

ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023
Campus Ghent / English
ENGAGEMENT LEGACY
ADO: Restoring Broken Journeys #4
OPO 14
Gisèle Gantois

STUDY GUIDE

PALIMPSESTIC LANDSCAPE

URBAN RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER - HINGE: YPRES

Key words: Palimpsest, Urban Resilience, Lived Space, Heritage and Inheritance, Regeneration



Cartes Parlantes: The city of Ypres - The Ghost Client

Highlighting historical information confronted with experiences from the ground gathered while walking. Course of the underground river Ieperlee. Original map: anonymous copper engraving from 1581 after Braun and Hagenberg in 'Description' by Ludovico Guicciardini in Vanrolleghem (2006: 62-63)

Jim Du Pan, "Ypres' secrets", master thesis: p.30, International Master, Faculty of Architecture - KU Leuven – Academic Year 2016-2017

STUDIO ASSIGNMENT

Site

Ypres town, situated in the Flemish province of West-Flanders was completely destroyed during the First World War (1914-1918). When seeing the photographs made during and after the war, we might think of a tabula rasa caused by the bombing. However, what is remarkable is that specifically the streets, alleys and public spaces lined by the blackened ruins remained visible because trucks and tanks run over them and people who came back after the war cleared them from rubble and re-walked them again and again. This pattern of public and collective spaces is still recognisable today in this palimpsestic town's spatial composition. While on the one hand palimpsest is a powerful term referring to geological stratification, palimpsest is also a literary metaphor. This reference to language or to think of the landscape or city as text or using methods of analysis that relate closely to literary practices comes back regularly in urban studies, but perhaps most famously in Michel De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) in which spatial narratives and acts of reading and writing are used to describe experiences in the city. Andreas Huyssen's (2003) concept of "urban palimpsest" translates his conviction that literary techniques of reading historically, intertextually, constructively and deconstructively at the same time can be woven into our understanding of urban spaces as lived spaces that shape our collective imaginaries' (Huyssen 2003, 7) In this sense *palimpsest* is considered as a less rectilinear, less straightforward development: here the layers of the *palimpsest* are rather thin, frail and mostly unfinished, fragments of different layers peek through other newer layers. In André Corboz's (1983) definition the re-inscription of the *palimpsest* involves not only the adding of new layers but more often than not the erasure or adaptation of the old ones.

Goals

This exercise aims to investigate how ordinary citizens with their real-life experiences interfere in top-down made proposals while enabling the co-creation of a resilient palimpsestic town in contrast with the predominant discourse on the war's destruction and the reconstruction. From here those elements will be distilled, supported with intense fieldwork that will be helpful to understand the town's multilayered appearance today while unraveling and highlighting its spatial fabric. Bridges will be made to actual cases of urban resilience after disaster. Questions will be formulated about whether and how the historical spatial configuration contributes to the process of recovery after disaster.

Expected outcome

The basis of this real-life case is intense fieldwork with the Interactive Walking method developed by the author (G.G.). This will result in graphical representations on small and large scale and in tactile models going from the very small scale to 1:1 installations on site representing the multi-layered city.

KEYWORDS

Social sustainability, Interactive, Collective Space, Local Identity, Appropriation, Social Meshwork, Community, Community Based Approaches, Storytelling, Palimpsest, Resilient Environments, Cultural Landscape, Recovery, Regeneration

TIMING AND ORGANISATION

Intense survey on location is an essential part of this exercise!

In the first three weeks you will work individually and in small teams to gather information and to get acquainted with the site perimeter and the topic. This should enable you to make an informed choice for a specific topic in week 5.

This exercise will be organised in close collaboration with the Ypres Museum and In Flanders Field Museum. To support this exercise different lectures and site visits will be organised (dr. Jelle Haemers, Departement of Medieval History, KU Leuven, about Ypres in the Middle Ages, dr. Hannelore Franck, walk in the city discovering the Medieval city, dr. Dominique Dendooven, In Flanders Field Museum: destruction and reconstruction of Ypres, Sandrine Coorevits, director of the Ypres Museum about the resilience of the town and its residents today.)

September 28th: ASSEMBLEA

October 5th: Introduction + lecture Gisèle Gantois + study material

October 12th: Exploration Ypres

October 19th: studio in Ghent to discuss first observation and representations, creation of Spatial Narratives

October 26th: morning: Lecture Sandrin Coorevits + walk in Ypres with dr. Hannelore Franck

Afternoon: Exploration Ypres

November 2th: studio in Ghent, Questioning the first exploration, creation of Cartes Parlantes

9 november: studio in Ghent

16 november: studio in Ghent

23 november: studio in Ghent

November 30th: Lecture dr. Dominiek Dendooven about the reconstructed city and authenticity + dr. Jelle Haemers on the Medieval City. Presenting first results in Ypres. Questioning these results after interactive discussions. Choice of location for 1:1 installation, concept plan for final exhibition (**visit exhibition room**, measuring room + composition exhibition)

December 7th: studio in Ghent

December 14th: studio in Ghent

December 21th: studio in Ghent

Januari 7th, 2023: Installing exhibition in Ypres

Januari 11th, 2023: jury en opening exhibition in Ypres

Exhibition until end of February

METHODOLOGY – MODUS OPERANDI

Before developing individual approaches, strategies, methods and instruments, the exercise starts with a number of reflections and a proposed research method to enable the students to immerse into the given study area. The detection and implementation of multiple narratives, old and new, graphically recorded through casual and organized encounters, is encouraged.

