

# WORKING WITHIN THE HUMAN ELEMENT

# WORKING WITHIN THE HUMAN CONTEXT

Tine VAN HERCK & Peter CASIER, PTA, Belgium

2017

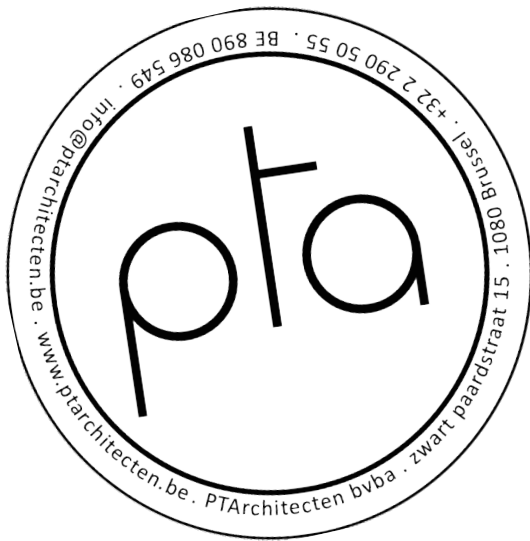


Figure 1: logo PTA

## 1. PRACTICE BASED RESEARCH

What should be the attitude of a designer in today's society where all certainties threaten to disappear? How to contribute something small to society in order to create a stronger tissue, a safety net, a solid foundation. How to pursue a *Joi de vivre* for the users, passers and ourselves ...? What is or could be the role of the designer in this complex world. Those questions are inherent for the practice of architecture, urbanism, urban design and planning. In this frame of questions and ambitions, we search for a human based design process. The developing of the method is a research through design, based on the practice of PTA.

This practice based research has the goal to develop a method that can be used for real assignments, with clients, budgets, realistic programs and restrictions. It is a method based on and made for everyday projects.

## 2. HUMAN BASED DESIGN PROCESS

Before introducing the method, we underline that the proposed method is a possible designer attitude. It is not our intention to develop an objective instrument of quality control. There will always be different kinds of architects with different attitudes and interests, which is good.

### 2.1 SCALE INDIFFERENT

The method can be used to projects of different scale : from interior architecture to landscape strategies. It is scale indifferent. We think this is important because we believe in multiscale and transdisciplinary projects. The distinction between disciplines and scales ((interior) architecture, urbanism, urban planning, ...) is blurring.

### 2.2 HUMAN CONTEXT

This paper is an introduction to the (re)search. With the human based design process we aim to attribute something to the human context. We introduce the term human context as : people alone or in all kinds of compositions : a couple, a family, a neighbourhood, an age group, a city, a region, ...

Human context means people and society and all its processes and actuality.

The human context is in the centre of the presented design method. The method for a human based design process can be sum-

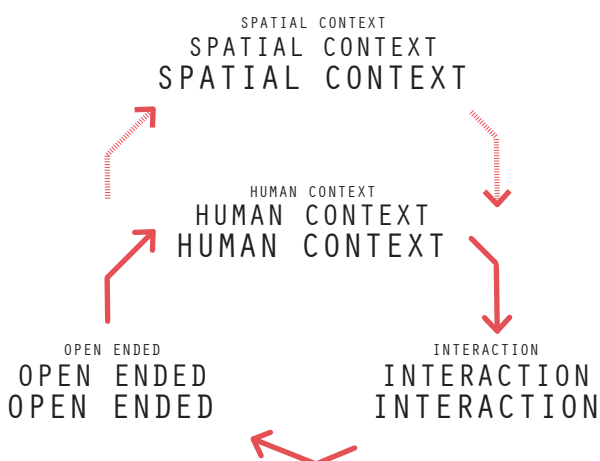


Figure 2: diagram



Figure 3: PTA178 . concept study, Geel  
(foto . Stijn Beeckman)



Figure 4: PTA187 . Neighbourhood contract 'Zinneke,' Molenbeek



Figure 5: PTA170 . feasibility study casino Middelkerke  
(foto . Stijn Beeckman)

marized in a diagram (fig.2).

