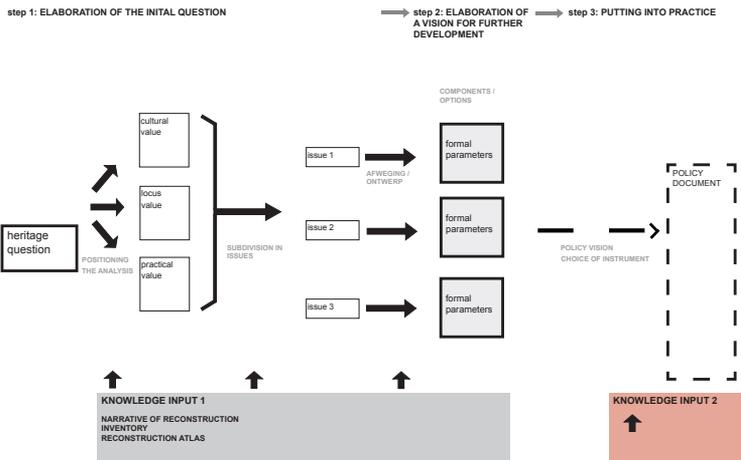


# Labo S/04 Reconstruction Architecture in the Front Zone of '14-'18

Commissioned by: Province of West Flanders  
2007-2008  
Collaborators: P. Uyttenhove, T. Bulckaen, M. Liefgooghe, D. Schmitz



The study 'Reconstruction architecture in the front zone of '14-'18: Ieper and Heuvelland', dating from 2007, served as a first exploration on how to deal with reconstruction architecture in Ieper and Heuvelland, against the backdrop of a policy that desired to articulate a vision concerning this architecture. A year later, the study was followed by a 'Reconstruction architecture in the frontzone of '14-'18: an atlas of the villages of Heuvelland', a completion of the mapping of the villages of Heuvelland.

## Context

After World War I, around 100 000 buildings were destroyed or laid in ruins in Belgium, with the biggest damage in the front zone, the axis of Nieuwpoort-Diksmuide-Ieper. The reconstruction took place between 1919-1926.

As a result, during that period of time, a completely new landscape was laid out in the front zone. Woods had disappeared and were only partially replanted. Farms, villages and towns got rebuilt with an altered layout. A considerable number of prominent buildings got restored in a so-called reconstruction style, an eclectic style with mainly local style figures.

With a broad consensus, local municipalities value these historicising buildings as heritage. However, the less articulated buildings in cities, villages and on the countryside as well play a vital role in composing the overall image. An image that is characterised by a striking homogeneity.

Nowadays, this patrimony is under an increasing pressure, since renovations and demolitions of buildings seem inevitable in order to meet the current living standards. Therefore, a critical reflection upon this issue is crucial when aspiring to establish a decent heritage preservation policy on one hand and generate opportunities for

INSTRUMENTS SUPPORTING THE VALUE ANALYSIS
<b>cultural value:</b>
- NARRATIVE of reconstruction
- INVENTORY valuable buildings,
<b>locus value:</b>
- ATLAS reconstruction structures
<b>practical value:</b>
- generally obvious
- additional study

FORMAL PARAMETERS
- a selection of what premises to preserve
- location and layout of the plot
building alignment, building lines, freestanding volumes or street façade, circulation, green layout, layout of public space
- building form
typology (workers house, commercial premises, elongated farm, villa, school, presbytery...)
building volume
façades (level of articulation, with or without depth, openings in the façade...)
- materialization

POLICY STRATEGIES
- awareness
best practices
governance
publications
...
introducing a jurisdictional framework for a permit policy
preservations
spatial plans
subsidies
...
negotiation (preferably before granting the building permit)
action
urban design
obtaining property
formulation project definitions
...

From heritage questions towards policy making.

a qualitative and sustainable urbanism on the other.

## Framework

To conduct the research, a framework was set up, enabling to evaluate specific heritage conflicts by granting each building or case study with certain parameters or values: a practical value, a cultural value and a locus value.

The practical value refers to the extent that a building can meet the current user needs. These needs can vary in one building, depending on the regarded user. The functional capacity, the building physics, adaptability... all influence the practical value of a building.

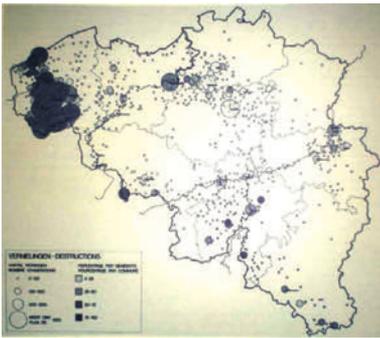
When a building expresses current or historical contemporaneity, one can assume it has cultural value. On one hand, we make an appeal to buildings in order to commemorate, remember or get introduced to certain historical events, as well as to the past itself. On the other hand, some buildings are valued for their expression of the contemporary cultural

climate.

