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 Gregorio Carboni Maestri (T1),
 Johnny Leya (T2)**

**AGRIVISIONS
 2024-2025
 Architectural Visions
 for Agricultural Transition in Europe**



AGRIVISIONS is a research-by-design studio dedicated to the issues of ecological transition in agriculture, with a focus on the Walloon cattle-raising and dairy sectors.

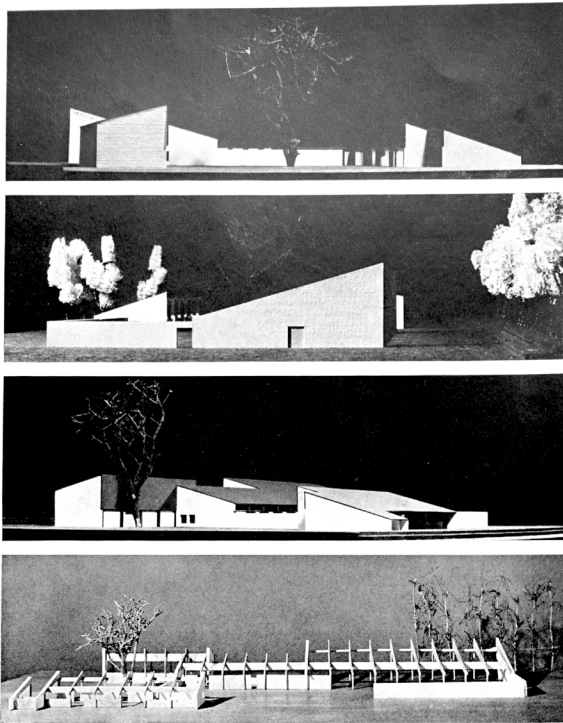
The farmers' protests held during the 2023-24 winter have revealed the tensions between the means at hand and the costs of the transition objectives – reductions of greenhouse emissions, of phytosanitary products, of herds, of monoculture – set by the EU for 2050. Within this frame, neither the spatial nor the functional constraints or opportunities offered by agricultural architectures are being considered as a potential leverage.

“Europe” and “Agriculture” are two recurring notions within the architectural debate which are seldom linked to one another. Still, agricultural policy has been and remains one of the major foundations of the European construct, and any architectural project is an opportunity to question top-down and ungrounded policies

in the face of a given, situated and personified place. AGRIVISIONS occupies this neglected space, taking stock of the geographical vicinity of European institutions and the recent renewal of both the European Parliament and Commission (2024-29).

Following the last major phase of agricultural modernisation (the postwar boom), a lasting gap has grown between agriculture and architecture. Unable to compete with the benefits of industrialisation of both production and farming facilities, architecture has been sidelined from the agricultural sector. Today, as climate change and the many shortcomings of dominant production models place agriculture under increasing pressure, farmers and experts are focusing on gradual, limited and palliative innovations. Hence, there is still room for a reflexive effort aimed at sketching out new visions that are equal to the challenges at stake.

Finally, as both experts and citizens/consumers, we are all too



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often underequipped to find our bearings in a debate whose terms and values stand beyond our understanding or appear irrevocably conflicting. Family farming vs. corporate farming? Indebtedness vs. lock up of capital? Dependency to industry vs. limited revenue? Internal vs. international competition? Food sovereignty vs. global markets? Large result networks vs. local supply chain? Conventional vs. organic farming? European institutions vs. local authorities? Animal vs. vegetal proteins?

AGRIVISIONS raises the following question: what are the possible contributions of architects / of architectural design to the public debate and to the envisioning of potential responses to these stakes?

To this end, the studio focuses on the topic of cattle farming and dairy production in Wallonia, more specifically on the Hainaut Province. The research and design objects concerned range from pastures,

stables, dwelling, and the farm at large, to the dairy, the slaughterhouse, the cold storage warehouse, the milk-tank and truck yard, the logistic platform, the market and the retail store, throughout the production chain all the way to the end user.

The studio consists of two interrelated periods:

- the first term, which pursues an exploratory scope;
- the second term, which pursues an experimental term.

During the first term, students compile an atlas of exemplary agricultural architectures (B3), map out the spaces of cattle farming and dairy production in the Hainaut Province paired with on-site surveys (M1), and write a position paper on a specific issue related to the topic (M2). All these productions are collected in a 'bestiary' and put to the test through a 'dummy' design exercise. This effort is fuelled by off-campus visits to production sites organized by the teachers,



lectures, theoretical contributions and meetings with stakeholders in the field.

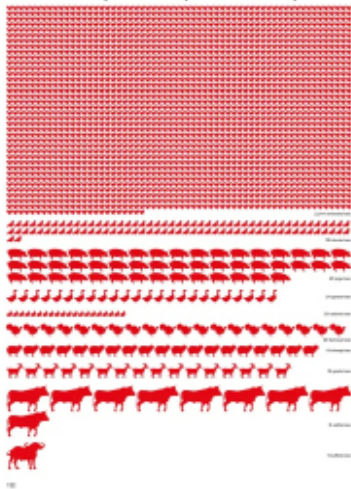
During the second term, based on the range of issues and problems highlighted during the first term, students identify a site, a working scale, appropriate resources and means, in order to demonstrate, through an architectural project, avenues for an ambitious vision of agricultural transition in the Hainaut Province. To this end, students autonomously build, under the instructors' watchful eye, contacts with stakeholders in the field and a situated knowledge of the examined reality.

