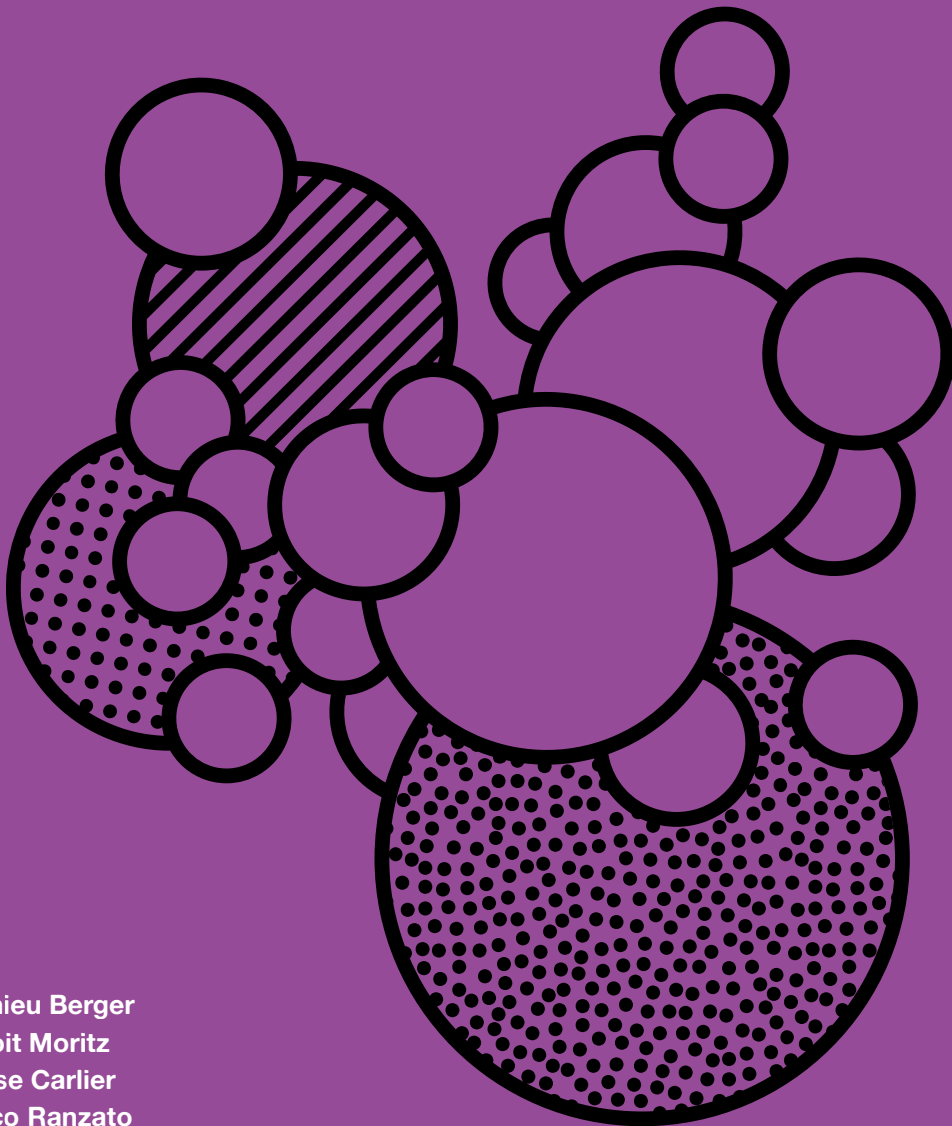


Designing Urban Inclusion

Metrolab Brussels MasterClass I



Mathieu Berger
Benoit Moritz
Louise Carlier
Marco Ranzato
(eds)



Metrolab series

Designing Urban Inclusion

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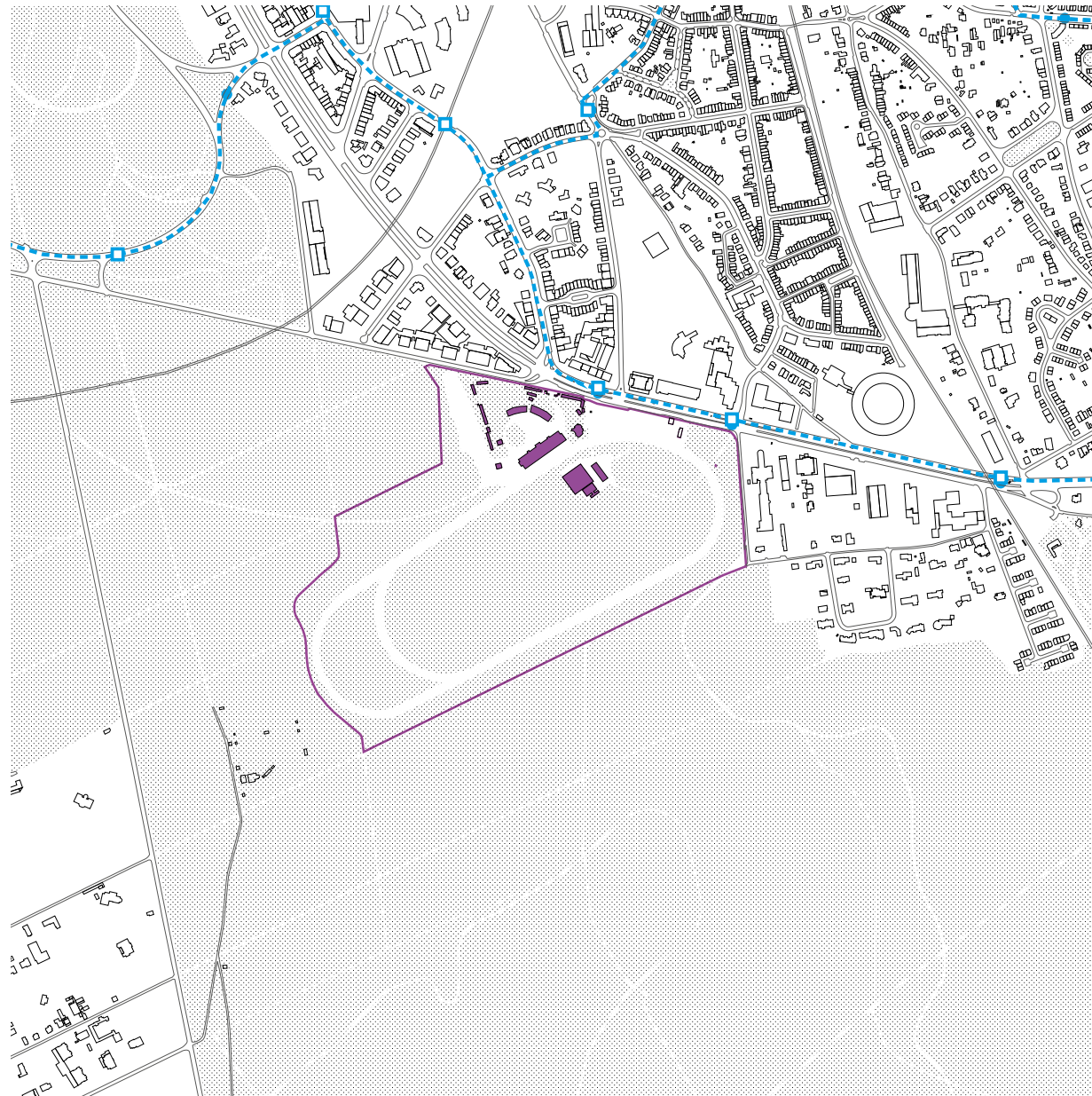
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Context plan

Site 4: Droh!me

Park to the people

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 Andrea Fantin
 Marco Gonçalves
 Diane Lefèvre
 Barbara Le Fort (tutor)
 Sheng Song
 Pauline Varloteaux (tutor)
 Gauthier Verschaeren

0 200m



■ ERDF project built-up space
 ■ green areas

- - - public transports
 ● bus / tram stops

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

Introduction

Reimagining the role of a cultural landmark as the gate to an interregional green network

The Droh!me Melting Park project is a rehabilitation of the Boitsfort racecourse in the municipality of Uccle in South Brussels that proposes to introduce facilities for sport, leisure, as well as environmental preservation and education into a cultural landmark site. Built in 1878 under King Leopold II and situated in between the heavily trafficked Bois de la Cambre park that extends into Brussels' city center and the 4383 hectare Sonian Forest which stretches across the three regions of Belgium. The hippodrome park served as an active racetrack for over 100 years until it was closed in 1995, due in part to difficulties and expenses incurred in maintaining and operating the complex site.

