

The Ambition of the Territory
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Curator Statement ⁵
AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT

Photography ¹⁸
Dieuwertje Komen

'The Ambition of the Territory' outlines an alternative conceptual framework to imagine the future of Europe. Our current prosperity and welfare states are founded on the principle of consumption—the consumption of land, raw materials, and goods. This makes the territory the setting for growing conflicts between economic dynamics, demographic developments, and ecological challenges. Our future prosperity will not be based on this limited principle. AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT is therefore shifting the focus from consumption to the organisational potential of the urbanised territory of Europe, exploring how the various uses of space can be geared to each other in a spatial metabolism. In this way the future of Europe will be imagined on the basis of its *shared* territory. On the basis of its *common ground*. On the basis of the ambition of its territory.

Globalisation has entered its next phase, with a redistribution of economic dynamics, wealth, and power between the traditional 'West' and the emerging markets. This fundamental shift means that many Western and European countries find themselves forced to slowly wind down their welfare state systems. Or even to give them up. At times like this there is often a return to successful formulae seen in times of enormous growth in prosperity. This is what is happening now: to combat the crisis, budgetary rigidity is combined with deregulation. The intention here is to give the economy and the creation of wealth all the room they need (also in a literal sense) to pick up again. But the times—and our collective knowledge—have changed. The ecological crisis and the finite nature of manufactured and raw materials can no longer be ignored when thinking about and planning future developments. We can no longer revert to the uncoordinated consumption and exploitation of the territory to keep our prosperity up to standard. We are more aware of the consequences and cost of this principle than we were half a century ago. And we can no longer burden future generations with the problem. So we have to look for a different principle for our development. So as not to completely abandon the ideal of the welfare state—meaning redistribution—we must reinvent it. We have to replace consumption with a principle that brings society and the various uses of space and the territory into line with one another. A development that links the elements together in a productive way, as if it were a spatial metabolism. From consumption to production.

In 'The Ambition of the Territory', AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT sketches the outlines of this developmental principle and points out the new issues on which we have to work collectively. The collective focuses on drawing and redrawing the territory and the environment we live in. A think-tank, a cartographer, an urban planning firm, a firm of architects, a group of architecture students, and an artist recalibrate their work in relation to these new issues. By way of drawings and design studies they create a climate and a context in which the questions concerning contemporary society can be raised in a new way. And from which tailored responses that come closer to the reality of the shared territory might be generated. The presentations in Venice and Antwerp do not represent the end of a process, but instead formulate a new outlook and

starting point from which to continue developing this alternative principle for development and organisation. AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT is thereby launching a process of thinking and testing. An atelier.



Ante Timmermans

FLANDERS AS A EUROPEAN LABORATORY

Flanders, the northern part of Belgium, is the ideal laboratory in which to test this new developmental principle. The extreme urbanisation and consumption of its territory means that Flanders today has a horizontal mix of small-scale functions and programmes. As a result, the number of spatial conflicts is constantly increasing. Almost every day the newspapers report on the tensions between nature preservation and agricultural activity, between urbanisation and the retention of open space, about the affordability of housing, about our position at the top of the traffic congestion tables, about the increasing risk of flooding, etcetera. So a new principle of development is no longer a question of good intentions, but one of pure necessity. We have reached the limit.



Studio Joost Grootens

The construction of a new conceptual framework for the development of Flanders can thus be a model for the future development of other parts of the European continent with a similar territorial development: the Veneto region of Italy, the urban valleys in Switzerland, the English Midlands, the Katowice region in Poland, and Germany's northern Rhineland. In these regions the territory has become urbanised, but not as a result of a growing concentration of urban functions and programmes in urban centres or metropolitan regions. The finely-meshed juxtaposition of functions also occurs between the traditional urban centres. This gives rise to a landscape of functions and activities located alongside one another with no mutual relations. This juxtaposition of programmes is not a very sustainable way of using space. It puts serious pressure on infrastructure, as people travel long distances from home to work, school, recreation, and commercial spaces every day. And it makes great demands on natural structures, biodiversity, and open spaces.

