

2021-2022 – SEM 4

OPO 42

Gisèle Gantois

STUDY GUIDE

VICINITY as NEARNESS IN SPACE

HINGE: FORMER BRICK PRODUCTION SITE IN NOEVEREN



G. Gantois, 2021

FRAMEWORK

A fast territorial transformation is occurring under polarizing and accelerating processes of urban concentration and depopulation, of economic development and decline. This is strongly impacting local communities around the world, changing the way people live and use collective spaces. These global challenges become even more visible in post-situation areas such as post-industrial, post-traumatic and peri-urban areas, where the collectively used spaces are strongly entwined with the historical tissue embedded in daily habits of ever changing and intertwining communities and fluid and interchangeable local identities.

With the central theme '**Vicinity as Nearness in Space**¹', this studio delves deeper into the topic of the interrelationship between local inhabitants and the heritage landscape as a future oriented generating force. It investigates the relationship between heritage and urbanisation. It looks at heritage and history in a different way, on the one hand by breaking away from an object-based static approach to it and, on the other hand, by tracing an arc from the past over the present to the future with a clear anthropological perspective.

An important shift is gradually taking place between the mere preservation of sites for the sake of heritage values expressed in historical characteristics and sustainable reuse in all its spatial possibilities. The transition from a 'maximum preservation of the heritage values', say historical characteristics – which often also means the freezing of time - to the active use of our immovable heritage to meet current social needs and ecological expectations based on actual significances and intrinsic qualities is fully explored today. Additionally, there is the policy ambition that projects the year 2050 as the horizon in order to stop claiming non-built space in Flanders to built but on the contrary to densify the built space and guarantee a higher building quality. This means: more reuse, the densification of the use of space and the interweaving or bringing together of different functions within one space and creating new cross connections.

Unfortunately, there is also a danger here considering the speed at which existing heritage sites are sold privately or at which they are adapted for new use, while their present societal role and their irreplaceable social importance is largely underestimated. Local heritage, which from a historical perspective is sometimes only important as an exemplar of a larger series of similar archetypical buildings, often holds important value as part of a collective space.

Today, for various reasons, heritage is increasingly judged by its picturesque character or possible monetary return. It is then reduced to an empty shell, not only disrupted from its historical continuity in time but also from its valuable social mesh. This evolution provokes strong feelings of estrangement among local people, who do not always play a decisive role in the development of re-use projects. It seems often difficult, if not impossible, to provide them with their righteous place within a traditional project process – righteous because they often have deep knowledge of the heritage site as key holders.

To explore these topics we will use one particular site (former brick manufacturing site) in a particular hamlet (Noeveren) in a particular region (Rupelregion) as an alibi to bring together heritage, planning, geographical and urban development issues and social and ecological aspects and this within the policy ambition of Flanders 2050.

¹ This exercise has to be situated in the framework of the Academic Design Office (Study Guide_Addendum 2): Restoring Broken Journeys. The studio is part of the Engagement Team Contested Legacy

Although the case of the former brick production site in Noeveren is locally anchored we will demonstrate that the conditions in this study can also be linked to Meta conditions of other territories in the world.

How can heritage sites be continued? What are the expectations of different stakeholders?

Can a more dynamic interaction with heritage through research by design applied from the very start of the investigations enact, create, shape and negotiate a new meaning of place by comprehending the multiplicity of types of its actual significance. Can the investigation on the triggering position of heritage and its deep actual significance add to the actual discourse on what François Hartog (2017: 204) calls a crisis of time, described as a 'gap' between past and future. What can the interaction of people with built heritage add to this discourse?

STATEMENT

Global warming is the result of a huge fire lit two centuries ago at the dawn of the industrial revolution, accumulating since then CO₂ in the atmosphere. Although it might be an obvious fact, the image given by the ecologist Andreas Malm in his book *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (Malm 2018) opens a perspective that is quite opposite to the traditional proactive discourse on the sustainable city. If we follow the retroactive look of Andreas Malm, we realize that our entire urbanized landscape, with its billions of kilometres of infrastructures and its myriads of buildings, has been created thanks to these 'historical fires'. In this regard, any savage demolition and any abandonment of existing structures that reduced to nothingness the 'past investment' inherited from previous generations, should be weighing on our conscience. The still marginal practices of reuse and recycling (Viganò 2012, Brilliant and Kinny 2016) should be the central point of any sustainable urban design theory, which has to relate somehow to that immense **'energetic heritage'**.

David Malaud, 2020

STUDIO ASSIGNMENT

'Vicinity as Nearness in Space' will be explored through the case of the abandoned brick manufacturing site in the hamlet Noeveren, situated in the post-industrial Rupel region in Flanders, Belgium. In Noeveren one can discover historical rights of trespassing with collectively shared private spaces which turned the neighbourhood in a slowly grown social mesh where collectively used spaces are constantly negotiated through a complex system of codified, and non-written and culturally nested customs sometimes underscored with thresholds and objects (Fig. 1). These unplanned spaces of vicinity thus turn into places of invitation and daily negotiation. This is atypical for Flanders where property rights are clearly defined by tracing a hard line between two parcels often accompanied with a sign indicating 'No trespassing' or 'Private'. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happens with the proposals for new developments of multi-family housing on inappropriate locations along the green and vacant northern bank of the river Rupel in the neighboring hamlet Hellegat. They overlook and turn their backs to the living community. They neglect the spatial and social fabric and reframe the collectively used space by explicitly delimiting the private plots due to a different landscaping or by using hedges and fences, obstructing an ancient right-of-way, which grew over time. This act alienates the local people from their living environment and excludes the newcomers from taking part in any form of vicinity. Additionally, the material remains of the industrial past risk becoming isolated artefacts because they increasingly lack their relationship with the landscape. This process raises interesting questions within the discourse about the conservative and progressive visions of the meaning of a (heritage) place: what option is active, evolving, generating and which one is passive, fixative and annihilating? The answer is obvious: due to the neglect of grounded knowledge in restoration and development plans cutting into collectively used places these heritage sites can no longer be active drivers of positive change as they once were. Instead, they turn into something that is only subject to change (Fouseki et al, 2020: 1–15).