After two decades of informal use, the site was reopened under a unique public-private partnership between the region of Brussels and the VO Group, a communication consultancy well known for large-scale event planning and management and private shareholders. Slated for completion in 2018, the fully activated site will play host to both public and private activities, including a municipal playground, a membership-driven golf course, several sport facilities, an observation tower overlooking the adjacent greenscape, several cafes and restaurants, rentable event space, and a 'House of the Forest' dedicated to environmental awareness and preservation.¹

The following research and proposals, sponsored by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and completed by a team of international participants and Metrolab laboratory, reconsiders the park and the adjacent green-space as a focal point of tensions at multiple scales while also addressing the components of the '5 axis' points proposed by Droh!me: culture, sport, nature, education and leisure. In recognizing the role of the park and the adjacent green-space in a national 'green' network and challenging existing ownership and management structures, the proposals work towards realizing the park's potential as a meeting point of the urban and the natural at a regional scale.

1. All the information reported is available on the project website. Technical information is collected during the research process by the Metrolab tutors.

Insights

Considering edge-space

Recognizing the part that Droh!me Melting Park plays within economic, managerial, language, topographical, and regional tensions, allows for critically evaluation to understand its role in regional networks. The current Public-Private Partnership (PPP) governance model of the site revolves around revenue-generating facilities and activities. Brussels-Capital Region is the owner of Droh!me, supported by the partnership of various governmental institutions and funded in part by the ERDF. Currently the park is leased to the VO Group and its subsidiaries for a 15-year partnership for development and activation of the site.² The revenue-driven programming of the site is inherently exclusive and limits the potential of the park as a meeting place of regional green and social networks.

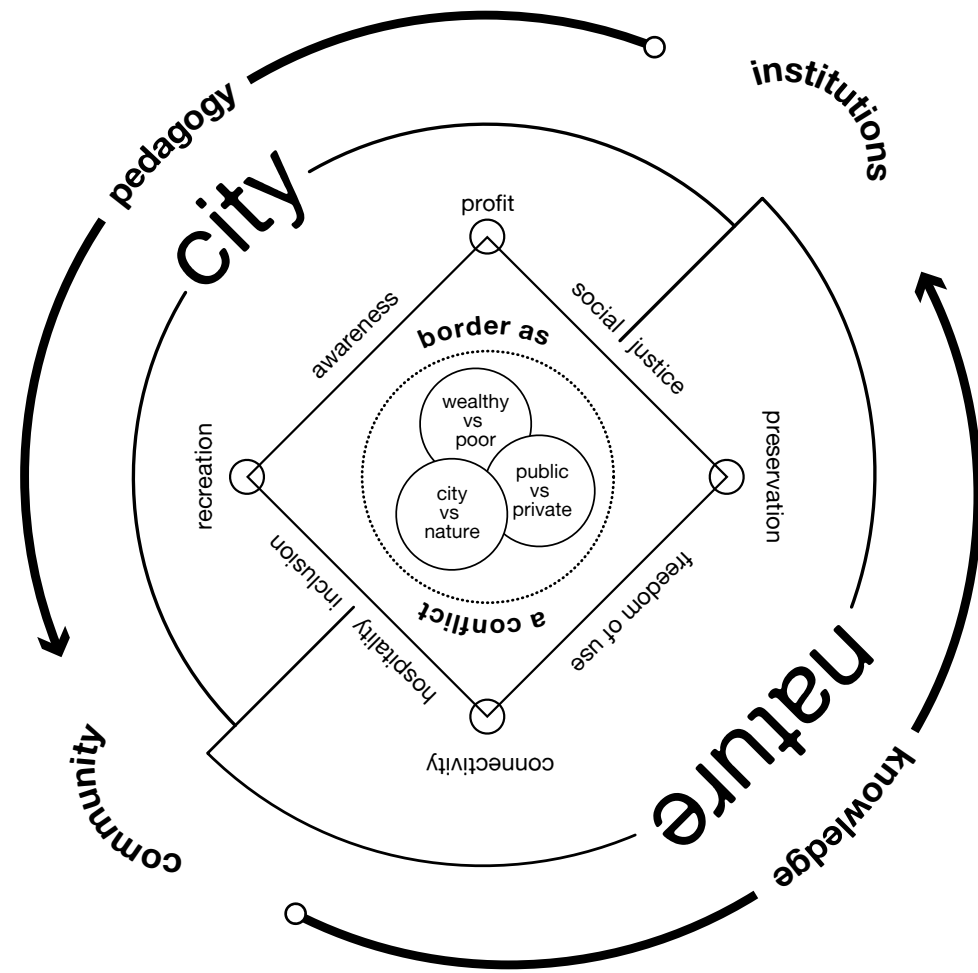
2. Project presentation by Droh!me team during MasterClass fieldwork (24.01.2017)

The significance of border

Dualities in Brussels are realized not only spatially, culturally but also linguistically. Belgium consists of the Southern (French speaking) region of Wallonia, the Northern (Dutch speaking) region of Flanders, and the Brussels-Capital Region occupies a relatively small space in the middle. Brussels population is composed by almost 200 different nationalities and most of the people speak more than two languages.³ These facts reflect a demographic transformation occurring in Brussels, with the implications of 'border' represent the starting point of our work on the Droh!me project.

