Space Speculation is a research by design studio linked to the Laboratory of Urbanism, Infrastructure, and Ecologies (LoUIsE). The studio addresses the socioeconomic and ecologic transition of existing cities and their hinterland as a condition for a sustainable future, and the tools spatial designers need to harness in order to accompany such transition.

Cities are complex and interactive ecosystems. Their transformation demands a multi-scalar reflection about the material and energy flows circulating through or into them as well as the processes contributing to articulate those flows, also known as Urban Metabolism (UM). The adjective 'urban' has major consequences on this metabolism because it addresses not just the place where metabolism takes place but also the underlying social contract that determines the form and organization of production and consumption within cities.

By placing 'urban' in the first place, questions other than the quantification or the detailed inventory of flows crossing our cities gain in importance, like the one about agency: Who decides the way this social contract has been designed? How is it managed? By whom? Who (agencies, associations, individuals…) are trying to question it? And how can we as spatial designers intervene upon it? How much of our work should encompass the design of places as well as the identification, connection, and disentanglement of these diverse flows and the actors gearing them?

Our first hypothesis is that only by moving from ‘mapping the urban metabolism’, to ‘designing with the urban metabolism’ we make possible for spatial designers, architects and alike, to move from an object-centered approach to a systemic one, engaging flows, actors and places into their proposals for urban transformation.

**Language skills**

Space Speculation is a studio taught in English, giving its participants a chance to practice and improve their language skills. A level of A2 to B1 is expected from students willing to undertake it.

**Studio specs**

The studio starts from particular places and actors, so as to reclaim the highly contextual and contingent but transformative nature of any spatial design work. The geographical context is limited to Brussels’ metropolitan area. For the last couple of years, we have devoted our attention to the Canal zone and the possibilities of developing an emancipatory project around circularity, exploring the opportunities offered by old industrial areas, and the ecosystems they are embedded, for transition. The work within the design unit is organized in groups, mimicking the collaborative and strongly 'dialogic' and interdisciplinary work in the real world.

**Former work**

[http://www.metropolitan-estudio.eu](http://www.metropolitan-estudio.eu)


Cover image: Joachim Beuckelaer, The vegetable vendor (1563)