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**INITIAL MEMO
LIMBURG
GOVERNMENT
ARCHITECT**
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Lava: Residential Complex Eendenoord, Genk

Foreword

Former Flemish Government Architect Bob van Reeth recently tossed up the idea of appointing a Government Architect in Limburg. The present initial memo underscores the enthusiasm that has arisen around the proposal amongst the people working in this area in Limburg. A Government Architect fits Limburg's ambition and the dynamic that traditionally characterises it. The initial memo outlines the context in which the Government Architect will operate. It is now up to all stakeholders to collectively draw up an agenda.

Architectuurwijzer, November 2012

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Architectuurwijzer, a non-profit association, promotes architectural and spatial quality in Limburg and the wider Meuse-Rhine Euroregion. For this purpose, it maps architecture, organises lectures and excursions and publishes available information. In this, Architectuurwijzer embodies the architectural culture of Limburg. With the designation, juxtaposition and weighing-up of tasteful creations, a wide audience is given insight into the added value of architecture for the living environment.



Ney + Partners: Bridge over the Albert Canal, Vroenhoven



Ney + Partners: Bridge over the Albert Canal, Vroenhoven

Today, Architectuurwijzer is proposing the appointment of a Government Architect in Limburg. A critical architectural culture does not operate within the seclusion of the professional sector and its training institutions, but within the daily reality of construction. Therefore, Architectuurwijzer is promoting an administrative body to launch the dialogue about architectural and spatial quality amongst parties whose activities are determinative for the environment in Limburg.

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De Gouden Lijniaal: Reconversion Cigar Factory, Dilsen-Stokkem (© Dennis Brebels)

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The Government Architect confirms the architectural culture as the foundation and the cement of spatial development in Limburg. Design consultation, spatial control and a cross-border perspective sharpen the ambitions of clients, developers, local authorities and government departments. It allows the various parties to attune their mutual desires to each other and to distribute responsibilities. In this way, the Limburg Government Architect lays a solid basis for cooperation amongst the partners involved.



Lava: Social Housing Complex De Steymer, Genk (© Arno Roncada)

In recent months, the proposal for the Government Architect was sounded out within the Limburg architectural field. Also, experiences and suggestions were collected from relevant parties and stakeholders with a similar function. The present memo describes the expectations placed upon the Limburg Government Architect and with that as starting point, sketches the outlines of his area of work. The initial memo is an invitation to everyone to contribute their thoughts about the use and benefit of the Government Architect for Limburg.

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BVB: MAD-faculty, Genk (©Marc Sourbron)



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The Government Architect is the subject of the first Parliament for Architecture in Limburg. Design agencies, design schools, researchers, professional associations, public authorities, administrative departments, public and private clients, construction companies and other stakeholders are gathering on 21 November 2012 in C-Mine! Genk. Those present will be examining the proposal for the Limburg Government Architect and will exchange views and expectations. Jointly, an agenda will be formulated that will be decisive for the future of Limburg.

In no way is the level of provincial government in Limburg in decline. It is using its brand name in the pursuit of constant change. In so doing, the Province is striking back at the structural disadvantages against which the region is battling. Linking to the dynamism that traditionally characterises Limburg is the message. Spatial development is a key driver within this framework. It offers a considerable spin-off in cross-border cooperation, the development of talent, sustainability, innovation and quality of life.

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Gijs Van Vaerenbergh: Reading between the lines, Borgloon (© Filip Dujardin)



Broekx-Schiepers: Social Housing Complex, Lummen (© Dennis Brebels)

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The Province of Limburg has an indirect impact on the environment. The largest share of construction output in Limburg takes place on the initiative of private clients. The contracts for public works are commonly issued at higher or lower levels of government. In both cases, the Province must make use of the commitment of others to realise its own ambitions. Traditional tools, such as spatial structural planning and delineation of urban areas, are inadequate for this purpose. Reversing negative situations through provocative design challenges demands a new approach.



BARAK: Van Dinter House, Maaseik (© Filip Dujardin)

The Limburg Government Architect acts as a mediator between different levels of management and private parties. The driving forces at intermediate management level are exploited to transcend fragmented responsibilities and ad hoc decisions. The Limburg Government Architect lays the basis for a professional collaboration and increased involvement. Professional collaborative links contribute to the quality and dynamics of the environment. All projects – large and small – must contribute to the importance of Limburg.

