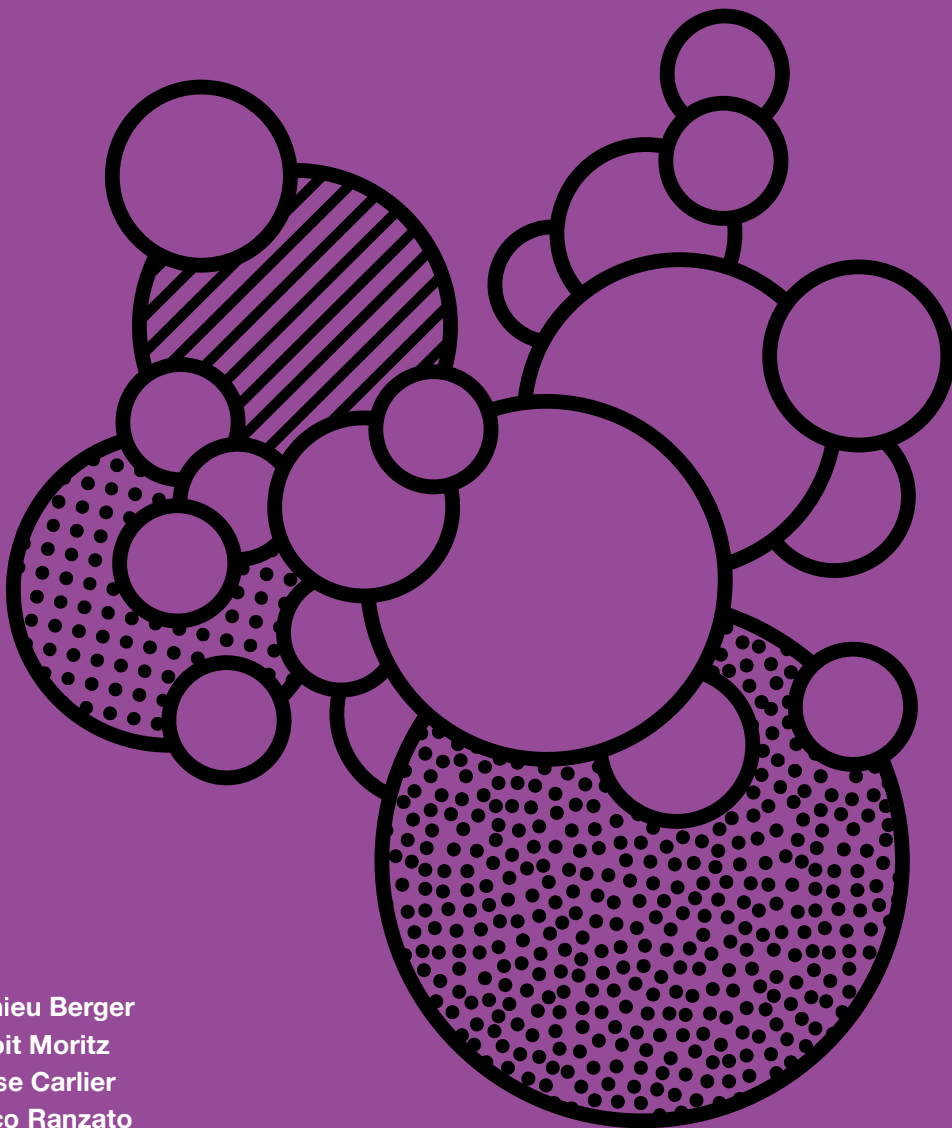


Designing Urban Inclusion

Metrolab Brussels MasterClass I



Mathieu Berger
Benoit Moritz
Louise Carlier
Marco Ranzato
(eds)



Metrolab series

Designing Urban Inclusion

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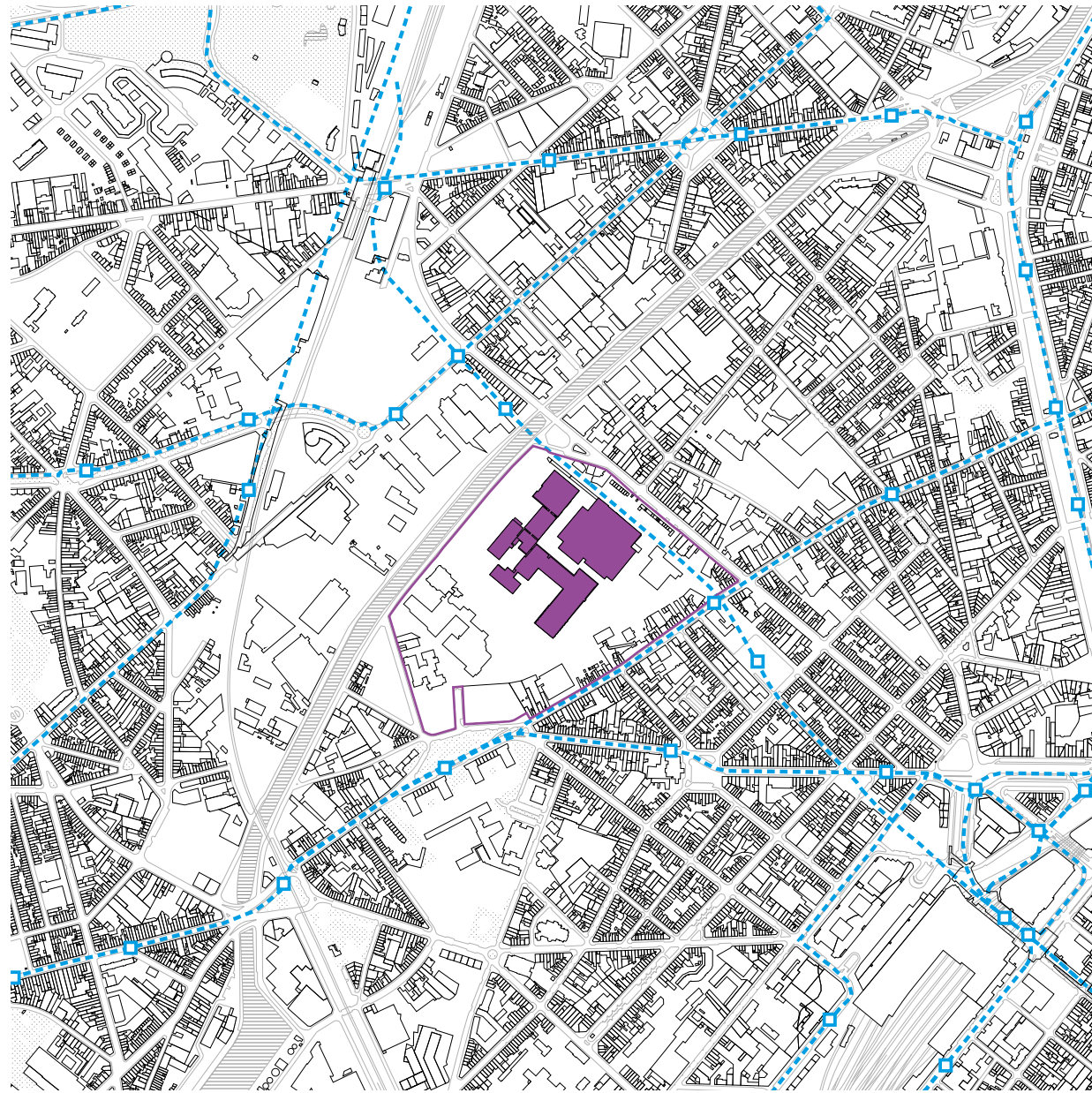
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Context plan

0 200m



■ ERDF project built-up space

■ green areas

■ canal

--- public transports

● bus / tram stops

Site 1: Abattoir

A new meeting place for Brussels

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 Corentin Sanchez Trenado (tutor)
 Baptiste Veroone (tutor)

**To invite****To ease****To allow****To shelter****To host**

Introduction

With over 100,000 visitors each week, the Abattoir of Anderlecht is Brussels' largest market and probably one of the city's most important social institutions. The weekend market, however, is not the only unique aspect of this venue. The Abattoir site also hosts one of the very few remaining urban slaughterhouses in Europe. While most of the meat production today is done far outside the cities and therefore invisible and inaccessible to most Europeans, the citizens of Brussels still live in the immediate vicinity of a functioning slaughterhouse. The two bronze bull statues guarding the main entrance are symbols of this traditional function. Behind them, the visitor is faced with an impressive covered open space (100 by 100 metres) which, from the end of the 19th century to 2008, hosted a cattle market. It is now classified as a historic monument. The slaughterhouse is located behind this imposing steel construction, along with a number of buildings that accommodate around 40 meat-packing companies and wholesalers. The Foodmet, designed to host e.a. the meat and fish merchants and separate them in so doing from the rest of the market, is the newest development on the site. The site, which is leased from the municipality of Anderlecht by the Abattoir S.A. company, totals 11.7 ha (some 6 of which are open space) and includes a large car park bordering the canal.

