



Arcadian landscape (Claude Lorraine, 1647), Zeche Zollverein (Alex Knapp)

# ARCADIAN ANTHROPOCENE

SPRING 2020, OPTION STUDIO

Peter van Assche with Dillon Pranger

Since the last glacier period nearly 10,000 years ago the world has been defined by the Holocene age which has witnessed rapid growth and development of all aspects of life. However, it is only recently that we have begun to reclassify our geological epoch as one being largely influenced by humans due to overwhelming global evidence of ecologic, geologic, biospheric and other conditions directly altered by our presence. It is likely this new epoch, the Anthropocene, will not last that long, since human behavior has led to the depletion of precious resources and an imbalance in earth's ecosystem. Only recently has the irresponsible risk of our relationship to the earth become clear to a broad public. At our current rate of consumption Earth only has a limited ability to defend itself against human intervention. Circular design and thinking provides a solution to restore a balanced relation between humans and planet earth. In a circular system, there is no waste, and raw materials are intended to be used over and over again. Energy and material cycles are closed, and the damage to our earth's ecosystem is kept to a minimum. Circular thinking might provide the long-lasting solution for man and earth to live together again in a happy coexistence: a true Arcadian Anthropocene.

More than half of the waste that our civilization produces comes from construction and infrastructure. For architects, the principal designers of waste production, the transition to circular thinking means a fundamental transformation across the full breadth of the field of work. In this studio we will explore the consequences and benefits of circular thinking for our profession. We will do this in two consecutive parts. First, we will challenge current society (with its linear system logic) with an imaginary squatting intervention. Second, we will design a mixed-use housing complex within a circular context.

Squatting, the occupation of unused buildings without the permission of the owner, was a more or less accepted method of dealing with the housing shortage in Amsterdam during the 1980's. Nowadays, like many urban European cities, squatting is forbidden, building occupancy is at an all-time high, and Amsterdam faces a shortage of middle-income housing. The introductory assignment uses the concept of squatting - now in small unused vacant spaces throughout the city - as an opportunity to design a small temporary circular dwelling for one middle-income household. The design process will be used to become familiar with concepts of circular thinking as applied to conventional building logics while exposing the drawbacks of traditional linear thinking.

In the main assignment we will look at circular system logic itself. Our site is in the up and coming district: Amsterdam-Noord. Here, a former industrial area will be transformed to a new, sustainable neighborhood. Through the lens of circular thinking, we will design a mixed-use high-density housing complex for new communities. You will be challenged to not only produce a building, but approach the problem through circular thinking at every scale of design. New economic models will be required to accommodate circular thinking, resulting in potential unforeseen and unexpected typologies. Your approach will show to solve societal issues that traditional linear thinking is unable to cope with. Traditional building processes will be questioned and redesigned resulting in new construction methods, detailing and materializing.

Visiting Critic Peter van Assche ([vanassche@bureauSLA.nl](mailto:vanassche@bureauSLA.nl)) will be in Ithaca from January 21 - February 5, March 9 - 19, April 13 - 21, May 4 - 7 and will also participate in the week long field trip to Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Visiting Critic Dillon Pranger ([drp94@cornell.edu](mailto:drp94@cornell.edu)) will collaborate in the studio on a full-time basis in Ithaca. The field trip will take place from February 16 - 21. A \$500 field trip contribution will be required.