Figure 1 – space of vicinity as invitation

In the case of the former brick production site in Noeveren it is specifically the understanding of the easements, historical rights over land originally installed to guarantee a short four hundred meters walk between the workmen's houses and the factories and clay pit, that is key to the contemporary policy issues surrounding (social) sustainability and future development. It underlines the cultural and social meaning of the heritage site as a slowly grown historical example of the so-called 20-minute neighbourhoods (Melbourne) or the superblocks in Barcelona, mini city quarters of 400 x 400 m in which living locally is the new way of living. It also questions private land property boundaries in the creation of spaces of vicinity.

This studio aims to understand the historical layers of meaning of a given site on the one hand and to generate new ones on the other by looking at this both on the larger **landscape** scale of the Scheldt-Rupel river basin area and on the micro scale while considering the **reconversion** of the abandoned former brick production site and the **interdependence of the non-built and built** as part of the same cultural landscape. The architectural proposals will be characterized by an active approach to the cultural landscape, in which the heritage relics are no longer treated as isolated objects, but as part of a vibrant landscape in **a gradual process of transformation related to aspects of space, environment, climate, nature, ... and this in relation to the socio-economic context.**

With the study of the former brick production site in Noeveren we not only ask what heritage is or can be by looking at the urbanising conditions of the post-industrial landscape of the Rupel region, but we also try to understand what the contemporary significance of the site is for the residents of Noeveren by combining their authentic experiences expressed in their daily interaction with this living environment with our own experiences on site. We will then confront the gathered knowledge with existing data, including historical archives and maps and the heritage management plan guidelines.

We will take up with the expectations of different stakeholders such as the owner, the local municipality administration, Immovable Heritage Administration, etc.

To ensure the participation process we will regularly organise moments of exchange.

This design project will analyse the relationship between heritage zoning - the whole hamlet Noeveren is a protected village scape - and urbanisation. (Heritage zoning is a method of urban planning to define listed heritage locations, such as monuments, historical centers, green parks, and cultural landscapes. On the other hand, urbanisation refers to the process for a city to grow, transforming natural or rural areas into urban areas.)

We will question the statement that heritage zoning guarantees the area's conservation, and consequently, disables urbanisation within its boundaries.

Different research/design questions can be formulated:

On Macro-level

- Does heritage zoning still work as the aforementioned definitions state in times of rapid urbanisation and a declining state of heritage conservation,
- Does the fact that a site was designated as a heritage zone disable urbanisation or does it cause other types of urbanisation? What about 'The Wild Side of Town?' (Chris Baines, 1986). Heritage and Nature and Urbanisation and Nature, can there be a link or interaction between both?

- Does heritage zoning in itself prevent gentrification or does it on the contrary provoke gentrification?
- How can the open space and built heritage left behind by disappearing functions/activities smoothly and structurally be used in the long term in function of social needs.

On Meso- and Micro-level

- What is the significance of the post-industrial landscape for the inhabitants of Noeveren and how can we detect, reveal and map this in a tactile way? What is the place of this abandoned former brick production site herein?
- In which way can the reuse of the former brick production site as 'energetic heritage' in the context of this hamlet generate additional opportunities for the reinforcement of the existing spatial and social mesh of the hamlet?
- How can the former brick production site, and by extension the hamlet Noeveren, deal with its industrial past, so that the emphasis is no longer on the built construction as passive isolated object, but as a living structure in constant metamorphosis that enables the creation of new memories and associations of local people and newcomers?

On Methodology

- What resilient anticipative design strategies can we define for the heritage of this region more particularly for the former brick production site, considering un-predefined scenarios?
- How can we explore the notion of "cultural living landscape" in which the tangible and intangible aspects of this heritage and all living creatures are included in order to achieve more (socially) sustainable development?

On Community Involvement

- How can we involve the inhabitants of the hamlet more intensively in our new plans?

At the start of the research, each student will critically question and further define these initial research questions and will formulate new or additional questions in a designerly way that will finally result in a design proposal. As a triggering idea we will start from the current conflicting ideas of the owner who wants to develop the site with the construction of new buildings such as multi-family housing and some of the local stakeholders wish to conserve the site as much as possible with the creation of collective spaces with respect for the spontaneously grown pioneer vegetation. Depending on the students' own design research these conflicting dream scenarios will be explored, questioned, widened and/or adapted in close interaction with the different protagonists.

The exploration of other post-industrial cases (Former Textile industry in Łódź in Poland, urban regeneration towards cultural blue-green city, NDSM Shipyard in Amsterdam and participatory urban development, Former ceramic industry in Porto Portugal) will support the students' investigations. See also [Recycling Warehouses: 25 Adaptive Reuse Projects | ArchDaily](#) for other interesting examples.

The research by design is supported by literature research. An initial list of references is included in this study guide, but will be expanded in the course of the design process related to each student's own individual interests.

SAMPLE SITE

The hamlet Noeveren (Meso-scale) belongs to the municipality of Boom, which is situated on the north bank of the river Rupel together with the municipalities of Hemiksem, Schelle, Niel and Rumst. These five municipalities have in common their geomorphological structure with the cuesta and their historical evolution with clay exploitation. The river basin of the 12 km long tidal river Rupel is part of the Flanders-Dutch Scheldt delta. This is unique in its kind, because of the special interaction between natural processes and cultural history. On the one hand, the region plays an important role in the creation of space for the river to flood, on the other hand there is the Flanders Sigma Plan that not only protects the existing living environments along the river Scheldt and Rupel with the construction of dikes, but also provides for a series of projects for the Scheldt basin that create nature and recreation areas. This sometimes means that citizens and entrepreneurs are expropriated.

Less commonly known is that the Rupel region had next to the brick industry other important activities in many other branches of industry such as steel industry, with numerous shipyards; the food industry, with various gin distilleries and beer breweries; the diamond industry; the shoe and slipper industry and the glass industry.

This intensive industrial past is expressed in the alienating cultural landscape of the **Rupel region** (Macro-scale), which is marked by over 400 years of clay mining and the production of bricks, pipes and roof tiles, with numerous clay pits and industrial heritage relics scattered all over the landscape. A number of valuable sites have remained. The special waffle structure of the landscape with pits and ridges, the peculiar housing typologies on the flanks of the pits all interconnected by a fragile mesh of easements over private land which guaranteed fluent trespassing, played and still play an important role in the identity, quality and (social) cohesion of the region.