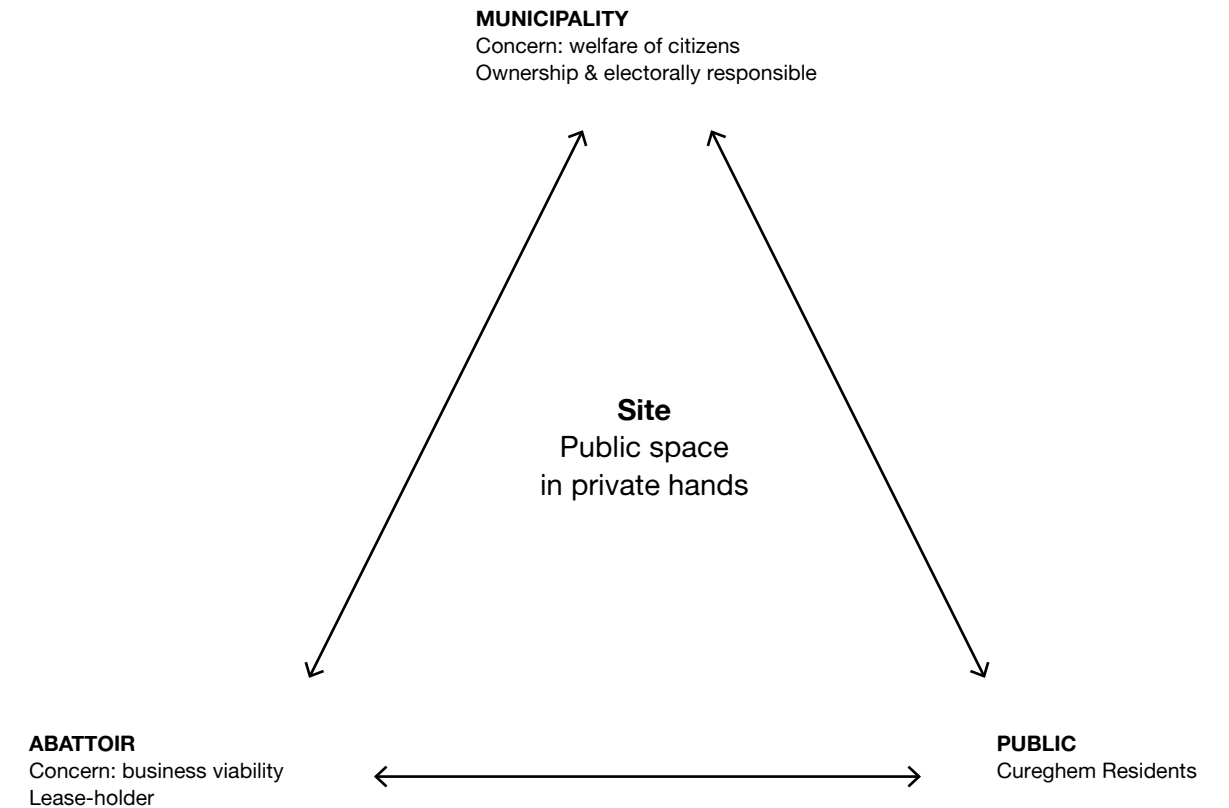
While the other projects presented in this publication deal with health, leisure and culture, this site is obviously all about food. Thinking about the relation between food, hospitality and inclusion was inspiring and confusing at the same time. Food is one of the main components of hospitality, and yet most of us experience slaughterhouses as hostile and uncomfortable environments. Can those opposites be reconciled? Furthermore, does Abattoir S.A. — which, after all, is renting a big chunk of public land from the municipality — have a responsibility towards the challenges of the neighbourhood around it? And what are the effects of the meat industry on a European and global scale with regard to social inclusion? We hope that our project can inspire you to think about these and other related questions.

Insights

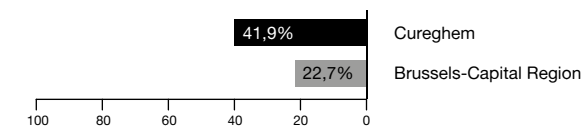
Public land in private hands

The Abattoir is a very special piece of urban land. The ownership situation is perhaps its most notable aspect: while certain parts of the Abattoir site belong to the private company, Abattoir S.A. has a long-term lease (running until 2050) for the rest of the land, which is owned by the municipality of Anderlecht. The contract is valid only under the condition that the slaughterhouse remains active on the site. As the capacity of this urban slaughterhouse is relatively limited, the company has difficulties competing with larger slaughterhouses outside the city. As a result, Abattoir S.A. is now looking for ways to maintain and diversify its business, and has developed a fully-fledged masterplan for the site (2009). This plan has found support among the municipal and the regional institutions who, up to this point, had not shown particular interest in the land. Considering the site's symbolic importance and potential, including in relation to the surrounding neighbourhood of Cureghem, this is very surprising. Cureghem is often considered as a neighbourhood of arrival, hosting much of Brussels' migrant and minority communities, and as home to many different types of informal economic activity. Access to green spaces and schools is underdeveloped, many residents are unemployed, and — not surprisingly — the average income in the area is far below average.

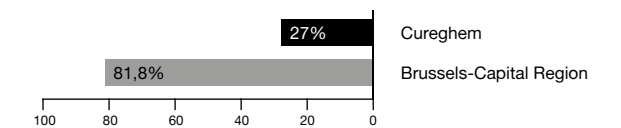
Stakeholders involved on the site



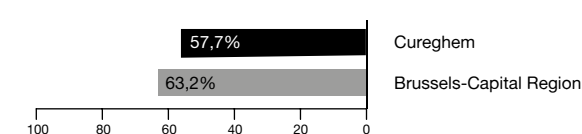
Unemployment rate (2012)



Share of population living near a green public space (2012)



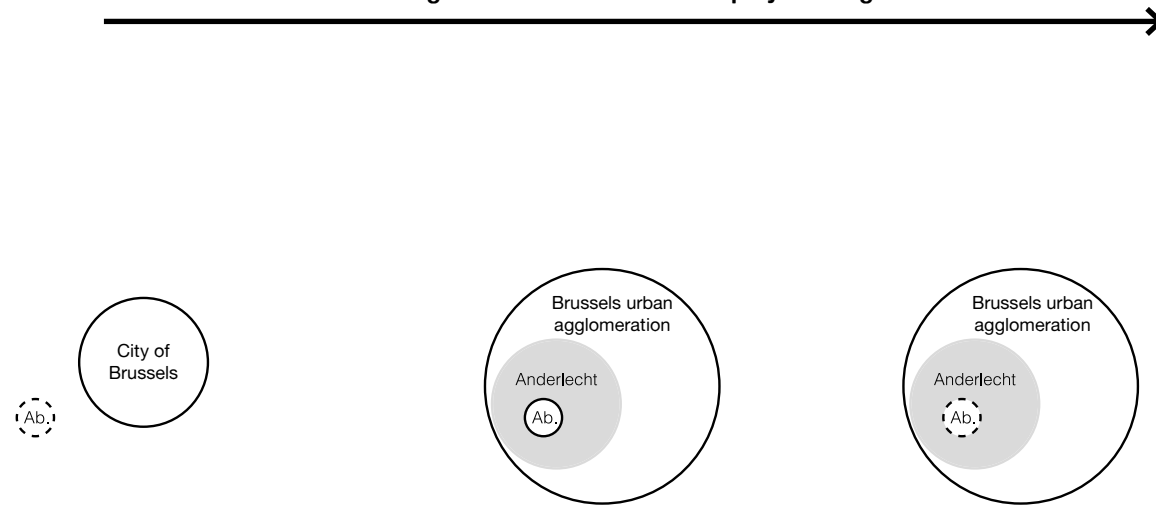
Primary-school-kids who go to school close to their home (2016-2017)



Source: IBSA/Monitoring des quartiers

Evolution in the management of the site

The slaughterhouse is swallowed up by urban growth



Abattoirs built outside of the city in 1890 by a public limited company.

- Also nearby;
- 2 woolen factories
 - 6 cotton printing & dyeing factories
 - 3 cotton mills & factory
 - candle factory

1890

Slaughterhouse bought in 1920 by the municipality of Anderlecht.

1920

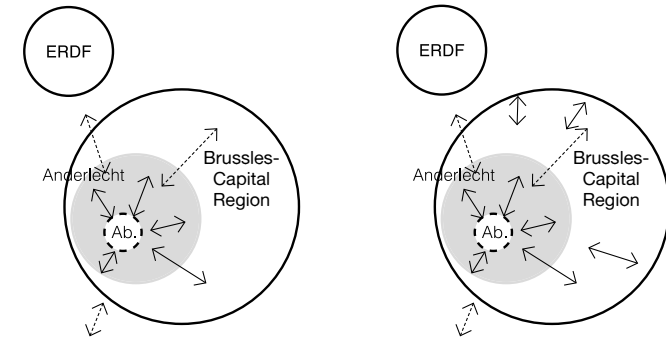
Slaughterhouse ceded to the 'Abattoirs and Markets of Anderlecht' company in 1984. 100-150 shareholders involved.

1984

KEY

- public limited company
- government

The Abattoir masterplan incorporated in city development plans



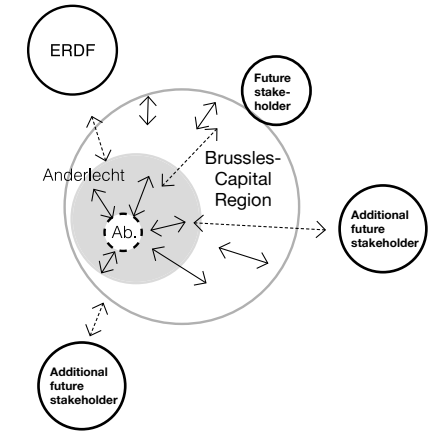
Renamed Abatan S.A. and then Abattoir S.A. the company has come up with two development plans (Masterplan).

