

An exhibition on Architecture and Transition

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A studio or gallery space with a dark floor and white walls. In the foreground, a gold metal cart with two shelves is on the left. To the right, a long table holds several architectural models. A silver pendant lamp hangs over the table. In the background, a ladder is leaning against the wall, and several large panels or maps are displayed. A track of spotlights is mounted on the ceiling. A large orange square is centered in the image, containing the text "Call for projects".

**Call for
projects**

The Great Transformation is calling on designers, commissioning parties and social actors to submit models, plans, impressions, photos or videos of architectural projects that already contain the seeds for a sustainable and inclusive future. Submit your project by Tuesday 19 April, or let us know which ones you consider to be leading projects within the narrative of a change-oriented architectural practice!

A narrative for the practice

Our architectural practice is facing a paradox. On the one hand, it is under the spotlight at home and abroad due to its exemplary commissioners, sharp architectural criticism and innovative design. On the other hand, the way in which we continue to build, take up more space, harden surfaces and consume materials and energy conflicts with the ambitious goals we have set ourselves as a society related to the climate, circularity and solidarity. You only need to pick up a newspaper to realise that our energy, water or food system needs to change now. This will not be possible without a large-scale transformation of our districts, our public space, and our landscapes. We are in the midst of a paradigm shift. The design competences we possess in-house are refocusing on embedding very abstract transition-related tasks in our everyday living environment. At least, if we develop the relevant frameworks, collaborations and typologies needed to achieve this!

Architecture and Transitions: a marriage doomed to fail or a match made in heaven?

Architecture in the Eurodelta is flourishing. Partly thanks to institutional frameworks such as selection procedures by chief government architects or city architects, the quality of design plays a key role in the construction process. It is bearing fruit. Belgian and Dutch architects, innovative practices and commissioning parties are praised at home and abroad. Architecture elevates the quality of the places where we live, work, relax or travel through to an unprecedented level and (consciously and unconsciously) influences users and their behaviour. Furthermore, well-considered choices in the design and construction process have an impact on the material, energy

and financial chains that should not be underestimated. The innovative - and poetic - way in which our architectural sector deals with these aspects is highly regarded worldwide.

At the same time, our approach to building is up for debate. The rate at which we are constructing, taking up more space, hardening surfaces and consuming materials and energy really is alarming. The building industry must reinvent itself. A change is needed that will require a large-scale transformation of our buildings, streets and districts. This observation has a rather destabilising effect on the practice of architecture today. Reconciling architecture with the major social challenges does not appear self evident. Does the social agenda deviate too much from architecture's core task? Shouldn't we stick to what we know?

It is true that the frameworks for intrinsically sustainable architecture have not (yet) been finalised. Today, designers must increasingly take into account circular materials, new energy sources and installations, water reuse, collectivity and affordability. All too often, these tasks are added to the margins of a project instead of constituting the core of the design challenge. They remain relatively vague principles to which the only answer is to layer established concepts (with buzz words such as 'circular' or 'adaptive'). At the same time, architecture is confined to a rigid straitjacket of compulsory regulations with which building projects must comply in a generic way, but which often stand in the way of innovation (consider, for example, the strict but not always logical EPB regulations).

Good architecture within these shifting contours has not become any easier. It is precisely this phase of instability that is characteristic of a paradigm shift that has only just begun. Does that mean architecture and transitions are genuinely irreconcilable? Or should we dare go a step further?

The subsequent phase in the paradigm shift: architecture as a prefiguration of the future

If you look closely, you can already discern the seeds of future-oriented architecture. The Circular Building Materials Hub in Brussels proudly graces the cover of the Flanders Architectural Review 2020, in which it is praised for its inspiring combination of form, scale, spatial layout and use of materials. No less important is the catalytic effect that this building has in the transition to a circular economy. Isn't it a real breakthrough that the Port of Brussels - which until recently was not known as a leading commissioning party - nevertheless chose to turn its storage, sorting and recycling centre into an architectural moment? It is precisely with this gesture that the Port positions itself and its productive activity as an actor entitled to a place in the city and that wants to contribute to a well-functioning urban ecosystem.

