

en couverture

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édito

Un nouveau master pour apprendre à concevoir des éco-territoires 1

Jean-Philippe De Visscher, Pierre Defourny, Yves Hanin, Cécile Poullain, Elisabetta Rosa, Guillaume Vanneste

Un jet privé au LAB-day, et après ? 2

Marie Pirard

Cinq points de vue sur la recherche 4

Hugo Caruso, Hugo Vanhamme

L'envie au cœur des archives 10

Olivier Masson

Le projet INTERREG VI LUNÉfil 16

Coraline Berger, Fiorella Quadu

L'envers du décor 22

Nele De Raedt, Giulia Marino, Corentin Haubruge

A shift of paradigm in the way we build 30

Christine Fontaine

A shift of paradigm in the way we include natural entities 34

Christine Fontaine

Multiplication des intervenants dans la rénovation 37

Dorothee Stiernon, Emilie Gobbo

Architectural intelligence and generativity 40

Molly Wright Steenson, Emilie Gobbo, Damien Claeys

Rue Isabelle 44

Martin Buysse

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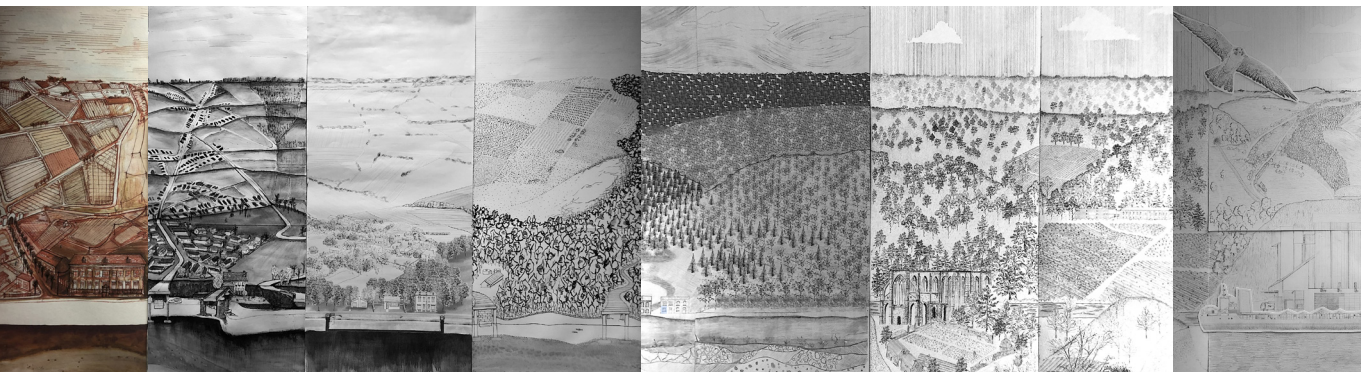
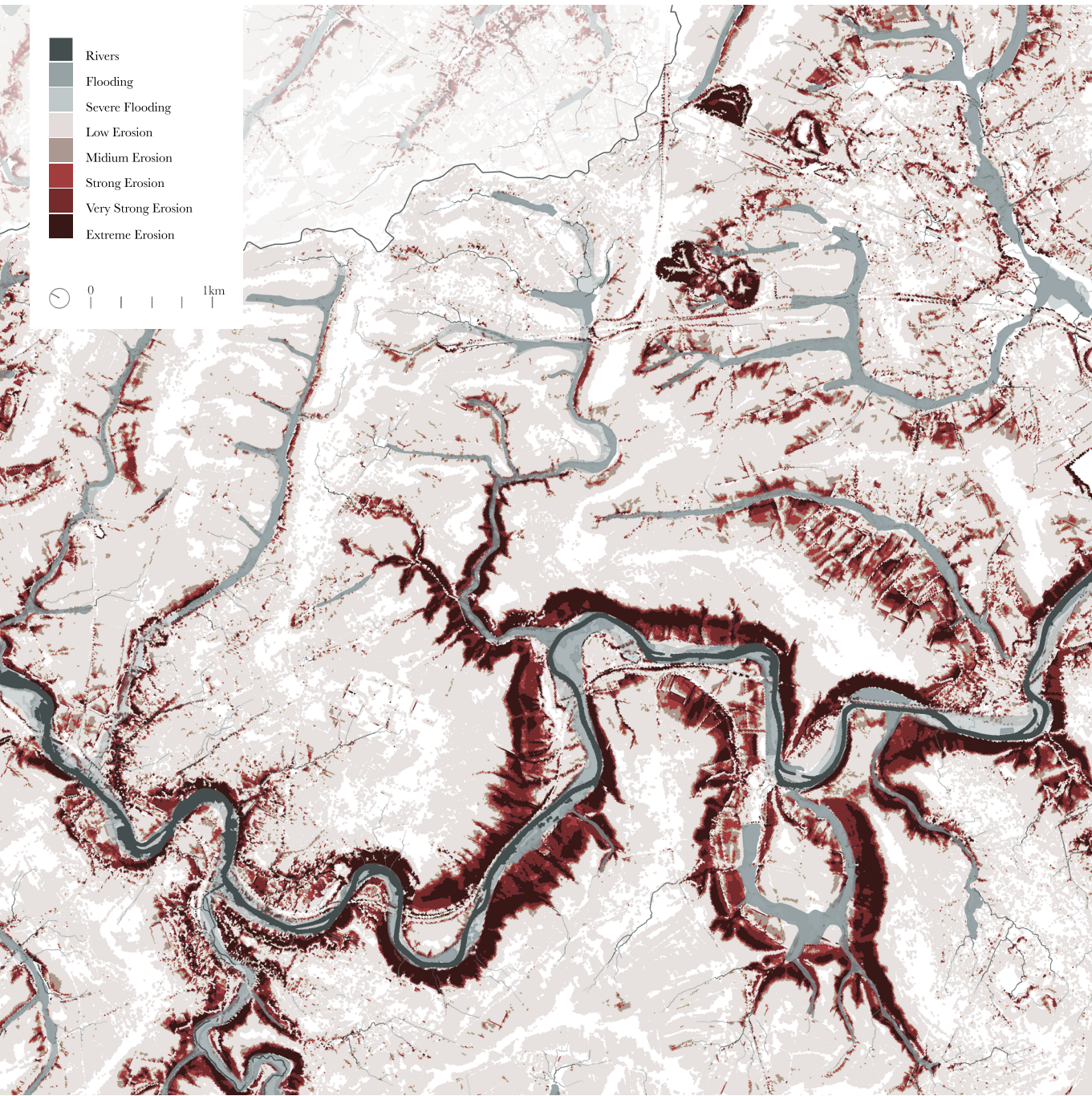