2009-2012

Abattoir development plan taken into account by various city schemes.

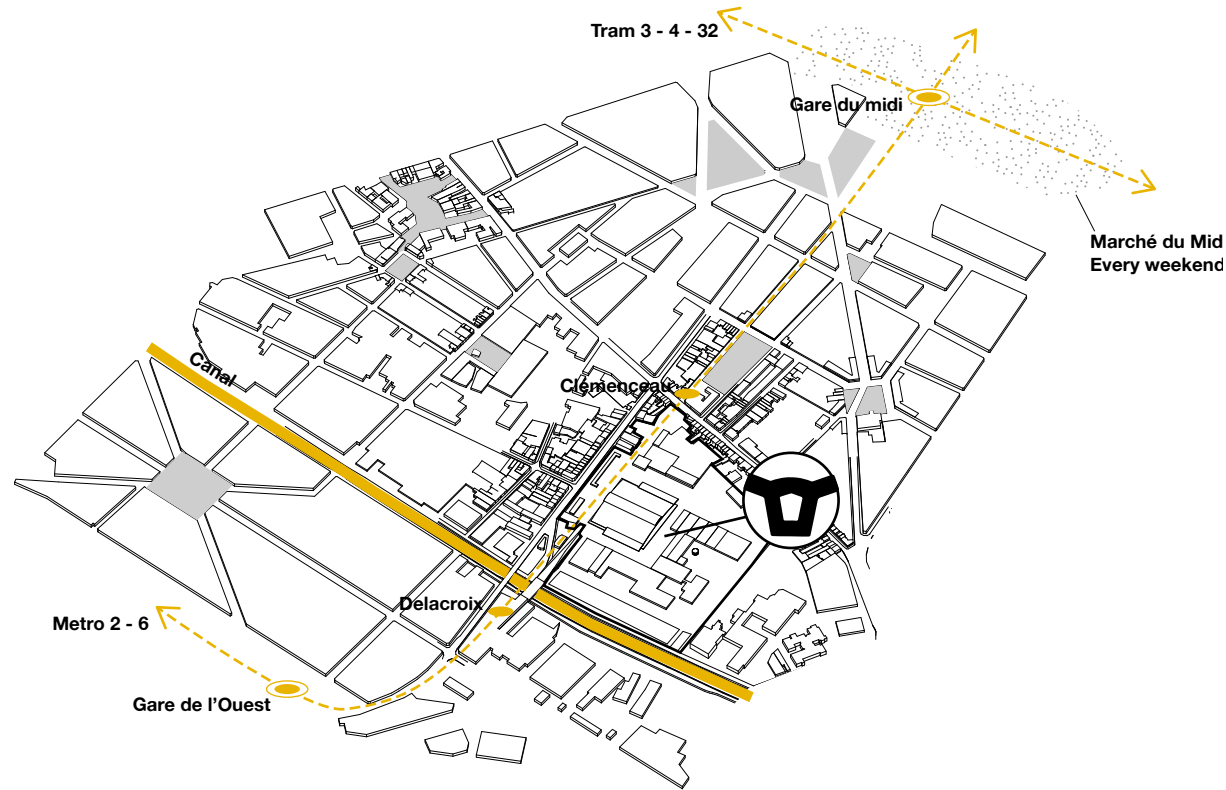
2010- ...

Future possible scenario



Future scenario

Location of the site in the neighbourhood

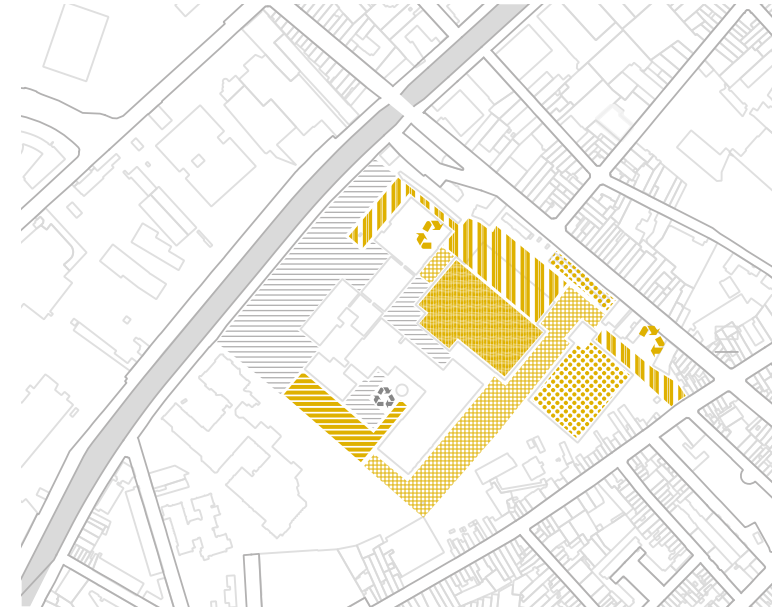


- - - - - public transport
- parks and squares

Public spaces connectivity: Several public spaces are close to the Abattoir. The lack of hospitability of those preexisting places shows the necessity to develop the Abattoir as an inclusive and open area with the possibility to play, rest and gather for all publics.

Use of space: Friday, Saturday, Sunday Market

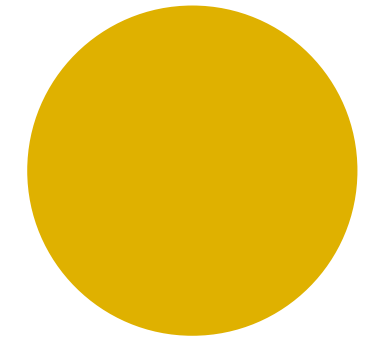
- Meat and fish
- Vegetables and fruit
- Clothing
- House features and electronics
- Working tools
- Flee market
- Collectmet



Market Day (Sunday maximum shown)

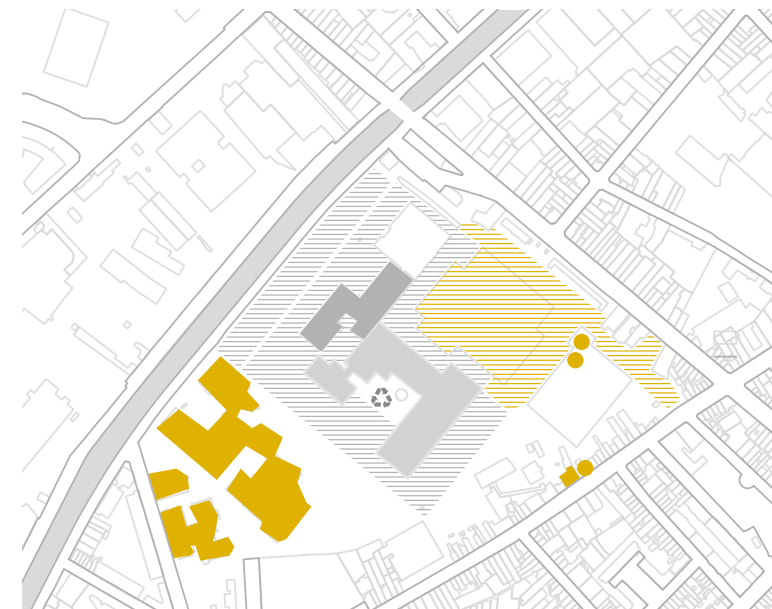
4am – 4pm
60,000 market visitors (Sunday)
600 stall holders
(meat, fruit, vegetables, electronics, clothing, wholesale,...)

Population on Site



Use of space: Weekdays (except Fridays)

- Slaughtering activities
- Wholesalers
- Parking area
- Recycling infrastructure
- Schools / Universities
- Cultureghem activities
- Non-profit organization's office



