

## 361°

Looking to the future is mostly represented as peering at a limited spectrum on the horizon, or as being on watch with a forward or upward glance. However, the essence of the contemporary looking to the future is not peering into the distance. It is looking around, taking all directions of our field of vision into account and making use of all 360 degrees of our capacity of insight. "All directions" are the access roads of our history: the present, the past and the future. "All directions" are as many scientific disciplines and methods to estimate or explain developments and turns as possible, as well as – or maybe even mostly – unbiased, emphatic conversations with all existent actors in society: consumers and producers, white collars and blue collars, northerners and southerners, the elderly and the eccentric, advocates of the cause and hermits, fathers and daughters, believers and non-believers, polluters and cleaners, dreamers and doers, people with indigenous roots and people with roots from elsewhere...

Even so, the 360° panoramic view on time, humanity and society does not suffice. One degree is missing: the degree of reflection, of vision in its own right, of the (wo)man in the mirror, of introspection... If you want to look to the future, you need to listen! To voices, all 360° of them, but also to the one voice that can be found on the 361<sup>st</sup> degree: the inner voice<sup>1</sup>, which tries to justify the unjustifiable in our society.

Without this extra degree, we will fall into the trap of typical mercantile projects such as the placement of unsightly solar panels on our roofs. Yes, we also decide to buy them for the environment and air quality, but it is mostly the EPC value of our house and wallet that we are thinking of. Promoters, installers and the government that's funding the project express it in money: today you may have to pay several thousands of euros, but you'll get it back in eight to eleven years. You can buy a bigger diesel car with the profits...

Contemplating 'cathedral' futuristic views are about broader societal benefit projects, for which immediate financial yields are not important. The Ringland in Antwerp is a good example. Now a combination of tarmac, traffic and air pollution, it can become an oasis of space, green, air and light from the moment that Ringland is realised. The present-day generation won't live to see it, but their offspring certainly will. The project aspires to reach a considerable improvement of environment and well-being in 25 to 30 years' time. According to Ringland, optimizing the Antwerp Ringroad will lead to a rise in capacity of 10 percent. This can even become 50 percent by adding lanes in the area with the busiest traffic. It would also improve the air quality for more than 350.000 inhabitants, thus attaining a sum of 1700 years in one's life that will be saved as well as a huge decrease in the amount of allergies and respiratory infections of youngsters in more than 350 Antwerp schools. In addition, there have been plans for a tenth Antwerp district on top of the traffic lanes, which will accommodate 39.000 Antwerpians. That equals two thirds of the expected population growth for 2035. The district will also include 500.000 square kilometres' worth of offices, stores and a football field. All building structures combined take up less than 25 percent of the available space, which will make Ringland the greenest city district of Flanders with its 297 hectares.

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<sup>1</sup> In classic, Freudian psychoanalysis this is called 'Superego' or 'Uber-Ich'; popular speech refers to this as a 'conscience'.

So anticipating what is about to come is essential for our 361° compass, but a chronometer in due course isn't a luxury item either. You see, the velocity of change changes as well. Inventions and turns are barely allowed the opportunity to settle and ripen, which has an effect on the noble art of prophesying: before you know it, you are predicting the past! Questioning old doctrines and making way for a new way of understanding things, for a new doctrine, is the next box we have to check on our to-do list. This is the doctrine of dealing with paradoxes: the **paradoctrine**.

The paradoctrine is the study of unlearning what we have learned up until now. It doesn't have a clear-cut definition or any fixed regulations, but these are probably some of its creeds:

- Put an end to making plans in traditional chains of cause and consequence, and start drawing up scenarios about the certainty of the uncertain.
- Absorb paradoxes and treat customers and co-workers based on the way they are in the year 2016: people who tend to show less predictable behaviour and more and more malpractices.
- Start collecting information and experiences continuously, by preference the former through the latter.
- Use your intellectual impertinence: break the rules, not in order to make a difference, but in order to innovate.