The need for a new approach is made even more acute by the economic and demographic developments that this part of Europe will undergo. As one of the economic powerhouses of the European continent, Flanders attracts a lot of new people. Flanders can expect one million new inhabitants by 2050. All these citizens will be looking for a place to live, an activity that will give them a livelihood, and so on. For Flanders, this outlook provides an opportunity—if not an absolute necessity—to break away from the present principle of urbanisation and to work on an alternative guiding model. And on another vision. The principle of the compact city and of the separation of urban areas (large and small) from the open space is not suited to the actual reality and dynamics of the territory of Flanders. Employing a vision based on the compact city to achieve the transformation of the territory means trying to cluster people and programmes in a limited space. In this way the spatial footprint can, in theory, be reduced and the concentration of these same people and activities can bring about a developmental dynamic and urban public space. But this pursuit of a rational agglomeration of functions does not correspond to the combination of functions that emerges. The fact that it cannot take hold of it and let it evolve into a more sustainable organisation of space generates more frustration than spatial dynamics.

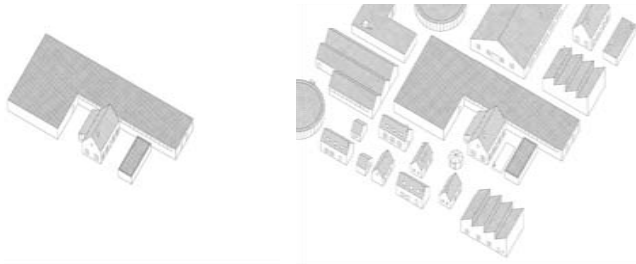
Flanders, and the other parts of Europe characterised by this sort of urbanisation, did not arise out of and cannot be controlled on the basis of centralised organisation. Neither administratively, nor spatially, nor economically. Just as its spatial organisation is not centralised, the Flemish economy is not a planned economy. The foundations of economic activity and prosperity in this part of Europe are private initiative and entrepreneurship. So for these European territories we have to look for a suitable vision and control mechanism that does not confront the reality with an inappropriate planning ideal, but that uses and guides the characteristic dynamic so it can become a different form of organisation—spatial and social.

HORIZONTAL RE-COMPOSITION

It is precisely these private developments and dynamics that lie at the heart of the work presented by architects De Vylder Vinck Taillieu (aDVVT). By lifting the ESTEE enterprise—an ensemble comprising an office building, industrial shed, and house with garden alongside a motorway—out of the territory and presenting it as a model, they undermine the traditional dogmas of architecture and planning. By placing ESTEE next to a traditional square farmstead—by calling the composition a ‘contemporary square farmstead’—aDVVT identifies an unexplored potential. The question this raises is whether the combination of functions can, like a hybrid, be developed from the logic of consumption into a principle of sustainable organisation. At present, it is the objects (homes, factory sheds, amenities, etc.) in the horizontal patchwork of urban functions that are the subject of good-quality contemporary architecture. In this contemporary square farmstead the focus is no longer on the architectural quality and good taste of the objects themselves. In this instance, everything revolves around the strength of the

combination of functions and the linkage of programmes to each other.

This convergence of functions is not planned, but arises out of the entrepreneur's desires and the risks he is able and willing to take. The destiny of the enterprise has taken physical form in the course of time by means of the transformation and composition of buildings. From a traditional farmstead to this contemporary,



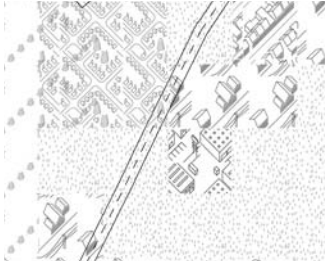
architecten De Vylder Vinck Taillieu

square farmstead. Does the spatial organisation of life and work in a single place provide a principle by which to revise the structure of an entirely horizontally urbanised area? Nowadays, any logical, rational planning opts for the organised consumption of space for specific programmes and functions: areas for housing expansion, industrial areas, natural areas, etc. Housing and work are seen as mutually exclusive functions. ESTEE is the antithesis of this principle: living and working are each other's starting point, each other's alter ego. ESTEE is a statement about the essence of entrepreneurship and initiative. What would it signify if we imagined the organisation of the territory on the basis of that cornerstone of prosperity so familiar in Flanders—the family business—instead of planning the consumption of the territory by means of zoning principles? Can we transform ESTEE from a solitary island alongside the motorway into a territorial fabric? Into a horizontal sequence of housing, workplaces, and landscape that offers an alternative to the fabric of the compact city?

