

Master studio Semester 2 Brussels  
Master Dissertation studio Brussels

2023 2024 - Harold Fallon & Sophie Laenen

Craftsmanship Engagement / The Brussels  
Way ADO translocal (re)conversions

# Real Life

real projects

about transforming social housing in brussels  
and existing single-family housing



*The heritage of many social housing in Brussels has reached a tipping point: the life cycle of various materials is coming to an end, the integration of housing in the urban fabric needs reviewing, the habitability and functionality of buildings deserve broader reflection, ...*

bMa Brussels Master Architect, 2021

**Deze master studio is gebaseerd op een actuele vraag,** gelanceerd door de Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA) Deze heeft betrekking op de toekomst van bestaande sociale woonblokken en hun locaties, die een bredere reflectie vragen over de toekomst van het ‘recente erfgoed’ in de stad. De studio werkt cross-over tussen 1e en 2de master. Verticale uitwisselingen werpen hun vruchten af. Beide studio zijn gevestigd in Brussel (MARB) Studenten van beide studio's zullen hun krachten bundelen op dezelfde sites.

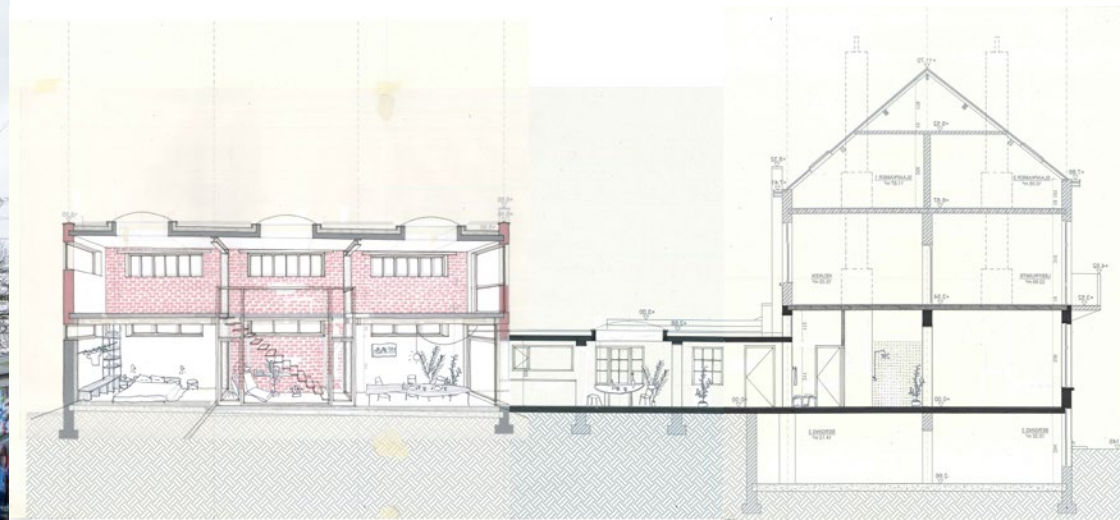
Général Jacques, Etterbeek



*The refurbishment of terraced single houses, be it strictly interior or the usual cleanup of the back-façade, has become an obligatory step in every starting architecture practice in Belgium, and is a fertile ground for experimentation.*

**This studio is based upon real life tenders** launched by the team of the Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA) regarding the future of existing social housing buildings and sites, framing in a broader reflection about the future of “recent heritage” in the city, the should I stay or should I go debates and the contemporary topics of circularity and reuse. This design studio in Brussels is both a Master Dissertation Studio and a Master Studio. The two studios will collaborate in the form of small offices of two or three students. They are the kind of projects you may be confronted with after graduation.

Klimop (c) AgwA



## Real Life

With the first year of Real Life (21-22), the Brussels Architecture Center (CIVA), the Brussels Master Architect (bMa) and our studio at KU Leuven decided to put the transformation of social housing built in the XXth century on the agenda. In the coming months, a series of debates with commissioners, architects and other actors from the field will tackle the challenges linked to renovation: changing buildings, changing contexts, changing tempo. The first talk, organised on site at Rue Haute, was combined with the exhibition of the students work from the studio.

