

Preface

Regiopolitan Living Parkstad Limburg

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Parkstad Limburg is a modern name, a policy metaphor, given to the urban landscape in our former coal mining region around the city of Heerlen. The mines were closed in the 1960s when cheap American coal and the find of a large natural gas bubble in Groningen ended the golden era of Dutch coal. In social/economic sense the region still did not completely recover from this blow. Moreover, Parkstad is one of the demographical shrinking regions of Europe.

This region is bristling with interdisciplinary assignments for architects, landscape architects and urbanists. It therefore became the location for a design and research studio of 3rd year students in landscape architecture, architecture and urbanism of the Academy of Architecture Amsterdam. The studio took a slightly polemic angle: it wanted to research, show and use the potentials of this relative low density urban landscape when it comes to formulating answers to the environmental problems we are facing: climate change, energy transition, water problems, agricultural transition and the mobility-revolution.

Over 16 weeks 8 students worked on prospective design proposals and research. Anne Floor Timan-Wenzel became intrigued by the hidden world of the mining past beneath her feet. Her design proposal aims to reveal these hidden

layers and explores the creation of a Geopark as a way to give direction to the development of Parkstad. Anne-Marije van Duin designed a 'shrinking coping'-strategy that requires a rethinking of roles and responsibilities of municipalities and house owners in order to redesign green public space and stimulate social cohesion. Ellis Soepenbergh used methods like mapping to explore possible directions for development for Parkstad. Would the making of a new blueprint be a fruitful next step? Or do we need designs that act as conversation pieces about next steps? Jacoba Istel researched the correlation of ecology and cultural development. Her project of a drift sand landscape as part of folk university demonstrates how this correlation could offer new perspectives on preserving our planet. When Marlies Doesburg found out the firefly had been spotted near Geleenbeek she decided to design a poetic 'firefly experience' for inhabitants and visitors of Heerlen, as well as a way to improve the biodiversity of the site. Sophie van Eeden returned to Heerlen after our fieldtrip as quick as possible, carrying a camera and folding ladder. She objectively chose forty-six points to visit and used the photo material to read the Limburg landscape in a fresh way, showing that activating your senses leads to accurate observations and site-specific design choices. Tale Bjelland focused on the silver sand mines on the edge of Heerlen. She looked to the module of the commons to foster a sense of belonging and permeability, but also to encourage a better biotic layer within the site.

With this booklet we proudly present in a compact way the student's projects and research. The aim of sharing these projects is to boost the conversation about the potentials for Regiopolitan Living Parkstad Limburg. We would like to thank IBA Parkstad for their input and support of this studio and invite IBA, its partners and stakeholders to take note of our workpieces and continue our conversations together. A wonderful opportunity to do so would be the 2021 conference Regiopolitan Rumble. We also would like to thank the research group Intensive Energy Landscapes, that is part of the Academy, for their support and involvement in this studio.