FROM CONFLICTING INTERESTS TO TERRITORIAL COLLECTIVES

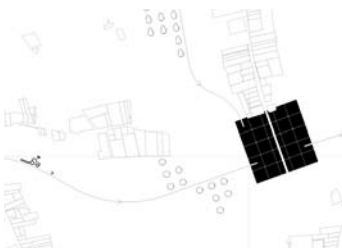
ESTEE is by no means an exception. More like a rule. Functions and programmes situated alongside and intermingled with one another are fundamentally characteristic of Flanders. This is demonstrated by the territorial cartography carried out by Studio Joost Grootens under the title *A Land Never*. Simultaneous use of space and the pressure consequently exerted by various sectors and special-interest groups is typical of areas with this sort of favourable geographical position. Urban developments often originate near rivers and coasts because the land there is fertile. In addition, the mouth of a river on a delta is the perfect place for trade and thus also for establishing a flourishing economy. The wealth and variety of possibilities enables life to thrive there. This advantage attracts a lot of people, who in the course of time create inevitable conflicts over the use of space. A struggle ensues over the use of land. Various sectors claim each other's land and blame each other for the negative effects on the surrounding functions, the climate, or the biodiversity. Or else they wish to take over each other's space. In this situation, planning is a matter of dividing land into units of area per sector and of separating functions so as to reduce the negative

effects. This democratic deadlock leads to an escalating positional conflict between opposing interests and claims on space.



Studio Joost Grootens

But the simultaneous and multiple use of space also contains the seeds of the transformation of the multifunctional territory. This is shown by the strategy that GRAU worked out for the development of southern Limburg (the area around Borgloon). It is an area characterised by farming activity and a dynamic social network stimulated by the seasonal workers employed there. Instead of fixing the boundaries and limits of each of the uses of the space and building a compromise around them, GRAU links together the need for housing, future-oriented farming activity, the increasing pressure exerted by recreational activities, and the question of biodiversity. These various activities and aspects of the territory are linked together at strategically chosen points. The farming activity can be stimulated by translating productivity, innovation, and recreational potential into spatial organisation.



GRAU

In this way, not only is the spatial distribution of activities transformed into a surplus, but a form of organisation is also introduced that gives a place to latent social and cultural diversity without lapsing back into the typical urban strategies of densification. The collective urban potential is materialised by this linkage of interests. It is a strategy that integrates the existing urbanisation, questions of sustainable development, operational efficiency, and socio-cultural transformations into one single form of spatial organisation. Development is not conceived in relation to an external ideal such as the 'pure', pastoral quality of the landscape. Unlike in other parts of Europe, this has never been a characteristic of this region. This landscape has other qualities. GRAU tries to realise this inherent ambition by linking different uses of space. In this way, the latent diversity of social and economic activities is situated and materialised in those places that organise the combination and mutual attunement between complementary uses of space. This gives rise to territorial collectivity.

METABOLISM AS PLANNING PRINCIPLE

The ambitions of the territory are realised to the full when the systems of agriculture, habitation, industry, nature, recreation etc. that lie alongside and superimposed on one another start to cooperate and interact. Rather than simply creating a place for burgeoning collectivity, territorial collectivity in this instance organises itself around the sharing of services and amenities. This collective organisation thus shares the territory and organises its evolution and transformation towards a more sustainable state. If an agricultural activity produces surplus energy and is located alongside a residential community, this may be a reason to bring about greater efficiency by linking the two uses of space together. Residual heat can be used for the surrounding housing so that the two are more closely connected to each other. The exchange of interests means that mutual win-win situations—or productive relationships—determine the organisation of space.