Weekday

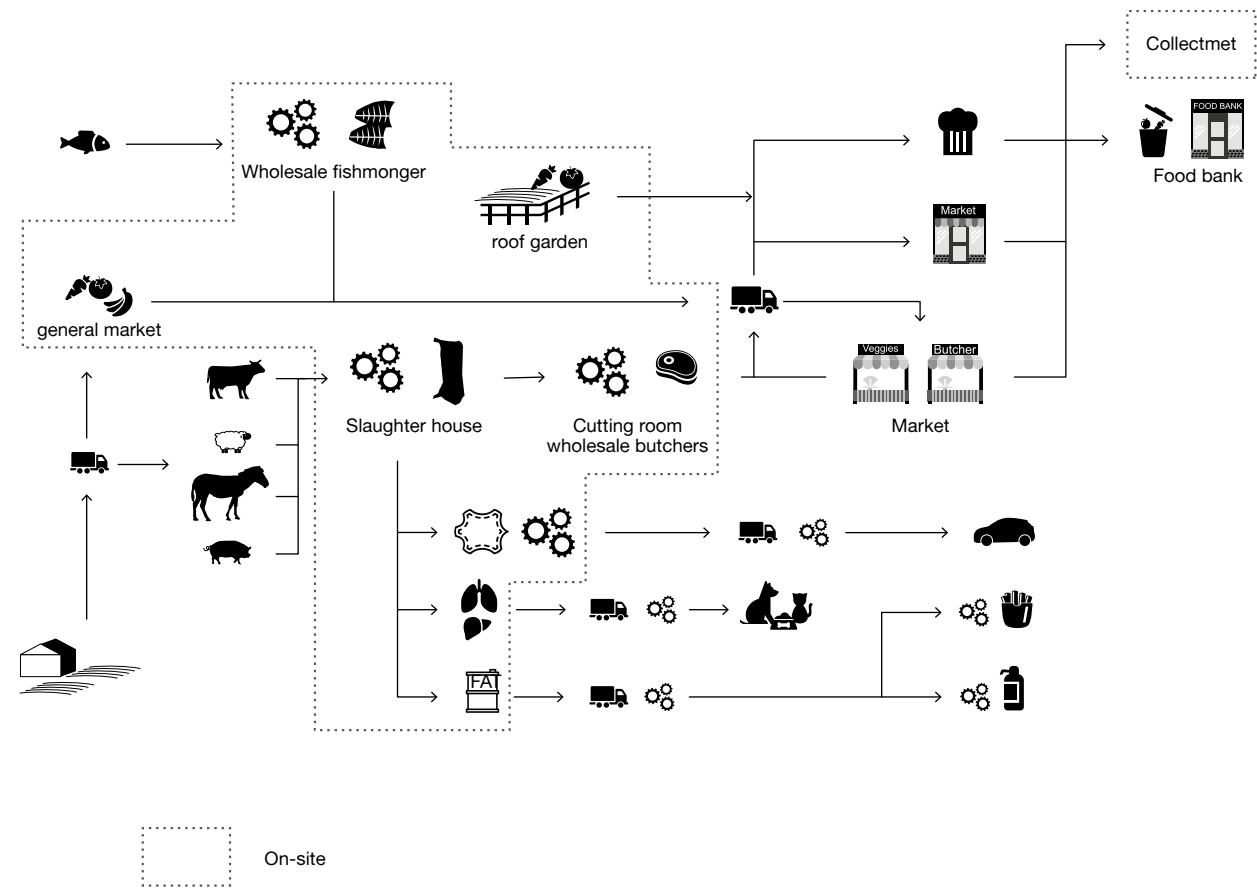
6am – 6pm
Slaughter lines,
Wholesalers,
Abattoir administration,
Affiliated activities (skins etc.)
(ca. 300 persons in total)

Cultureghem
(ca. 5 staff & 20 persons in total)

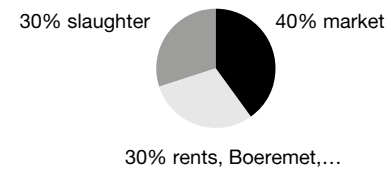
Population on Site



Abattoir site productive chains

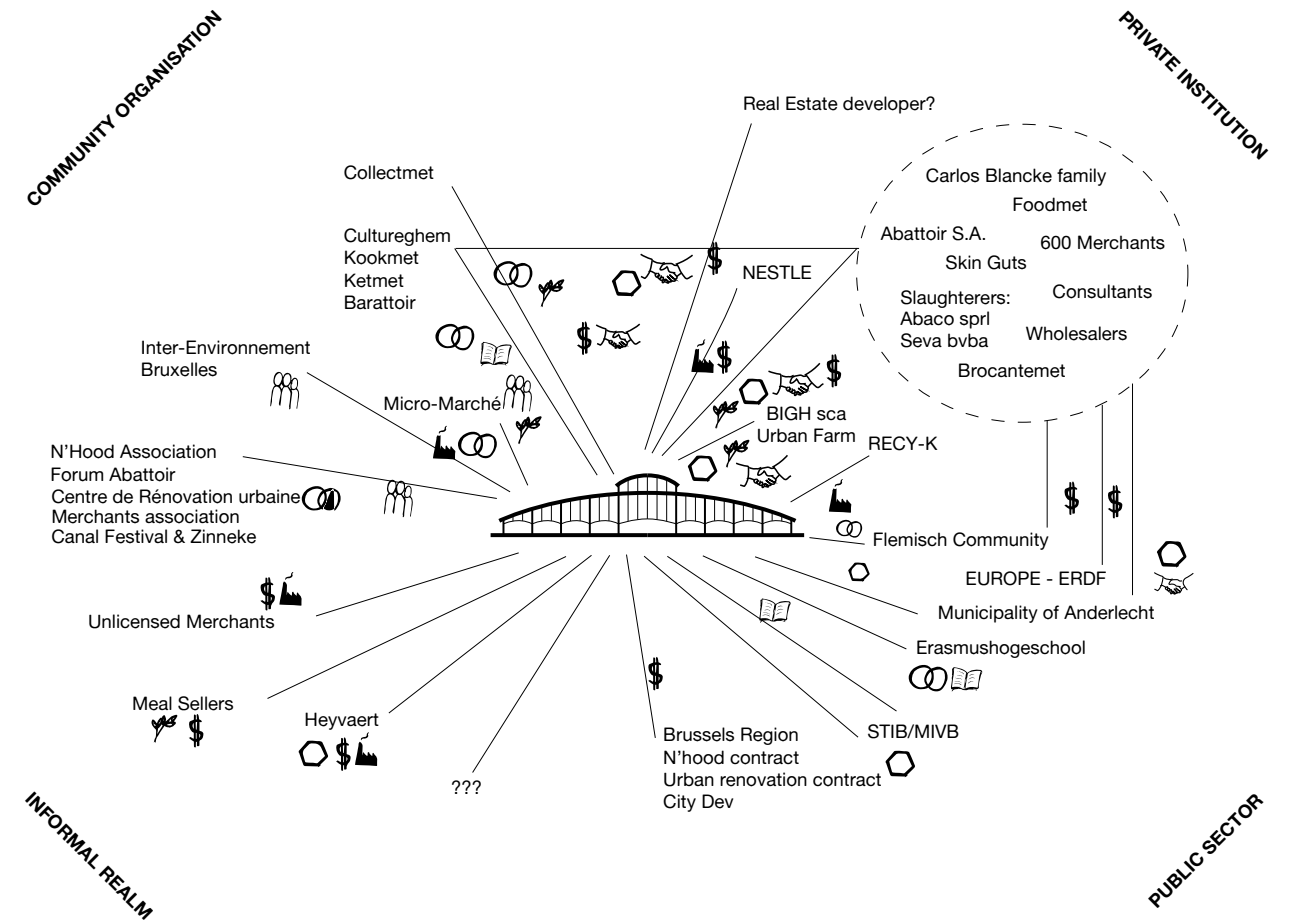


Abattoir S.A. revenue



Source: Abattoir S.A.

Stakeholders and their regroupment



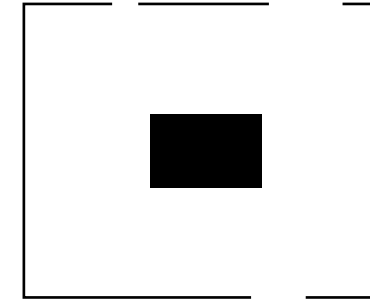
Scenarios

On meat, community and responsibility

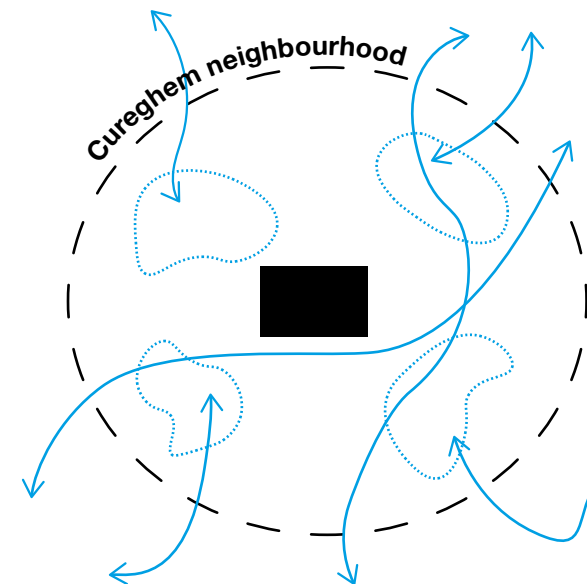
The perspective of our proposed scenario is the masterplan developed and continuously readjusted since 2009 by Abattoir S.A. which, in principle, is an attempt to increase the area's accessibility and connectivity to densify and diversify business activities, to create a large open square for the weekend market, and develop different clusters that combine housing with single- and multi-purpose 'urban warehouses'. Generally speaking, we do agree with these main objectives. We also perceive, however, a need to elaborate on possible programmes and networks in more detail. We also insist on the municipality's and Brussels Region's responsibility toward their constituents, as well as on the ethical responsibility of Abattoir S.A. to improve the quality of life of the residents of Cureghem and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Finally, we emphasise the unexplored potential of the Abattoir to provide a physical space dedicated (in part) to one of the most crucial and controversial topics of contemporary Europe, namely meat production and consumption.

Below we sketch out potential social and architectural designs for three urban warehouses. The underlying objective is to actively include a plurality of stakeholders into the future development of the site, creating interdependencies between them.