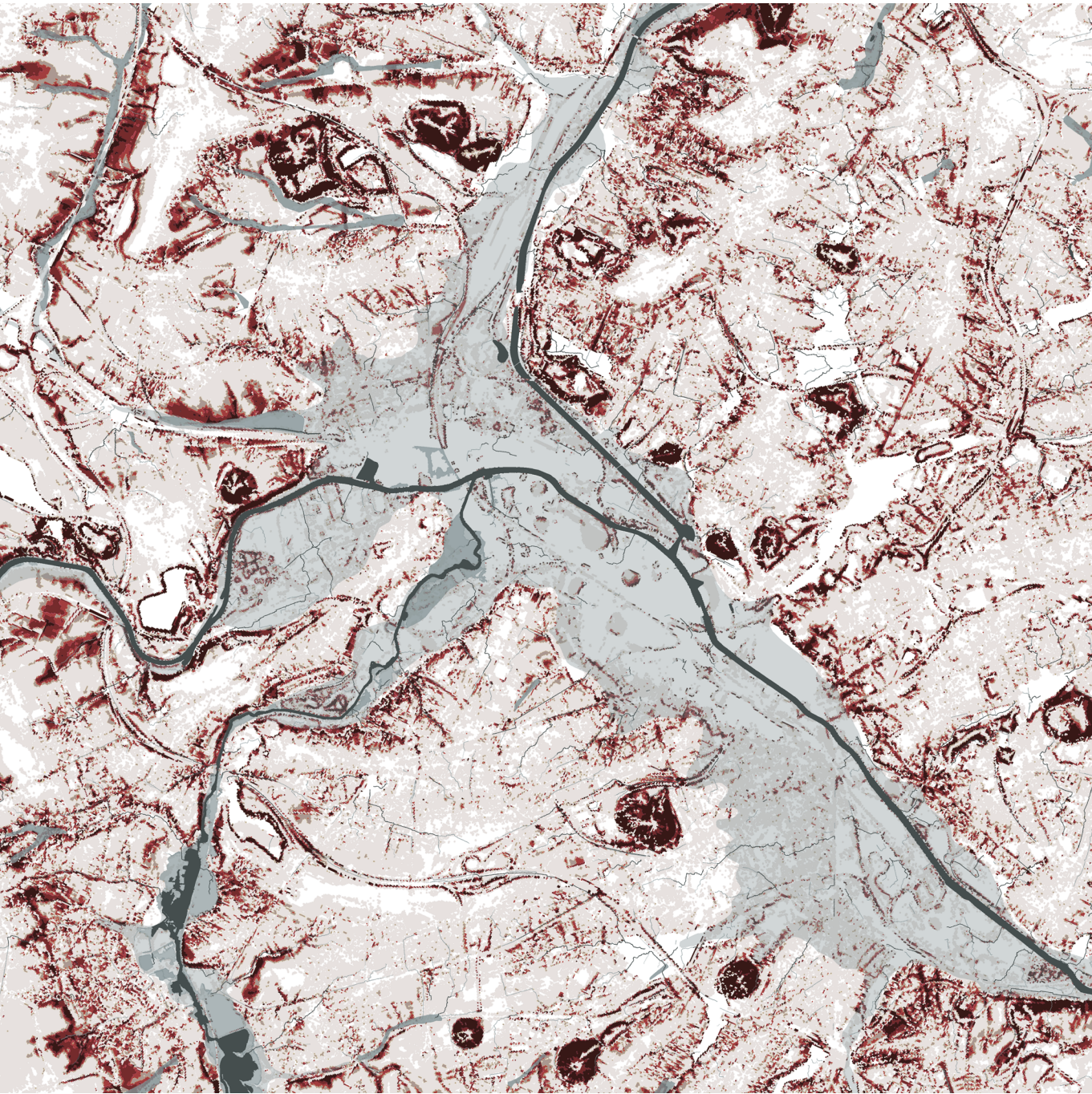
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⑨ *Sambre Erosion*, cartography realized within the project *A Journey Along the Sambre* by the loci-ima students: Eugène van Outryve d'Ydewalle de Diest, Myles Al Zobai, Lucija Pavlice