Connecting society to the territory in a single spatial metabolism gives rise to a new logic for (spatial) organisation and planning. The work done by GRAU and Atelier Versailles takes the juxtaposition of landscape functions and urbanisation one step further: the productive combinations between the elements of the territory help define the structure for future urbanisation. And no longer the other way around. For example, GRAU identifies those locations where industrial activity produces surplus heat and energy as the ideal places to set up new, energy-intensive agricultural activity. Or else, on the basis of the essential intensification and increase in scale of glasshouse cultivation, they present a vision of the structure of the residential fabric around the water, heat, and electricity networks. The sharing of energy (passing on superfluous energy), the reuse of water (consumption and reconsumption), or the recovery of heat (emission and reuse) give rise to a guiding principle for siting future programmes and functions in the most suitable locations.

TOWARDS METROPOLITAN AND PRODUCTIVE TERRITORIES

This is precisely what is being explored in the work done on the central part of Flanders between Antwerp and Brussels. This area is subject to the greatest pressure from urbanisation: rising land prices and the increasing demand for recreational landscapes are putting huge pressure on agriculture. In a strategy that GRAU developed in cooperation with the *Boerenbond* (Farmer's Association), the various challenges are linked together. The proposed landscape lobes in the otherwise urbanised territory will function as productive parks that accommodate agrarian and recreational activities. In this way the open space provides essential (life) services to urban society. Instead of opting for a defensive protection of the open space in the face of advancing urbanisation, the strategy goes for protection by development: the organisation and productivity of the unbuilt space gives structure to future urbanisation. The landscape becomes productive in two ways: as a producer of services that enables urban society to survive, and as an organising system for its further development towards a metropolitan territory.

Each of the plans and drawings set out above demonstrate the possibility of letting the components and systems of this horizontal, non-central and multifunctional territory work together and evolve into a territorial fabric. By way of mutual synergy and attunement, what exists now can be transformed into a more sustainable form of organisation. Thus, out of the multifunctional territory we distil a developmental principle and conceptual framework that enables us to break away from the current principle. Rather than arranging the increasing demands on space alongside one another in areas or zones, this principle links the strengths and the problems together in a single spatial metabolism. In this way the territory produces its own spatial organisation out of the available potential. Demographic and economic developments thereby no longer automatically lead to the continued consumption of the territory but rather form the building blocks for a transformation of an unsustainable pattern of urbanisation into a territorial metabolism and collectivity. By starting from the territory's ambitions, we can make the existing diversity and juxtaposition of functions and activities merge together into a territory with a metropolitan quality.

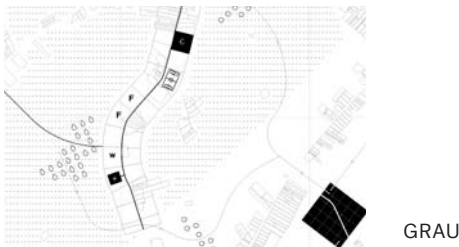


GRAU

To start from the territory's ambitions signifies a radical shift in the mission and range of territorial planning. In recent decades, the main planning focus has been on the organisation of a network around which the service sector and service economy are given room to establish themselves and develop. Transferring the mission of spatial organisation and planning to territorial metabolism also broadens the focus of the planning to include the possible synergies between uses of space, and the different forms of productivity in the urbanised territory. The focus on the spatial development of the knowledge and service economy corresponds with the idea that innovation, and research and development, are Europe's chief economic mission in a changing world. In this view, the Western countries are the brains of the global economy, and manual labour can establish itself where the wage conditions are most advantageous. But at the present time this division between brain and hand is under considerable pressure. We see that countries such as Brazil, China, and India are also emerging as leaders in global innovation. These growth nations have, in a very short time, also developed into knowledge economies of enormous capacity. On the basis of the interaction between their strong knowledge and manufacturing industries, these countries are developing into both the most dynamic and the most innovative urban economies in the world.

These economic shifts in its turn bring about a profound social transformation. A middle class takes shape in these countries too, as does a social debate on

better labour conditions and circumstances, as well as on higher wages. If, over the next few decades, the wage gap closes, the advantage of spreading economic activity worldwide will no longer apply. If we do not change our views and policy, Europe will be left behind, abandoned as the old continent that rejected its manufacturing industry and is no longer the exclusive centre of knowledge and innovation. To remain competitive, Europe will also have to make the manufacturing industry a priority again. At this very moment in the United States both the government and several large companies are already aiming for a return of this manufacturing industry. At present this still goes against the global trend towards delocalisation, but it does open up the necessary prospect of more competitive and varied economic foundations for Europe.



