

Strøm

ENG

Urban space

Luc Deleu – T.O.P. office

Four decades of proposals and
advices for public space on the
scale of the earth.



The very first pictures of the earth taken from outer space changed the way I look and think forever. The earth is our spacecraft, our mother, and home to all of us. (Luc Deleu, in The Knights Move lecture at Stroom Den Haag, March 30, 2011, see review on p. 36 - 38.)

Orban Space: Luc Deleu - T.O.P. office

Curated by Wouter Davidts & Stefaan Vervoort
in dialogue with T.O.P. office

January 20 - March 24 2013

Opening: January 19, 5 pm

Location: Hogewal 1-9, The Hague

Cover: Thonik

Orban Space

Introduction

“Less is Less’, according to the Flemish architect and artist Luc Deleu, in a subtle play on the well-known motto of Mies van der Rohe. Because of the increasing world population the available earth’s land surface is decreasing, which means less available space per inhabitant. In the eyes of Luc Deleu ‘less’ also means consuming less, building, polluting and producing less in order to save the world. The implications of this attitude for the architecture and design of our cities and public space will be presented in the exhibition *Orban Space*.

When the Belgian architect and artist Luc Deleu (1944) founded T.O.P. office in 1970, the name he chose resonated as an admonition: Turn On Planning! The letter O in the center symbolizes the earth. Inside the O the globe is depicted as an upside-down mirror image. In short, the world takes center stage.

Centered on contemporary concerns about the vertiginous population growth, uneven food production, rash environmental pollution, and the friction between the individual and mass society, Deleu developed an eco-centric and global urbanism, operatively recast as Orbanism.

The world also takes center stage in this exhibition, that links the most recent research project, *Urban Space*, to a more than 40-year-long working practice dedicated to looking at the world around us in every way possible. Thus it becomes apparent that *Urban Space* is not an isolated project, but is firmly rooted in a working method and a mentality that has been continued over the years.

The exhibition is developed around five thematic clusters. Each of them zooms in on an *Urban Space* production. In display cases and in the surrounding area various works and projects from the period 1969-2013 are shown.

This guide introduces the five themes and central works. The curators Wouter Davidts and Stefaan Vervoort explain how they came to chose these specific themes. A model made by T.O.P. office gives a further illustration of the layout of the exhibition. The colours refer to the five themes. Each theme is accompanied by a full list of exhibited works.

In addition to a short summary of the research work of T.O.P. office and a portrait of the bureau, this guide also presents the full and original text of the *Urban Planning Manifesto*, and the Archined review of Luc Deleu's lecture at Stroom Den Haag in 2011. To conclude the activities of the Stroom School are described.

Orban Space

Curator statement

The exhibition *Orban Space: Luc Deleu – T.O.P. office* centres upon *Orban Space*, the latest research project initiated by T.O.P. office in 2006. *Orban Space* brings to full circle the ambition of T.O.P. office to develop a theoretical framework and a practical methodology to think about public space on a global scale, and ultimately to develop suitable strategies to design it.

The exhibition intends to provide unforeseen perspectives and to unveil new ensembles within the oeuvre of Luc Deleu – T.O.P. office. To this end, the exhibition advances five thematic clusters: *devices, media, dimensions, movements, and realities*. Neither conclusive nor exhaustive, the respective clusters retrace the many recurrent operations, actions and strategies that mark the work and practice of Deleu – T.O.P. office over the past five decades.

In a unique scenography devised by T.O.P. office, the exhibition distributes a selection of previous works and projects around recent results of *Orban Space*. Newly produced work is put into an historical perspective by means of older works and projects, as well as through a distinct selection of sketches,

models, design tools and archival documents from 1969 to 2013, many of which have never been shown to the public to this date.

Below there is a explanation of the five themes and a description of each central Orban Space work. Pages 12-19 feature the full list of works organized by theme.

Devices

From the very founding of T.O.P. office in 1970, Luc Deleu and his collaborators have established and even invented the required tools to embark on projects in the diverging regimes of architecture, urban planning and art.

Over the past few years Luc Deleu – T.O.P. office have worked on *Orban Space: Terminology* (2006-), an index of public space on a worldly scale counting over 1000 pages. *Terminology* aims to map and describe the various connections, hierarchies and priorities of global public space on all possible scale levels. It combines abstract terms with photographs derived from the archives of T.O.P. office and from publicly available encyclopedias or websites like Wikipedia. The result is a design tool that operates as a dictionary, atlas, thesaurus, catalogue, and manual for architecture and urban planning all at once.

Media

T.O.P. office solicited and appropriated a vast range of modalities to mediate the design process in the studio as well as to make the resulting work public.

The terminology of global public space provided the onset for the vast poster *Orban Space: Analysis* (2006-). Composed of the sections Forum, Network and Nodes, Urbanized Public Space, Setting & Location and Scales & Degrees of Urbanization, the scheme proposes a refined and complex world image modeled from different layers of urbanity, infrastructure, and technology. Set against a starry sky the panels function within T.O.P. office both as an organizational system and a design manual for contemporary global society.

Dimensions

T.O.P. office never failed to measure developments in society as well as their own activities against the scale of the globe.

Orban Space: The Voyage (2006-2013) documents a sailing trajectory around the world, enacted by Deleu in person. The journey served as a performative climax to Deleu's lasting research into planet earth's surface, by means of which contemporary globalization is not only mapped but embodied throughout. Negotiating between cartographic calculation and human expedition,

research here ambivalently appears as both abstract and concrete. 'I want to make the journey to get a grip on and a real feeling for the scale of the world,' Deleu stated in 1994, 'and for the urbanist that's what it's all about.'

Movements

T.O.P. office explored imaginative proposals and thought up visionary plans to challenge the immobile nature of building.

