

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

LAND

Case the urbanized territory of Muide-Meulestede

ARCHITECTURE & TERRITORY

framed in the ADO Landscape, Ecology and Design

Steven Geeraert, Bruno Notteboom, Sis Pillen, Bart Van Gassen, Jan van Hoof

MARG/MAIG 24

2020 - 2021

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 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. 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.

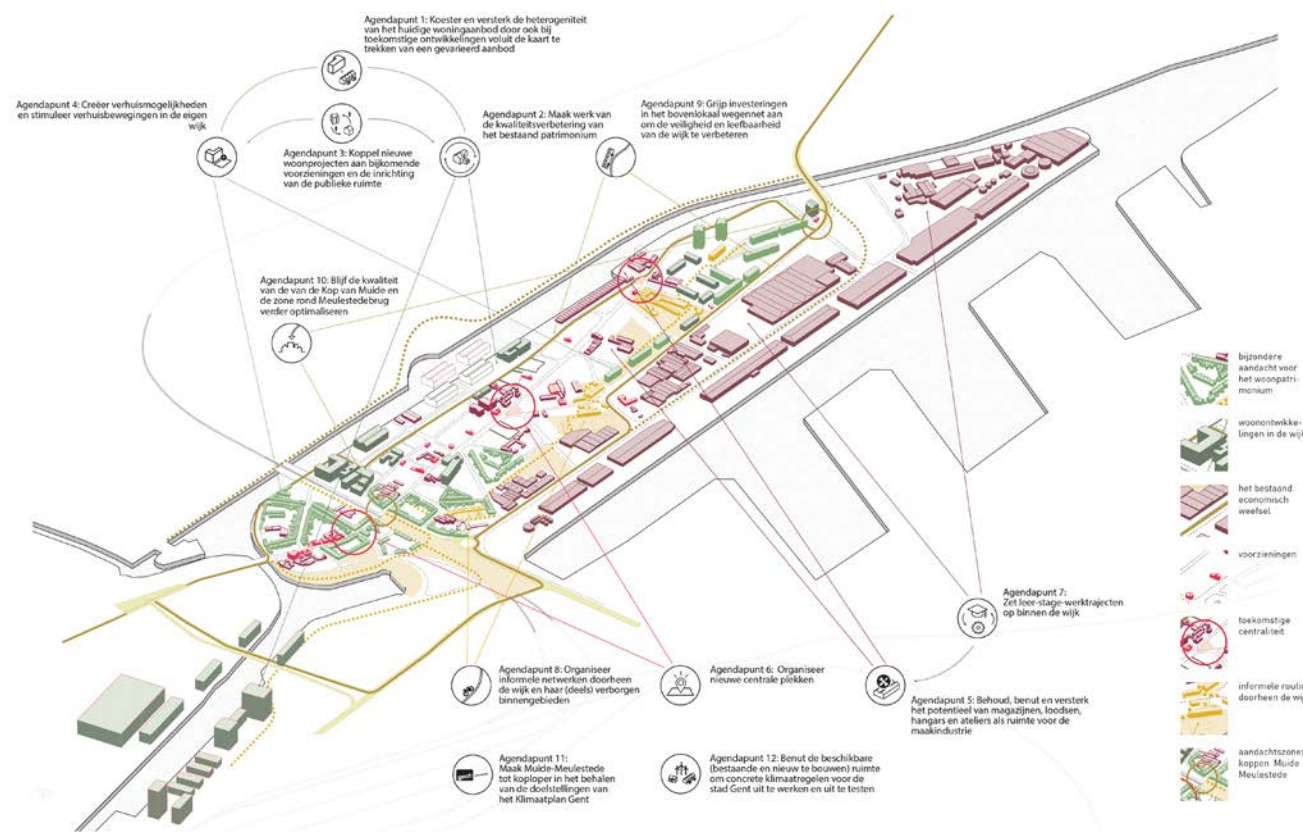
The design studio links theory to practice. The relation between theory and practice is crucial in architecture. Good architecture can only be realized through a continuous interaction between theory and practice. By reading and discussing texts in the design studio a complex and multifarious relation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

The design studio function as a collaborative team. The ambition is to combine individual and collective efforts. Students will collaborate to develop joint analyses, fieldwork ... 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) urbanized territory of Flanders. We will investigate and mobilize spatial, social and ecological forces that can support a sustainable transformation of the territory. Forces that can function as a driver to develop key architectural interventions. Each architectural intervention will thus tackle urban challenges – climate change, ecological decline, social polarisation ... – and 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 making a contribution to a real democratic and a more “terrestrial” territory.