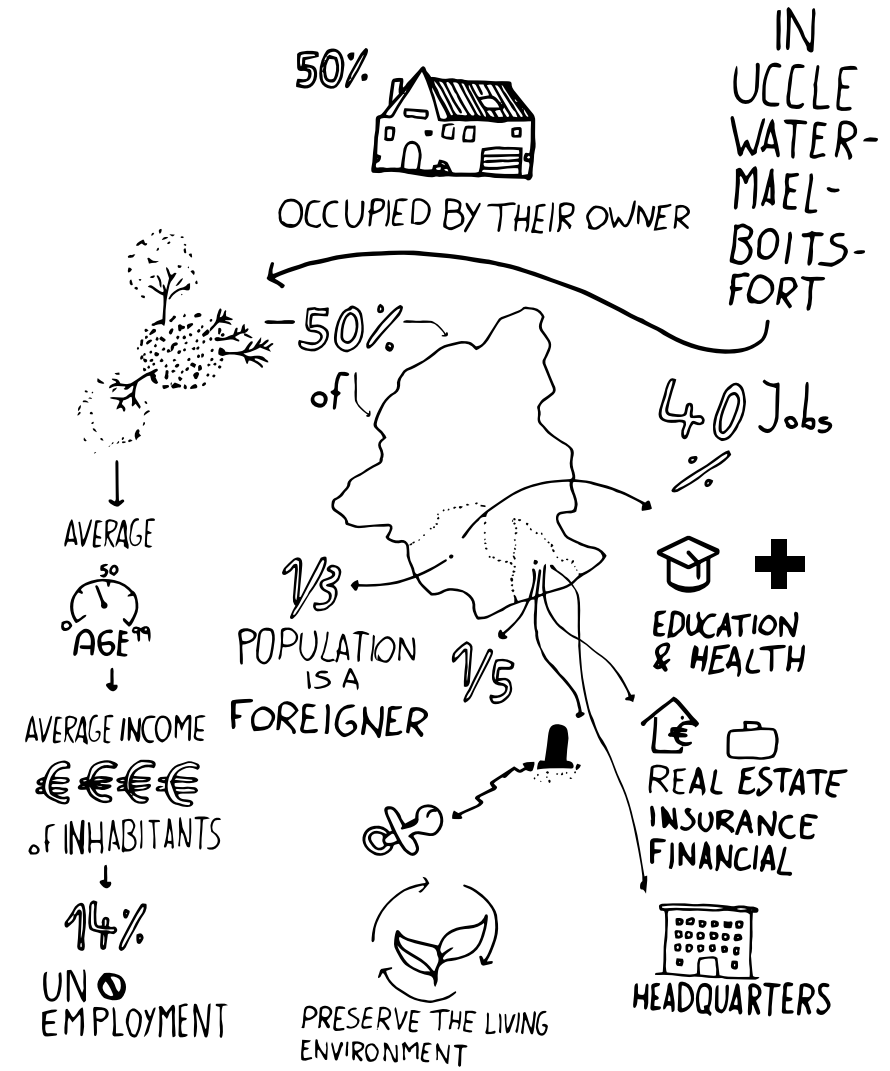
Exploring the concept of border through lenses of social, economic and physical inclusion reveal significant intricacies faced by the current Droh!me project. Real and perceived borders can be qualified by elements of hospitality: does the space invite, allow, host, grant the user ease and provide shelter? Economic barriers could limit access to the site: the price of transportation, and activities that require a fee, such as the golf course and activities like "les petits aventuriers".

3. See IBSA statistics of 2016

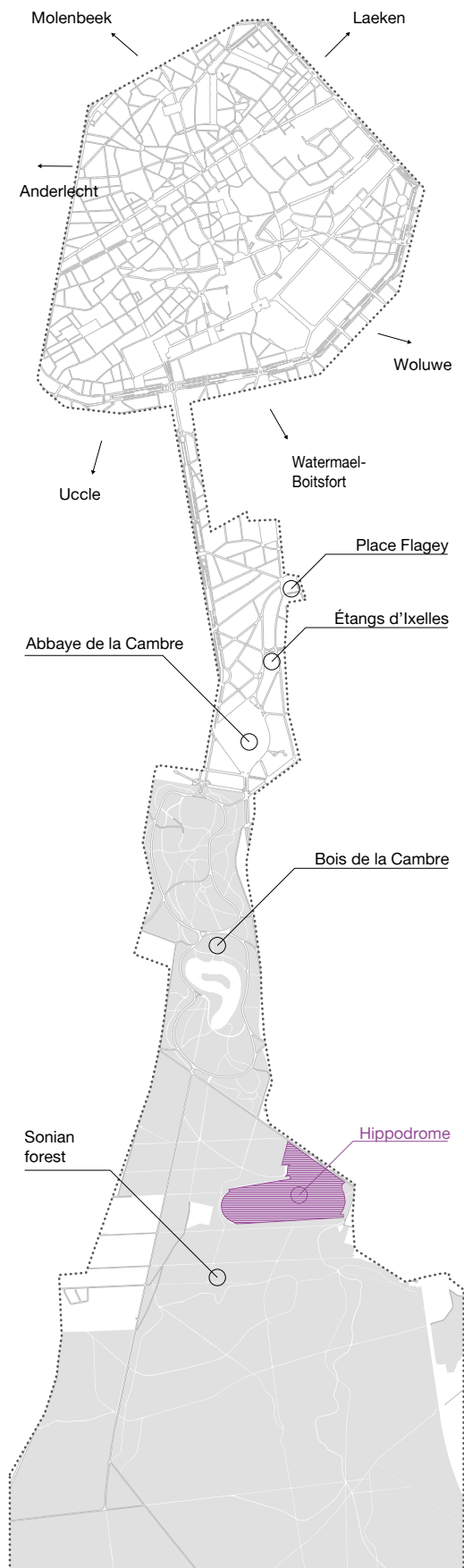


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Diagrammatic synthesis:
Border as a conflict
 The multiplicity of conflicts present in the region and park.



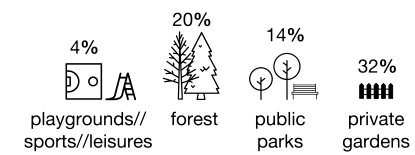
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Sonian Forest as part of the green network
Visualizing the connection between the forest, the natural environment and the city



- + Gates
- Green spaces
- ▶ Playground
- Playground and sport
- Sport



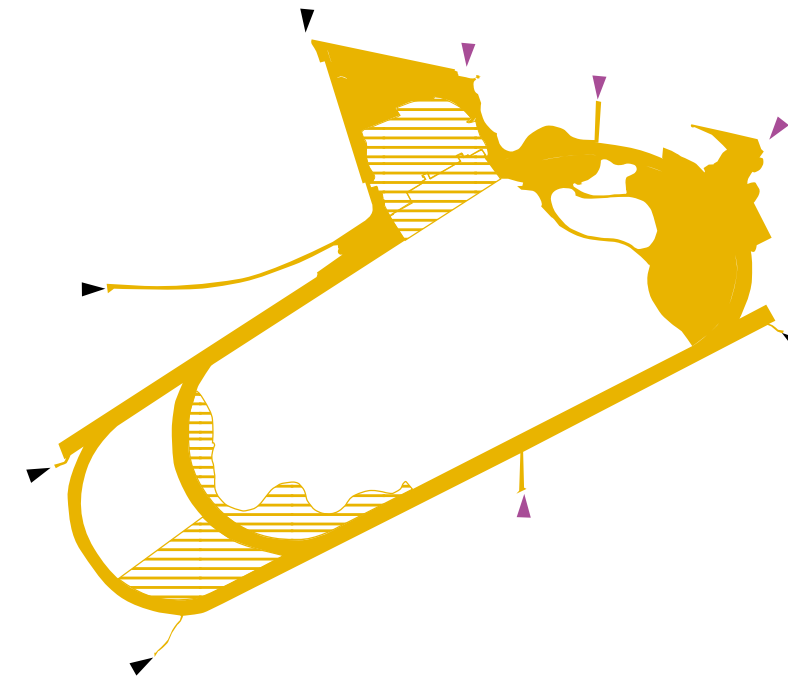
Existing leisure space, playgrounds, forest, public playgrounds and parks
The City of Brussels has a pressing need for more playgrounds for children and access to green space for all. The gates to the Sonian Forest are at the edge of the hippodrome.