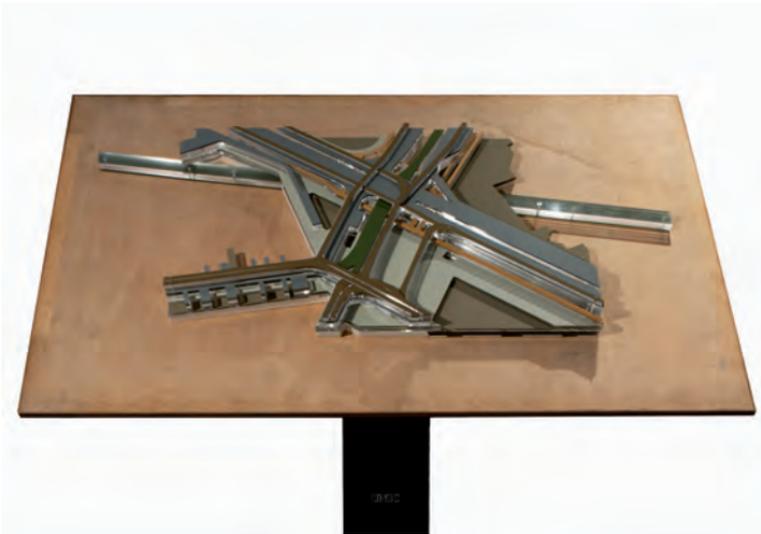
Urban Space: Travel Pictures (2006-2013) comprises of a grid-like sequence of photographs shot by Deleu during a journey around the world in 45 (44) days in 2006. A visual record of the actual travel experience, it documents the urbanist's movement over land, through the air and over sea. The pictures not only represent the physical voyage but also reveal the different political, cultural, and historical spheres that were passed through – a global realm marked by ongoing internationalization and cultural cross-influences between West, East, North and South, that is, by the present-day aftermath of a modernist age.

Realities

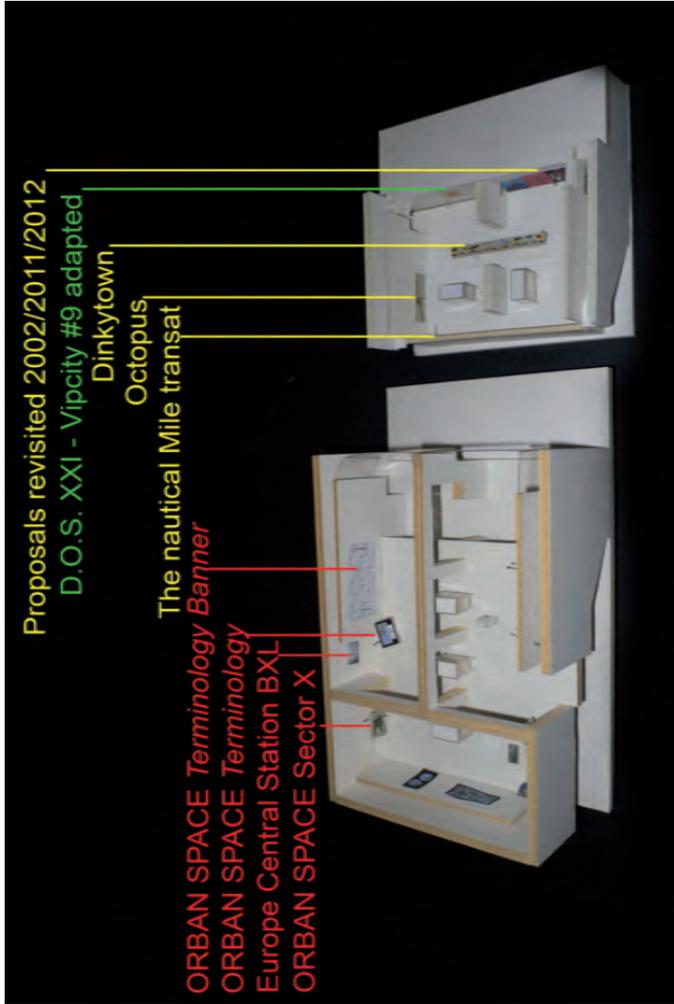
T.O.P. office adhered to the design rule that all schemes – from the conceptual to the quixotic, from small to extra large – are grounded in the real and contribute to a future understanding of our dwelling on the vessel planet earth.

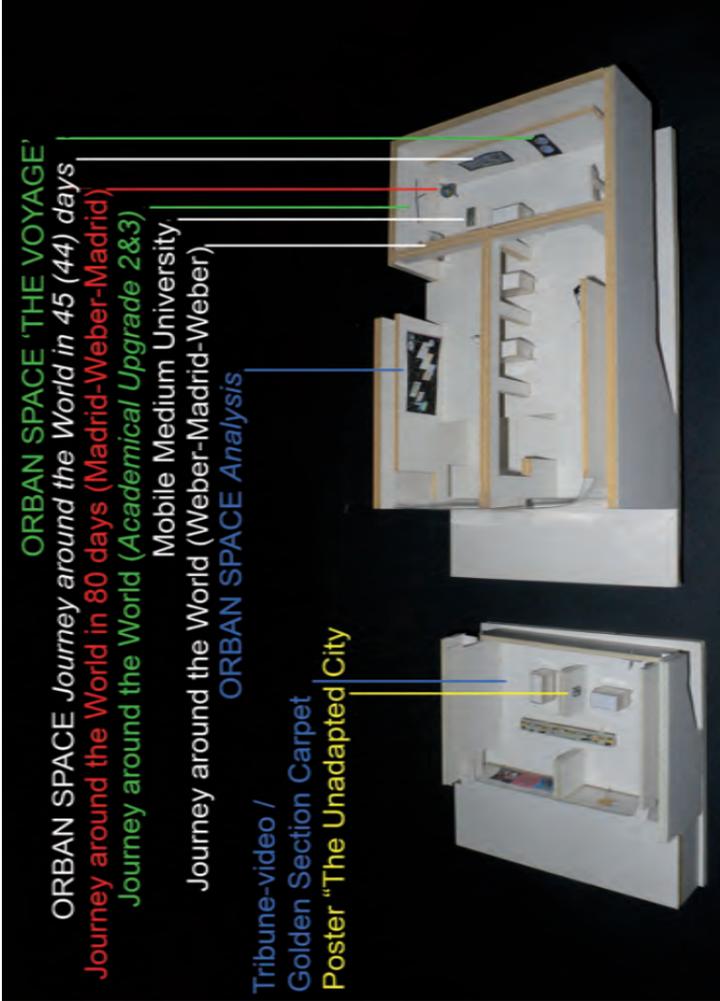
The model *Sector X* (2010) analyses an urban territory in the immediate surroundings of T.O.P. office's Antwerp studio. The mapping and superimposing of the assorted traffic flows generates an architecture in and of itself, detached from the objects, bodies and buildings that populate the original site. The intricate pairing of detailed attention for a local environment with an abstract and scale-less materialization tentatively convey public space as a multilayered force field.