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ONO: Youth and Culture House De Steen, Bocholt (© Filip Dujardin)

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The Limburg Government Architect is outward-looking. The cross-border perspective inspires the field of architecture in Limburg and provides desperately needed renewal. An assertive architectural culture also challenges the surroundings with high-profile projects and provocative design issues. The saying 'unknown is unloved' applies only to the extent that indifference reigns supreme. Neighbouring countries and regions – Flanders in the first instance – should get better acquainted with Limburg.



Beel & Achtergael Architects: Gazometersite, Sint-Truiden

The Limburg Government Architect performs three mediation tasks:

- attuning interests and desires related to individual, local projects (consultation platform);
- carrying out spatial control beyond the local area related to common design challenges (liaison officer);
- promotion of projects and constructions with provincial charisma and acquisition of talent (PR).

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Broekx-Schiepers: Private Home, Zutendaal (© Studio Claerhout)

first assignment

FROM APPEAL TO MEDIATION

Aim

To prevent appeal procedures offered by the Province from being used to damage the quality of the living environment in Limburg.

What?

A platform where stakeholders come together for discussion and reflection related to a concrete construction project.

Where?

Around local construction projects with a strategic impact at provincial level (in terms of visibility, use or symbolic value).

When?

At regular intervals linked to the decisive steps in the construction process: project definition, architect selection, procurement, process monitoring, completion.

How?

Important files are searched out and in consultation with the parties concerned and the competent authorities, a consultation agenda is drawn up.

second task

FROM STRUCTURAL PLANNING TO SPATIAL CONTROL

Aim

Preventing the failure of cities and municipalities to identify with imposed structural plans thus undermining the ambition of building a strong brand together.

What?

Cities and municipalities are brought together about common design challenges and formulate a coherent vision.

Where?

Design challenges and building projects for which cities and municipalities bear responsibility, but where the issues extend beyond municipal borders. Consider reuse of mining heritage, landscape conservation, mobility, urban congestion...

When?

Proactively, strategically and permanently

How?

Workshops bring the competent authorities and parties involved together in relation to specific design challenges. The workshops are complemented by design research conducted by universities and consultancies.

third assignment

TOWARDS A CHALLENGING ARCHITECTURAL POLICY

Aim

Preventing the reputation of spatial developments from remaining restricted to within provincial boundaries and thus not doing justice to the importance of innovation in Limburg.

What?

Profiling the Limburg development area internationally.

Where?

High-profile design challenges, building projects and constructions that symbolise the development potential and the innovative character of Limburg.

For whom?

Outside world and own hinterland.

How?

Targeted communication ties high-profile design challenges, innovative achievements and visionary design research together into a provocative image of Limburg.



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An Architect active at provincial level has no equal. The initiative takes its inspiration from the post of Flemish Government Architect, created to depoliticise the definition of projects and choice of architects within Flemish public contracts. For the first time, through independent and professional advice, architectural and spatial quality were given the chance to be built into the heart of an administrative context. In the footsteps of the Flemish Government Architect, the Limburg Government Architect envisages a professionalisation of the spatial development in Limburg.

The Flemish Government Architect introduced renewal from the outside into Limburg by granting project-related assistance. A number of tasteful architectural projects are the result of this. The task list of the Limburg Government Architect complements the local operation of the Flemish Government Architect. It acts as a fulcrum for local activities of the Flemish Government Architect. It then provides an extension where the task of the Flemish Government Architect ceases, particularly with regard to process monitoring and quality control. It expresses, ultimately, a local voice in the formulation of a Flemish architectural policy.

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Omgeving: Traffic Interchange, Lummen



Omgeving: Traffic Interchange, Lummen

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The quality improvement in the living environment of Limburg is also the responsibility of the 42 cities and municipalities. Ambitious urban visions and professional services guarantee acclaimed architecture and promising plans. The range of action of cities and municipalities, however, is confined to their own powers. Their clout has to contend with defective (internal and external) communication, understaffing and lack of capacity (inter alia because of the requirement to have a degree). The Limburg Government Architect meets these requirements and provides a platform for the exchange of professional knowledge and experience. The Limburg Government Architect thus constitutes a sounding board that enables local authorities to better carry out their own responsibilities.



a2o: Virga Jesse College, Hasselt

The Limburg Government Architect will build up his activity and credibility from scratch. The greatest challenge lies in the participation of private and public clients. To this end, the Limburg Government Architect maps out various collaborative relationships:

- participation on condition of being paid expenses (persuasion);
- participation in exchange for additional funding, manpower and PR (enticement);
- participation depending on the scale and the provincial impact (commitment).

