

PhD Position :

The Blue Park as a cross-border territorial project.

Directions for socio-ecological transitions and solidarity in the management of resources.

Institutions

KULeuven (Department of Architecture, researchgroup Collective spaces, Urban Projects & Local identities) and Université de Lille (LACTH, laboratoire de recherche de l'ENSAP de Lille) offer a 4-year joint doctoral project, full time, under the umbrella agreement of the CROSSPOINT research program (see details above).

Content

The proposed research involves studying the "Blue Park" project developed by the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis.

In the complex social, political, material, infrastructural, and ecological connections and dependencies between the metropolis and the territory, the Blue Park plays a key role. It is a concept that federates across borders and literally touches upon every m² of the territory. It is a figure that makes appeal on the imaginary, a project, that invites to reflect on future alternatives.

This research project has four dimensions :

1) The first dimension deepens the why, the *raison d'être*, of the Blue Park. It is elaborated as an answer to the different challenges that occur as the consequence of climate change and the resulting crisis in the different watersystems (groundwater, rainwater, sewage, drinking water, surface water). This crisis connected to climate change only increase social inequalities by creating different "planets" for the "haves and the have-nots". In order to face these challenges, the Blue Park must become deeply rooted in its environment, taking into account its ecological systems of water and vegetation etc., without being limited to an ecological answer or being opposed to a social response.

2) The second dimension of the research investigates the territorial role of the Blue Park (BP). It defines, characterizes and situates it within a general body of knowledge, to be built up, concerning the various 'territorial project' practices. This involves : assessing the capacity of the BP to represent the 'catchment area' that is the Eurometropole (definition); identifying the characteristics of the BP in a general typology of territorial projects (comparison), particularly in cross-border metropolitan regions (CBMR); and questioning the dominant theoretical models regarding territorial organizations, particularly metropolisation (theory).

3) Thirdly the research produces new options in the project, through scenario analysis and design.

The general issue is the integration of socio-ecological transitions and processes of shared solidarity in CBMR. This will be partly based on the annual output of the Master's workshops in architecture, landscape and urban planning (ENSAP Lille and KULeuven). The aim is to work on the hypotheses and scenarios formulated there, with a view to assessing their relevance, compatibility and acceptability, and the ways in which these new political ambitions can be implemented in the context of the LKT Eurometropolis.

4) Fourthly the Blue Parc raises the question of its governance. As the Eurometropolis (EM) is conceived as an organization 'in the middle', it initiates dialogue and connects its 14 partners across the borders but simultaneously relies on the same partners for the realization of the projects. On the hand the Blue Parc is the symbol for the Eurometropolis, on the other hand the EM has no means for its realization. So how to construct this project of projects, bringing together a multitude of initiatives by different partners and governmental bodies as one project?

Job description

- doctoral research (4 x 12 months) under the co-direction of Prof. HDR Bénédicte Grosjean (LACTH, ENSAP de Lille) and Prof. dr. Maarten Gheysen (department of Architecture, KULeuven)
- Submitting research results for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals and presenting papers at (international) conferences.
- Participation in the collective seminars of the CROSSPOINT research group and other doctoral seminars organised by the 2 research laboratories.
- Opportunity to give occasional lectures, and teaching in studios both at ENSAP and KULeuven

The candidate must be capable of conducting research that combines spatial structures, project visions and a social approach. He/she will have to work on the basis of the spatial forms of the territory (reading, description, cartography); on the basis of theoretical notions of territory (catchment area, bio-region, polycentrism, etc.); on the basis of the system of actors (surveys, data, sensitive maps, interviews).

Profile

- The applicant has a Master Degree in Urban Design, Urban Planning, Civil Engineering, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, or related fields.
- The applicant has strong skills in urban/spatial analysis, and/or urban theory, and/or the interpretation of processes of urbanization.
- The applicant is interested in territorial project and/or crossborder situations
- The applicant has excellent mapping skills
- The applicant has excellent academic writing skills in English
- The applicant is able to work both independently and as part of a team
- The applicant speaks English, and either Dutch or French. Bilingual is an added value

Application

Interested candidates are invited to send an application to B-grosjean@lille.archi.fr or maarten.gheysen@kuleuven.be before 31st of August 2024. The application includes:

- cover letter
- curriculum vitae
- some evidence of mapping skills
- if possible, some evidence of writing skills (paper, thesis, etc.)

Additional information

This doctoral project is part of the CROSSPOINT joint research programme, one of five international chairs held in partnership by the University of Lille and the KULeuven. It is likely to start in October 2024.

<https://crosspoint-project.eu/>

The CROSSPOINT programme will fund years 1 and 2 of the PhD; the KULeuven is committed to funding years 3 and 4. The doctorate will be co-supervised:

- KULeuven, Faculty of Architecture, campus Ghent:
<https://arch.kuleuven.be/english/research>
- at the University of Lille, in the SESAM doctoral school:
<https://edsesam.univ-lille.fr/>

The 'Blue Parc' project is supported by the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis and has already been the subject of a great deal of work. The timeline shows the different stages and the designers.

<https://www.espacebleu.eu/timeline>