Wouter Davidts and Stefaan Vervoort
January 2013



Urban Space: Sector X, 2010





Orban Space

Exhibited works

All works are selected from the collection and archives of Luc Deleu – T.O.P. office, unless indicated otherwise.

DEVICES (red)

Orban Space: Terminology
print and drawing table
2006-

Orban Space: Terminology
Banner, print, 2006-

Journey Around the World in 80 Days (Madrid–Weber–Madrid)
drawing on globe, 1992–93

The Unadapted City
Continuous digital calculation of the correlation between the increasing world population and the decreasing earth's land

surface, 2013

vitrine

T.O.P. office logo
cartouche, 1970

Golden (Section) Triangle
drawings and printed plexiglass, 1980

Big Triumphal Arch
voucher for stock share
in container installation,
Neuchâtel, CH, 1983

Luc Deleu: Postfuturismus?
(Antwerp: deSingel/Woemmelgem: Den Gulden Engel)
exhibition catalogue, 1987

A Wall for MuHKA
'Luc Deleu & T.O.P. office 1967–1991', Museum of Contemporary Art (MuHKA), Antwerp, BE
drawing, 1991

Unadapted City: TOPDOS
Digital presentation, 1998

ORBINO with interior presentation of The Unadapted City (1995-2002), Nauerna, Amsterdam, NL
exhibition scale model, 2002

Luc Deleu (Antwerp: Openluchtmuseum voor beeldhouwkunst Middelheim)
exhibition catalogue, 2003

'Citizen Game', Le Quartier, Quimper, F
exhibition scale model, 2003

'Façade 5, Luc Deleu' (solo), BOZAR, Brussels, BE
exhibition scale model, 2005

Noeud de Chaise
scale models, 2005

Orban Space: Analysis
printed scale model after

Kümmeler & Frey Carte du Monde, 2007

'Brussels Biennial' (solo),
Anneessens Metro Station,
Brussels, BE
exhibition scale model, 2008

**Journey Around the World
in 72 Days** (via the Antipodes
of Madrid/Weber); 3
April – 14 June, 1999, in: Luc
Deleu - T.O.P. office: Orban
Space (Wouter Davidts, Guy
Châtel, Stefaan Vervoort
(eds.), Amsterdam: Valiz)
2012

'Orban Space: Luc Deleu -
T.O.P. office' (solo), Stroom
Den Haag, The Hague, NL
exhibition scale model, 2013

T.O.P. office letter paper
s.d.

globe
s.d.

toy containers
s.d.

**Kümmeler & Frey Carte
du Monde**
s.d.

MEDIA (blue)

Orban Space: Analysis
print, 2006-

Golden Section Carpet
fabric, circa 1988

Tribune
video of the collage book
Tribune (1971–later), 2013
Coproduction of LLS 387,
Antwerp; Etablissement
d'en Face Projects, Brus-
sels; Extra City Kunsthal,
Antwerp; and Stroom Den
Haag, The Hague.

Less is Less
graffito on façade Stroom
Den Haag, The Hague, NL
2013

vitrine

**Mobile Medium Architec-
ture Promotion**
postcard. 1973

De Skipper
postcard. 1975

Museum for Broken Art
postcard, 1978

**Vrije Ruimte—Espace Li-
bre—Open Space** (Antwerp:
Internationaal Cultureel
Centrum (I.C.C.)/Ministerie
van Nationale Opvoeding en
Nederlandse Cultuur)
exhibition catalogue, 1980

**Orbanistisch Manifest/
Manifeste d'Orbanisme/**

- Orban Planning Manifesto** (annotated version), in: *Vrije Ruimte—Espace Libre—Open Space* (Antwerp: Internationaal Cultureel Centrum (I.C.C.)/Ministerie van Nationale Opvoeding en Nederlandse Cultuur, 1980), pp. 20–26, 1980
- Proposal for a Worldwide Windmill Network**
postcard, 1981
- Luc Deleu - T.O.P. office: selected works 1968-1982**
portfolio map, 1982
- Small Triumphant Arch**, Kannelfeldpark, Basel
print, 1983
- Small Triumphant Arch**, Kannelfeldpark, Basel
postcard, 1983
- Grand Arc de Triomphe**, nouvelle jetée photographiée le 8. 6. 1983
postcard, 1983
- Untitled** (Installation with Windsocks and Rulers), Furkart, Furkapasshöhe, Switzerland
postcard, 1987
- TGV Spectaculaire Boven Brussel**, in: *De Antwerpse Morgen*, Thursday 7 August, 1987, pp. 1–2
newspaper print, 1987
- Ø Gate '84-'88**, Maritime Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
paper model souvenir, 1988
- Tent for Napoleon**
postcard, 1989
- Scale & Perspective: Barcelona Towers** (Housing (&) the City), edited by Guy Schraenen, Antwerp, BE
multiple, 1989
- Antwerp, Your Next Cruise Stop!** (AYNCS)
postcard, 1990
- Rotterdam, bureau pour l'état civil dans "De Hef", récupération**, Fri-Art Centre d'Art Contemporain Kunst-halle, Fribourg, CH
postcard, 1990
- Scale & Perspective: Barcelona Towers** (Staircase)
multiple, 1991
- D.O.S. XXI: MODEL VIP-CITY SPACE ARRANGEMENT** (model from 38.000 to 76.000 inhabitants)
masterplan of The Unadapted City: Vipcity (2001-2003)
foldable plan, 1999

Inbreiding versus uitbreiding: Antwerpen, Renovatie van de oude haven met een getijdendok, 2001, in: De Witte Raaf, no. 95 (January-February 2002), pp. 12-13 artist's pages, 2002