There are other examples too: learning centres for new forms of food production, empty churches that that are repurposed as a district engine or manufacturing learning hubs for the local production of materials, clothing or furniture. They are all places where the seeds for fundamental social and spatial changes have already been sown. A new generation of projects is in the making. Architects and landscape designers are proving that they are capable of making

very abstract transition challenges fit in our everyday living environment. They take concrete shape in our homes, streets, public spaces or landscapes. The projects question the established order. They offer a preview or 'prefiguration' of what could and should be happening in many more places.

Writing the story of a sustainable and inclusive architectural practice together

While the task of underpinning this new role of architecture with routines and guidelines falls partly to the building practice itself, it is equally up to the innovative practices that redefine the (written or unwritten) rules of the building process from a different perspective (consider ROTOR, BC architects & studies, Miss Miyagi), Generation Energy, Superuse studios or OOZE), the commissioning parties that take on a pioneering role, the social actors and coalitions that work on a transition practice and the architectural critics and cultural organisations that observe and challenge the discourse.

The mission of The Great Transformation is to bring all these perspectives together. That's why this summer it is launching an exhibition on architecture and transitions. Together with a group of designers, consultants, economists, sociologists, administrative specialists, cultural actors, transition experts and policy makers, we have drawn up an agenda comprising ten 'Future Places'. These are ground-breaking projects of which we will need many more in the next decade to achieve our ambitious goals. Future Places explore the frameworks, the language, the coalitions, the commissioning and design strategies that help put the much-needed paradigm shift on a firm footing.

The exhibition will also be a research space. We will share knowledge and expertise by means of a rich and varied programme of lectures, debates and workshops. Through guided walks, we will link the grand principles to real buildings, streets and districts. In this cultural environment, we will collectively compose a new narrative for architectural practice, situated within a broader practice of change.

Future Places: seeds of change

How do we transform our living environment so that it meets the ambitious goals we have set ourselves? The Great Transformation is compiling an agenda of ten types of projects whose seeds have already been sown and which offer a preview of a promising future. The ten Future Places form a framework for the exhibition.



Agricultural centre Paddenbroek
jo taillieu architecten

1. Food Land

In order to produce our food in a healthy, profitable and affordable way, there must be a new kind of interplay between landowners (especially on the outskirts of the city) and (traditional or new) farmers. The infrastructure set up to facilitate this takes various forms: new (collective) farms, training houses, experimental grounds or urban distribution and sales centres.



Grand Parc
Lacaton & Vassal architects

2. Energy districts

In order to reduce the CO2 emissions from our residential areas, a mechanism is needed that allows renovations and the installation of renewable energy sources to be carried out much more quickly and thoroughly. To achieve this we need information and support centres, (low-tech) collective energy storage facilities and design strategies for affordable and quality energy solutions in buildings.



Picardstraat / Rue Picard
Filter Café Filtré



ABC-house (Art Basics for Children)
HUB

3. Climate streets

We must provide room in our public space for the redistribution of mobility, the integration of water and biodiversity and greater social cohesion. Water collection systems for the neighbourhood, desealing projects, neighbourhood kitchen gardens or play streets all contribute to testing prototypes for this kind of multifunctional street profile.

5. Community engines

A social infrastructure is also needed for informal encounters and collective action. Places such as community or youth centres, social restaurants, repurposed churches and safe spaces are deeply embedded in the community. They boost the district's social capital and promote a new dynamic.



Source de Friche
OOZE



Intergenerational Project Linkeroever (IGLO)
De Smet Vermeulen architecten

4. Buffer brooks

We must tackle drought, erosion and flooding at the source. Tidal parks, natural water purification systems or wet farming techniques link recreation to more functional challenges and make people aware of the necessary water transitions.

6. Caring neighbourhoods

Caring for each other is once again becoming part of our everyday environment and is no longer tucked away in isolated institutions such as hospitals or care homes. This requires new typologies focused on intergenerational living, social services linked to other facilities, and care environments that open up to the neighbourhood and share services and places.



Centers Borgerhout
NU Architectuuratelier

7. Making and learning hubs

Technological innovation, circular production and education are increasingly intertwined. In addition, they are afforded a more visible place in the city and engage in new relationships with the neighbourhood. They are open and multifunctional workplaces, hubs where learning and talent development are key and where new ecosystems flourish between different types of organisations and actors.