All assignments, indifferent their scale start from the spatial context. The method insist in analyzing the spatial context in different scales and adds the human context as a major precondition of the design process. A good analysis of the human context combines objective and subjective elements, findings and interpretations, text and images, and is the base for a human based design process. There is attention for the different scales and for the dimension of time.

All the relevant information of the human and spatial context can be put together in a biographical frame of a plot/ neighbourhood/ ... . This frame is the starting point of the design process and it is the foundation of the project. Relevant aspects of a human context can be:

- . Too much public space causes little of contact
- . Elderly and their integration in society
- . Braindrain in a panoramic landscape
- . People of all ages living together in the city
- . ...

The biographical frame can be constructed by very different sources :

- . interviews of keyactors
- . photography as a very interesting tool to look in a different way to reality (fig.3).
- . workshops with professionals (fig.4)
- . a model traveling through the neighbourhood collecting feedback
- . organising walks and visits with future users
- . observations (fig.5).
- . ...

It is the combination and interaction of the collected material that gives the possibility to crosscheck the value of the information. The biographical frame is by definition subjective, but a subjective understanding of the side is as important as the objective data.

### 2.3 INTERACTIONS

Starting from the human context, the method proposes to seek for interactions. It can be interactions of all kinds : between people, between generations, between functions, between inside and outside, between private and public, between rural and city, between human and animal, between present and future, ... . The interactions can be situated within the scale of the assignment, but they can also be on a very different scale.

The designer is tempted to search in each design process for assignment relevant interactions. We believe that incorporating interactions of all kind attribute to the human context. This is due to the

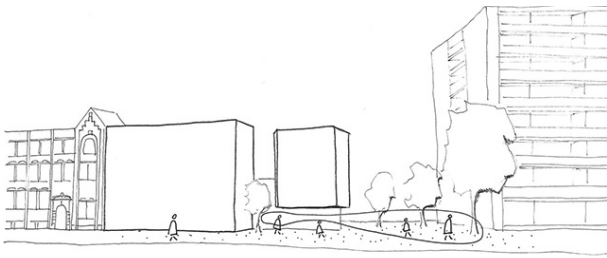


Figure 6: PTA109 . Apartment building, Antwerp

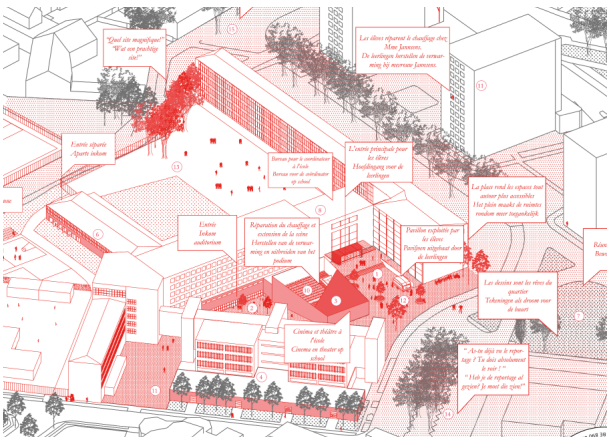


Figure 7: PTA262 . Pilotproject 'schoolcontracts', Brussels region

fact that an interaction enlarges the human context of the project. We illustrate with some examples :

- . an open facade for a private housing building augments the liveliness of the public space;
- . connecting inhabitants of a neighbourhood in a shared public space (fig.6);
- . interactions between generations in a masterplan;
- . synergy between school and neighborhood in a activation program (fig.7);
- . incorporating a public bar at the ground floor of a private office building;
- . inviting birds to share a façade (fig.8);
- . opening a school to his neighbourhood (fig.9);
- ...

## 2.4 OPEN ENDED THINKING

Afterwards or simultaneously the designer is asked to take into account what we don't know yet. The method believes in open ended thinking. Today's society evolves very quickly in contrast with building or planning processes which generally keep taking several years. The design has to take this into account and leave enough room for adaptation or evolution.

For example this aspect can be incorporated by :

- . creating multifunctional spaces, using flexible structures, ...
- . designing basic buildings with room for a self-expressing infill, ...

But this aim can also be achieved by :

- . respecting the flexibility of a building structure (fig.10)
- . rethinking the use of heritage in a flexible way (fig.11)
- . incorporating a timeline in the design and making it evolutive (fig.12)
- ...