Today, new migration and mobility, but also nature (nature has reclaimed space and created new habitats that are exceptional for their biodiversity value) give rise to new meanings for the Rupel region. As a peri-urban² region, however, there is also increasing pressure as a housing expansion area for Antwerp. To date, a total vision is lacking, which means that each municipality individually outlines its own policy or takes decisions plot by plot.

HINGE PROJECT: THE FORMER BRICK MANUFACTURING SITE LAUWERS

‘Warehouses, whether industrial or rural, are a type of building that can easily be found all around the world. Some of these shelters are century-old and have probably been built to store products or to accommodate factories. However, due to urban phenomena and new technologies, many of them stopped operating as they were originally used to and started to spark interest in several businesses whose aim was to re-adapt these structures to meet new purposes’.

On the site [Recycling Warehouses: 25 Adaptive Reuse Projects | ArchDaily](#) 25 projects have been selected ‘to demonstrate how adaptive reuse of **warehouse structures can be a great option for multiple purposes**

² Peri-urbanisation relates to those processes of dispersive urban growth that creates hybrid landscapes of fragmented urban and rural characteristics (Wikipedia)

- residential, cultural, commercial, services - in addition to being an eco-friendly solution by recycling the existing architecture.'



Former brick manufacturing site



One of the abandoned production halls on site

METHODOLOGY – MODUS OPERANDI

This historical fabric is often not readable at first sight and demands an approach, which differs from the traditional static top-down and exclusively material survey.

Before formulating specific research questions and 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.

Architects and urban planners are usually 'illiterate in the landscapes' language, which is the colloquial expression of the place itself' as the historian Rebecca Solnit formulates in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2005: 10). Additionally, they are also not trained to assess sociocultural values at inherited sites. Ethnographic and observational approaches with unplanned open interviews of community members seem to be the most appropriate to the architect's and urban planner's task to include the social as well as the historical and the political, context of the site as they are the closest to what an architect or urban planner already does: survey and fieldwork. The utmost important lesson learned from these existing approaches in anthropology is that people's deepest unspoken emotions, lived memories, traces, social interactions and associations cannot be understood without being on site.

In this design research we will explore the use of *Imagines Agentes* in the understanding of different forms of vicinity through negotiation of space, whereby these approaches merge with the skills of an architect—specifically, the ability to draw, as well as to work with models which help to 'put the designer in a haptic contact with the object, or space' (Pallasmaa, 2012: 14), by an active, context-related approach with an anthropological perspective.

In using *Imagines Agentes*—sequences of active, inspiring and meaningful images—the places and experiences are marked in the quest to understand the social use of layered space. This entails imprinting images of events on the places by enriching these images by highlighting the accessories. *Imagines Agentes* not only move through association with their form, which enables one to recall these places later on by the memories of events related to these places, but they specifically move with authentic spatial experiences, actions in recent past and present related to the place, such as to look for shelter, to attach to, to remember, to refer to, to meet at, to reject, to identify with and to live in which will enable a deeper understanding of the multi layered use of space.

Interactive Walking

It is inherent to the twofold profile of the architect/student with an interest in heritage to simultaneously look to 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 heritage, 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 wo/man in her/his living

environment) and architecture (thinking and shaping the future). We investigate how the act of moving 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 a design proposal for the former brick manufacturing site, which by extension will be a generator for the Rupel region, 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 church, the hamlet and the wider environment intensively on location during the research week in SEM3.

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.

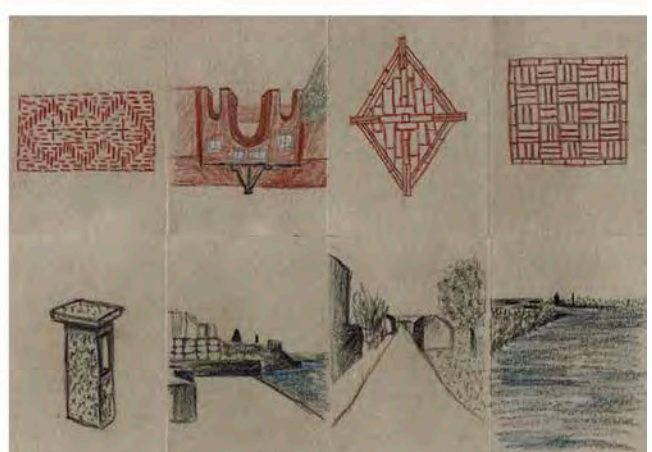
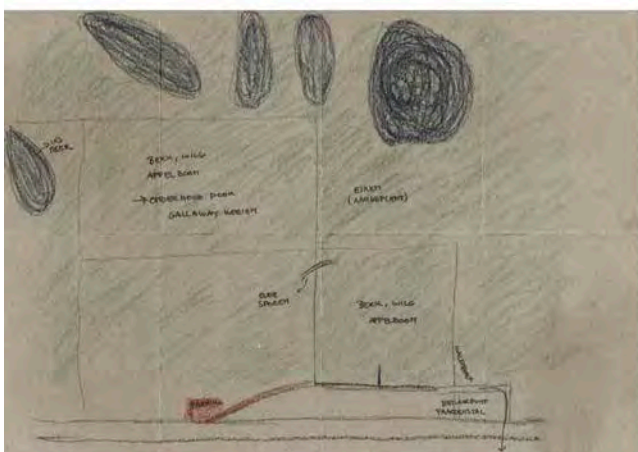
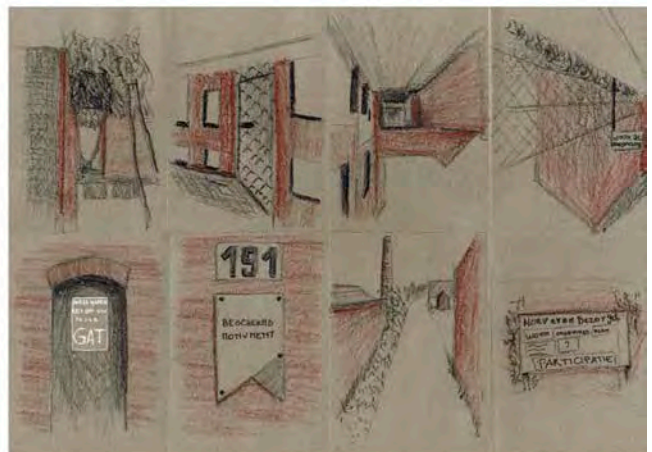
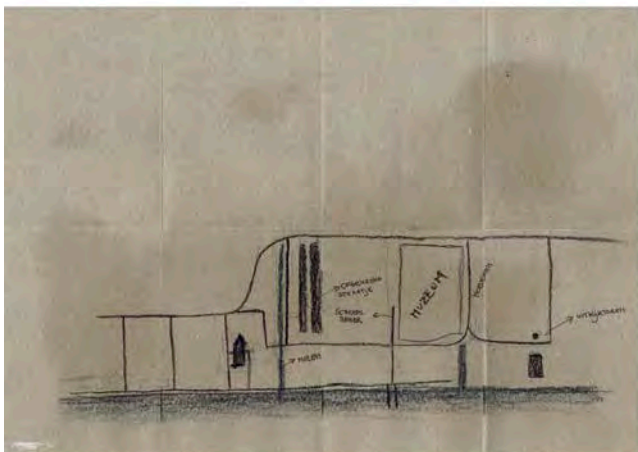
The small booklets will serve as a personal lens for each student through which he/she views and experiences the site and the way he/she interacts with the residents. This will create a specific angle that, as an important player, will help create tension between existing and new data, and to identify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