The Unadapted City: Vip-city - Brauwpower, 2001 postcard, 2002

Montyplan
monthly agenda and newsletter of Monty Theatre, Antwerp, BE, 2004

"Een compacte haven voor Antwerpen", Vipcity, onder-tussen 2001-2004
Een prototype van de Antwerpse minderhinderpaal 2004

"Een compacte haven voor Antwerpen" bijvoorbeeld door dubbeldekkades met

fotovoltaïsche daken 2004
monthly program flyers of Monty Theatre, Antwerp, BE 2004

Speybank 1999-2005,
International Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, JP
postcard, 2005

Inktpot - Project II (with Filip Francis & De Nieuwe Koloristen)
postcard, 2010

International Idea Contest for the Court House Brussels (with EXPO 68, Jos Vandenbreeden Heritage Architects & SAVE)
postcard, 2010

The Unadapted City: Nautical Mile
digital film sequences of The Unadapted City: Nautical

Mile (2003-04) , 2004

MOVEMENTS (white/black)

Urban Space: Journey Around the World in 45 (44) Days
print, 2012

Mobile Medium University
scale model, 1972

Journey around the World in 80 days 'Weber-Madrid-Weber'

drawing table, lamp, globe, Buckminster R. Fuller Dymaxion map, paint, 1993
Collection M HKA, Antwerp, BE

vitrine

Mobile Medium University
drawing, 1972

Mobile Medium Architecture Promotion

copied photomontage, 1973

Neo-pebbles

glass, brick, asbestos, concrete, and mixed media
1973-2013

Proposal (Voorstel voor inter-city verbindingen langs waterwegen [Gent - Antwerpen - Rotterdam - etc.] [Antwerpen, Liège - New York - London - Bombay - Lissabon, etc.])
collage, 1978

Proposal (Unit for (mobil) sea cities with possibility to fuel energy on the spot!)
drawing on photocopy
1978

Proposal (Proposition to classify the public transport as monument in use)

photomontage, 1978

Dictature du Soleil: Vienne le 21 mars a 16.00 heures
drawings, 1984

Untitled (Signposting Geneva)
drawing, 1992

Journey Around the World in 80 Days
multiple (Museum Dhondt Dhanens, Deurle, BE) and scale model, 1993
Collection Museum Dhondt Dhanens, Deurle, BE

Usiebenpole
scale model, 1997

Journey Around the World in 72 Days: Auckland, New Zealand
photomontage, 1999

Journey Around the World

in 72 Days 40° 24' 904S 176° 17' 551E over its antipode 40° 24' 904N 3° 24' 449W (ERNSLAW ONE TTD, WEBER, NEW ZEALAND over its antipode PLAZA MAYOR, MADRID, SPAIN)
photomontage, 1999

Antwerp, Your Next Cruise Stop! (AYNCS)
scale model, 1999

Urbi et Orbi: De Onaangepaste Stad (with Hans Theys, Ghent: Ludion), 2002

Journey Around the World in 72 Days
printed photograph, 2004

The Container
scale model, 2009

Indische Oceaan
film, 2010

- Orban Space: Passage to the Antipodes** (La Malu II: Voyage Palermo – Richards Bay [espace orbain] [12/07/2007 – 22/11/2007]) in: Lettres de La Malu II. Un Voyage Autour de Monde (Antwerp: Bernard Blondeel), 2011
- DIMENSIONS (green)**
- Orban Space: The Voyage** print, 2010
- The Unadapted City: D.O.S. XXI – VIPCIY #9 adapted** Print on dibond, 2001
Collection Bernard Blondeel
- Journey Around the World (Academical Upgrade 2&3 Setenil over Auckland)** 5,6 km north-west of SETENIL, SPAIN, N 36° 52. 683' W 5° 14. 126' 2003 June 19, 18H 47' 54" to 18H 50' 16" UNIVERSAL TIME OVER
- MOUNT EDEN, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, S 36° 52. 683' E 174° 45. 874' 2002 DECEMBER 20, 6H 47' 54" to 6H 50' 16" UNIVERSAL TIME
doubled photograph printed on dibond, 2002
- vitrine*
- Scale & Perspective with Tower Crane**, Montevideo warehouse, Antwerp, BE photograph, 1981-82
- Golden Section Carpet** plan print, circa 1988
- Proposal** (Principle for a lesson in scale at sea with two identical sister ships sailing together)
drawing on photocopy, 1981
- Atelier Hofraum** scale model, 1986
- Land Surface per World** Inhabitant Calculation scrap paper, 1987
- Tracés Régulateurs on Villa Schwob** (Le Corbusier), La-Chaux-de-Fonds, CH photograph, 1987
- Lesson in Scale**, Slochteren, NL photograph, 1987
- Scale & Perspective** (Public sculpture for University of Twente)
scale model, 1990
- Land Surface per World** Inhabitant Calculation scrap paper, 1993
- Masstabstudie für Grossen Hamburger Triumphbogen** drawing, 1993
- Print Map: 1998-1999**

archival map with prints

Untitled (Installation with GSM mast), Breda, NL
scale model, 1999

Journey around the world in 80 days

archival map with calculations, 2005

Orban Space: Passage to the Antipodes

Google Earth digital simulation, 2007-10

World Land Surface Calculation

print, 2009

globe lampion

s.d.

Fuller Projection of Dynamaxion™ Air-Ocean World
print, 1938

REALITIES (yellow)

Orban Space: Sector X
scale model on drawing table, 2010

'Europe Central Station'

(HST Brussels)
framed photograph, 1986
Collection Vlaams Bouwmeester

The Unadapted City: Dinkytown

scale model, 1998

The Unadapted City:

Octopus
scale model, 1999

The Unadapted City: Panel

text and photomontage, 1999

The Unadapted City: VIP-CITY: The Nautical Mile Transat

photomontage printed on

canvas, 2004

Proposals Revisited 2002 / Revisited 2011 / Revisited 2012

prints on canvas, 2012

vitrine

T.O.P. office: video portrait and selected works: 1969-2013

digital slideshow, s.d.

