immaterial, physical and social... From a close reading of the site civic architectural interventions will be developed aiming to tackle major challenges urbanized territories are facing today. Like there are climate change, social polarization, water management...



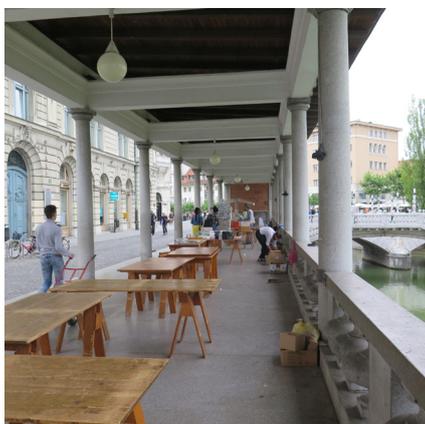
SPEELPLEIN, AMSTERDAM | Aldo Van Eyck



SPORTCOMPLEX, BELLINZONA | Aurelio Galfetti



FLOWER PAVILION, MALMO | Sigurd Lewerentz



PROMENADE, LJUBLJANA | Joze Plecnik



PARC LANCY, GENEVE | Georges Descombes



MALLEGUIRA, EVORA | Alvaro Siza

“... I like the idea of discrete, tactical operations over the clumsy “totality” of the master plan. I believe that the largest of territories can be irreducible restructured through small, laconic interventions as opposed to the unbearable excess of everything - object, forms, materials.”

Georges Descombes in *Shifting Sites: The Swiss Way*, Geneva

PUNCTUAL INTERVENTIONS | We will design punctual and precise architectural interventions that can transform a given urbanized territory and help it to evolve in a more sustainable direction. The focus is thus not on the development of an over-all masterplan but on elementary interventions that form the translation of the most essential options. These interventions can vary from very fragile (light, temporal...) to very robust (hard, permanent...). Since we work on punctual interventions – and are not aiming for an overall transformation of a site – the overall quality of the project is developed through the confrontation, the collision between what is given and what is added. In the studio an architectural intervention is developed in a precise relation with what is already there and is given a precise character, atmosphere, materiality, detail.



PLATFORM, BRUGGE | Atelier BOW WOW



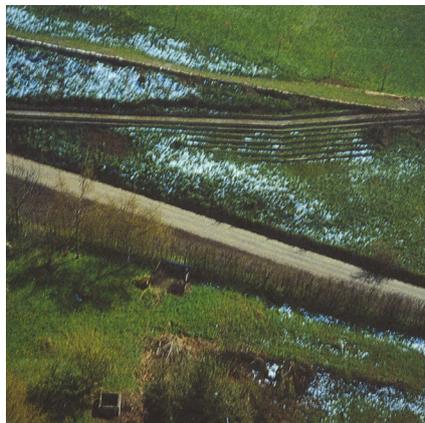
STADSHAL, GENT | M.J. Van Hee en Robbrecht en Daem



SERPENTINE | Peter Zumthor



HD 400, Gent | Ann Veronica Janssens



VOIE SUISSE | Georges Descombes



PARK DUISBURG NOORD | Peter Latz

“Animals, vegetals and minerals have to come into the world of art. The artist is attracted by their physical, chemical, biological possibilities (...) Among the living things the artist discovers himself, his body, his memory, his gestures, everything which directly lives, and doing so he restarts to experience a sense of life and nature, a sense which implies (according to Dewey) many contents: the sensorial, the sensational, the sensitive, the sensible, the sentimental, the sensual. The artist chooses the directly lived, not anymore the represented.”

Germano Celant, Arte povera, 1969

LANDSCAPES FOR LIVING | These interventions go far beyond architecture as object. With these interventions we would like to introduce new perspectives to improve spatial structures – water and ecological systems, public space, green infrastructure, neighbourhoods ... – and social/cultural practices in the city. We want to develop true “landscapes for living”.

The studio Architecture & Territory is taught in the masters of Architecture in different formats. As well masterstudios as the master dissertation. In the year 2020-2021 following studios are taught. Studio 24GENT –Restructuring AC/AL through punctual interventions, case the urbanized territory of Muide-Meulestede. Studio 34 GENT – the transformation of an urban park, case Gentbrugse Meersen Gent.

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BIO STUDIO TEACHERS

Steven Geeraert is an engineer-architect and an urban designer. He graduated in architecture (KULeuven, 2000) and urbanism (KULeuven, 2004).. Steven has a broad experience ranging from architecture to urbanism. He worked with BGK consulting (Leipzig/DE, 1995/1996), ABETEC (Dendermonde/BE, 1997), architect Kris Vos (Edegem/BE, 2000-2003), Studio Associato Secchi-Viganò (Milan/IT, 2004-2010) and AG Stadsplanning Antwerpen (Antwerp/BE, 2010-2012). In 2008 he founded MAARCH with Andrea Carlesso and Stefano Peluso. MAARCH is a laboratory for architecture, urban design and landscape. MAARCH is based in Milan/IT and Antwerp/BE. Stevens personal focus and interest mainly lies on public space, landscape and urbanism/urban design. He was, and still is, involved in (inter)national competitions and projects. With Secchi-Viganò he worked amongst others on the renovation of the Grote Markt, Veemarkt and Sint-Romboutskerkhof in the centre of Mechelen, the redesign of the Theatresquare and surroundings in Antwerp, the Lamot site incl. the Vanbeethovebridge in Mechelen, the Spoor Noord Park and the Regatta Park in Antwerp, the masterplan for the Hoge Rielen near Kasterlee, a former military site that today is used as a reception area for youth internships and summer camps, and the masterplan for Siesegemkouter in Aalst, where the landscape is guiding the layout of an industrial area. He was also involved in the project for Hostel Wadi at the Hoge Rielen, a project that was nominated for the Mies