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.)

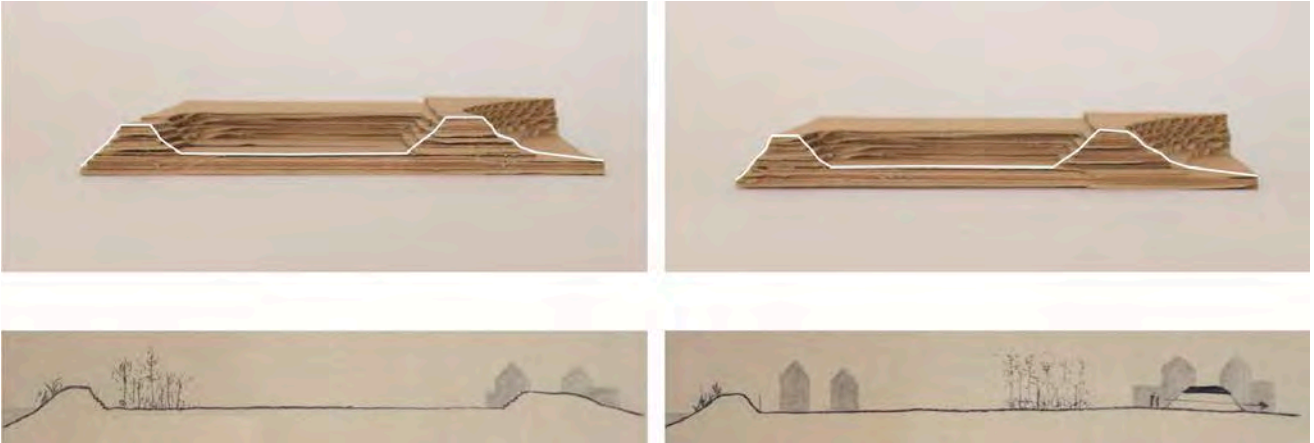
In a third step (**Step 3: Cartes Parlantes**) students are asked to combine their experiences with existing expert data such as official data, archives, existing topographical, geological and road maps or historical maps. These official maps and data are rearranged as a series of alternative maps reimagining 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.

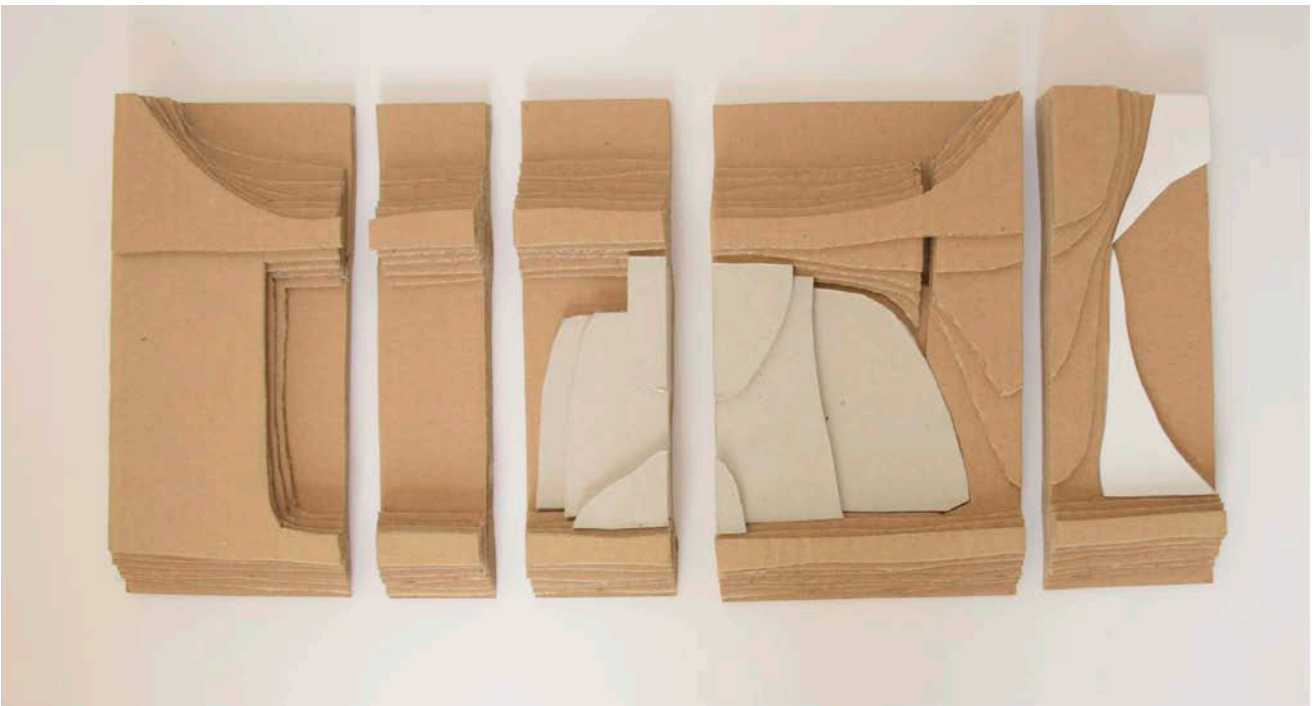
The conceptual choices that each student makes in her/his design will visualize the special stratification of the neighbourhood and environment and enable its communication to third parties. Special attention will be given to large sections linking the site to the larger context.