'Luc Deleu: 20 futuristische voorstellen voor stedelijke agglomeraties (26.6.77)',

in: *A+*, no. 7-8 (1977), pp. 52-53.

artist's pages, 1977

Proposal (Voorstel om de Amsterdamse grachten (+ rondvaartboten) te gebruiken als infrastructuur van een openbaar vervoersnet)
mixed media, 1981

Luc Deleu: Prototype d'un Monument Mobile (with Marc Hostettler, Brussels: Sint-Lukasstichting/Neuchâtel: Editions Media) 1984

Ready-made Housing Architecture (Luc Deleu **Manifesto to the Board**) contact prints, 1985

Scale & Perspective: Barcelona Towers (Housing (& the City)) scale model, 1989
Collection Koen Deprez

Container Bridge over the Venidse (1990) and Mobile Medium Architecture Promotion (1973)
Cover of Archis, no. 4 (April 1991), 1991

Construction X
drawing, 1994

Niebuur House, Poortugaal, NL
scale model, 1997

The Unadapted City: Vipc-city House of Prayer
scale model, 2002

'Luc Deleu', Middelheimmuseum, Antwerp, Belgium: General View of the Park
postcard, 2003

Glass Containers in Bulk, 1988-2003
postcard, 2003

'31 Reflections on Architecture', in: The Urbanism Workshop (Amsterdam School of the Visual Arts, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 2005), pp. 2-3, 2005

House of the Province of Antwerp (with 1:1 Archi-

sects)
competition booklet, 2011

'Sector X'
exhibition flyer for a solo show at Rossicontemporary, Brussels, BE, 2012

Airbase Biekorfstraat, House Panamarenko, Antwerp, BE
postcard, 2012

Future prospects

Quote from interview T.O.P. office

Steven Van den Bergh: Actually, *Orban Space* is a continuation of *The Unadapted City*, or, more specifically, a further exploration of urban space. T.U.C. also began as a continuation of the *Usieben-pole* design. The starting point is that not houses but facilities make up a city, *Brikabrak* is a literal expression of that proposition. During the next phase, *Dinkytown*, we started to realize that in fact the space between the facilities, in other words the public space, is even more important. So we wrote arrangements and scores that unconsciously shaped the public space. With *Dinkytown* the approach was rather formal, as we were still mainly focused on manipulating the facilities. With *Vipcity*, by contrast, we started designing the public space itself, so it was no longer the formal end result of the positioning of the facilities. The arrangement and scores in this case were largely written for the public space. *Orban Space* is the continuation of this. With *Orban*

Space, the study of public space goes much further than formal analysis. We are trying to register the acts and networks that define public space, along with all that they entail.

Hans De Wolf: Could one say that, with *Orban Space*, a temporal dimension has been added to the study of public space? Are you now trying to map movement and displacement, in particular the dynamics controlling public space?

Steven Van den Bergh: Yes, I think one could certainly say that.

Quote from: *Future Prospects. An interview with Isabelle De Smet en Steven Van den Bergh*, door Wouter Davidts en Hans De Wolf, in: Luc Deleu - T.O.P. office, *Orban Space* (Valiz, 2012)





Vipcity the nautical mile transat photo-
montage, 2004



Vipcity, BXL Biennale, 2008

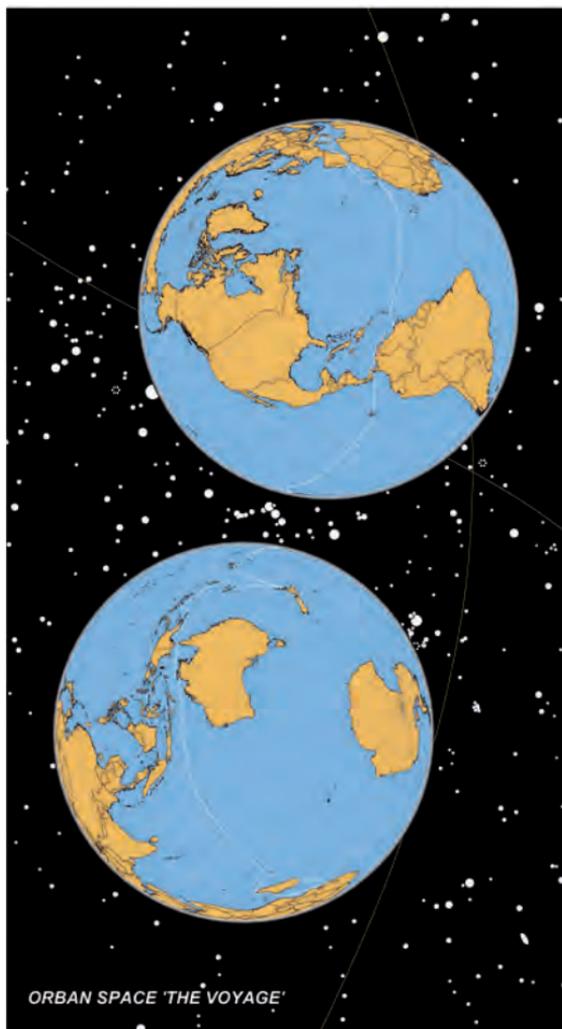
Urban Space

Design by research

***Urban Space* was initiated in spring 2006. The project sprung from *The Unadapted City* (1995-2006) the urbanist, spatial and theoretical research into urban facilities and infrastructure in relation to the ever growing world population. *Urban Space* extends the understanding and expertise that were gained during this decade-long study and attains another scale level.**

Urban Space has the ambition to develop a contemporary theory and a new paradigm for public world space on planet earth, i.e. urban space, in both word and image. With the study T.O.P. office aims to map the wide array of public spaces, ranging from the street, the internet to the world seas. While the reflection about public space within the design of *The Unadapted City* was driven by a mathematics of the anonymous number, public space is being analysed in *Urban Space* by means of a nomenclature of abstract terms.