BUILDING A VIABLE (MENTAL) MAP

These transformations in the economy have a serious impact not only on space, but also on society itself: on the inhabitants of this space, on the organisation of society, and on the organisation of our work. This is precisely what Ante Timmermans discusses in his work: the position of man as an individual who—sometimes actively, but definitely sometimes passively too—sees his environment and community in continuous motion as part of these major global transitions. He sees a territory that is dynamic and constantly moving. This shift in the conceptual framework from consumption to production is, in this sense, also a social and cultural transformation. The framework provides for the organisation not only of space, but also of our daily lives together in society. The cooperation between various programmes and activities, and the exchange and sharing of raw materials, energy, and so forth, is more than a form of spatial or energy efficiency. These are transitions that can also introduce changes into the way society is organised. The notion of starting out from



Ante Timmermans

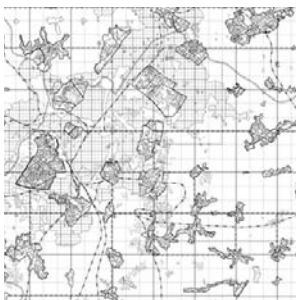
small-scale economic and productive activity instead of from a planned economy thus also has consequences for the individual's spatial experience. It is in the new conceptual framework and developmental principle that the context arises

in which it can transform from consumer to actor in productive and metropolitan territories.

But our image of reality—in both visual form and mental constructions—appears to be lagging behind this territorial reality. We ‘know’ and ‘read’ the territory more by way of traditional notions that are also incapable of recognising the opportunities offered by this territorial urbanisation: take for example the division of the notions of ‘city’ and ‘landscape’. The territory of the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt Delta is more like a soup comprising various programmes and functions, and so in reality there are no longer any clear distinctions. We see, rather, a fine-grained mixture of uses of space that have not yet formed a fabric. In its metabolic cartography, the Studio Joost Grootens graphic design firm developed an instrument for presenting this territorial reality in such a way that the question of synergy arises spontaneously. The cartography departs from the consumption planning principle by refusing to divide the territory into urban patches separated from industrial areas, nature, and agricultural areas. The fine-grained composition of the metropolitan landscape lays the foundations for a new ‘reading’ able to reveal the potential horizontal exchanges and compositions before they actually occur.

GENESIS: A RESILIENT ENTREPRENEURIAL LANDSCAPE

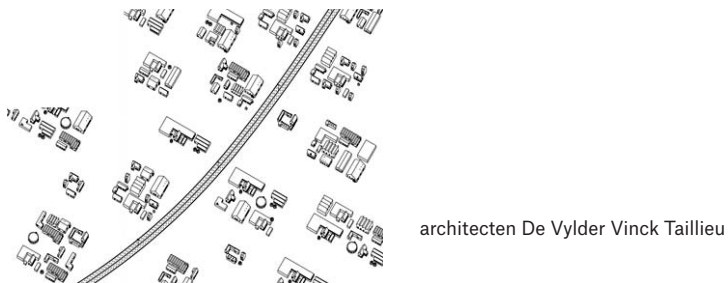
This development into a finely meshed urbanised area is the product of several waves of widespread building. The most extensive wave of urbanisation after the Second World War was the spatial expression of the evolution towards a consumer society. This wave of urbanisation has, over the last half a century, led to a radical intensification of the spread and intermingling of uses of space but is not a break with the history of urban growth in the transnational urban and economic complex of which Flanders is a part, i.e. the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt Delta. The foundations of the widespread construction and urbanisation in this part of Europe are to be found in the Middle Ages. Since then, the principle of social and spatial organisation has not fundamentally changed and has only intensified in waves.



Atelier Versailles

The cartographical analyses and depictions of the Eurometropolis, the transnational area on the borders of France and Belgium between Lille, Kortrijk, and Tournai, which Atelier Versailles developed, demonstrate that we cannot reduce this territory to a series of compact cities which, at a later stage, silted up as a result

of organised and widespread building. In several fields, the underlying basis for urbanisation was originally horizontally organised. The scattered country estates, the spread of building, and a very dense network of infrastructure together form a territorially embedded system with a more or less even distribution of the original settlements and activities. Even at that time private entrepreneurship was a crucial part of our culture. The model that aDVVT designate in their ESTEE project originates there.