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In this studio we will explore a **possible transformation of the horizontal urbanization** that characterizes (large parts of) Flanders. A rich varied, seemingly chaotic, environment that is characterized by tensions, contradictions, juxtapositions, ... but also offers opportunities, possibilities and robustness/resilience for those who tend to look further. **Within this very diverse urbanized territory – as well spatially as socially – we will search for the common ground that can connect the diversity of inhabitants and users, the human and the non-human, by means of architectural interventions.** This will create common goals, a common understanding of a shared situation. Shared between citizens living differently in this urbanized territory. Shared between man and nature.

This design research needs to be framed as a **spatial as well as a political project**. In a context where the opposition between city and countryside is reinstalled by politicians and political programs (see elections of May 2019 in Flanders!). In the light of climate change and sustainability some (political) agents want us to believe that the only place where we can work on a solution is the city. **We are convinced that the power to transform is not concentrated in the city nor the “city centre” but is – in the condition of Flanders – spread over a wider horizontally urbanized territory.** At the same time we witnessed the last half century an opposition between the social and the ecological in politics.



Also this became again a hot topic in the last elections where some of the main actors capitalized on the fact that choosing for climate is choosing against people. And again here we are convinced that the solution lies in connecting the ecological and the social instead of treating them as two separate worlds. **The studio will give us insights in the way this spatial and political project can be imagined. And needs to be seen as a tool to explore a common ground and a common understanding of urban transformations that serves people as well as ecology.**

More specifically, we will work on the urbanized territory of Muide-Meulestede. The district Muide-Meulestede is located in the north of the city of Ghent. Its location, as a peninsula in the fringes between the port and the city, gives the district and its diversity of residents a shared identity. The strong boundary between the neighborhood and the surrounding fabric, has created a strong self-sufficient society on an island within the city.

Thanks to its position between the port and the city, the district contains a combination of a differentiated housing typologies, types of workspaces that differ in scale and character and a multitude of formal and informal collective spaces.



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Historically, the district was strongly related to the port. The relationship between living and working was an important reason to live in Muide-Meulestede. The district could function as an island within the port, independent to the city.

Today, the district functions as an island within the city. The live-work balance within the neighborhood is currently under pressure. The neighborhood has not been self-sufficient in functions for a while and conversations with residents indicated that this is certainly a problem for the aging original residents. Where the isolated location gave added value to the neighborhood in the past, it is now a limitation and exposes a mobility problem.

In the past, the residential fabric of the district was surrounded by the harbor activities and in this way separated from the water. With the displacement of these activities, plots with development potential were created. Waiting for this development, these spaces became active by informal use and gave a place to initiatives ranging from festivals, exhibitions, hangouts to forms of informal living. At the same time, the former marshalling yards and buffer zones developed themselves into green areas, which were needed in this paved neighborhood.



©Jan van Hoof

The expanding city is moving in the direction of Muide-Meulestede. Large-scale residential developments such as the Oude Dokken at the south side of the neighborhood and the transformation of the historical warehouses in the neighborhood into luxury lofts and offices, signified the transformation of Muide-Meulestede. The qualities of the neighborhood today, as a differentiated residential fabric, a close-knit heterogeneous society, car-free streets and various forms of open space, make the neighborhood attractive for new resident groups and for this reason, for developers. The concerned reaction of the residents to the impact of these changes of their neighborhood, led to the concept study “Muide-Meulestede Morgen”, a participatory project to define the guidelines for the future of their neighborhood. Together with the subsequent structure plan, these trajectories raised objectives such as the healthy neighbourhood, the connected neighbourhood, the natural neighbourhood, the adaptive neighbourhood and the circular neighbourhood. Based on this structure plan, current and future projects must further shape these objectives.