Parallel to the denomination and cataloging of different types of public space on a planetary scale, T.O.P. office explores the connections, priorities and hierarchies between assorted spaces of commonality. The resulting



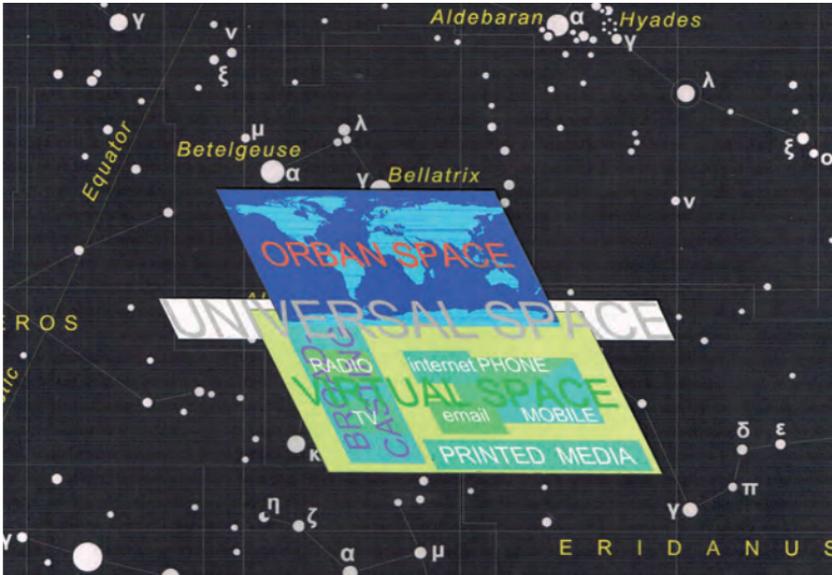
Orban Space: The
Voyage, 2006-2009

taxonomy of public space is complemented with a detailed study of the use and shape of the latter spaces.

With the study T.O.P. office aims to determine whether the design of public world space and its infrastructures can be used as an instrument to organize city and world. Public space is no longer treated as a mere residu of the built environment, but as the prime challenge of urban design. *Urban Space* is fuelled by the conviction that the present-day crisis of public space can be deployed as an opportunity to redevelop that very shared space. As common interests prevail over private concerns in public space, governments are faced with a crucial task to establish themselves by means of a thoughtful management and a genuine plan for public world space.

T.O.P. office (Luc Deleu, Laurette Gillemot, Isabel De Smet en Steven Van den Bergh)
January 2013





Universal Space, 2006

Journey Around the
World in 80 Days
(Madrid-Weber-
Madrid), 1992-1993



Urban Planning Manifesto

T.O.P. office, 1980

Until we can start evacuating our planet on a massive scale, or importing goods from space, we will need to fulfil all our needs with what is found here on Earth – apart from the (required) solar energy and possibly other (unacknowledged, but equally vital) space energy.

One-third of the world population is undernourished. This implies that we would have to expand our existing arable land by over 30% to satisfy our actual needs. Besides intensifying food production per square metre, we could make a huge effort to transform deserts, steppes and wastelands into arable land. But we will also need to utilise as much ‘free space’ in our conurbations as possible for food production. All the more so because if anything, we should strive to save our jungles, forests, woodlands and other nature areas and even expand them into

reserve areas.

If we choose to accept these priorities, in theory this means there are hardly any opportunities left to us to expand our conurbations in terms of surface area. This in turn puts considerable pressure on our living conditions. If we wish to guarantee maximum residential comfort for all, we will need to create far greater efficiency in the organisation of our living environments than has been achieved up to this point. We will need to focus more strongly on the polyvalent use of urban spaces. In this critical phase, the best solution would be for everyone to organise his living situation on an individual basis, according to his personal preferences, resources, options and limits. This can be seen as analogous to the entirely decentralised organisation of a plant community (phytocoenosis), in which every specimen bears full responsibility

within the limits and opportunities offered by its station. On the other hand, we should set strict requirements for the macro-structures of legal entities (organised groups of individuals such as corporations, private limited liability companies, associations, pressure groups, etc.) in order to balance the macro-level impact and land use of such entities with the micro-level impact and land use of individuals within the ecotope (environmental effects and biocoenosis¹). Once again, we can observe an analogous arrangement in nature, in which the biological equilibrium is best served by an ecosystem that comprises a large number of species, as this leads to more diverse effects on the individual species. On the other hand, in a system in which there is a limited variety of species, this equilibrium is more easily upset, which may even result in the proliferation of a particular species (plague).

Inconvenient and unnecessary elements need to be dumped (i.e. shot into space with a rocket). The remaining elements need to be stacked as clearly and compactly as possible (while making sure that these entrepots can be used for a variety of functions). As all communities (anthropocoenosis², zoocoenosis³, phytocoenosis, microcoenosis⁴ and mycocoenosis⁵) are closely interconnected, we will have to be very careful not to smother one in favour of the other. To this end, we need to limit pollution to a bare minimum and recycle as much materials as possible. We will need to be particularly efficient when it comes to recycling organic waste, which can be used to replenish our arable land. This way, we will be able to conserve the maximum amount of biogenic matter (which is necessary for phytocoenosis).

Fortunately, we have a major spatial reserve in the form of our oceans and seas (whose biocoenoses are in a critical state). This reserve is twice as large as the surface on land. For example, the Earth's entire population could be accommodated on one million 40,000-tonne cruise liners. Indeed, if the number of ships were increased to two million, their residents would even be fairly comfortable. The entire population of Belgium could find a perfect mobile home for themselves on five thousand 40,000-tonne liners.

It is my modest hope that the picture of 'momentaneous times' that I have outlined above brings home the importance of adopting a new "urbanist" perspective to town planning and architecture. In 'momentaneous times', town planning and architecture work according to urbanist priorities. The aesthetic priorities and stylistic elements of

'non-momentaneous times' are no longer relevant in a situation of do-it-yourself architecture and self-made cities, in which the built-up environment is codetermined by each individual citizen.

Indeed, in 'momentaneous times', the urbanist architect (urbanist) fulfils an entirely different role altogether. Just as the (pictorial) function of painting (in Western art) changed profoundly after the invention of photography, town planning and architecture (urbanism) have presently undergone a change of function and meaning. A key aspect of the 'momentaneous' urbanist's current profession is providing "information" (reduction of uncertainty). The urbanist is a medium, a trendsetter and/or the town jester, etc... He designs, publishes, performs, exhibits, realises or plays around, and so on.