Synthesis of analysis and objectives of the project

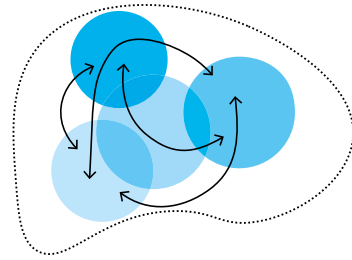


- One powerful stakeholder
- Underused most of the time
- Inefficient use of space
- Few entrance points and pathways
- Mixed use, but 2 very dominant functions

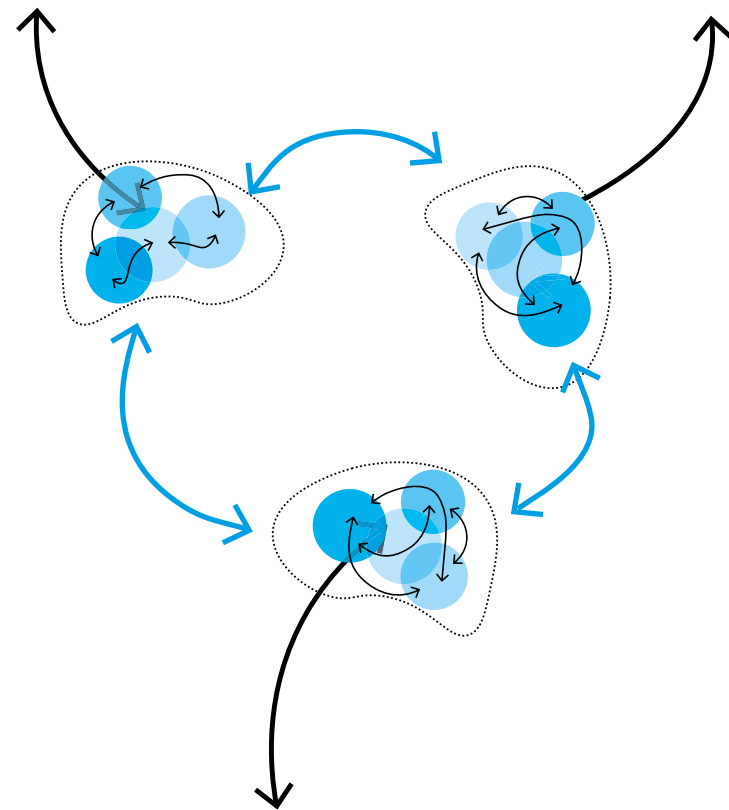


- Diverse range of stakeholders
- Using the full potential of the site
- More public facilities and functions
- More entrance points and pathways
- Market and slaughterhouse remain central functions

Intentions

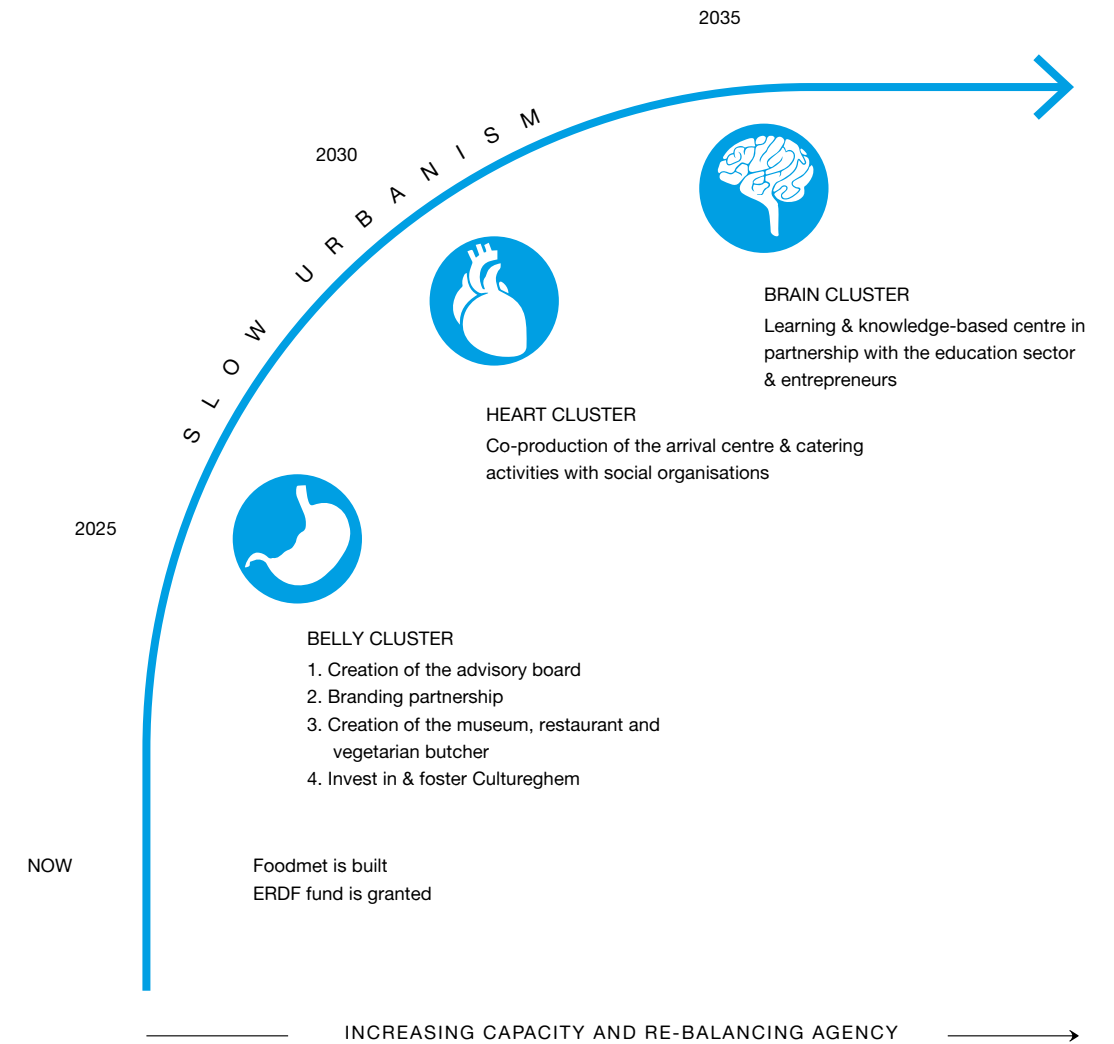


Based on the idea of the 'urban warehouse' proposed in the existing masterplan, we suggest to create three 'clusters'. Each cluster is imagined as a coalition of different stakeholders and functions which will create synergies and allow for new forms of production, engagement and education on the site.



Each individual cluster is allocated in one building complex. Still, they are not imagined to be islands. On the contrary, each cluster will interact with and benefit from the presence of the other clusters.