Scenarios

Challenging existing models of ownership and governance

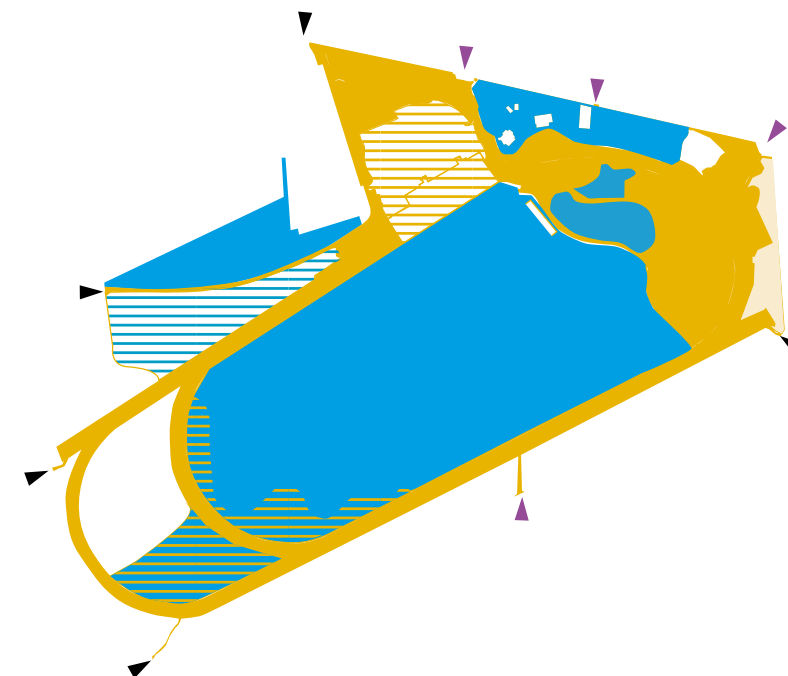
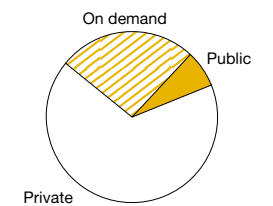
By challenging the current ownership-management model with a reimagined public-private model and a diametrically opposing public-public model, the park can be reconceptualized as a space of regional-scale inclusion and local activity. The two proposals generated by the MasterClass participants team, conceived as public-private 'plus' and public-public, aim to generate social and cultural capital through freely accessible programming and facilities while simultaneously integrating the park more fully into broader networks through increased permeability and partnerships with local educational and cultural institutions.

The following pages present a first attempt to illustrate the current management model and ways to challenge it.



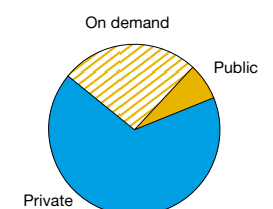
Comparing space for paid activities with multi-use informal space in the Hippodrome

Despite the fact that the project is aimed towards accommodating the public, the available 'free' space is very limited.



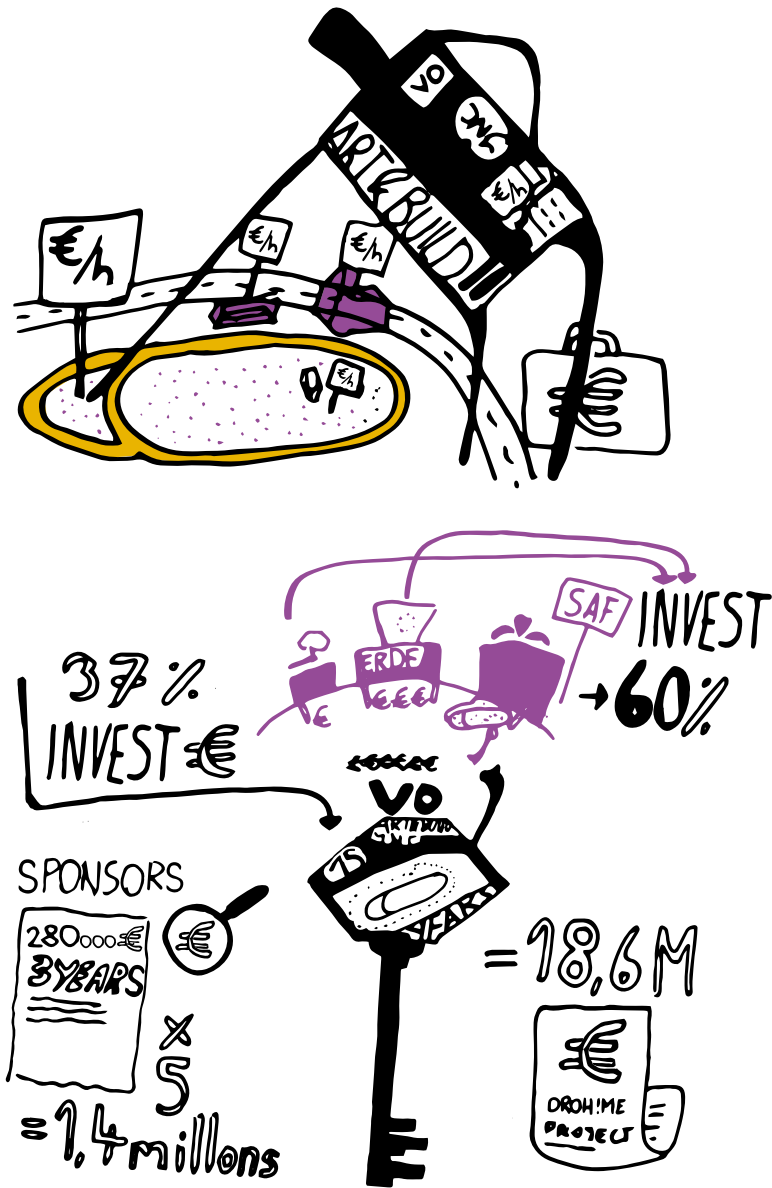
Comparing space for paid activities with multi-use informal space in the Hippodrome

In the proposal, the pattern is inverted and much more public space is made available.



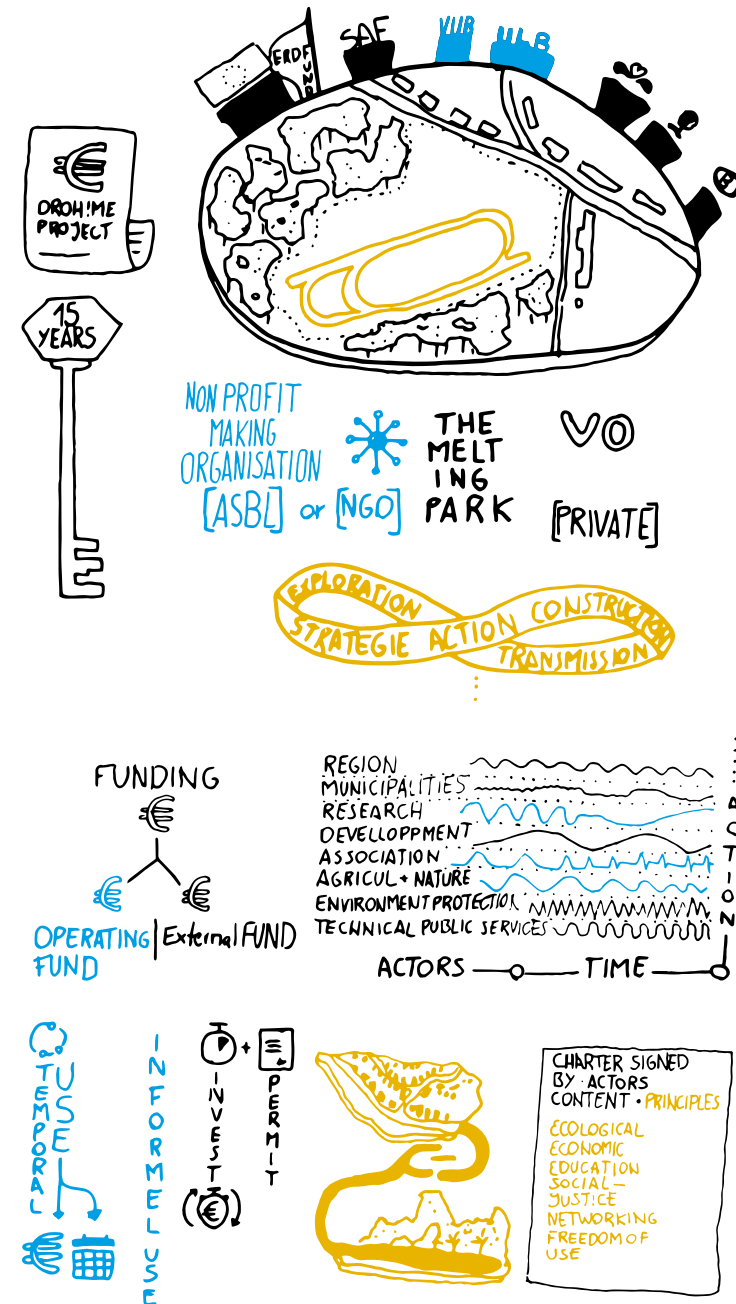
Drom!me now, the existing situation

A public private partnership contract is currently in effect for the Drom!me project, but, in our opinion, hospitality and inclusion are not sufficiently considered in the present design criteria.