His new ideal is 'free space'. Instead of focusing on infrastructures that define the Earth's space and make it more one-dimensional, the urbanist now utilises ultrastructures that increase this space without limiting its wide range of potential uses.

Today's urbanist is a theoretician first and foremost – one who in rare cases is able to realise his visionary models that outline how to structure our planet's spaces. Although it is a dynamic and evolving planet, as home to a constantly self-realising urbanism that is influenced by the actions of all its individual inhabitants, the Earth can constantly be considered completed in the 'momentaneous times'.

Notes:

¹ Community of all living organisms

² Human community

³ Animal community

⁴ Bacterial community

⁵ Fungal community

Translation: Willem Kramer

T.O.P. office

Portret

T.O.P. office is an architecture and urban planning firm with many faces and multiple personalities. It was founded by Luc Deleu and his wife Laurette Gillemot in 1970 in their house Les Nénuphars in the stately Cogels Osylei street in Antwerp, one year after Deleu's graduation as an architect from the Hoger Instituut Sint Lucas in Brussels. Based on the recognition that 'it takes a team to deal with the complexities of architecture,' Deleu conceived both the mode and the environment of his commencing practice as collaborative and dialogical.¹ The logo of T.O.P. office further underscored the ethical stance taken by Deleu: a globe upside-down and in reverse, the emblem represented the willful shift from local preoccupations towards a global consciousness. With the concept of *Orban Planning*, Deleu further developed an architecture and urban planning practice that took the earth as its

yardstick. T.O.P. office made an imaginative plea for a tolerant urbanism for a tolerant society, an ecological perspective, true citizen participation, and, avant la lettre as it were, sustainability. The profound changes in the organization of public space, transport and dwelling combined with the steady increase of the world population, Deleu wrote in his *Orban Planning Manifesto* of 1980, forced the architect-town-planner to define new priorities.

T.O.P. office was set up based on two distinct convictions: first, that it would be better to reduce the spatial impact of building and hence to build less, and second, that future developments in communication media would enable new modes of nomadic life. The ensuing early works emphasized mobility versus the immobilism of real estate and questioned the exclusive privilege of buildings as

living and working accommodation. The assertion that '[t]he urban planner has become primarily a theoretician, who in rare cases realizes his visionary views on space of the planet earth,' has constituted the core of T.O.P. office's mission ever since. By means of a consistent formal research and multi-layered design strategies it investigated such dichotomies as order and chaos, or new and existing.

Partly due to his many friendships with local artists, Deleu primarily gained visibility in the art world in the 1970s and early 1980s with performances, sculptures and installations of large-scale objects that shifted the scale and perspective of both urban and natural settings. Rather than being acknowledged as an architect and urban planner in charge of an office, Deleu built up an international reputation

as an artist. However, Deleu's claim that 'building' is not the only available mode to express ideas on architecture and urban planning should by no means be regarded as grounds to portray him as a mere visionary or even utopian architect. To Deleu, the sphere of the arts just served as an additional platform to make his work public, or as he formulated it in a short unpublished statement on scale and perspective in 1986, 'to put his ideas up for discussion.'² His ambitions, Deleu has never failed to stress, have always been situated squarely in the realm of architecture and urban planning.

Even though Deleu engaged in several collaborative projects during the 1970s, both artistic and architectural, it were the various studies for High Speed Rail (HST) lines in Brussels (1986–89), Utrecht (1989–90), Antwerp

(1989–93), and Rotterdam (1990–91), the Housing (& the City public housing contest (1989), the design for the reconversion of the 'De Hef' bridge in Rotterdam into a sky plaza and civil offices (1989–90), or the cruise terminal for Antwerp (1998), that marked a new phase in the structure and activities of T.O.P. office. These large-scale and elaborate architectural and infrastructural design projects required a collective mode of research and a novel degree of shared efforts. In this period the office grew considerably and employing an ever varying number of collaborators. The shift in the late 1980s to the design of large-scale urban projects encouraged the office in the mid-1990s to add a bottom-up approach to the conventional top-down method.

The Unadapted City, an ample study for the development and organization of urban infrastructure

and amenities initiated by T.O.P. office in 1995, was a new pinnacle in this development. Idiosyncratically labeling it as 'design by research' T.O.P. office invested in a long-term mode of research and in the development of more sophisticated concepts. This new development moved into a higher gear in 1997, when Isabelle De Smet and Steven Van den Bergh joined T.O.P. office and soon after became permanent staff members. In little less than a decade, the new team developed a unique model of collaborative practice centered upon aleatoric techniques and engaging stochastic processes that led to autopiloted design. As they worked together, and often simultaneously, on one single computer drawing for *The Unadapted City*, all the while combining high technology and chance principles, T.O.P. office merged authorship to a large degree. Parallel to an adherence to strict rationality,

T.O.P. office tried more and more to get hold of the synchronicity of things in the processes of creation.

T.O.P. office has always cherished its position as an independent research team that develops an autonomous format for urban research by design. On many occasions T.O.P office has participated in debates on the present state and the future of architecture and urban planning. Yet the drive behind the work and practice of T.O.P. office has never been merely theoretical. The many and varied activities of the past four decades have resulted in a distinct understanding of the design challenges of very large and complex programs and meanings, this from a planetary point of view and bearing the earth's scale in mind. They have developed a unique sensibility for oversized monumentalism and

advanced the strategy of imaging concepts. Yet the conceptual vocation of T.O.P. office has always been coupled with the sincere desire to consolidate the built-up expertise and the acquired knowledge in the very practical realm of building. The claim to build less is all too often mistaken for a refusal to build.

¹Luc Deleu, *The Ethics of Architecture*, April 1989, p. 1.

²Luc Deleu, *Schaal & Perspectief*, [Switzerland] 1986 (unpublished). This position is echoed by Deleu's aphoristic statement that 'I am an artist because I am an architect.'

This is a shortened version of the portrait written for the publication *Luc Deleu - T.O.P. office Urban Space (Valiz, 2012)*.

Stroom School

Stroom School is the umbrella term for the side program Stroom organizes to accompany exhibitions. In the Stroom School, the themes of the exhibition are highlighted and more profoundly explored.