Exploration of the cultural landscape of Hellegat in Interactive Journeys – Elise Pouleyn – Academic year 2020-2021 – MARG42



Exploration of the cultural landscape of Hellegat in Spatial Narratives – Elise Pouleyn – Academic year 2020-2021 – MARG42



Exploration of the cultural landscape of Hellegat in Spatial Narratives – Elise Pouleyn – Academic year 2020-2021 – MARG42

REFERENCES

- Alfrey, J., and Putnam, T. (1992) *The industrial heritage: managing resources and uses*. London: Routledge.
- Altman, I., and Low, S. (1992) *Place attachment: A conceptual inquiry*. New York: Plenum Press
- Baines, C. (2012) *The Wild Side of Town in Urban Wildscapes* by Anna Jorgensen and Richard Keenan. Routledge, London.
- Boym Svetlana, 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books: p.24
- Brilliant, R., and Kinney, D. (2016). *Reuse Value: Spolia and appropriation in art and architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen Anthony, 1985. *The symbolic construction of community*. London: Routledge: pp. 20-98.
- de Klerk Eva, 2017. *Make your city. De Stad Als Casco – NDSM Shipyard, Amsterdam/The City as a Shell – NDSM Shipyard, Amsterdam*.
- Delagua, V. (2020). *Recycling warehouses: 25 adaptive reuse projects*. Op: www.archdaily.com (consulted 12 august 2021).
- Diaz, P. (2000) *Definitions of community*.
<http://uregina.ca/~sauchyn/socialcohesion/definitions%20of%20community.htm> last consulted 2019.11.04
- Drury, P. (2002) *The historic and cultural dimensions of landscape*. Belgium: Bietlot-Gilly
- Fairclough, G. and Rippon, S. (2002) *Europe's Cultural Landscape: Archaeologists and the Management of Change*. Belgium: EuropaeArchaeologiaeConsilium
- Fouseki, K., Guttormsen, T. S. and Swensen, G. (eds) (2020) *Heritage and Sustainable Urban Transformations. Deep Cities*. Oxon and New York: Routeledge
- Gantois, G. (2019) *Tracing the deep significance of built heritage through encounters with undisclosed protagonists*. PhD, supervisor prof. Yves Schoonjans, co-supervisor prof. Krista De Jonge, KU Leuven
- Gantois, G. (2021) *Built Heritage as Imagines Agentes*. In *Collabra: Psychology* research nexus on The Psychology of Senescent Environments - Environmental Psychology and the Historic Environments
<https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.21194>
- "Geopark Schelde Delta - Aspiring Unseco Global Geopark". Climate Living Lab Schelde Delta i.o., 17 mei 2020, www.schelledelta.eu.
- Hancock, M.D. (1971) *The United States, Europe, and post-industrial society*. *Comparative Politics*, 4 (1), 133-146
- Haapala, P. (2003) *The Rise and Fall of Industrial Society – Perceptions of Urban Reality*, in Niemi, M. and Vuolanto, V. (2003) *Reclaiming the city: innovation, culture, experience*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 72 – 82.
- Hartog, F. (2015) *Regimes of Historicity*. New York: Columbia: pp. 215-216.
<https://omgeving.vlaanderen.be/voorbeeldprojecten-ruimtelijk-rendement>
<http://shrinkingcities.com/>
- Hudson, K. (2015) *Industrial Archaeology*. Routledge.London.
- Jackson, J. (1984) *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. New haven: Yale University.
- Jorgensen, A. and Keenan, R. (2012) *Urban Wildscapes*. Routledge. London.
- Malaud, D. (2020). 'From modern utopia to the 'deep city': heritage as history, collective memory and embodied energy' in Kalliopi Fouseki, Torgrim Sneve Guttormsen and Grete Swensen (eds), *Heritage and Sustainable Urban Transformations. Deep Cities*. Oxon and New York: Routeledge: pp. 16-35

Malm, A.(2018) *The progress of this storm: Nature and society in a warming world*. London: Verso

Manzo, L. C., and Wright, P. D. (ed.). (2014) *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*. London: Routledge.

Solnit, R. (2005) *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. New York: Pinquin Books: pp. 4-10.

Viganò, P. (2012) Elements for a theory of the city as renewable resource. In: L. Fabian, E. Gianotti and P. Viganò, eds. *Recycling city, Lifecycles, Embodied Energy, Inclusion*. Venice: Giavedoni, 12-23.

Waterton Emma & Smith Laurajane, 2010. The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage. in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 16, no.1-2: pp. 4-15.

Ecomuseum en Archief van de Boomse Baksteen: EMABB, online via http://www.emabb.be/Nl/nl_SteenbRup.htm

KEYWORDS

Vicinity, Social sustainability, Interactive, Collective Space, Local Identity, Appropriation, Social Meshwork, Community, Community Based Approaches, Palimpsest, Resilient Environments, Cultural Landscape, Heritage Zoning.

STUDY MATERIAL

Location-specific information will be provided after the research week. All the already collected studymaterial will be provided to the students such as the double volume 'The Cuesta of the Rupel Region – New Challenges for its Cultural Heritage' which was created together with masterstudents of the academic year 2014-2015, the Vision note 'Ik Zie Ik Zie Wat Jij Niet Ziet, written by G. Gantois in 2018 and the first publication of the ADO Restoring Broken Journeys as a result of the investigations within the masterstudio of the Academic Year 2020-2021-Tree is Leaf and Leaf is Tree – House is City and City is House. After the research week, the reader is handed over and further built up together with the students.

EVALUATION METHOD

See guidelines

EVALUATION CRITERIA

See guidelines

LEARNING OUTCOMES

See guidelines

INDICATORS OF BEHAVIOUR

See guidelines

OUTPUT

See guidelines

- Reflection paper
- Design proposal presented with plans, sections, 3D images, models etc.