Since the Middle Ages the territory has developed out of this smallest scale of enterprise. Every home was situated along an infrastructural thread so as to have access to one of the urban centres. At the rear, these same homes offered access to farming land. Whereas for most of the year farming was the main activity, over the centuries the secondary activities came to occupy an increasingly important place: textile workshops, retail trade, etcetera. The secondary activities slowly moved into the towns and cities and there became a main activity. But the pattern of settlement, with homes linked to the infrastructure at the front and the farming land at the back, has remained unchanged. This pattern also demonstrated a resilience that became essential to survival in times of economic crisis: it was always possible to return to one's own food production any time that trade and the urban economy could no longer provide sufficient income. In other words, the pattern of urbanisation gave material form to this robust, double economic orientation. Unlike European regions where there is only a single dominant economic activity, such as the production of grain in the French region of Picardy, Flanders is a dual or multiform economy territorially embedded in the structure of its territory and its urbanisation.

FLANDERS IN A DELTA OF METROPOLITAN TERRITORIES

This part of Europe did not develop out of one single urban site, but rather as a network of complementary trading centres. This was not just one centre that grouped together all the functions and developed a central function with regard to its hinterland—as was the case in Paris and London—and each of the urban centres represented a particular economic activity and at the same time was dependent on the other cities for other activities and products. Because the farmland enabled the high-quality production of fibres (flax, etc.), and because there was a direct connection with the port of Antwerp via the waterways, textile production was concentrated in the region between Lille and Ghent. In other

words it is a combination of territorial factors (quality of the soil, geography, hydrography, etc.) and its position in the network that led the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt Delta to develop as a non-centralised system of complementary cities. One step down from this network of centres and urban hubs lies a patchwork of territories with a specific structure and productivity. This interaction between the specific production focus of these various territories and the ever-stronger network and urban system is what makes this delta one of the most prosperous regions in Europe.

However, for reasons of legal certainty and regional balance, today we plan and administer the Flemish territory with a single principle, from the West to the East. The same planning principles apply everywhere within the political boundaries of the Flemish region. Immediately below this level it is the local authorities and towns and cities that have the powers to supervise and direct development. Neither level of administration and planning is adapted to the urban structure and territorial differences. If we simply administer and develop Flanders as a homogeneous area and leave the vision only to the individual local authorities, we are not using the territory as a lever to direct development and tackle the major problems. The administrative boundaries we employ are in constant conflict with the reality of the territorial system. Both history and the present dynamics make it clear that Flanders has never had and still does not have a singular identity. We can therefore no longer allow ourselves to be guided by a principle of 'one planning fits all'.

The regional differences in agricultural activity, in the concentration of particular industries, and in territorial and urban structures and organisation, confirm the view that the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt Delta is a collection of complementary urbanised territories. For this reason, Architecture Workroom puts forward this way of viewing the territory as a productive basis and spatial framework for a planning, administration, and development that moves toward a sustainable and prosperous society. These territories are the integration frameworks in which spatial challenges, developments, and opportunities can be linked together in a spatial metabolism. So the future of Flanders does not have to be imagined on the basis of one single principle for its regional territory, but can be developed out of the Delta's collection of mutually complementary territories.

Some of these territories are within the boundaries of Flanders, but others transcend borders and move into the surrounding regions and countries. The fact that many of the strong development poles are situated just outside of the Flemish region underlines the importance of these transnational metropolitan territories: the metropolitan area around Lille in the west; the delta and port activity in Rotterdam; Brussels as European capital that forms an island in the Flemish region; and Aachen, Maastricht, and Liège to the east. More than a question of constructive international collaboration, these regions are key to maintaining and strengthening Flanders' economic activities and welfare. It is hence through governance and planning founded on this collection of metropolitan territories that Flanders will make use of its chief levers.