Building Material Village Vergotedok
TETRA Architecten

8. Material villages

A circular economy and a circular building process require links in which flows (of materials and energy) can be connected. Circular material hubs take the form of sorting and processing centres, logistical areas and hubs for storing (recycled) materials.



MolenWest
1010au

9. Flow collectors

The mobility shift requires a better supply of soft and shared types of mobility, which are also aligned more effectively with one another and with the lifestyles of the people who use them. Connection points between different forms of mobility are the new places for urban encounters and the place where you do your shopping or have your bicycle repaired. The new infrastructure serves as the hub of the new mobility model.



Fierens Towers
Happel Cornelisse Verhoeven Architecten

10. Affordable dwellings

The housing stock for families in lower income brackets is insufficient. The solution lies partly in optimising the use of space, for example by investing in high-quality collective (outdoor) spaces. A second, important task lies in the transition to an alternative development model. Densification projects and new land coalitions will play a crucial role in this regard.



Become part of the exhibition

The Great Transformation is calling on designers, commissioning parties and social actors to submit projects that already contain the seeds of the Future Places.

Who is issuing the call?

The Great Transformation is a social movement that is helping to shape a way of living, working, producing, moving, eating and relaxing that restores and improves our environment. Its online platform defines and collects knowledge about ten Future Places. The Great Transformation involves both experts and citizens in the future of our common living environment. As a contribution to The Great Transformation, Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB) will act as curator and producer of the exhibition and accompanying public programme. AWB builds on the experiences of Building for Brussels in 2010 (BOZAR), A Good City has Industry in 2016 (BOZAR Ravenstein Gallery) and You Are Here 2018 (WTC1 Tower Brussels), among others.

When?

The exhibition will open during the New European Bauhaus Festival in Brussels on 9, 10, 11 and 12 June 2022. Various events are planned during this opening weekend. The exhibition will open at regular intervals until October, with the final highlight during Archi Week in Brussels from 15 to 23 October 2022.

Where?

The exhibition will be held in a former call centre on the North-South axis in Brussels (Boulevard Pacheco/Pachecolaan), a ten-minute walk from both the Central and North stations. The building is being used temporarily by architecture and design firms, organisations for urban renewal and the research group of an architectural education programme - an ecosystem in which the exhibition nestles as a workshop for practice renewal.

What are we looking for?

- We are looking for projects carried out in a real place, which have already been implemented, are under development or currently only exist on paper. What is important is that the feasibility has been tested (and the challenges involved).
- The project proposes a new design typology, coalition and/or practice that is crucial for tackling the major social and systemic challenges we face in the coming decade. Does the project meet a particular demand? Is there a special commissioning party? Was the (design) team's composition somewhat extraordinary?
- The project is located within the borders of the Eurodelta (Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern France, West Germany) or exceptionally in a place that faces very similar challenges, both spatially and sociologically.
- The project can be presented through one object that speaks for itself (model, visual, photo, video, material or other).

The projects will be selected based on:

- ① Their contribution to interpreting the hypothesis of the Future Places.
- ② The quality and innovativeness of the design, the commissioning and the coalition.
- ③ The power of imagination of the exhibited object.

What do we offer?

- Selected projects will be given a place in the exhibition and will also be showcased on the online platform and the social media of The Great Transformation.
- The Great Transformation will be responsible for the transport costs (up to 200 km around Brussels) and all related production costs linked to the exhibition, but cannot provide a fee for the production of the object itself.
- The coalitions behind the projects are invited to be part of a programme in which collective practice development and innovative commissioning are key. You will thus become part of a network at the forefront of a future-oriented practice. So be sure to keep the 9 (evening), 10, 11 and 12 June 2022 free in your diary!

Submit your project by Tuesday 19 April, or let us know which ones you consider to be leading projects within the narrative of a change-oriented architectural practice!

We are looking forward to embarking on this journey together! For more information, or if you have any questions, please visit www.thegreattransformation.eu or info@degroteverbouwing.eu.

Fill in the form on the platform of The Great Transformation

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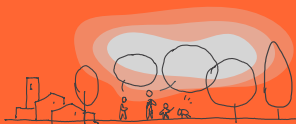


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GREAT
TRANSFORMATION**