EXCURSIONS AND WORK ON LOCATION

Excursions related to the project:

Location		Curriculum related (C) or Optional (O)
NOEVEREN	RESEARCHWEEK AND ON REGULAR BASE	C

Work on location for this project:

Location	
NOEVEREN	

ADDENDI

ADDENDUM 1 – On the Academic Design Office – Restoring Broken Journeys³

Title & Theme description

This newly created ADO is inspired by a great fascination with built heritage, for its tangible beauty, the craftsmanship it holds, and for the meaning generating force of it. This ADO focuses on the largely, underestimated present societal role for society of heritage because it gives rise to cultural and social identity for different communities⁴.

The central theme of '**Restoring Broken Journeys**' has to be understood as the re-establishment of a previous (social) right, practice, or situation, which was distorted while looking at the future as 'Journeys' pre-suppose a process of change and development. The ADO will look at heritage in a different way beyond the pure restoration of a historical structure but will investigate on how journeys, narratives and lives are closely entangled within a lived environment which has an indivisible link with built community heritage⁵. The need for stories is entwined with people's need to be part of some closely connected community actively expressed in their daily activities and spatial environment. This creates a universal sense of belonging. Within academia, but also within architectural practice there is still a lack of fully understanding this complex interaction between the societal aspect of communities, heritage and architecture, urbanism and landscapes.

This ADO, with a focus on **community heritage** with additional environmental and social relevance, investigates on how architects and architectural students can arrive at a deep reading of heritage places, exceeding the historical material evidence. The approach starts from the idea that a shift is needed from a solely static approach to an engaged active processual and context related approach, with an anthropological perspective whereby the deep significance of built (community) heritage can be traced and envisioned through encounters with undisclosed protagonists, those actors whose voices are silenced for different reasons. The aim is to come to more socially sustainable projects and a (re-) signification of built heritage and imagined future. In other words, with a more dynamic and future oriented interaction with heritage through design driven research applied from the very start of the investigations a new meaning of place will be enacted, created, shaped and negotiated. This will happen by engaging the multiplicity of types of its actual significance towards critically positioning this in a broader, future-oriented social and societal debate.⁶ "The discourse about legacy shall therefore rather be about which changes it can generate rather than merely seeing legacy as the subject of change" (mission statement *Legacy*, Gantois, 2019).

The used method

Each assignment will start with a thorough survey on location based on the methodology of **Interactive Walking** whereby a close interaction with local actors will be stimulated as they often have deep knowledge about the place. This method was developed and endorsed in the framework of my PhD linked to my private practice (see the cases of the Rupel region and the Brabantse Kouters⁷).

³ See also **Pamflet Expo**, Campus Sint-Lucas Brussel/Gent/Arenberg, 19.04 – 28.05.2017 Exhibition 100 teachers, title of my contribution: **Restoring Broken Journeys** in reference to M. Jackson, 2002, and ICOMOS president Araoz, 2011.

⁴ Community has to be understood the way Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith state (2010: 4-15) it in *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*: 'Communities thus become social creations and experiences that are continuously in motion, rather than fixed entities and descriptions, in flux and constant motion, unstable and uncertain.'

⁵ Jackson, 2002: pp 14-53

⁶ Can the investigation on the triggering position of heritage and its deep actual significance add to the actual discourse on what François Hartog (2017: 204) calls a crisis of time, described as a 'gap' between past and future. What can the interaction of people with built heritage add to this discourse?

⁷ It was found that more and more of the collectively-used land had been given up as this land is often situated on privately-owned land. Thus, less land is as

As was the case with the studio assignments of the last five academic years, the exploration will be done through the **examination of real-life cases**. Each of the students' assignments will focus on subjects offering an interesting, unusual or particularly revealing set of circumstances. They will concentrate on different issues and their impact on heritage sites and local communities.

The chosen case will allow the ADO to work on a multiplicity of subcases whereby the emphasis is placed on the one hand on relationships between the single heritage structure, its surroundings and its users (human and non-human) and on the other hand on the relation between the different heritage structures and the wider spatial, cultural, ecological and social context in which they are located.

The case will offer the students the possibility to explore their own path in a diversity of subtopics in function of thought-provoking design of buildings and/or strategies. The advantage of working within the framework of an ADO is that each assignment will be built further on the insights that have been developed the year(s) before. This enables the creation of a framework that allows the cumulative result.

The choice of the final case will be made in function of urgencies or opportunities.

For this academic year 2021-2022:

Sem 1: Rupel region – Hellegat – Saint-Jozeph church

Title of the assignment: Church ain't over till they stop singing

Sem 4: Rupel region – Noeveren – former plant for brick production

Title of the assignment: Vicinity as nearness in space

ADO – ambitions and intentions

Research-Teaching-Practice

An Academic Design Office is a practice-based multidisciplinary studio, research and educational environment. I believe strongly in the link between practice, research and education with the (gradual) implementation of research lines within teaching activities, assignments and cases in the Design Studios and specific Regular or Elective Courses. The ADO aims at generating knowledge (trans-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary) and expertise in the form of studies, assignments, research (PhD) projects, design based proposals and strategies, diverse academic output and societal discussions.

Building on my experience in the Master of Architecture and the established interaction between my own practice explored topics, research and education, this ADO started by hosting first one preliminary studio within the framework of the Master Dissertation in the academic year 2020-2021 (**Tree is leaf and leaf is tree – house is city and city is house ...Case: Hellegat**) and now extends towards a second studio in the Master of Architecture semester 1 in the academic year 2021-2022 (**Church ain't out 'til they quit singing**) and in semester 4 in the academic year 2021-2022 (**Vicinity as nearness in space**). The goal on the longer term is a multiplication of the opportunities and possibilities for the students by enriching the studios in the different stages of the bachelor and master programs with seminars and electives (for example on the link between heritage – intrinsic qualities detectable through the presence of nature), which underscores the faculty's educational vision based on crossing perspectives (see also timing schedule). Program directors,

accessible as it used to be because the rights of the individual owners are more often upheld than the good of the community. People have a sense that the landscape is their heritage, and they have a right to be there. When a heritage site is disrupted from daily life by eliminating its multiple significances and turning it into an economic product as a large-scale development by privatisation or as a touristic attraction, it can no longer be approached as a physical place in which contents, memories and associations can be located.