TOWARD A TERRITORIAL VISION OF EUROPEAN PROSPERITY

When we chart the organisation and productivity of European landscapes, it is clear that the Rhine-Maas-Scheldt Delta is an area with a specific, non-central urban and territorial system. If we conceive and plan the future of this system on the basis of the territory's ambition, the area can grow into an alternative form of metropolitan development. It is this metropolitan potential that is not recognised either in Flanders or in Europe. The metropolitan and territorial system is a reality that occurs all over Europe but is not understood or sufficiently used. It is these areas where the present and future prosperity is produced disproportionately and where, at the same time, the greatest socio-economic, demographic, and



Ante Timmermans

ecological challenges converge so abundantly clearly. It is these urban regions that offer concentrations of opportunities and conflicts. It is only when we are able to relate them to each other within properly functioning 'metropolitan machines' that we shall be able to build a balanced European territory for the future.

At present, the organisational structure of Europe too often harks back to that of its former collection of nation states. In the present crisis, the continent tries with all its might to protect the prosperity of the various countries within their national boundaries, borders that, these days, have no more than a cultural and organisational significance. Their point of departure is the maintenance of the developmental principle and the dynamic that has made part of Europe grow into a set of welfare states since the Second World War. A dynamic based on the consumption of space, services, and goods. But the reality of the territory has already overtaken this administrative division.

This mechanism has now reached its limits. The consumer's spending power is maintained artificially using government support so as to keep the wheels turning. Despite the redistribution of wealth, social differences are growing, and there is no more space to exploit. The years of explosive growth have made prosperity a fact—something that exists, and which has to be properly shared. But now that this growth is slowing down and stabilising, the principles of the welfare state turn out to be a millstone around our necks and impossible to keep up. It seems as if we have been rocked to sleep by the living standards previous generations built up collectively. As if we have come to believe that this is an ultimate state, rooted in the stable organisation of society with its democratic structures.

But prosperity does not arise out of abstraction. It is generated in highly concrete locations. And it is in the metropolitan areas that the production of this prosperity is disproportionate. All over the world, it is in urban areas that people come together to build a better future. All over the world it is these cities that are the driving force behind a global evolution in which the creation of prosperity is accompanied by the tackling of social, economic, and ecological challenges. Europe must not be left behind in these worldwide transitions and dynamic. It cannot allow itself to do so. To take its place in this dynamic, it has to shift its focus radically to the productive capacity of its urban and territorial organisation. From the consumption of land to the planning of productive and metropolitan territories. In order to put the creation of prosperity back on the map, Europe has to start out from its own territory. That is the Ambition of the Territory.

On behalf of AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT, Joachim Declerck, Architecture Workroom

This curatorial statement does not include footnotes or any references beyond the work developed in the framework of this project. It is a continuous argument that builds on the many atelier sessions and conversations that led up to the presentation of 'The Ambition of the Territory' in Venice and Antwerp: the exchanges and collaboration amongst the members of the temporary collective AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT, with Christoph Grafe (Flemish Architecture Institute), and with Peter Swinnen, Stefan Devoldere, and Bart Steenwegen (Flemish Government Architect's team); the intensive studio sessions with Djamel Klouche (l'AUC), David Van Severen (OFFICE KGDVS),

Stef Vande Meulebroucke (Eurometropolis agency), and the students of the Eurometropolis graduation studio at the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles* (Paris); the conversations and workshops with the Flemish Farmer's Association (*Boerenbond*); the expert workshop with Peter Stabel, Ilja Van Damme, Lars Lerup, and Paul Gerretsen; the exchanges with Peter Cabus, Hans Leinfelder, Charlotte Geldof, and Jan Zaman from the Flemish administration of spatial planning; the contributions of Olivier Bastin (Chief Architect of the Brussels Capital Region) and Yves Deweerdt (Flanders Institute for Technology); and finally, the conversations that took place in the context of other Architecture Workroom projects: with George Brugmans, Henk Ovink, Dirk Sijmons, and Michiel Dehaene.

