The open ended design method resulting in an evolutive design, is illustrated by the project of PTA for the Cadix square in Antwerp. The design incorporates the idea that the current and future inhabitants can rethink parts of the park in function of evolving needs and wishes (fig.12).

## 3. CRITICAL REFLECTION

The goal of the proposed method is to attribute something to the human context. The added value can differ from type and scale :

- . a cohousing project where people enjoy life (fig.13);
- . a visible and open community centre inviting neighbours to meet (fig.14);

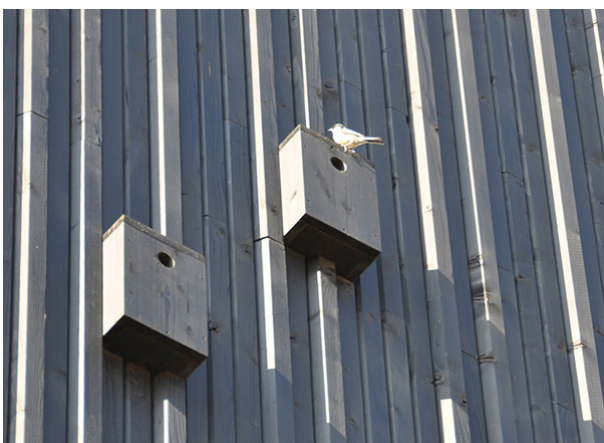


Figure 8: PTA148 . Multifunctional child orientated public building, Molenbeek (foto boven . Tim Van De Velde)



Figure 9: PTA098 . School 'Klimop', Vilvoorde  
(fotos . Tim Van De Velde)