As Solnit (2000) states: 'If walking sews together the land', new ownership and fencing tears apart (163). Trespassing is no longer possible. As a consequence, when daily journeys are distorted, lives and stories are as well, which finally creates those feelings of estrangement that arise so often when new plans for development emerge that were not built together with the residents and cut into these collectively experienced spaces. 'It is a political statement to claim this trespassing' (Solnit, 2000:163). The same holds true for claiming the right-to-heritage.

other engagement coordinators and studio teachers within the Faculty of Architecture will be addressed in order to explore the possibilities to embed the developed methodologies in their own studio assignments.

Design is investigated as a possibility, as a solution and as an imagination. This requires a multidisciplinary team and an interdisciplinary approach, depending on the site or theme. In this way students become acquainted with the value of the different expertises and, most importantly, their own value in teamwork. A close collaboration will be sought with other parties with the objective to exchange knowledge about the used methodologies and content in midterm jury's and collaborative seminars to later strive towards a more intense collaboration.

Starting with the Master of Architecture, it can be extended towards Interior Architecture. The Master (SEM4) is open to students of IA. In the post-master of Master in Conservation of Monuments and Sites interesting sites are thoroughly studied by multidisciplinary teams. Considering that I am teaching at the RLICC in the MCMS, these studies can form a valuable basis for the master students of Interior Architecture and Architecture (or vice versa). The endeavor will be to closely collaborate and exchange knowledge, in the future also with the Master after Master Human Settlements.

Characteristics in relation to education

The ADO as 'internal practice' with many external links

My architectural practice includes the collaboration with different practices of engineering, interior architecture, art, urbanism and spatial planning and art history and archaeology. The ADO can be seen as an '**internal practice**' or internship on the border between an advanced educational context, the academic world and the world of practice where students learn to apply an academic attitude and methodology in a design driven research based, practice-oriented and pedagogical driven office with concrete projects initiated by the staff of the faculty.

The design assignments start from a (large-scale) site and a predefined theme where students are confronted with the reality of stakeholders and communities. However, this does not mean that the students "work" in function of a client or the ADO- design studio team. Room is left to interpret, as well as to test if there can be an actual correlation between research and design strategies that enables stronger arguments for decision-making for design scenarios and visions. It is and remains an educational project with its own finality aimed at developing the reflection and skills of the student.

The student's future self

To start the investigations the ADO will initiate the three-step methodology of *Interactive Walking* for which I wrote a protocol. **In this way the students learn and achieve a scientific methodology and attitude 'by doing'**. This requires students with no working experience with heritage landscapes and sites to have great intellectual openness and curiosity; demanding flexibility in adapting to their findings and existing knowledge. With this design based survey method, students *read* the site in a different and very detailed way unveiling possibilities.

While walking and sketching in *Interactive Journeys* (Step I), the students develop an individual field of interest or lens through which they view the cultural landscape.

In addition to walking and drawing, model making is an essential tool of inquiry and representation of the experienced space in so called *Spatial Narratives* (Step II). After having visited the site for a considerable period of time, the students independently formulate some basic individual design driven research questions

about the region or site and about the interactions that residents have with built heritage within the cultural landscape. While exploring these relationships, students transcend their own experiences by combining them with the experiences of others (local communities). This act is based on their individual focus, which adds to the developing of the *student's future self*.

When the students delve deeper into their specific field of interest by combining existing expert knowledge and their new findings in *Cartes Parlantes* (Step III), these tools already hold the beginnings of their project proposals. This makes *Interactive Walking* a very effective research-by-design methodology.

(From a purely methodological point of view, it would certainly be worthwhile to test the method of *Interactive Walking* on a restricted scale with students of the first year of the Bachelor of Architecture to sharpen their observational skills and improve their drawing capacities. With the exercise they could be introduced in tactile model making and drawing with different tools and materials. It would make them aware of the influence of their own experience in the way they observe and experience an existing site (see suggestion for an introductory course – timing schedule – academic year 2021-2022 to be postponed to next academic year).

Contribution to Society

Societal relevance

The ADO has the ambition to achieve multiple competences for a multi-scale, social, cultural and ecological inter-relational approach while addressing different spatial interventions, participation of local communities, urban narratives and implications on policy. Due to the focus on relational issues as crucial factors in the production of inherited space, the ADO aims at bringing to **light the deeper significance** of a heritage place or landscape as part of a lively process with people's everyday human practices and their interactions with these heritage places and landscapes. Rather than providing immediate solutions, the ADO, aims at **opening up future possibilities**. This evokes an image **of the student/architect as a mediating storyteller**. In graphically narrating new stories about the place, different scenarios can be highlighted and **alternatives can be put forward**. This is important in the framework of feasibility studies, management plans and (re-) development plans in which local people are more explicitly represented.

Contribution to society

The proposed strategies provide the people involved with a profound documented instrument that not only shows the eventual conflicts of existing planning proposals but also alternatives and grounded arguments, so they can communicate and negotiate with decision makers about what is important to them. **The tactile drawings and models help them to formulate what they could not state in words before**. They feel involved as results are presented **in exhibitions and debates** and reformulated and reworked after their feedback is implemented.

Moreover, policy makers have **a well-founded basis** for outlining detailed policy guidelines for example for management plans or living environment plans.

In terms of contribution to society, I intent to create a framework for **providing consultancy services** on my expertise in dealing with community heritage. To achieve this, I have already been doing preliminary work and networking both in relation to my professional experience (since 1994), my doctoral research (since 2014) and my teaching activities (since 1991). The starting point is the hypothesis that many redevelopment projects related to heritage find a gap when touching upon participatory practices. The challenge is the understanding of their implications from multidimensional perspectives generating outcomes both at the level of a specific

heritage site and the (urban) landscape level. They have to do with **complex spatial configurations**, appropriation processes and sustainability discourses. New projects generally propose to mitigate or 'upgrade' existing situations with the promise of economic welfare but they run the risk of neglecting existing qualities that are not easy to detect.

With a multidimensional approach that includes theoretical positioning and practical enquiries in real-life case studies the aim is to disentangle the complexity of the cases in terms of the research focus (detecting the deep actual significance of community heritage through encounters with undisclosed protagonists) in order to generate insights on the way the distortion (Broken Journeys) impacts in spatial terms, and ultimately to influence the manner in which heritage spaces are approached, managed and intervened in projects of adaptive reuse. Possible service activities will be supported with internal representation through membership in councils and administrative bodies.

Research Lines

The ADO **Restoring Broken Journeys** can be situated in the research section *Urban Design, Urbanism, Landscape and Planning* (UULP) and will have a direct link with the research group *Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local Identities*.