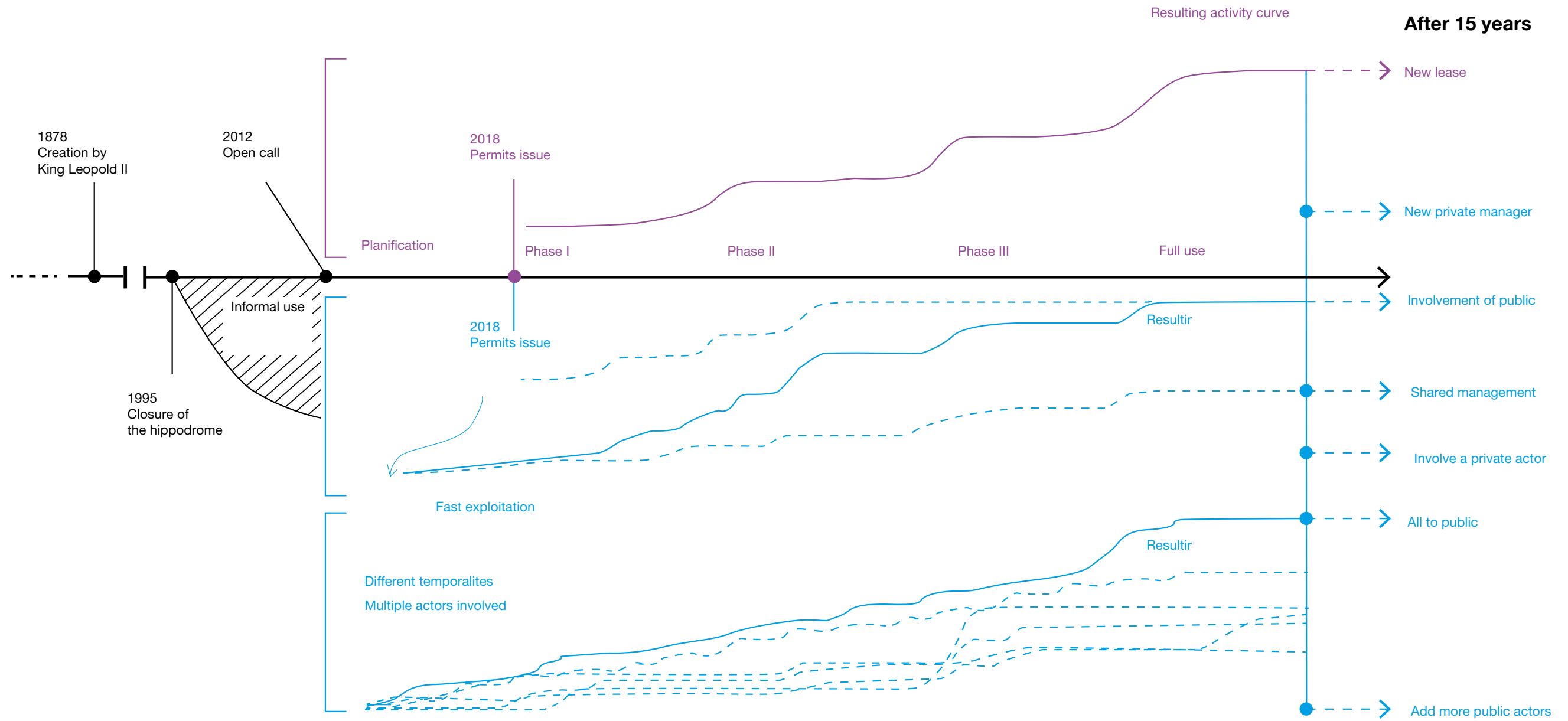
Conditions for a Public-Public partnership

The development of leisure, sports and culture are competencies that should not be managed by a single institution. If this project is to be self-sustaining and financially reliable, coalitions must be formed. The management and the partial activation of the site by an association can be possible with operating funds, which allows sustainability. A more scattered would open the potential to a wider range of existing actors. In this structure, the addition of a board of directors to manage the Melting Park project would be fundamental.



Governance Timeline

The existing Public-Private Partnership is shown on top, comparing it with the proposed Public-Private Partnership 'Plus' and the Public-Public Policy, and how each project will develop and extend beyond the current 15 year timeline.