The 'slow urbanism' concept: projection

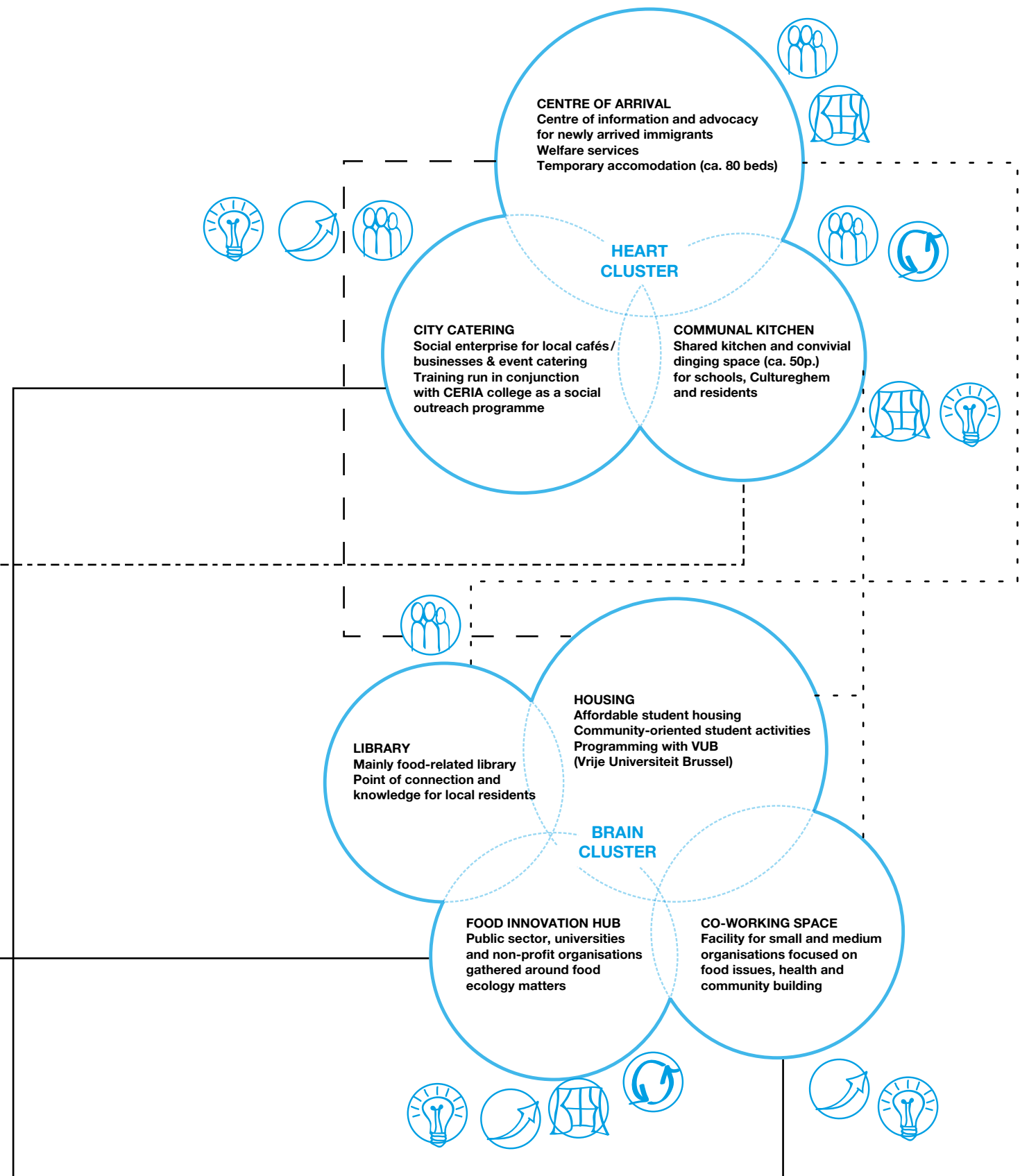
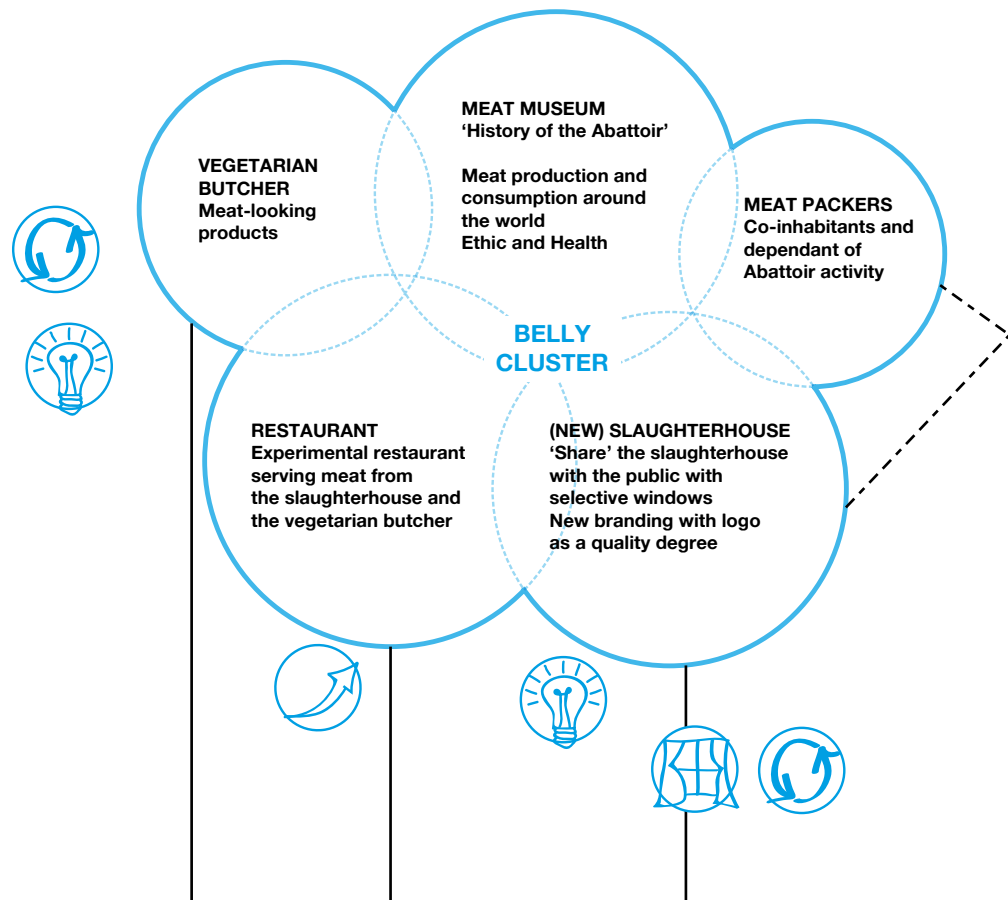


Scenarios

Belly, Heart and Brain clusters

Interconnections within the cluster and synergies between them.

Our Values



- - - - - supply books & other resources
- _____ experiment
- eat
- - - - - skills exchange



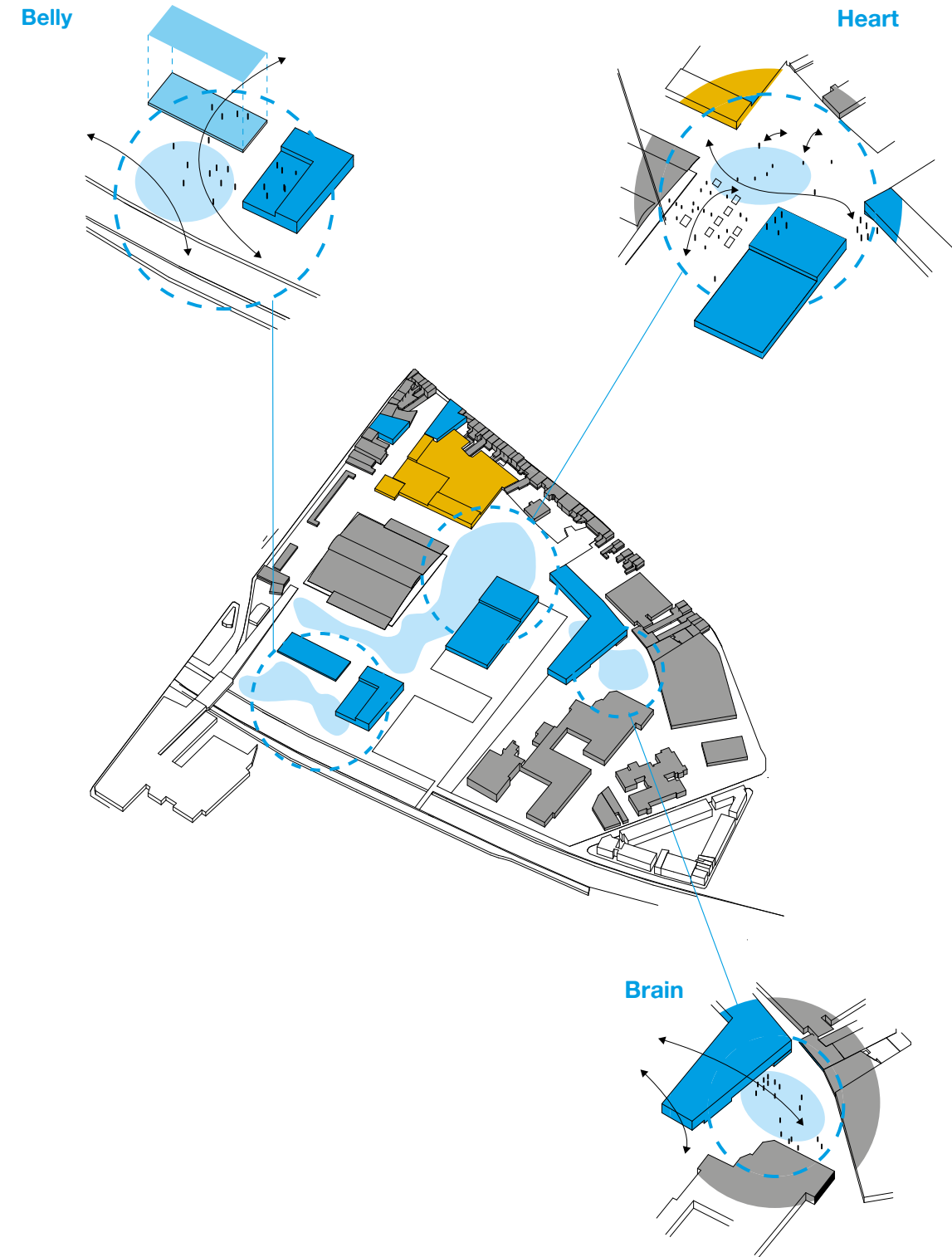
Logo of the new slaughterhouse as a communication tool with its diverse public (costumers, visitors, suppliers, etc.) that emphasis the quality and the local aspects of its production.