In the ADO, I intend to further develop and test some of the direct results on the processes and outcomes of my own research and the multiplicity of research questions that arose from these outcomes while opening up a future research line: **Architecture and Development of Community Heritage – Strategies for future spaces**. The research will be structured by subtopics and will be realized by a case-based methodology. This constitutes a strong starting point.

The proposal for future research starts from approaching one case as a multiplicity of cases in which the research focus articulates in significant ways. These subcases will be implemented in ADO contexts in condensed 1 to 2-semester-timeframes. The different subcases are to be undertaken in sequences or interrelated manners but will always generate substantial output per subcase, aiming at building up a research line both in short, intermediate and long-term. The subcases will be undertaken both within and beyond the KU Leuven mandate and the scope of the subcases will constitute a crucial component for testing the enquires in different situations, addressing the research focus of Community Heritage. In the longer term I want to develop three design driven research sub-lines, which will be closely entangled in the ADO and choose three different viewpoints within the same theme of **Restoring Broken Journeys**:

Line 1: The architect as third-person narrator: A rambling field role

The first line is methodological and is developed from the perspective of the architect-student / researcher. It builds further on my research to identify **research design methodologies** and tools and to explore their possibilities for architectural education and heritage practice with the aim of further uncovering the current, often hidden meanings of heritage attached to a community in order to preserve and manage cultural heritage in a different way. Within the ADO I will test and evaluate both in education and practice if these design methods lead to better and socially better accepted projects.

The starting survey method of *Interactive Walking* is a method of routing, observation and narratives, which is characterised by an active, processual and context-related approach with an anthropological perspective. Knowledge is derived from the practice of everyday life and is generated through immersion in the natural

setting of diverse, real-life heritage cases in Flanders or beyond.

Line 2: Imagines Agentes, community heritage as mnemonic device.

This second line is developed from an **anthropological-spatial** perspective. It departs from the traditional focus on the built or un-built dichotomy, and aims at delving deeper into the topic of the interrelationship between local inhabitants (human and non-human) and the heritage site. It will focus on a better understanding of the different forms of societal significance of heritage and its role in society, further enlarged to my design driven research of constructing a memory overview by chronologically and graphically registering and interpreting places and heritage structures by imprinting images of people and accessories on these places. The idea of **Memory of place** (related to the everyday experience with community heritage) – **Places of Memory** (related to monumental heritage on which traditional heritage studies mostly focus) and the role of heritage will be translated towards new set up PhD research 2021-2025 on the mechanisms of how heritage plays a fundamental role in the appropriation of places in the minds of people (Imagines Agentes, Memory Palace) which will be related to the global problem of refugees and displaced people.

This is linked to the entwinement of narratives, journeys and lives and the role of community heritage within this entanglement. One of the important research questions that will be asked is: What happens when heritage places are disrupted from daily life or vice versa by war or natural disasters, or simply by urbanization or/and commercialization of these places?

Line 3: Community Heritage and social sustainability

The third line will start from the heritage structure and landscape itself and has historical research at its bases. This historical research will serve to trace an arch from the present situation back to the past to understand that present. This will be enlarged with the study of the multiplicity of actual layers of meaning attached to the heritage place and its intrinsic qualities related to its physical situation with the aim to position community heritage in a broader, future-oriented social and societal debate. (f.e. the idea of **Social Meshwork versus Network of Hotspots** will be explored within a future PhD research with the cases of Premonstratenser rectories. (of which the case of the rectory of Meuzegem is one of the 150 I already inventorised in the social meshwork of villages and hamlets, and the physical and mental structure of a landscape.)

ADO output

Output

The ADO will offer the time to observe and re-question the research and design questions during a longer period and to build up the necessary networks. The studio results of possible spatial interventions and strategies will be published annually and exhibited on location.

ADDENDUM 2 – On Contested Legacy

Striving for a synergy between academic and practice-centred knowledge and experience, the design studio task is framed and situated within the current debate about architecture, cultural heritage and sustainability.

This **Academic Design Office** inscribes itself within the engagement **Contested Legacy**. The ADO departs from the traditional focus on the built or unbuilt dichotomy when dealing with heritage. The interaction with cultural heritage, which is material – tangible and intangible – that signifies a culture's history or legacy, with its activating, generating and inspiring appearance, addresses the past, present and future simultaneously. It emphasises both stability and dynamics, enclosure and openness. In that sense, cultural heritage can be considered as a force of change to welfare and societal sustainability instead of having a purely material approach where heritage is only subject of change.

Heritage is always contested in one way or another and it always conveys a negative sentiment to some extent. The most comprehensible meaning is in the sense that some buildings, monuments and places sometimes bring us face to face with parts of our history that are painful, or shameful. Over time, they became symbols of injustice for many people. But some of our buildings, monuments and places are contested because they block new development plans as is the case in Hellegat, or because they evoke a 'wrong' connotation or because they belong to the 'wrong' architectural period or represent ideas which are no longer accepted or simply because they do not longer meet current standards.

We can choose to remove those sites, which have become contested. However, by learning how to observe and experience existing (infra-) structures and cultural landscapes, we might come to thought-provoking insights and long-lasting and powerful reinterpretation, adding new layers of meaning, leading to substantial, (socially) sustainable interventions and dialogues. History can be an element of sublimation as an active partner that leads to wondering, excitement and expertise and induces a process of becoming conscious of what a social, cultural and ecological context really is. It goes without saying that this studio puts the practice of reuse and recycling forward as the central point of sustainable (urban) design, which relates to the immense 'energetic heritage' out of which our built world consists (Malaud, 2020)

Heritage is therefore a place of radical possibility.

The research and design approaches in this studio linked to Legacy are strongly design-driven. Design is investigated as a possibility, as a solution and as an imagination. The approaches are active, context-related with an anthropological (socio-spatial) and (landscape-) ecological focus. They touch a multiplicity of themes and use methods of different domains such as architecture, landscape, urban and history studies and social sciences. With an agonistic approach, the studio doesn't aim so much to come to a status quo but it is on the contrary inhabited by pluralism marked by an openness towards different critical voices. In this way students become acquainted with the value of different areas of expertise and, most importantly, their own value in expressing their own vision within the studio.

Prof. dr. Gantois
2021_08_15