TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S) – DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
A Primordial Landscape as Heritage

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present in person (with a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):
A Primordial Landscape as Heritage
As in the past our built patrimony played a key role in defining the identity and the local traditional and cultural values, our current society is marked by a multitude of identities. Often this results in approaches towards patrimony and architecture which are marked by generic and ‘fit-to-all’ solutions. This paper explores an attitude towards the potential of landscape as an alternative to ‘built’ heritage. The research originates from a particular architectural intervention, namely the design of a crematorium amidst a cemetery in Lommel, Belgium. As an ubiquitous culture of burial is lacking, the design brief demands the architecture of a contemporary crematorium to accommodate to all kinds of rituals, interpretations and individual expressions, no longer leaving room for just traditional symbolism.

Instead of evoking a particular and contemplative atmosphere through religious symbolism or cultural references, the expression is linked to an essential and profoundly human expression of nature and landscape. It is this universal power of nature which shows the potential to replace the contemplative aspect, previously installed through symbolism. The presence of nature becomes humane and self-evident, as a tangible common ground, appealing to different cultures and traditions. The proposed landscape consists of an untouched "primordial landscape", a restoration project in which the indigenous environment is brought back. The approach refers to the intangible heritage found in the ideals of 19th century romanticism, expressing a new interplay between built and unbuilt space. The significance cannot be merely found in the architecture but in its surroundings, the landscape is prevailing over the building. The building itself takes on the role of a shelter which seeks to find contact with its surroundings. Not the tangible and built spaces, but the presence of nature aspires an intangible expression of contemplation, simultaneously being universally recognizable as delivering unique and eternal identities.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

As a design agency, a2o seeks to connect man and space through action-based research with an attitude towards searching for social relevance and collective added value. Therefore, a2o aims for appropriate answers to questions about architecture, urban development and conservation. Any solution or strategy, built or unbuilt, begins with reflection on the urban landscape. These answers, resulting from research, can sometimes be experimental, but they are always oriented on results. Thus, we not only devise spatial concepts, we also build them, with craftsmanship as the key element. A transdisciplinary team allows us to make optimal use of our diverse expertise for each project, both during the process and on the building site. With an expert team of research-oriented architects, urban designers, landscape designers of different nationalities, a2o, over time, has become active both nationally and internationally. We share our knowledge through publications, lectures and
expositions, and are continuously treading a fine line between the academic world, the arts and society.