Proposal

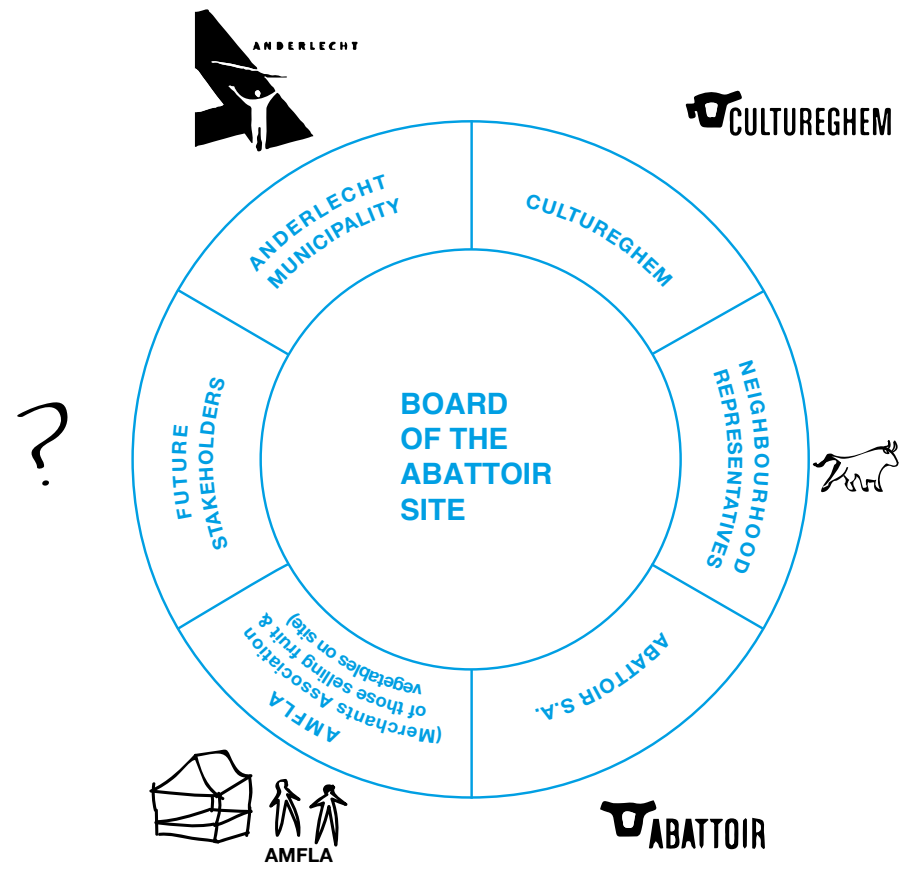
A sketch of 3 multifunctional clusters

The following sketches and images of three clusters correspond to the previously presented stakeholder diagrams. The first cluster is dedicated to meat production and consumption. It seeks to make visible what is usually invisible, stimulate discussion, and create experiences related to this societal controversy. Our main goal was to create an environment that would bring together opposites and reconcile contradictions. The second cluster offers a space for newcomers who may be in need of shelter and advice, combined with opportunities to strengthen neighbourhood relationships. Further, it provides an infrastructure for entrepreneurship and education with a focus on food. Lastly, the third cluster provides an educational infrastructure for children, students, and adults. We also included student housing, a coworking space, and a food innovation centre, hoping that these facilities will attract new visitors to the venue and the neighbourhood of Cureghem. Both the site's potential and the needs of the neighbourhood are such that we have even collected enough ideas to fill three more clusters; unfortunately, we have neither the time nor the space to elaborate on them. It should also be noted that the proposals we have laid out here must remain tentative. We hope they can inspire future developments in this venue!

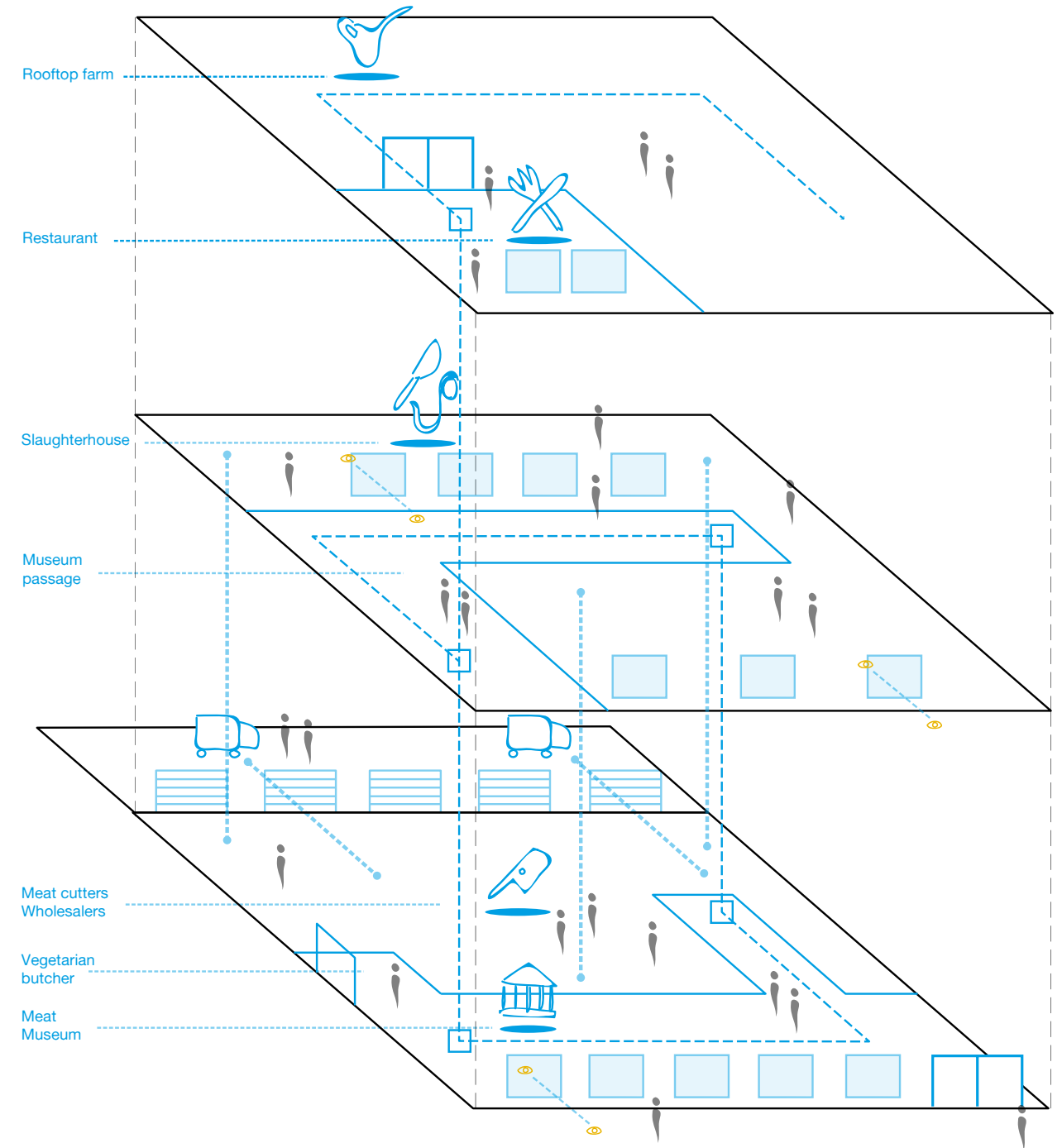
The localisation of the three project clusters



Board of the Abattoir site: Predominance of Abattoir company in the decision process for the site development is one of the main controversy of this project. In order to pursue our idea of fairness we intend to design a participative platform including the main stakeholders involved in the uses of the Abattoir area. This platform will be open to community organizations and future partners.



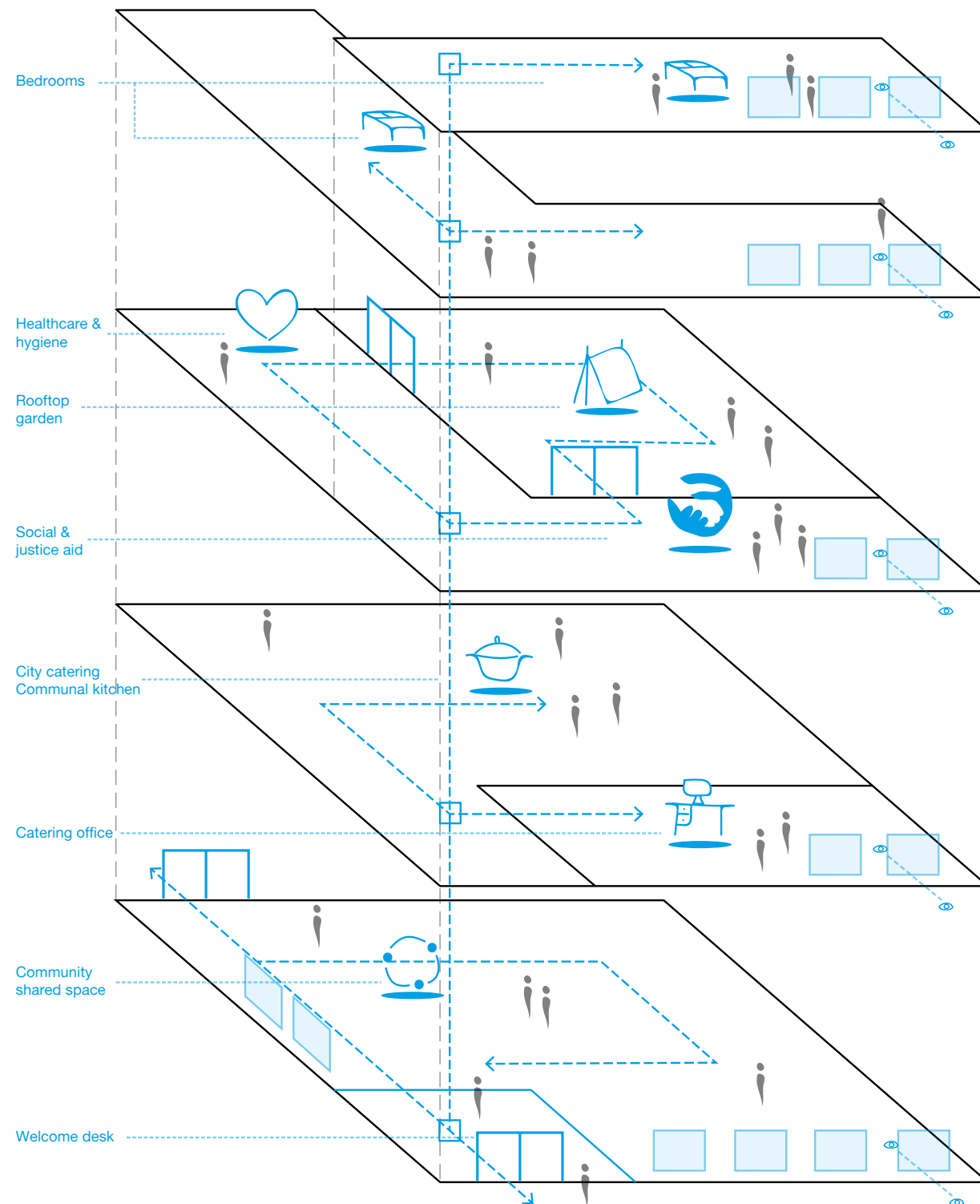
This redevelopment of the existing slaughterhouse seeks to put meat on the table while also reflecting on consumption and production. The first two floors are dedicated to host a meat museum and the slaughterhouse, in a sort of dialogue, with both activities presented through windows. Transparency is a tool that we hope can open debates and promote inclusion. The top floors are occupied by a restaurant and a rooftop farm, allowing for the debate to continue.





