

SPRING SEMESTER 2022
KUL / CAMPUS SINT-LUCAS BRUSSELS

A POLICY WHISPERING PRAXIS
THE GREEN COLONY (TERVUEREN)

Peter Swinnen - Ivonne Weichold

Our architecture studio is interested in testing architecture's capacity as an unsolicited and pro-active tool for political policy making. How can architecture critically inform and challenge socio-economic, spatial and ecologic policies? Can the architect perform as an effective "policy whisperer" for the sake of the common good? And is architecture's role to reactively answer a brief or should it prefigure the brief, and even the (public) client for that matter? Through methods of prospective architecture design, we wish to challenge and inform "a public client who doesn't know yet he/she is a public client".

For the coming lustrum (2022-2026) the atelier will embark on a long-term commitment vis-à-vis the community of Tervueren (50° 49' N, 4° 31' E), one of Europe's most bizarre and intriguing environments. We will politically and spatially scrutinize this *petite capitale mondiale*, made up of more than 25% expats and holding some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Europe. The individualism - both socially and ecologically - is henceforth 'unique'.



As an intrinsic part of the green belt around Brussels, Tervueren can be considered as a 'Green Colony', not in the least in its historical sense. For it was King Leopold II, with his barbaric import of colonial wealth at the end of the 19th century that laid the very cultural and ecological foundations of

contemporary Tervueren. A Chinese puzzle of lush parks, protected fields and forests form its bucolic core. As an iron lung to Brussels, this hinterland is however built up of schizophrenia, and hence, an intriguing testing ground for political and policy experimentation through architectural reflection.

The analysis of the potentials and pitfalls of Tervueren as a ‘Green Colony’ will lie at the heart of our design driven policy whispering praxis. We will aim at establishing futureproof environments in and around Tervueren, provoking more equitable balances on dwelling affordability, inclusivity, and productive landscapes, as well as enhancing Tervueren’s cultural diversities. A trial-and-error method will be hailed by the studio.

On an architectural level Tervueren is equally home to a weird mix of architectural ‘refugees’, making up a zoo-like environment of individual works by e.g. Willy Van Der Meeren, Henry Van de Velde, T.O.P. office, ... A thorough cultural understanding of the do’s and don’ts of these species will additionally inform our studio’s work.



C.E.C.A., Clos des 4 Vents, Tervueren, Arch. Willy Van Der Meeren & Leon Palm, 1955
(Photography, Peter Swinnen, Fall 2021)

Studio participants will be encouraged to think politically and act strategically, so that real-time impact can be generated. The studio will be assisted by local and supra-local political stakeholders, as part of our capacity-building exercise. Our nexus is to ‘find cracks in the system’, necessary to invoke change and evolution. We are interested in strong designers, clear thinkers and true team players that understand architecture as a strategic tool, never as the goal itself. The studio will perform as a professional architecture collective, with precise goals and projects (set by the students), regular deadlines and precisely defined responsibilities for each team member.

For every semester, the work will be synthesized in a green paper, helping to further define the ‘Green Colony’ concept and methodology.

The atelier will be led by arch. Peter Swinnen (CRIT. architects, www.CRIT.cc), specializing in political architectural strategies and dr. arch. Ivonne Weichold, leading expert in the field of agro-ecological landscapes.

Links (non-exhaustive list):

Horizon +

<https://omgeving.vlaanderen.be/horizon-zoniënwood>

www.CRIT.cc

<https://crit.cc/work/the-architect-as-policy-whisperer/>

<https://crit.cc/work/oh-yes-mr-president/>

<https://crit.cc/work/le-musee-et-son-double-book/>

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