⑩ *Mirrorama*. Collective work of loci-ima students, a graphic narrative of the *infinite visions* of Sambre, from upstream (left) to downstream (right).



A shift of paradigm in the way we include natural entities

SAMBRE'S OUT-STITUTIONS

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Abstract. This year loci-ima is interested in the physical/cultural/sustainable environment of Sambre, to understand and reinvent ways of cohabitating with the river. In network with the stakeholders of the project Sambre2030, ima learns from the different portraits of the river to produce tentative designs aiming at a resilient landscape with Sambre, towards possible collaborations between humans and non humans. At the architectural studio, ima raises different questions: How to reinvent and reactivate the commons in the face of contemporary challenges? How to give the river Sambre the respect she deserves? How to give her the space to regenerate and a shared development with humans?

Keywords. architecture · Sambre · landscape · rights of nature

Résumé. Cette année, loci-ima s'intéresse à l'environnement physique, culturel et durable de Sambre, afin de comprendre et de réinventer les modes de cohabitation avec la rivière. En réseau avec les acteurs du projet Sambre2030, ima s'inspire des différents portraits de la rivière pour élaborer des projets visant à créer un paysage résilient avec Sambre, en vue de collaborations possibles entre humains et non humains. Au sein d'un atelier d'architecture, ima soulève différentes questions: Comment réinventer et réactiver les communs face aux défis contemporains? Comment donner à Sambre le respect qu'elle mérite? Comment lui donner l'espace nécessaire à sa régénération et à un développement partagé avec les humains?

Mots-clés. architecture · Sambre · paysage · droits de la nature

The international master in architecture (ima) has chosen to address, investigate, and position toward pressing and emerging challenges of contemporary cities and landscapes. These issues are continuously explored and elaborated both in research based seminars and in – research by – design studio, that aims to ground, inform and provoke a dialogue with both civil society and decision-makers. This year, loci-ima collaborates with a network of stakeholders raising the awareness of the importance of recognizing the fundamental rights of natural entities, defined by one of our lecturers, Marine Yzquierdo, as the right to exist, to flourish, to regenerate, to fulfill essential ecological functions. The Sambre 2030 collective, under the coordination of Olivier Pestiaux, is moving forward in giving Sambre a legal, cultural and environmental personality.

Inspired by a set of initiatives (Parliament of Loire, Bronx River, actions around the Whanganui River, etc.) and motivated by the improvement of the quality of the ecosystem of living things around the Sambre, we want to obtain by 2030 the right for the legal personality "Sambre" to take legal action with a view to defen-

ding the quality of life of the community of inhabitants – human and non-human – of the Sambre river basin. (<https://www.sambre2030.org/>)

The first river channeled since 1830, frozen, vaulted, made invisible, polluted, Sambre has been colonized, abused, bereft of its original biodiversity. However, the river is still structuring its landscape, from its source in the woods of La Haie-Equiverlesse in France, to its confluence with the Meuse in Namur, Belgium. It has enabled the enrichment of a productive landscape, as illustrated in the de Croÿ album from the beginning of the 17th century, down to the mining and steel industry for two long centuries, 19th and 20th. As we will mark the bicentenary of its canalization in 2030, five years are left to try to reverse our human behavior towards the river and to imagine a path other than the productive landscape alone, that of a more collaborative landscape with the natural entities from which Modernity has tried to separate humans for generations. Since Christopher D. Stone's fundamental thesis of 1972, *Should Trees Have Standing?*, researchers and associations across the planet, have raised their

voices to protect natural entities. Some of them have gained the right to swim in their rivers. Today, people claim the right to drink their river's water.

In this matter, the Global South is a real inspiration. In Ecuador, the protection of natural entities is enshrined in the constitution, as in New Zealand, the Whanganui river obtained a legal identity for the first time in 2017. In Europe, we do not have guardians of the continuity between humans and non-humans, as in the Global South, where tribes or communities speak on behalf of their river the way Philippe Descola described for us in *Par-delà nature et culture*. In the Global North, we talk about possible river parliaments, in the sense of Bruno Latour's *Parliament of Things*, a more anthropocentric format, but which in the short term could help protect the river, which needs to be urgently reconsidered as an entity in itself.

The courses given in loci-ima this fall have thus taken the point of view of and from the river, observing whether this change of paradigm could disrupt our way of composing landscapes. The result was innovative project-based research, inspired by the people living between Charleroi and Thuin, who have shared their knowledge, enthusiasm, ideas, and visions of Sambre for possible futures for the river.

At the UCLouvain-loci-ima studio, the Sambre project has unfolded in three stages.

Tempo 1 put us to work immediately, reading and analyzing existing case studies, archives and numerous cartographies. The collection of this diverse information allowed the production of knowledge, ultimately assembled in a series of synthetic maps and portraits of Sambre. In parallel with these drawn discoveries, a series of works invited us to change our perspective on the Modern tendency to seek domination, colonization and exploitation of natural entities, considering them only as a resource in a productive cycle. In these times of climate upheaval and biodiversity collapse, a paradigm shift is gradually leading us to reframe our position in the act of composing architectural and landscape designs, seeking a more collaborative environment between humans and non-humans. It was therefore important at this stage to start searching for Sambre. If we have to defend her legal identity, who is she? What does she look like? And how could she change the way we conceive the towns and rural areas settled beside her?