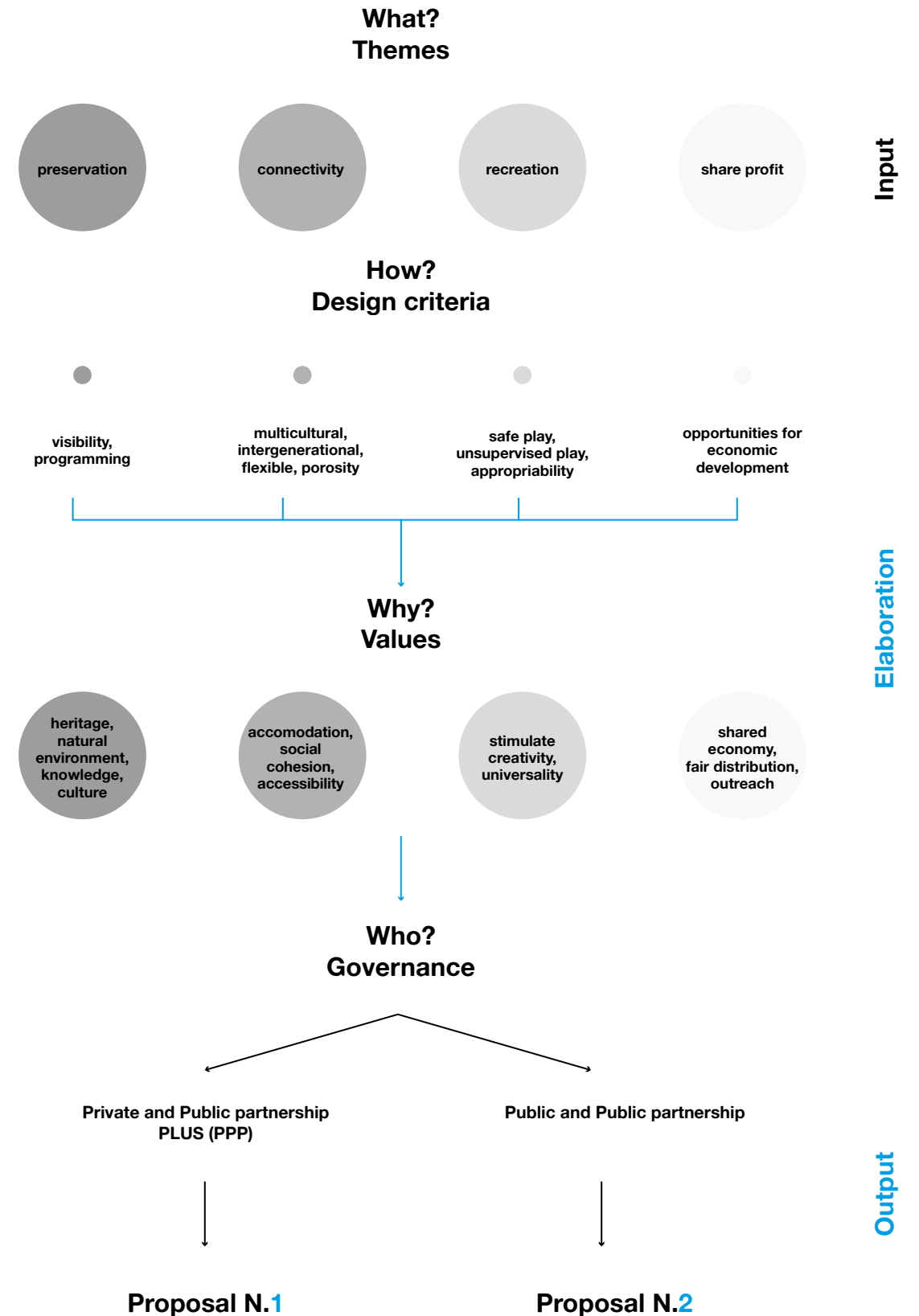
Proposal

The space in between

Revolving around themes of preservation, connectivity, recreation, and the generation of monetary and cultural capital, the following proposals put forth alternative models of ownership, management, and programming for the Droh!me Melting Park. Informed by the criteria of integration into larger green and socio-cultural networks, freedom of use, accommodation of pedagogical and leisure oriented partnerships, and opportunities for economic development, the proposed public-private 'plus' and public-public models reimagine the Droh!me Melting Park as a regional and local nexus of recreational and pedagogical activity. The Public-Private 'Plus' Partnership (PPP+) Model of Governance works within the existing structure put forth by the European Commission, the 'plus' refers to the creation of a board of directors which insures the continuity of the inclusion of the community, local educational institutions and the values of social responsibility in the project and the event and pedagogical programming for the park. The creation of a Public-Public Partnership returns the property to the Brussels-Capital Region and then opens it up to be managed by local actors, neighborhood partners, and non-profits. The Public-Public model of partnership also includes to the creation of a board of directors which insures the continuity of the inclusion of the community, local educational institutions and the values of social responsibility in the project and the event and pedagogical programming for the park. Diverging in the programming and physical use of the site, the two proposals involve the reconceptualization of the models of governance and the partnerships that inform the site's use.

The diagrams in the next pages show the process which led to the two proposals.

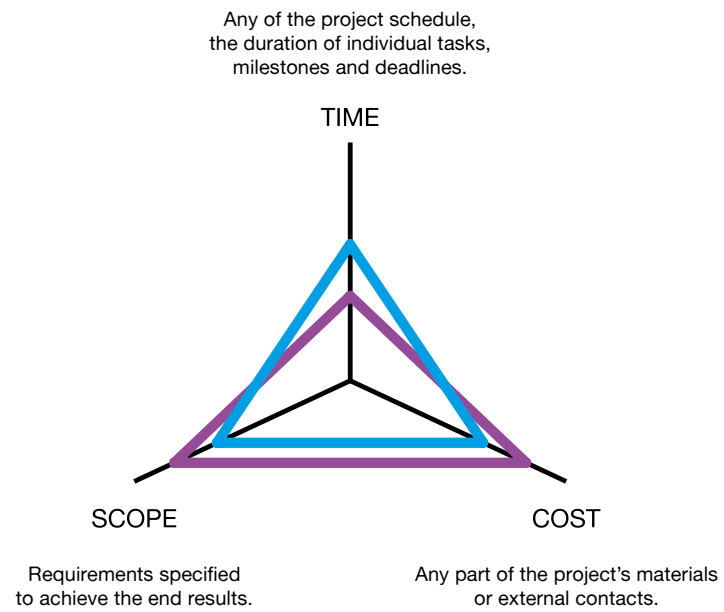
Hippodrome



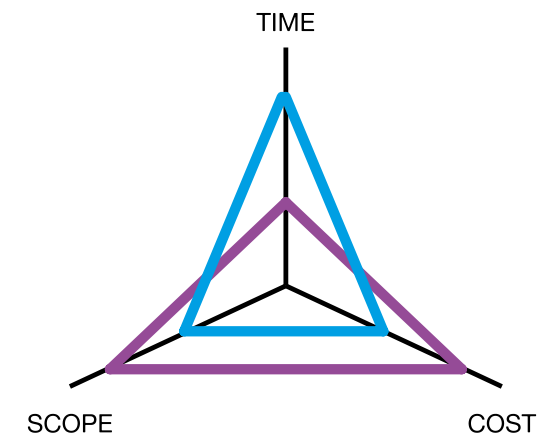
Time – cost – scope diagram

Comparison between ERDF funded and students proposals.

Proposal 1 Private and public partnership plus



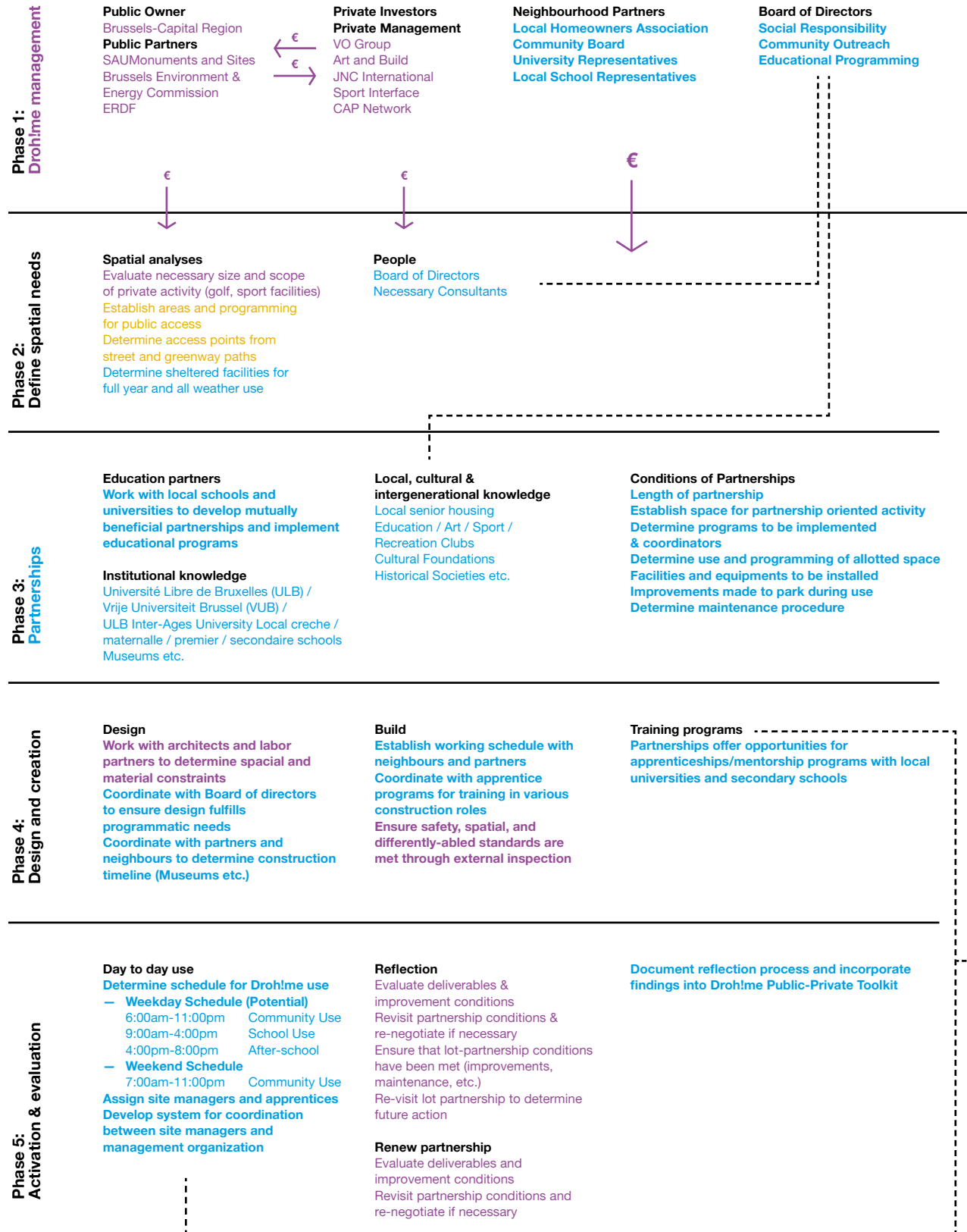
Proposal 2 Public and public partnership plus