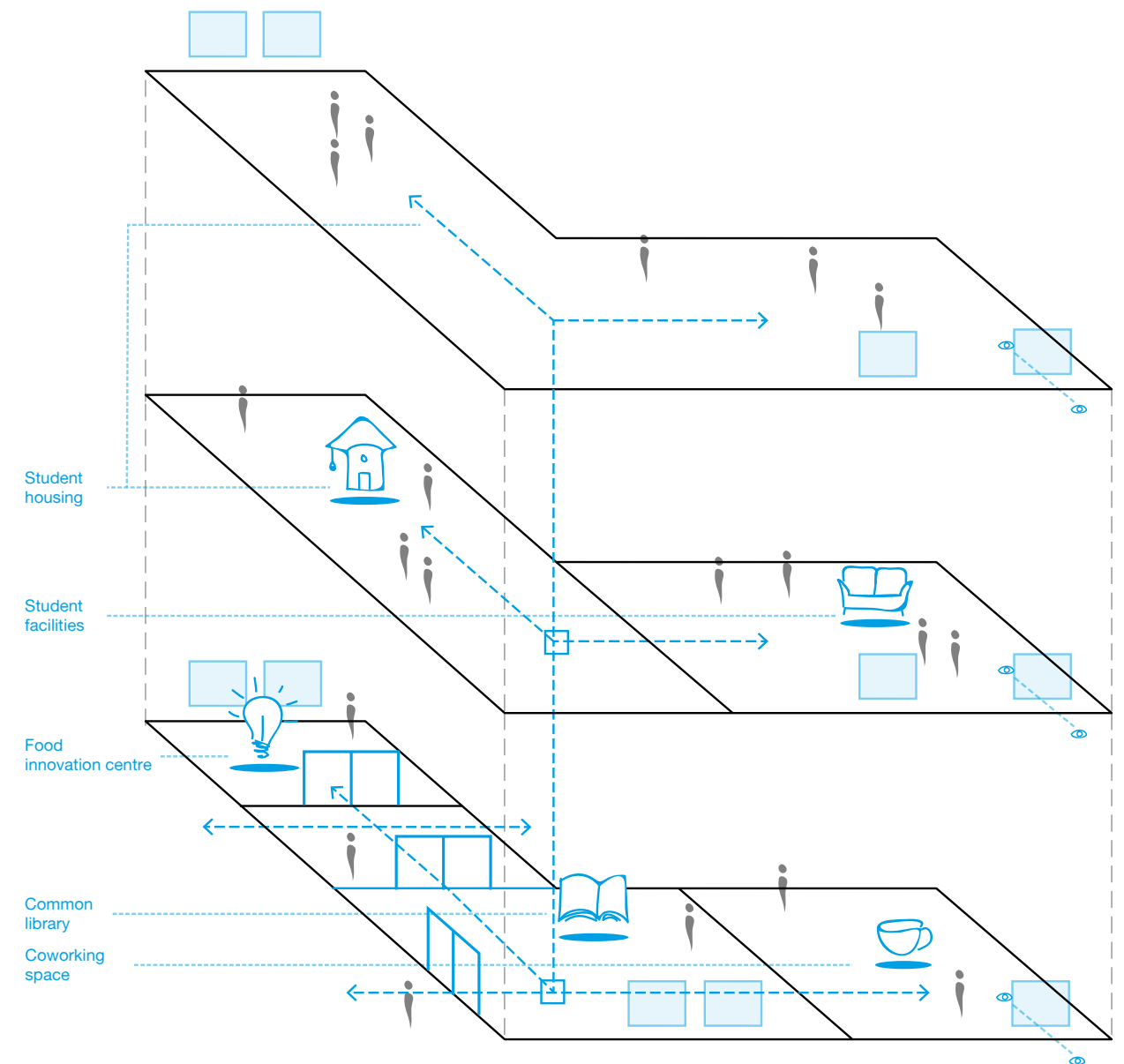
Heart

A belly without a heart cannot function properly. The cluster would be highly interconnected, with the building offering shared cooking facilities, dining tables, and I.T. space. Community organisations are in the centre of it all, acting as places of social exchange, inclusion, and hospitality.



Brain

Through a system of participatory housing, students who are willing to engage with the community would have the opportunity to get accommodation. The library is designed to be filled by all those who frequent the site. Above all, there is an income aspect, with the food innovation centre and the coworking space that can promote community activities.



Conclusion

Andrea Bortolotti, Christian Dessouroux,
Corentin Sanchez-Trenado and Baptiste Veroone

Working on a complex urban system such as the ‘Abattoir and Markets of Anderlecht’ is no easy task. With its market and slaughterhouse activities, the site has a long-standing socio-economic and symbolic relationship with its neighbourhood and the city of Brussels. This means that any design project should take carefully into account the impacts that transformations, even at the limited scale of the venue itself, might have at a larger scale. Moreover, the better we understand the site, the harder it becomes to make choices that account for the many conflicting interests at stake in such a complex urban area.

Over two weeks of hard work, the students had the difficult task of examining the issues of social inclusion and hospitality on the site, through a design-oriented approach of this complex urban system. This means, according to the Master tutor that they should not be interested in what is contingent, but rather be committed to what is possible, to the creation of new functions. Given the limited time available, the students have focused their efforts in opening up and exploring new possibilities regarding the future of the Abattoir site. The final result should thus encourage engaging in a general reflection on the — both planned and actual — reorganisation of the site and its capacity to integrate and host a series of visitor profiles and activities, rather than provide an accurate analysis of the concrete possibilities of transformation.

On the one hand, the final result remains very generic and somewhat close to the vision currently conveyed by the company’s masterplan. On the other hand, it provides some new insights into designing inclusion and hospitality for this specific urban area.

A main contribution is the effort to rethink the dynamics between existing actors and activities on the site, and to point out the opportunities to attract new functions while keeping an eye on the positive social effects on Cureghem and the wider city of Brussels.

Firstly, the proposal tackles the issue of better integrating the slaughterhouse’s activity, with its inevitable burdens and conflicts, in such a dense urban area. In doing so, it raises the issues of both the increasing sensitivity and discomfort surrounding animal killing and meat production in our society, and the fact that these activities are commonly displaced outside the city and concealed from final consumers. In this context, and taking into account the Abattoir’s special urban status, the students’ proposal reinforces the place of the slaughterhouse at the very centre — the ‘belly’ — of the site’s future transformation, both spatially and symbolically. Meat production and food-related activities are thus rendered highly visible and placed in the midst of new cultural, educational and economic facilities, with the primary aim of raising public awareness of meat production and consumption.

Secondly, it raises the question of the responsibility of publicly-funded private projects — as is the case of the ERDF project for the Abattoir — to contribute to social objectives set by development programmes of the EU and Brussels-Capital Region. Confronted with the issue of social inclusion and hospitality, the case of the Abattoir is once again singular, as the site is located in the midst of an urban neighbourhood that is underprivileged in terms of employment, education, building quality, public space, etc. The Abattoir has been active for a long time, and it still provides today a space where newcomers and low-skilled workers can enter the labour market and launch new food-related activities. In order to address the risk that future transformations — driven only by profit — might lower the social role of the Abattoir in relation to its surrounding neighbourhood, the students’ proposal includes the creation of a participatory platform intended to gather all the different stakeholders, including the Abattoir S.A. company, public authorities, and members of the civil society.

In any case, a deeper analysis may reveal that the vision of the private company, in spite of appearance, is far from clear-cut and distinguishes itself from other cases of privately-led projects. On the one hand, as can be clearly seen in the masterplan, the goal is to significantly diversify Abattoir S.A.’s activities and attract larger types of customers; on the other hand, in practice, the company appears cautious not to hinder the variety of functions and mixture of activities that have been present on the site until now. Finally, contrary to a massive one-way urbanism process, the company’s policies seem much more contingent on external opportunities and social context. There is much more to explore on this point.

To conclude, and as highlighted in this tentative design project, a future working programme should include a deeper understanding of the relationships between stakeholders and functions, in order to foster debate and visions for the future of the Abattoir site. Further design explorations would greatly benefit from in-depth knowledge of the site itself and the wider urban context in which it exists. This is something the Metrolab project is pursuing through its ongoing transdisciplinary research, with the aim of contributing to building new critical and empirical knowledge on complex urban systems such as the Abattoir.