The Stroom School program accompanying *Orban Space* includes guided tours of the exhibition, lectures, talks and workshops.

Up-to-date information about the activities, dates and times can be found on www.stroom.nl.

Guided tours

On a number of Sundays guided tours of the exhibition are organized. The tours are given by artists, architects and scientists who will give their personal interpretation of the works in the exhibition. For

groups of students it is also possible to book a guided tour during weekdays. For specific groups we offer so-called lunch-lecture tours. Interested parties are invited to contact Stroom.

March, 10, 3pm

Guided tour by **John Körmeling**,
artist and architect

March 24, 3 pm

Guided tour by architect **Vera Yanovshtchinsky**

Collaboration KABK

Around the exhibition there will be a close collaboration with the Royal Academy of Art The Hague (KABK). Under the guidance of the designers Sophie Krier, Cathelijne Montens and Krijn Christiaansen, students of the interdisciplinary Research Lab Next door will work on an assignment around the public space of the Schilderswijk.



Tribune, 1972-1975



Less is Less, graffiti on window Stroom, 2013

About an office that doesn't want to build

Review

The images of the earth floating in space and the poetic name that Buckminster Fuller coined for our planet, 'spaceship earth', inspired Deleu to come up with his so-called orbanisme — a form of urbanism and architecture that takes the human scale, as well as its significance for the whole world, into account with every intervention, no matter how small. Or as he writes 'Orbanism aims for an integrated practice of urbanism and architecture at a planetary scale and tries to view the earth as the spatial and social context for cities and architecture. Orbanisme therefore aims for a balanced organisation of the earth's space.'

Deleu is not only an orbanist but also a big relativist; his way of talking about his ideas, projects and orbanisme is almost cursory. He sprinkled his presentation with that characteristic humour with which Belgians so unerringly expose the absurdity of our world. Deleu flicked nonchalantly through a

number of projects from the early years of his office, including the Mobile Medium University, his proposal for a new university in Antwerp located on three ships. Once these students have completed their studies, they not only possess academic knowledge, they are also worldly-wise.

But despite the numerous jokes, he's serious. He made that clear not just by racing through his Orbanist Manifesto (1980). This manifesto, he concluded contentedly, still summarises his vision well. With his work he has also compiled the consistent oeuvre that he aspired to when he graduated and contemplated the question what an architecture office should look like that isn't going to build, or rather, doesn't want to build! Deleu devoted the largest part of his lecture to The Unadapted City (D.O.S), an urban study into the alternative use of urban space, which the office worked on from 1995 to 2004.

Deleu's urbanism is a logical elaboration of three critical premises, namely: that urbanism limit itself to determining the necessary volumes, infrastructure and services; that urbanism do not interfere in private lives; and that urbanism impose limitations on multinationals and institutes that are to the advantage of everybody. That makes this form of urbanism a direct reflection of Deleu's own critical view of society and urbanism.

He himself expresses it thus: 'The central theme is the search for an original form and organisation of what makes a city a city, for what makes everyday life pleasant and gives meaning to public space: an autonomous, three-dimensional and monumental (infra)structure, an example of contemporary collaboration between the private and public sector; attractive public transport and pleasant public space that display the identity of the community in symbolic fashion; a controlled urban space that is controlled and controllable

from inside to outside and under the urban roofs, and is provided with a system of public transport that is conceived as a horizontal lift; a space-park / park-space for pedestrians in symbiosis with the peripheral space for vehicular traffic; attractions and amenities for car drivers, intermediate stations for drivers and pedestrians; a public space in open space.' (La Ville Inadaptée, p.62).

The research into The Unadapted City started with a proposal for a linear city called Usiebenpole on the island in the River Donau near Vienna. On this 22-km-long strip he initially planned 1000 Unité d'Habitation buildings — 'the best apartment building there is of course' — and then asked himself how he should charge the public space. How many cafes, how many social functions, which medical facilities, where to play sports? These questions signalled the start of an endless data study that he then represented wonderfully — 'because I simply have to sell my drawings

to get by as a non-building architect'. Over the years this unadapted city has grown, and complete districts with names like BricaBrak and DinkyTown have been added. The project ended with a 1850-cm-long model — 1/100th of a nautical mile — of VIPCity, which was presented in 2004 at the MUHKA museum in Antwerp. Since 2006 Luc Deleu has been working on a new study called ORBAN SPACE into urban space on a world-wide scale.

The meta-studies result in wonderful, powerfully formal images, comparable with his artworks in public space. In terms of content, however, the images are much more difficult to digest. The theory and the data cloud that lie hidden behind the images are not to be comprehended in just one evening.

Just how difficult it is to fathom his work became clear when it was the audience's turn to pose questions. Even though the majority of them were professional colleagues,

scarcely any critical questions were put concerning the content of the work. Instead, they revealed the classical lack of understanding for the paper architect and his choice not to want to build. For example, he was asked: 'What do you leave behind as an architect/urbanist if you do not build?' A remarkable turnaround. Deleu hit the ball back by saying: 'I am an architect who wants nothing'. The question from urbanists and architects should be 'What can I do, or do I want to do, with the work of Deleu as an architect/urbanist?' His logical and full consideration of the Orbanist Manifesto, which focuses on mankind and the spaceship earth, has not lost any validity, and is worthy of study now more than ever.

Marieke Hillen

The Knight's Move lecture, March 30, 2011

Published on Archined:
<http://www.archined.nl>

Colophon

The project **Orban Space: Luc Deleu - T.O.P. office** (2010-2013) is a collaboration between Wouter Davidts, Luc Deleu - T.O.P. Office, Stroom Den Haag and Valiz book and cultural projects. The project consists of an exhibition and publication. For that purpose an international 5 day masterclass was held in March 2011 for students of different disciplines and the contributors to the publication.

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Later in 2013 the exhibition will travel to Extra City Kunsthal, Antwerp.
www.extracity.org

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In parallel with the exhibition, a comprehensive publication with both visual and written essays on the work and practice of Deleuze and T.O.P. office has been published by Valiz, book and cultural projects ISBN 978-90-78088-60-8 www.valiz.nl

Den Haag