Public-Private Plus Toolkit

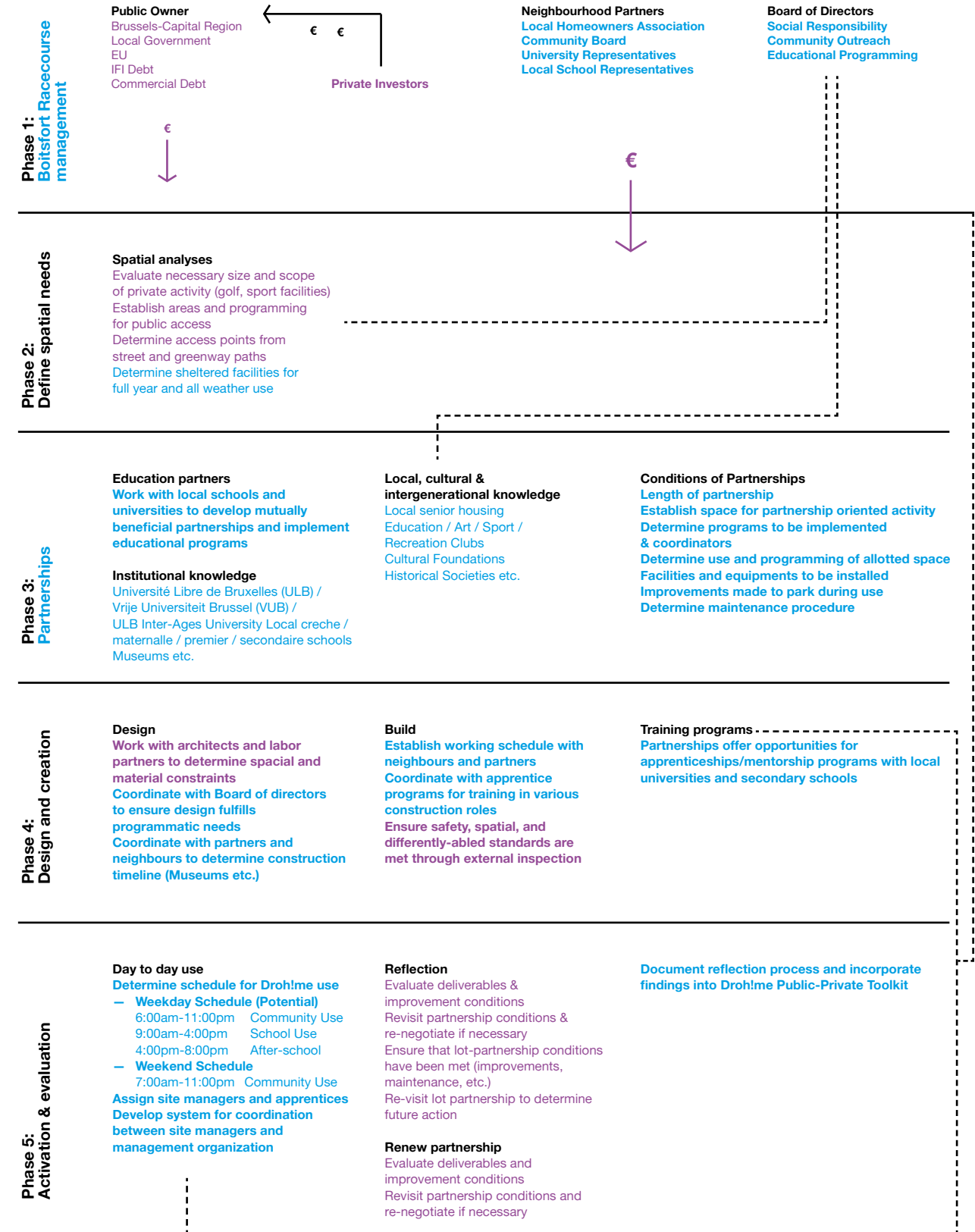
Structure: adhere to European Commission Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBFO) Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model