Hageweg 13, Sint-Katelijne-Waver, Belgium





Gaarshof / E19, Hoogstraten, Belgium













Armveldweg, Sint Anna Pede - Dilbeek, Belgium

AWJGGRAUaDVVTAT is a temporary association of designers including Architecture Workroom Brussels (BE), graphic design studio Studio Joost Grootens (NL), urban design studio GRAU (FR), architects De Vylder Vinck Taillieu (BE), and artist Ante Timmermans (BE). 'The Ambition of the Territory' was jointly realised in response to a call for projects by the Flemish Architecture Institute (VAi) and the Flemish Government Architect's Team. The team seized the opportunity presented by selection as curators of the Belgian Pavilion at the International Architecture Exhibition of the Biennale in Venice to reveal the significance of Flanders as a cross-border urban reality in Europe.

This multidisciplinary team invited photographer Dieuwertje Komen (NL) to create a series of works capturing the urbanized Flemish landscape and enlisted students from ENSA Versailles (FR) to present complementary work on the cross-border metropolitan area of Eurometropolis, Lille-Courtrai-Tournai.

The process was structured and developed in cooperation with the Flemish Government Architect's team and the Flemish Architecture Institute by means of a series of workshops attended by partners, experts, and stakeholders.

AW Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB) is a platform for innovation in architecture, urbanism, and other disciplines related to spatial development. Its central ambition is to enhance the social significance and role of spatial design and to develop innovative design principles in response to societal challenges. AWB undertakes these ambitions by initiating and stimulating the development of—and underlying debate on—new models, principles, and visions relating to the design of our habitat. All actions and campaigns supported and initiated by AWB focus on the architectural future of cities in general and more specifically on the urbanised European continent. Brussels, a small and cosmopolitan city that is also the capital of Europe, provides the Workroom with an ideally suited international context as well as with a prime subject for design-based research.

JG Studio Joost Grootens was founded in 1995. Joost Grootens studied Architectural Design at Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. His studio designs books on architecture and urban planning, specializing in atlases and maps. By means of their cartography they manage to translate complex urban and landscape-related realities on several scales into comprehensible representations. The Studio focuses on developing strategies, technologies and products for mapping and understanding an increasingly complex world.

GRAU GRAU, an association of four architects/urban planners, is an architecture and urban planning studio, established in Paris, that derives its name from Gerhard Richter's gray paintings—theirs is not a mediocre, in-between kind of gray, but a gray that evokes a permanent tension. GRAU imagines the contemporary city as an intense, dense hue of gray, like Richter's monochromes. In this city, ideas and styles have fought for their existence without ever having won or lost. GRAU looks at the contemporary city through gray, opaque reality. It is a place where physical structures and everyday urban phenomena manage to coexist, even though they often start from widely diverse and even opposing points of view.

aDVVT When Jan De Vylder Architecten and Jo Taillieu Architecten joined forces in 2008, they formed the studio now known as Architecten De Vylder Vinck Taillieu. Jan De Vylder, Inge Vinck, and Jo Taillieu—three architects who share a characteristically intuitive approach to architecture—now jointly direct the office. Their work marries imagination to pragmatism, achieving groundbreaking results with inspiring potential and a seductive poetic gravity. The firm is not only involved in building construction but has also made exhibition and furniture design an important element of their practice.

AT Ante Timmermans's work reveals a sharp, inquisitive perspective on the banalities of daily routine. His drawings pair words with images and form, in this way, what can almost be considered "mind maps." Drawing is a means of registering and fathoming the world, a process of observation and reflection that finds its most direct expression in techniques as markedly ephemeral as they are timeless. Timmermans's cartographies and topographies of reflection, in all their guises, are poetic musings on the state of the world in which the past, present, and future seem to be equally present. In his current work, these ideas also take the form of installations.

Atelier Versailles Atelier Versailles is a last-year studio at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles, directed by Djamel Klouche (l'AUC) and assisted by Joachim Declerck (AWB) and David Van Severen (Office KGDVS) in the 2011–2012 academic year.

Dieuwertje Komen Dieuwertje Komen makes photographs of the urban landscape. Her work demonstrates a potent curiosity about the origin of urban space and its use. She portrays the places at the edges and in between new city centers, spaces that often (unintentionally) escape from great urban metamorphoses. Komen's growing body of work depicts places that give an insight into urban reality.

The Ambition of the Territory Belgian Pavilion, 13th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia 2012

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ATELIER PARTNERS Boerenbond, Eurometropolis, Vlaanderen in Actie

EXHIBITION

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