Figure 10: PTA245 . Renovation & extension Mechanica KUL, Leuven



Figure 11: PTA187 . 'Streefbeeld' Brussels Canal district

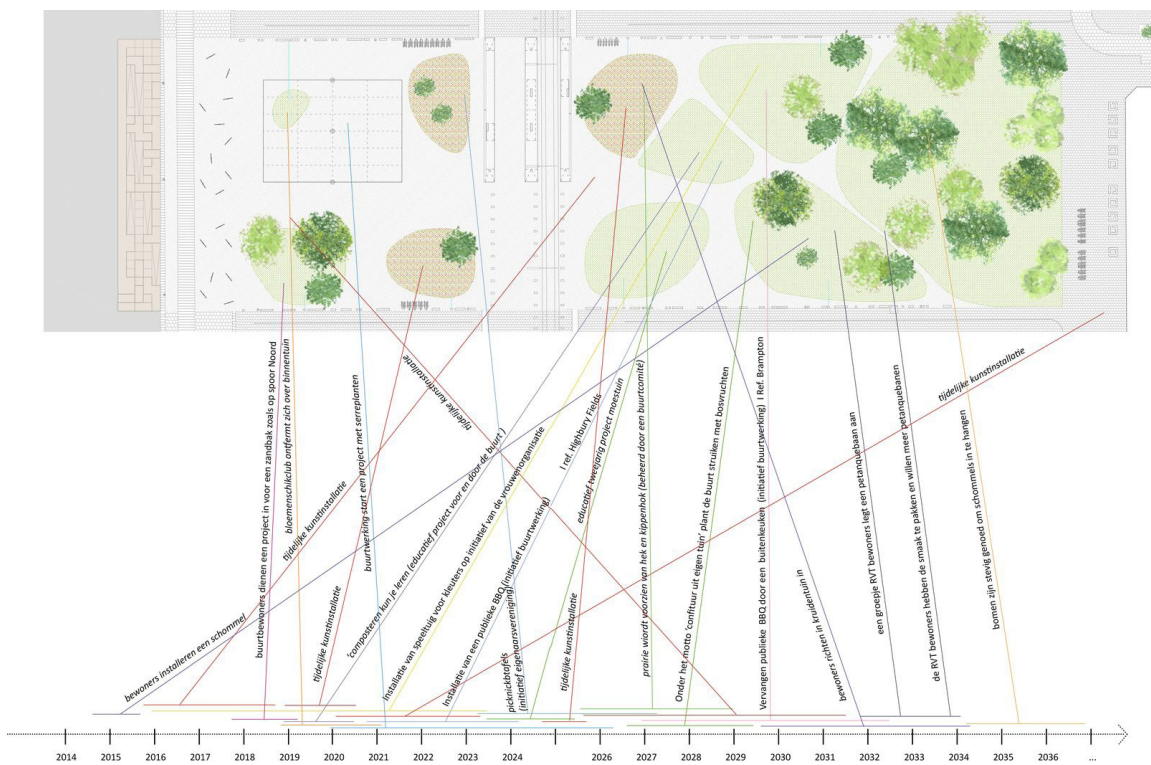


Figure 12: PTA 126 . Cadix square Antwerp – evolving park



Figure 13: PTA043 . Cobousing project, Brussels  
(foto . Bart Azare)

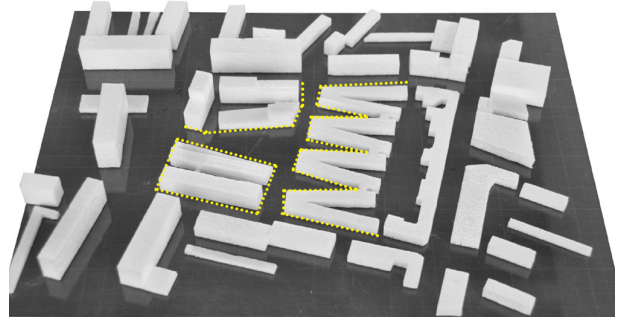


Figure 16. PTA090 . Masterplan Extra Muros Elderly housing, Antwerp



*a landscape base + people as activator of transformation*

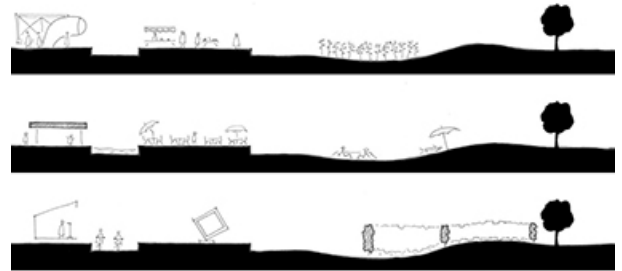


Figure 14: PTA023 . Community centre, Hasselt



© Tim Van De Velde



Figure 15: PTA095 . Senography photo kanal, Brussels



Figure 17. PTA126 . Cadix square Antwerp  
concept scheme & pictures



Figure 18: PTA109 . Apartment building, Antwerp (fotos Tim Van De Velde)

- . an art trial trying to break trough prejudices of bad neighbour-hoods (fig.15);
- . a masterplan in which the interface between private elderly housing and public space has been maximalized to include those people in society (fig.16);
- . the project for the cadix square in wich people are activator of transformation (fig.17).
- . social housing where inhabitants recognise their home (fig.18);
- . ...

PTA developed 2 diagrams to evaluate the design process and the design result (fig.19). Both common and individual values of a project are taken into account. It gives us a tool to evaluate and compare projects on their ability to provoke a common relevance and a 'joie the vivre' for their users and the larger human context. In addition to PTA projects, students of the KULeuven were asked to fill in the evaluation diagrams at the end of a design studio (fig. 20).

For a conference in Athens, we tried to assess a majority of PTA projects so far on the three axes Human Context - Open Ended - Interaction. (fig. 21). We realised that the projects in the middle, which take into account the three axes of the design process in a balanced way, are the projects that we like the most.