Tempo 2 thus invited us to meet Sambre, through an in situ immersion. Five partner universities (UCLouvain Brussels, AHO Oslo, Ion Mincu Bucharest, IUAV

Venice, ENSA Paris-Val-de-Seine) deployed different pedagogical methods to report on the river through drawings, photographs, films and writings. Several portraits and narratives emerged.

Tempo 3 took us in search of the humans who inhabit Sambre's watershed, the 'diplomats' – according to Isabelle Stengers – humans and non-humans, who know the river and can report on her qualities, the caretakers who see her and live in contact with her, but also those whose lives could change if the river regained quality and biodiversity. This work in the studio was conducted in parallel with a seminar where we questioned the words recalled by Marine Yzquierdo: changing the "cultural matrix" of our legal system from a "right to destroy" to "the rights of nature". A research by design exercise was therefore undertaken in the studio, developing scenarios of possibilities between radical positions: that of recognizing fundamental rights of natural entities, to the other extreme that of extending the duties expected of the river by humans; hoping that at the meeting of these two positions, we could find proposals for conciliation, coexistence and well-being for humans and non-humans, in a spirit of solidarity, complementarity and mutual care. This research by design was presented at UCLouvain-loci-Brussels in December 2024. These tentative designs allowed us to initiate debate and make choices committed to the pursuit of the future of Sambre and the human and non-human settlements that inhabit its watershed.

The lessons learned from these proposals led us to question if Sambre was only defined by its minor bed, its major bed or its watershed, and realize that the river could be the territory inhabited by 500.000 humans defending its rights and claiming a legal recognition in a text of law, like in the Mar Menor's case.

It all seems to come back to human representatives: a tribe? a parlement? Another political form is possible, one already experienced in the Brussels-Capital region in 2019 by an innovative group of stakeholders, the G1000 (<https://www.g1000.org/en>), with David Van Reybrouck as director and writer of the book "Against Elections".

This loci-ima second semester is therefore dedicated to imagining the spatialization for a Sambre G500, spaces of contact with the river, to better understand it, spaces to welcome and care for its fragilities, but also, a place for decisions and actions, spaces built with non-extractive methods and material reuse. This Spring, students are encouraged into a material-driven design, to create a tripartite program: a refuge; a space of proximity with the river; and a parliament held once a year.

As the pedagogy brings us into unknown territories of new concepts to think, we stay apprised of the evolution of the scenarios discussed in the context of associations and between thinkers and actors around the world:

- As in the case of the Mar Menor Laguna in Spain, the *International des rivières* coordinated by Camille de Toledo, works on the possible legal identity granted to Loire and which could lead to a bank account granted to the river. Could this supposition help the river buy back its major bed in the case of Sambre, permitting her to expand, flourish and offer a bounteous microclimate in these time of climate extremes?
- Could we weave a new narrative with a community of humans concerned by the river, like for *Voice of Nature Kinstitute* with Maria Lucia Cruz Correia as the representative for SZeNe?
- Or can we project ourselves forward 50 years, the way *Democracy next* founded by Claudia Chwalisz invites us to act in consideration of how future generations will live?

The work on Sambre invites us to design the future of the river with a new sense of time and space, at the pace of the river, thinking of her bed as an opportunity for her to expand when needed or for humans to share commons when she retreats, producing a microclimate conducive to cool spots in hot summers, the redeployment of a nourishing ecosystem for the inhabitants, towards an alliance between river and humans, an out-stitution. ■

Links

The Outdoor Swimming Society. <https://www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/a-right-to-swim>

The Voice of Nature Kinstitute. <https://voicofnaturekinstitute.org/about/maria-lucia-cruz-correia>

The DemocracyNext Institute. <https://www.demnext.org/people/claudia-chwalisz>

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