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NU Architectuuratelier: C-Mine Expedition, Genk (© Stijn Bollaert)



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Embedding the Limburg Government Architect into the provincial administration is an obvious option. Nonetheless, there are also opportunities for carrying out activities similar to a civil servant within the Flemish Administrative Centre, as project leader of the Flemish Government Architect or as a mandate-holder within an inter-communal initiative. In any case, the Limburg Government Architect arouses trust through enthusiasm, independence and accessibility. The Government Architect must be accessible to all cities and municipalities in Limburg.

The role of Government Architect is being created to optimise the performance of building projects in the interests of Limburg. The Government Architect does not build, but provides support for existing initiatives. Public and private clients are spurred on to assume responsibility. Local authorities are stimulated to put their powers into action. Regional government departments get a point of support. The Limburg Government Architect becomes more successful the less he has to act. It is a position – not an office – that, in the best case, makes itself superfluous.

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NU Architectuuratelier: C-Mine Expedition,
Genk (© Stijn Bollaert)



noA Architecten: city campus UHasselt

Not part of target audience, but the actual capital

Architects, town planners, spatial planners and (designer) researchers are not part of the target audience of the Limburg Government Architect. They are actually the capital needed for a Government Architect to function. They provide the design intelligence to integrate conflicting claims on space, convert spatial issues to stimulating challenges and get beyond seized rusty thought structures.

colophon

author: Gideon Boie, BAVO

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Postbus 80, B-3500 Hasselt

info@architectuurwijzer.be

www.architectuurwijzer.be

partners

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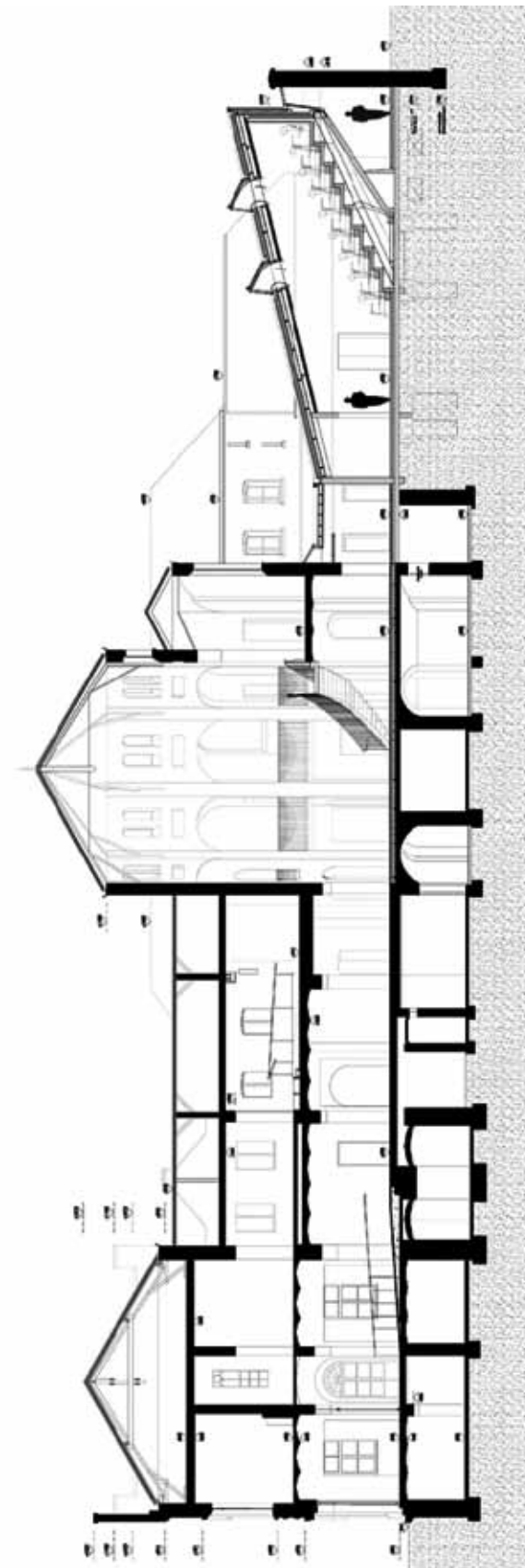
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City of Hasselt

Vandersanden Group

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PROVINCIAAL LIMBURG BOUWMEESTER GOVERNMENT LIMBURG ARCHITECT