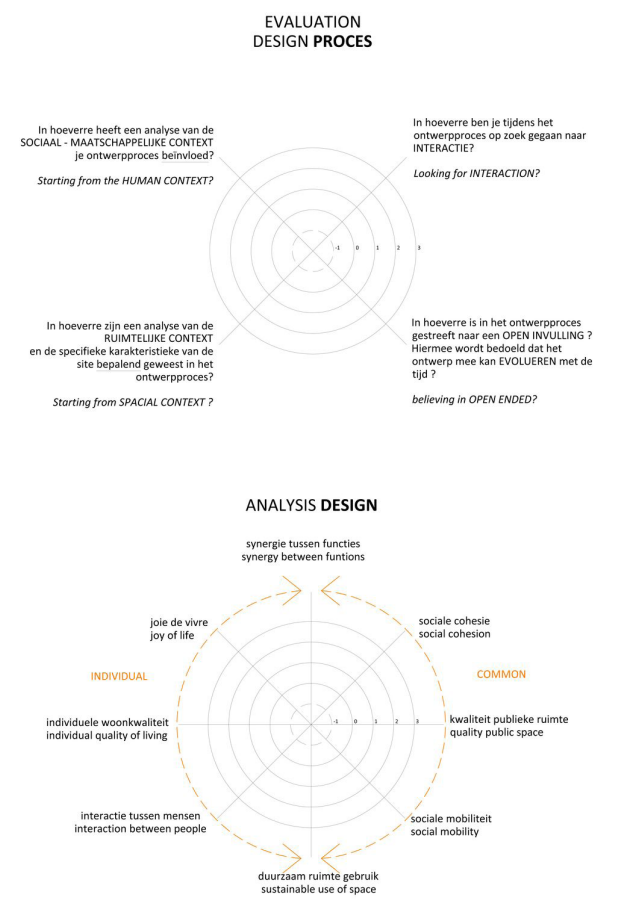


Figure 19: PTA evaluation diagram

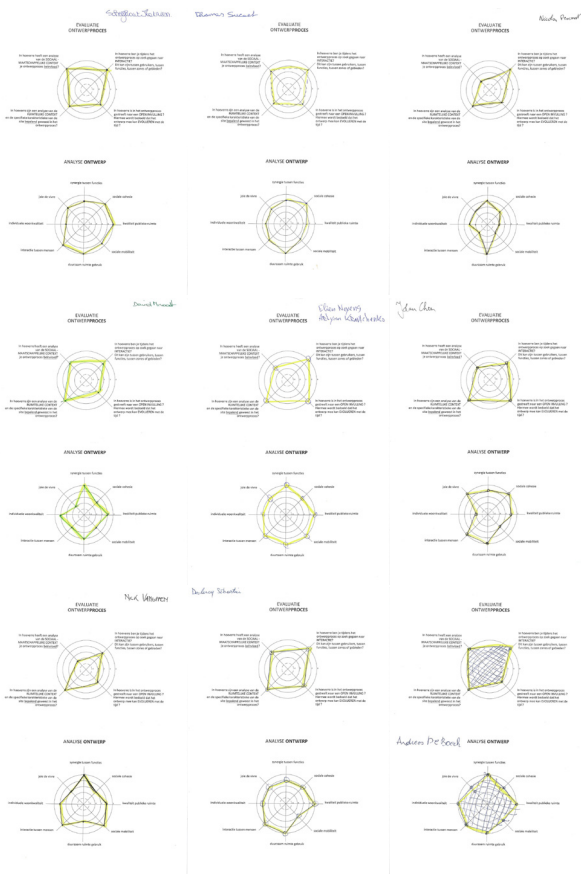


Figure 20: Student evaluation

Recently both project and process are combined in a simplified diagram (fig. 22). A project is assessed on the three axes : Human Context - Open Ended - Interaction. The larger the triangle formed by the quotes on the three axes, the higher the impact on the human context.

On the website ([www.ptarchitecten.be](http://www.ptarchitecten.be)) all PTA projects are assessed on the three axes : Human Context - Open Ended - Interaction.