The locus value is determined by the extent to which a building is conducive to the urban fabric or is essential to a bigger, qualitative ensemble. An ensemble can be a cluster of buildings, a street view, a town- or cityscape or a landscape. Hence, the locus value of a building should be considered in relation to its environment.

All three values stand independently next to each other, for reconstruction architecture as well as for new architecture. This way, the framework generates the possibility to evaluate existing conflicts and to formulate conditions or ambitions for future developments. Moreover, it becomes apparent that contemporary architecture and urbanism can be embedded in a legible and coherent reconstruction landscape. A landscape that is not static but can unfold itself in the future.

Atlas of the spatial reconstruction structures  
The intention of this analysis of the



Location of the ca. 100.000 destroyed building after WWI.



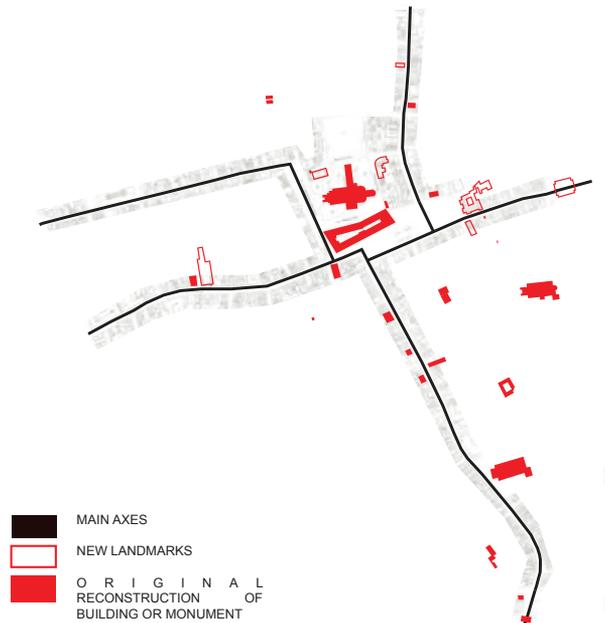
Building Alignment Plan Ieper 1924.



Building Alignment Plan Westouter 1924.



< The historicizing image of a building is mainly due to the front façade: the cornice line of the front façades is divers and articulated strongly compared to the rear façade.



Map depicting the main structures.

reconstruction landscape is to deduce an 'urban structure' of the reconstruction of the inner-city of Ieper and the villages of Heuveland, that proves relevant for the policy regarding heritage and urban planning. Therefore, an atlas was composed, collecting a series of maps, initially covering Ieper and three villages of Heuveland: Kemmel, Westouter and Dranouter and in a later study completed by the remaining villages of Heuveland. The atlas is intended as an instrument to enable well-considered decisions regarding building permits and other planning documents and to set the agenda for an enlightened spatial policy. The various sub-structures are presented in separate maps and visualised by means of photographic series. In certain cases, the superposition of different maps can reveal which element of a building is an 'exception' and which follows a certain contextual logic. Moreover, one can investigate whether a building is conducive to the image of the village, intended at the reconstruction.

The document focuses on the reciprocity between the public space and the reconstruction architecture, since the level



Map depicting the secondary structures

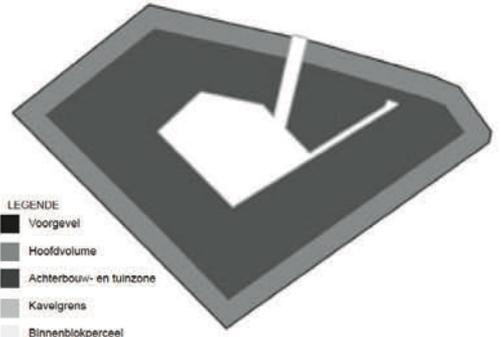
Map depicting the tertiary structures.

of publicness of a place and its position within the urban fabric seem to play a vital role in the design of reconstruction architecture. This interplay is demonstrated by the noticeable difference in attention and effort put in the front and rear façade, or the explicit distinction between the design of public and private space. The more public a building, the more an individual expression prevails over continuity. On the other hand, composition principles such as repetition, mirroring and variations on neighbouring premises, used due to a pressing need for housing in the post-war time, are mainly found in the outskirts of the village.

Therefore, three more subsequent steps are proposed to generate several feasible options. The first two steps, elaborate the initial question and formulate a vision for further development, are illustrated by means of the case studies. The final step refers to choosing the appropriate policy instrument. Obviously, the content of these policy documents should be guided by the first two steps.

#### Case studies

By means of case studies in the inner-city of leper and the villages of the Heuvelland, this research attempts to work out a methodology to evaluate current spatial developments and to provide them with a suitable policy. The methodology proposes to map the complete process from heritage conflict to a suitable political answer. The value analysis is an efficient and useful instrument to answer certain questions but is, however, not sufficient.



Case: the expansion of a corner dwelling in the village of Kimmel.

Case: workers houses in the Kegelstraat in Leper.