The studio's educational approach takes advantage of the teachers' diverse profiles and skills (see below) which stand at the crossroads of scientific research and reflexive practice, between architecture, urban

planning, regional planning, landscape, and museography in their links with policy(ies). We envisage the studio as a space for the co-construction of knowledge, know-how and soft skills, in which teachers, students, and partners question the studio's topic, leaving room for everyone to take strong stances out of any form of dogmatism. Our commitment towards reality takes stock of the designing process' multiple dimensions. We acknowledge how architectural design may work as a problem-solving device, but may just as well serve to reveal desirable futures. It may also limit itself to merely identifying problems (without solving them), or produce visual representations of complex realities in order to support public debate or decision-making. As a result, the studio's expectations fluctuate between producing operational solutions and exploring future visions.

In doing so, AGRIVISIONS aims at training future architecture

Animals killed per second (worldwide 2020)



Slaughterhouse floor plan



operators who are aware of and master their discipline's limits and strengths, but also at becoming more informed citizens/consumers.

Teaching location

Lombard site, to be specified (link) + off-campus activities to be detailed.

Key activities and timetable

The detailed timetable of activities will be presented at the beginning of each term (including assessment dates), and may be adapted as opportunities arise. Attendance at all sessions listed in the official timetable (link) is strongly recommended. Attendance at activities organized during official studio days (site visits, stakeholder meetings) or during 'project weeks' and 'jury weeks' is compulsory (see teaching calendar: link). Attendance at off-schedule activities (lectures, debates,

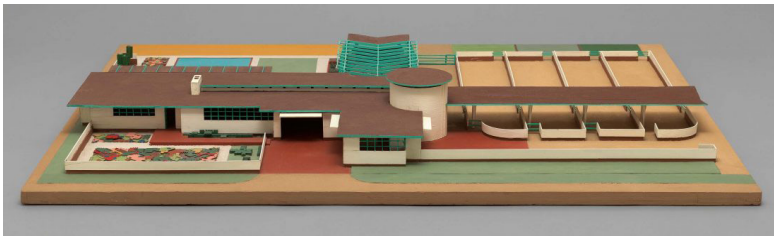
exhibitions) is strongly recommended.

Teaching languages

The studio's day-to-day working language is French, but knowledge of English is required to interact with external participants and for understanding the reference documentation. Erasmus students are welcome (2 terms!). Students do hold a minimal B1-level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR: link) for each of these two languages.

Articulation between design studio & M.arch. dissertation

Students (M1-M2) willing to undertake a Master dissertation on a subject related to the studio's are warmly welcome. An intensive writing workshop may be organized during the SIP for this purpose (Q2).



The teaching team:**Axel Fisher, Johnny Leya, Gregorio Carboni Maestri**

Axel Fisher is associate professor at the ULB Faculty of Architecture, where he has taught architectural design in both bachelor and master-level studios. He has also taught design studios at the Politecnico di Milano and at a number of international workshops, mostly within the frame of Erasmus partnerships. At ULB, he lectures a 'Landscape Theory' course, and lectured for many years in the 'Questions d'Architecture: Paysage et territoire' elective course. He has supervised research training seminars at ULiège and many Master dissertations. He holds a master's degree in architecture (Milan, 2007) and a doctorate (Milan, 2011). He has conducted research on architecture and rural planning in relation to 20th-century rural modernisation policies, supported by numerous grants (FNRS, COST-EU, Horizon Europe, ARES, WBI, ESF)

and marked by various publications (CLARA, Planning Perspectives, Springer, etc.).

Gregorio Carboni Maestri is a MAPA senior architectural project assistant at the ULB Faculty of Architecture, architectural design in both bachelor and master-level studios. He has also taught design studios at the Politecnico di Milano and at a number of international workshops, mostly within the frame of Erasmus partnerships. He has lectured at UCLouvain and supervised numerous Master dissertations. He has worked with a number of renowned architectural firms (RPBW, Archea, Citterio, Viel), and helped found the DIA firm. He holds a master's degree in architecture (Milan, 2007) and a doctorate (Palermo, 2015). He has conducted research abroad (GSAPP-Columbia, Graham Foundation, CCA) on the history and theory of late 20th-century architecture in relation to political commitment.



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Johnny Leya is an AEX teaching assistant at the ULB Faculty of Architecture. He graduated with honours from the ULB Faculty of Architecture (2015) and co-founded the architecture firm Traumnovelle. He has worked in various architecture and urban planning firms, including Charleroi Bouwmeester, Ole Scheeren (Beijing) and Muoto (Paris). He also teaches at the ERG in the Design and Politics of the Multiple master's programme. He is a regular guest critic at Paris ENSA-Versailles, EPF-Lausanne, ETH-Zurich and Sint-Lukas Brussels. He has been invited to numerous workshops throughout Europe and has been a guest lecturer at the Gerrit Rietveld academy. As part of his firm, he represented Belgium at the 2018 Venice Biennale of Architecture (Eurotopia), and contributed to the Polish Pavilion questioning rural areas (2021), as well as to the Slovenian Pavilion (2023).



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Images

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- 9 Beladon. (2019). Floating Farm, Rotterdam. Photograph by Hollandse Hoogte/Shutterstock [Photograph].

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