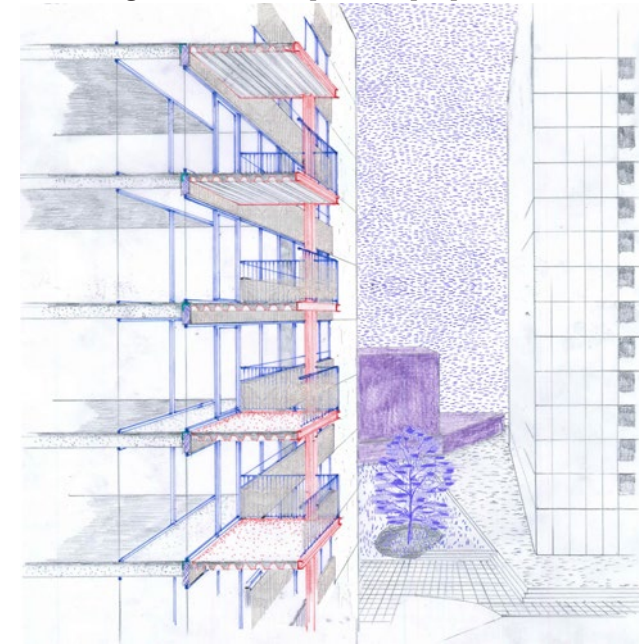
exhibition, 23/06/22, Changing Buildings



## CHANGING BUILDINGS

Transforming buildings of the recent past implies taking position. They are unexpected architectural opportunities and force us to address challenging realities. Markedly in the social housing sector, they were built in a momentum of optimism and generosity departing from a kind of Tabula Rasa. Today, the economy of means in considering the Tabula Scripta is becoming the rule, be it in terms of budget, environment or human context. The constructive reality of these buildings poses new technical, normative, typological and spatial questions. The love-hate relation to this young heritage is slowly shifting too : not yet considered as monuments, there is a real margin of negotiation between their simplistic replacement and their identical preservation.

Brunfaut, AgwA+ZED, competition proposal, 2021



## CHANGING CONTEXTS

The existing social housing sites are marked by their lack of articulation to their context. The typology of the block or tower are but the morphologic expression of this deconnexion. Inhabitants are stigmatized as social tenants of large scale developments. Exterior spaces are often reduced to vast stretches of supposedly functional emptiness. Not to speak about the insufficiency of services, complementing programs and appropriable spaces. At the same time, the need of social housing is a strong argument against the reprogramming of existing dwellings and budget is systematically short to provide significant change and multifunctionality. An impossible equation?

Ghandi



## CHANGING TEMPO

Some would say, time is of the essence. There is urgency in the renovation of these buildings and site, and there is urgency in expanding the numbers of social housing too. The point is not to mistake speed for haste, but also distinguish between prudence and procrastination. This is about feasibility studies, participation and competitive processes. Moreover, unlike demolition and reconstruction projects, existing buildings come with existing residents. This is about phasing works and moving plans. Could it also come together with a different approach on budget management? Change with a sense of continuity comes with additional and broader complexity: hopefully the condition of a more grounded architectural approach?

Rue Haute II



## Small offices

This design studio in Brussels is both a Master Dissertation Studio and a Master Studio. The two studios will collaborate in the form of small offices of two or three students.

You will be confronted with real projects, sites and assignments regarding housing. It is about real assignments, real competitions, real people and real houses, with available documents. They are the kind of projects you may be confronted with after graduation.

## Two scales

You will make two projects in parallel, exploring two different scales. On the one hand, collective social housing. On the other hand, the small scale refurbishment of houses.

(c)ZED



Brunfaut



## Exchange and guests

The studies on these recent tenders and projects are currently ongoing, which means that the studios can contribute to ongoing reflections and that interaction with real stakeholders are possible.

For the intermediate reviews, architects working on these (or similar) projects will be invited during the studio to discuss their projects and your work.

In 2021, we invited BC architects, Zampone, Matador, Label, Carton 123 and Lava.

Dubrucq, Molenbeek



## General planning

This is the third (and last) year of the Real Life Studio. The approach will be similar to last year's studio, with the inclusion of new sites launched by the social housing companies with the Master Architect.

In the first semester, the Master Dissertation students will prepare the work, from site visits and contacts with inhabitants to documentation, from observation to the definition of an attitude.

In the second semester, small offices are formed. The first day of the second semester is a presentation day by the Master Dissertation students, with guests. Offices are formed. In April, a second moment of ex-change with guests is foreseen.

The final Jury of the master studio is the end of the group phase and the start of the final production for the Master Dissertation students.

Ketelstraat, Laeken



KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture  
Campus Sint Lucas Brussels

**Real Life**

reinventing existing social housing in  
Brussels

2023 - 2024

Harold Fallon & Sophie Laenen

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Craftsmanship Engagement / The Brussels Way