THREE TRACKS

The studio assignment is divided into three tracks. Track 1 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 explored in groups of three students. 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 2)

Track 1 frames the studio in the architectural practice and architectural history through the exploration of an oeuvre. Practice and thinking are researched through key figures in the field of architecture and landscape architecture. Designers that combine a strong and broad engagement in society as a whole with sensitive and precise architectural interventions. This exploration is made in a group of two or three students. Each group performs in depth research on one of the key figures.

1. Aldo Van Eyck
2. Lawrence Halprin
3. Liebrecht Migge
4. Lina Bo Bardi
5.

Track 2: Jumping scales (week 1- week 5)

Track 2 explores the larger territory of Muide-Meulestede. 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 ... This exercise will build further on the existing policy documents developed by the city of Ghent and more in particular the “Muide Meulestede, een ruimtelijke toekomstvisie” (EVR/BUUR).

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". Jan van Hoof and also the participation with the City of Ghent and 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 area of Muide/Meulestede. The design of punctual and precise architectural interventions that can transform the given urbanized territory of Muide-Meulestede 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 build 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

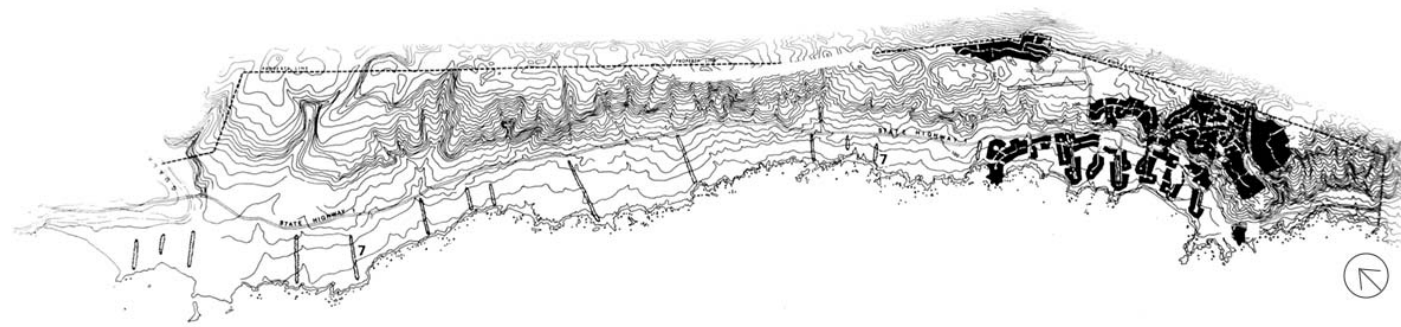
There is a quote of Gilles Deleuze that states “no practice without theory, and no theory without practice”. This means that an architect also needs to develop an understanding of theory if he wants to build. We invite you to read and reflect on what you read. Select quotes. And than start to write to 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 than 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) 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, shelters, passages, bridges, streets, squares, water systems, energy networks, river banks, 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 | Jozse 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

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 Meersenspark 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.

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 Lendelede, 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.

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 KU Leuven 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.

Sis Pillen is a PhD candidate in Architecture at the University of Leuven (Faculty of Architecture), Belgium. He graduated as an Architect from the Faculty of Architecture in Ghent at the University of Leuven (2014). He worked from 2014 until 2017 for Architecture Workroom Brussels. Architecture Workroom Brussels is a think-and-do tank for innovation in architecture, urban planning and other fields relating to spatial development. He worked in this period on projects 'Atelier Utrecht – The healthy city' and 'Atelier Brussels – A good city has industry' for the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2016 – The Next Economy. Further he collaborated on the projects: Revitalization Zeebrugge and the exploration of the trajectory 'Oost-Vlaams Kerngebied'. His doctoral research 'Waterscapes in Transformation' is a continuation and expansion of his master dissertation 'a new Belgian coastline, rethinking the existing'. The research will give insights on the role of architectural design in the transformation of landscapes under pressure. And will approach water as a protagonist of the architectural intervention at the intermediate scale.

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 project Muide-Meulestede, part of the city of Ghent, in which he collaborates with various urban services. In this role he conducted research on behalf of the city of Ghent focussed on the spatial use of children, youngsters and the elderly, and he is also responsible for the development of the age-friendly recreational structure of this district.

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. Jan is participating in the ADO "Luwte plekken" together with Geert Peymen, Hans Leinfelder and Pleuntje Jellema.