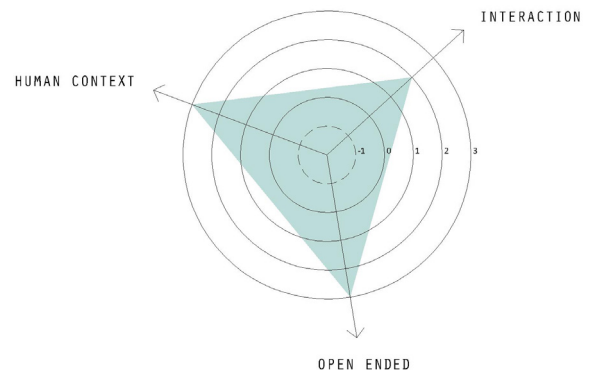


Figure 22: PTA evaluation diagram

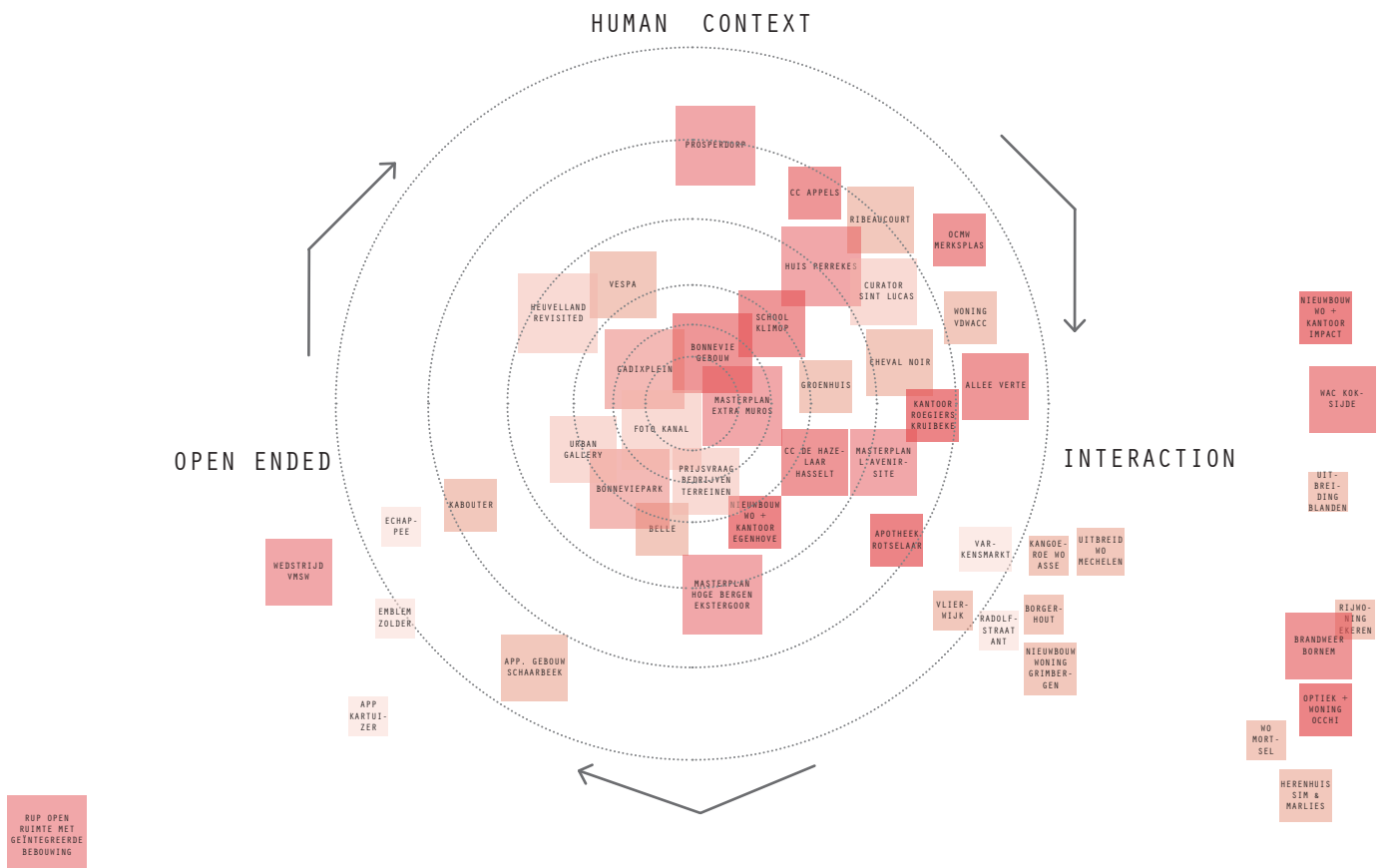


Figure 21: PTA evaluation scheme



## LEZINGEN & CONFERENTIES

**BOOK RESENTATION** - Van Herck, T. ; Baudet Violette, **Just another metro line?!**, Brussels : 19 ambitions for a layered city. (2017)

**ARCHIPEL** - (2016) Pecha kucha Gent, verdichtingsstrategieën.

**BELGISCHE PRIJS VOOR ARCHITECTUUR** 2016, Van Herck Tine as member of the international jury & speaker at the award ceremony.