van der Rohe Award 2015. With MAARCH Steven recently developed a vision for the village centre renewal of Dilbeek and a vision for the Immerzeeldreef and surroundings in Aalst where the present landscape defines 'living rooms' in which can be built. Nowadays he is working on a neighbourhood development in Lendeledede, where MAARCH maximally tries to intertwine the village and the surrounding landscape; on the design of a landscape parking in the protected area of the Hof Ter Linden park in Edegem and on a study for the city of Sint-Niklaas investigating the implementability of the Tjallingii's green lobe theory on the Baensland neighbourhood. MAARCH also contributed to the XV Venice Architecture Biennale with the project PM800 Post Metabolic City. The project presents a remediation-landscape strategy as base for the new future of the heavy polluted port of Marghera, the port of Venice.

Recently the team Studio Paola Viganò – Grafton Architects – MAARCH was selected as one of the five teams that studied the capping of the Antwerp Ringroad. Since 2013 Steven is teaching at the Faculty of Architecture of KULeuven. He is involved in the International Master of Architecture and in the Master dissertation Urban Architectural Design.

Jan van Hoof is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Architecture, KU Leuven. In his research he explicitly makes a differentiation between the physical city as infrastructure and the urban life that takes place within this infrastructure. From this perspective, he investigates approaches to theorize the city from its urban life, as a contribution to the process of urban renewal. His research is currently focused on the urban renewal projects Muide-Meulestede, part of the city of Ghent, in which he collaborates with various urban services.

As part of the Stadsacademie (a collaboration between the University of Ghent and the department of Architecture of the KU Leuven) he is leading a trans-disciplinary preparatory phase of the urban renewal projects Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham and Bloemekenswijk, aiming at rethinking the urban renewal process. He studied Industrial design at the TU Delft (2004), graduated at the Design Academy Eindhoven (2008) focussing on the public space and graduated in 2014 as an Architect (Tilburg). Between and after his studies he worked as a freelance designer/architect on projects differentiated in scale between a chair and the city and in collaborations (among others) with “Het zuidelijk Toneel”, Wim Cuyvers and John Kormeling. He worked as a researcher/designer the T.O.P office (2008-2009), as an architect for several small scale architectural offices and as a researcher at Endeavour (2016-2019).

Jan was a visiting teacher at the Academy for Architecture Rotterdam (2018) and was leading a design studio at the Academy for Architecture Tilburg (2019-2020). Within the research group Urban projects, Collective spaces & Urban identities (KU Leuven) he organized several electives related to his research.

Bruno Notteboom is an engineer-architect, urban planner and doctor in urbanism and spatial planning. He has worked at several universities and design offices in Belgium and abroad. As of 2017 he is a professor at the Faculty of Architecture at KULeuven and the faculty of Design Sciences at the University of Antwerp. His research focuses on the relationship between landscape and urban planning from the perspective of history, policy and design. He is an editor of OASE Journal for Architecture and the Journal of Landscape Architecture.

Bart Van Gassen is an engineer-architect and urbanist who graduated from the University of Ghent and the KULeuven. In his work and teaching he is exploring the relation between architecture, landscape and urbanism. Bart Van Gassen is leading the spatial design team of the engineering and consultancy firm of Tractebel (instagram Spatialdesigntractebel). He realised over a period of 20 years now studies and projects related to spatial design of a very different scale and nature. His main focus today lies on the design of public space, landscape design, master planning and territorial studies. He worked on the design and execution of several parks, squares and promenades in different cities in Belgium: Muntplein in Brussels, Maria Hendrikapark in Ostend, Gentbrugse Meersenpark in Ghent, Zeeheldenplein in Ostend, Kortrijk Weide, ... At this moment he is leading the refurbishment of the Gedempte Zuiderdokken in Antwerp, the Materialenkaai in Brussels... He also made several master plans for contexts where city and landscape are intertwined. Among others the master plan IGLO for a high rise quarter in Antwerp, the master plan Groenlint which is exploring the Greenbelt of Ostend, the master plan for the Stiemervallei

in Genk... Further he is currently participating in territorial projects like the reactivation of the Kolenspoor in Limburg, a research project to rethink the relation between space and mobility in the city region Ghent in the framework of Labo Ruimte, research on landscape and ecology in relation to the realisation of the missing link Noord Zuid Limburg... Since 2008 Bart Van Gassen is part-time lecturer at KULeuven. He started with teaching the Theoretical Component in different studios. Today he is leading two studios in the Masters of Architecture. One in the International Masters and the Master Dissertation in Architecture. Bart Van Gassen participated in the KULeuven in the ADO All Cities All Land and is now leading together with Bruno Notteboom the ADO Landscape, Ecology and Design.