Interactive Walking

It is inherent to the twofold profile of the architect/student with an interest in heritage to simultaneously look at the present and the future as an architect who helps to shape that future and to look back from the present to the past in order to understand that present. Heritage and cultural landscapes embody successive movements, memories, experiences and dreams. To that extent, this studio meanders through different temporalities, not only in the way it looks at the historical landscape, but also in its design-oriented research method. Although a strict division does injustice to the versatility of the different disciplines and the interdisciplinarity, the methodology of **Interactive Walking** combines methods and tools from different academic traditions, including heritage studies (studying the past), anthropology (observing contemporary humans in their living environment) and architecture (thinking and shaping the future). We investigate how the movement through the landscape, the narratives and life itself are closely intertwined.

The 3-steps methodology of **Interactive Walking** is a tool to explore the cultural landscape, not only to discover and understand the multiplicity of meanings of the site for its inhabitants, newcomers and visitors, but also to integrate the gathered knowledge in an (architectural) intervention as a generator for Ypres, and its inhabitants.

The deeper meaning of a place can never be discovered by mere formal research or simply collecting information "from above" (such as in archives or databases). Therefore, students will explore the city, and the wider environment intensively on location.

As a first step (**Step 1: Interactive Journeys**) and to facilitate the process of getting acquainted with the site, the student will explore the site by walking according to a well-defined protocol. No existing maps are consulted prior to this intense period on site. No photos are taken during the initial explorations. As a first step, the observations and experiences, the spontaneous conversations with residents and visitors are recorded chronologically by drawing and writing in small homemade notebooks. In the evening, the journey of that day is recorded at the back of the unfolded sketch booklet.

As foreign travellers, the students will have to orient themselves by marking reference places. They will be asked to link their discoveries to memories of events in other places. In this way they will draw up their own personal visual and experimental maps of the neighbourhood and the region.

The small booklets will serve as a personal lens for each student through which s/he views and experiences the site and the way s/he interacts with the residents. This will create a specific angle that, as an important player, will help create tension between existing and new data, and to identify spatial and programmatical

urgencies that will form the basis of further research and the (architectural) project proposals. These will be driven as much as all the actors involved will question them. In order to make this possible, close cooperation is envisaged with **local experts**, professional or not.

As a second step (**Step 2: Spatial Narratives**) the collected experiences and information about the neighbourhood and surroundings are processed, selected and visualized in artistic maps and models from a clearly personal interest, and this through reflection on one's own individual discoveries, translated into things outlined in the notebooks. This involves mediating between experiences on site and how the architect on the basis of existing maps traditionally represents this. (Think of how a landscape with feet on the ground is really experienced with highs and lows, bends and vistas, church towers as reference points and forests obscure the view and how this landscape is represented from a topographical map, from a bird's eye view.)

In a third step (**Step 3: Cartes Parlantes**) students are asked to combine their experiences with existing expert data such as official data, archives, existing topographical, geological and road maps or historical maps. These official maps and data are rearranged as a series of alternative maps reimagining the (urban) landscape. This exposes possible unexpected relationships and interactions between different layers and reveals the deeper meaning of the site as part of a lively process.

In this way one or more design questions arise, which are further defined in the course of the exercise. The conceptual choices that each student makes in the design will visualize the special stratification of the (urban) landscape and enable its communication to third parties. Special attention will be given to large sections linking the chosen site to the larger context and models on different scales.

STUDY MATERIAL

Location-specific information will be provided during the introduction session October 5th. The reader will be built up together with the students according to their fields of interest.

EVALUATION METHOD

The students will present their work orally in an exhibition on site. Jurymembers will be local experts, teachers-architects as well as historians.

See also ECTS

EVALUATION CRITERIA

See ECTS

The exhibition is an integral part of this exercise. Contributing to it is essential.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

See ECTS

This exercise has to be situated within the ADO Restoring Broken Journeys (#4) and within the Engagement Legacy.
Link to former ADO exercises #1 and #2 (#3 is under construction)

2022/#2 Church ain't out 'til they quit singing.

Hinge: Saint-Joseph Church Hellegat

https://issuu.com/restoringbrokenjourneys1/docs/hellegat_2_2022_04_08

2021/#1 Leaf is Tree and Tree is Leaf, House is City and City is House...

Case Hellegat

https://issuu.com/restoringbrokenjourneys1/docs/hellegat1_2022_04_08