**1st ISOCARP Congress** (2015), selected paper : Working within the human context.

**OMGEVING OP MENSENMAAT** - 7 november 2014 - Seminarie georganiseerd door de provincie West-Vlaanderen - hoofdspreker - Provinciehuis, Brugge

**ATINER** - 10-13 juni 2013 - Van Herck Tine speaker : Method for a human based design proces - 3rd Annual International Conference on Architecture - Athens Institute for education and research, Athene Greece

**INTERACTION** spreker op het existenzmaximum KUL (2012)

**BACKSTAGE ARCHITECTURE** 2012 - Cadix Square - 27 augustus 2012 - gastspreker bij de lancering van het boek Backstage Architecture op de BIËNNALE VAN VENETIË

**RMIT** - 24/11 – 25/11/2012 - Van Herck Tine speaker : Design methodology “human context”.

**DEBAT** - 29 november 2011 - Heuvelland Revisited debat met Tine Van Herck (PT ARCHTECTEN), Bruno Noteboom (LABO S, UGENT), Van Paridan - de Groot Landschapsarchitecten, Christophe Grafe (VAi) - deSingel, Antwerpen.

**UNIVER-CITY** - European Symposium Lund (Zweden) - 13-15 Juni 2007 – gastspreker

Studiedag **KWALITEITSVOL VERKAVELEN**, georganiseerd door het Vlaams Gewest te Brussel, 2007 - gastspreker.

## TENTOONSTELLINGEN

**bMa / MAN OF THOUGHTS I** 12.09.2014 - 25.09.2014 Brussel I Voorstelling van project PTA148 Bonnevie

**Bouwmeester I** Mei 2013 . MAD Brussels I Voorstelling van verschillende projecten.

**Heuvelland Revisited I** Tentoonstelling in de Singel 30 nov 2011 - 15 jan 2012 I Selectie door Vlaams Architectuurinstituut (VAI) voor 'Jonge makers, denkers, dromers.

**Wederopbouwhoeves in Heuvelland en Poperinge I** Tentoonstelling in Sociaal Huis Poperinge 5 okt 2012 - 22 oktober 2012 I WINVORM West Vlaanderen in vorm

**BIZZ beurs 2009 I** Voorstelling van projecten cohousing Ribeaucourt & Zwart Paard

## EIGEN PUBLICATIES

Van Herck, T. & Casier, P. (2014) “**Working within the human context 2.0**”, Brussel. (2017)

Van Herck, T. ; Baudet Violette, **Just another metro line?!**, Brussels : 19 ambitions for a layered city. (2017) isbn 9789082510829

Van Herck, T. ; Leinfelder, H. ; Wuytack, K. ; Hanegreefs G. ; De Decker, P. , **Terug naar de dorpen : Gooik 2.0: knooppunten, netwerken en pels.** In : Ruimte – 31 (2016) ; p. 62-67

Van Herck, T., Casier P., **Working within the human context ? selected paper** 1st ISOCARP Congress (2015).

Van Herck, T. & Casier, P. (2014) “**Working within the human context**”, Brussel.



Van Herck, T. (2013) “**METHOD FOR A HUMAN BASED DESIGN PROCES**”, in: Papanikos, G. T. - Architecture Abstracts, Third Annual International Conference on Architecture 10-13 June 2013, Athens, Greece, p. 166-167.

Van Herck, T. (2009) “**Workshop case Kinshasa (Congo)**”, in: S. Martens Reflections 10 - visies op stedenbouw. Brussel : Sint Lucas Hogeschool, pp. 81-87.

Van Herck, T. & Leroy, M. (2008) “**Urban planning processes of university complexes in Leuven**”, in: B. Larsson University. Lund: University of Lund, pp. 273 – 288.

Van Herck, T. & Casier, P. (2005) “**Gebruiksintensiteit : dichtheid en functiemening**”, in: N. Vreeze Een nieuwe logica voor bedrijventerreinen. Alkmaar: stichting welstandszorg Noord-Holland, pp. 16.

## SELECTIE PUBLICATIES OVER PTA

**Joie de vivre doet dichtbevolkte wijk herleven**, in Plan 04 Magazine, p 154 - 159. 2017

Buitengewoon en betaalbaar bouwen, 2016, **Groenhuis**.

**Mussen en Mensen** in A+ 2016

Patrice Leprince, **La Petite Senne tient son contrat**, *Le Soir*, 21 oktober 2014, p. 26.

**Ninove, le ‘projet de ville’ vert**, *La Dernière Heure*, 16 september 2014, p. 20.

**Architecten wonen in Brussel**, Woonboek, 2013, p56 - 63.

**Cadix square**, Backstage Architecture 2012, p186 -191.

**Corps**, Departement Architectuur Sint Lucas, 2011, P.62-63.

**AHA, met Tine en Peter van PT Architecten**. *Unité naar aanleiding van Existenz week KUL*, februari 2012

**Jonge makers denkers dromers PT architecten**, *A+233*, december 2011 - januari 2012

**Buurt positief over aanleg Cadixplein**. *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 15 december 2011, p. 12.

**Wonen in een Brusselse Oase**. *De Standaard*, 3-4 december 2011, wonen p. 16-17.

De Ruyter Kurt, **Foto Kanal : je suis le plus beau du quartier**. *Festival Kanal*. nr.1, september 2010, p.3.

**VZW L'avenirsite. De L'avenirsite in Lier: het industriële verleden en zijn toekomst**. *Forum - Contact*, jrg.17 nr.63, januari februari maart 2010, p. 31 - 34.

De Vriese Sofie. **Kangoeroewoning in hoevestijl**. *Ik ga bouwen*, augustus 2010.

Hermans Vital. **Werken aan de Hazelaar vorderen goed**. *Het belang van Limburg*, 31 augustus 2009.

## GEWONNEN WEDSTRIJDEN

Winnend ontwerp architectuurwedstrijd I Bouw van ongeveer 30 middenklassewoningen, 39 parkeerplaatsen en 785 m<sup>2</sup> uitrustingen met een kinderdagverblijf met 30 bedden, lokalen voor een SCK en de lokalen voor de VZW PAJ te Sint-Pieters-Woluwe I in uitvoering.

Winnende offerte voor onderzoek en uitwerking van actieprogramma's voor de proefprojecten met schoolcontracten in het brussels hoofdstedelijk gewest I in uitvoering.

Selectie voor architectenpool grond- en pandenbeleid AG Vespa I in uitvoering.

Winnend ontwerp architectuurwedstrijd I Bouw van 25 rijwoningen op de site Verbeemen te Mechelen I in uitvoering.

**Selectie door Vlaams Architectuurinstituut (VAI) voor 'Jonge makers, denkers, dromers, tentoonstelling in de singel met eigen tentoonstelling in de Singel**.

Laureaat Stedelijke scenografie voor Foto Kanal in opdracht van het agentschap voor territoriale ontwikkeling van het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest I uitgevoerd.

Winnend ontwerp open oproep 1924 I Geïntegreerde studieopdracht voor de nieuwbouw van basisschool Klim Op in Vilvoorde I uitgevoerd.

Winnend ontwerp open oproep 2008 I Volledige studieopdracht voor het ontwerp en de uitvoeringontwerp van het wijkplein Cadix en het uitvoeringsontwerp van de Napelsstraat in Antwerpen I deels uitgevoerd.

Winnend ontwerp architectuurwedstrijd I Bouw van een creche en buitenschoolse opvang + Bouw van een lokaal voor parkwachters en heraanleg van een speelplein I in uitvoering.

## INTERNATIONALE SELECTIE

**PTA werd geselecteerd om België te vertegenwoordigen in het Backstage Architecture netwerk**.

Backstage Architecture is a collection of projects that represents an original panorama of architecture on a global level across a network of professionals. In it are the names and contacts of architects under 40 from forty-five different countries, one per country, each selected and presented by a referee in the book Worldwide Architecture (brand UTET Scienze Tecniche).