Existing ERDF Project Components
Existing Hospitality Elements
Proposed

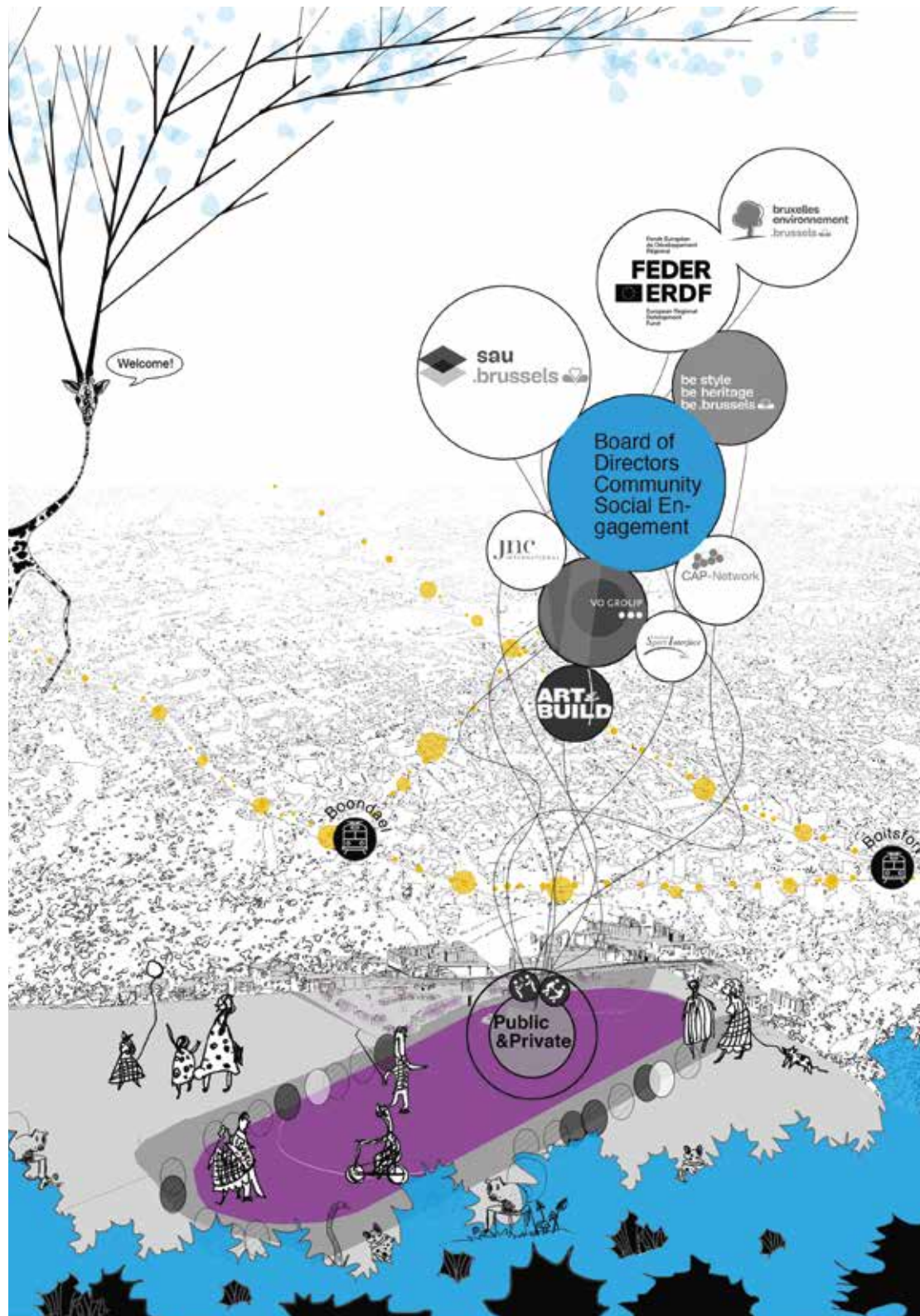


Public-Public Toolkit

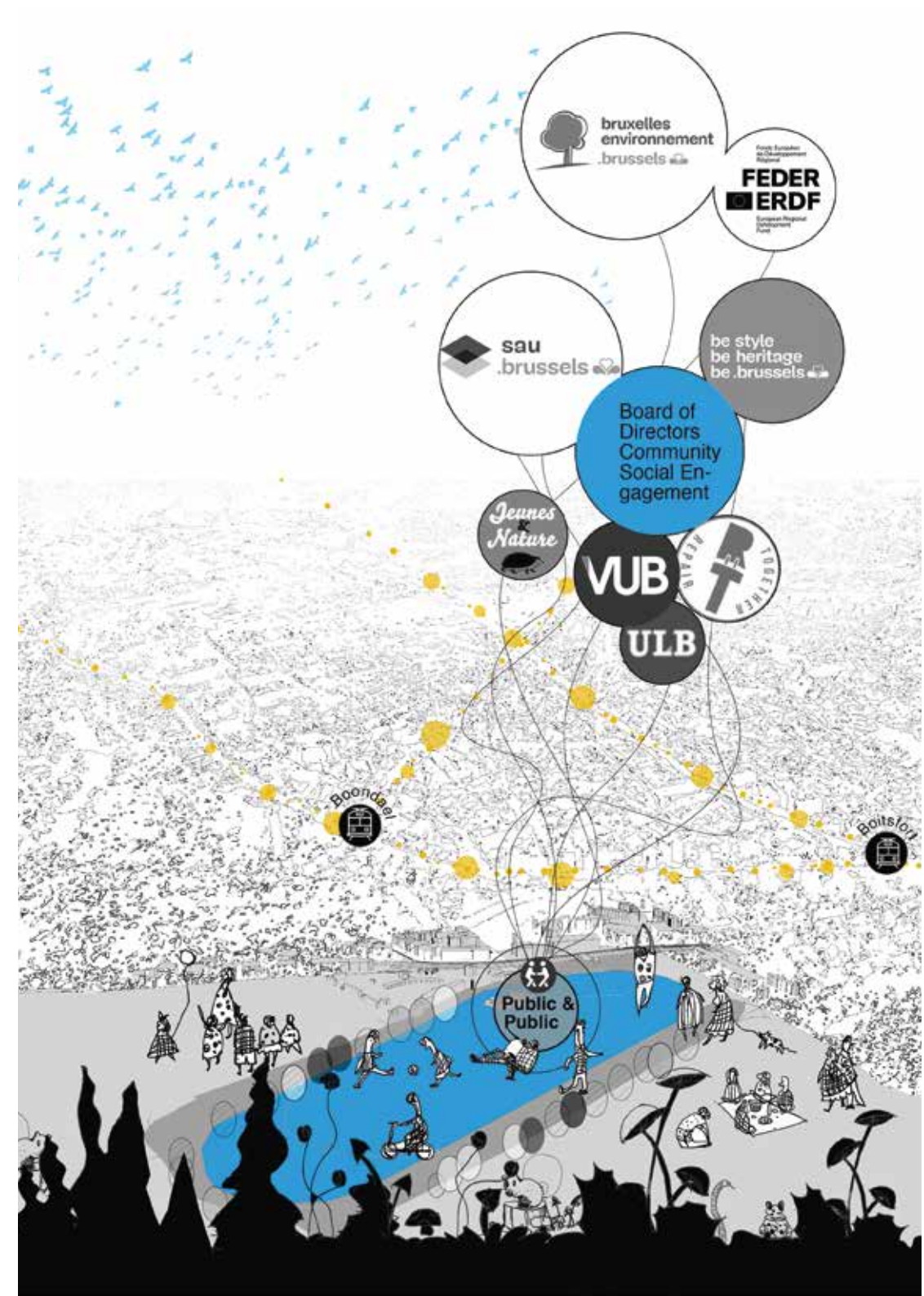
Structure: adhere to European Commission Traditional Public Sector Procurement model



Visualizing the Public-Private Plus Partnership: an imaginative view of the park governance.



Visualizing the Public-Public Partnership: an imaginative view of the park governance.



Conclusion

Roselyne de Lestrang, Louise Carlier and Pauline Varloteaux

Several research projects have studied the Droh!me project previous to the master class, approaching it from various angles: the relationship between urbanity and biodiversity, the question of the project's engineering, and the joint dynamics of publicisation and insularisation.

Early in the research processes, one cross-cutting theme caught our attention and became the core of the work carried out at the crossroads of several disciplines: accessibility. Although its spatial aspects in the immediate surroundings were discussed publicly, it appeared in our analyses as a much more complex problem, linked to the metropolitan status of the site.

As is the case with other ERDF projects (Casernes, Abattoir, Abbaye, etc.), we understood it as being at the heart of antagonistic strategies of insularisation and networking, perceptible from different angles:

- Spatial, referring to internal accessibility (site scale, degree of porosity and relationship between planned activities) and external accessibility (the site's metropolitan scale and its insertion into a network of public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructures, recreational and natural places);
- Sociological, from the point of view of the site's hospitality towards various populations concerned by the project, apparently targeted differently by the activity schedule;
- Environmental, regarding strategies linked to conflicting environmental ethics: closure (sanctuarisation) or publicisation.

The objective of our research team was first to question, through this project, the conditions of the spatial (in/out), sociological, and ecological accessibility of a public space with high natural value, hosting recreational and leisure zones. Beyond this work, the ethical issue of Metrolab's approach was to contribute to placing the Droh!me project and the urban processes it engages (PPP for the programming and management of a metropolitan public space that receives EU funds¹) at a level of discussion that suits its scope: public and supra-local.

Much like the preliminary research, the work done by the students was carried out concurrently with a highly dynamic project process, based on information that was limited to its spatial and programming dimensions, and with no clear identification of the ERDF's contribution to the project, as the Droh!me project predates the ERDF's programming for 2014-2020².

The student' work looks into the accessibility of the site for the different communities and demographic profiles that characterise Brussels' society. They also tried to address this question from the perspective of a network of public green spaces — taking into account the site's location on the edge of the Sonian Forest.

The insularisation/networking axis of analysis was found to be appropriate from an early phase, with the students' team suggesting the themes of borders and edges as starting points for its reflections — the edges under scrutiny being at the same time perceived and real, material and immaterial.

Quickly, the economic dimension of accessibility led to focusing on the public-private partnership for the project (PPP), with which the American members of the team were quite familiar and in which it foresaw valuable opportunities for social innovation.

The objective of the team was then clarified: rethinking the inclusion of the project in spatial and social terms, but also from local economies and the theory of the commons. This latter dimension even became the strategic key to guaranteeing the hospitality of the site, as defined by the theoretical bases of the master class.

Based on the American team members' expertise with PPPs, the students designed their scenarios through the focal point of engineering and governance, following a pedagogical exploration method that consisted in confronting a variety of proposals — from the most realistic to the most radical — and leaving room to take certain liberties with regard to feasibility criteria³. These scenarios offered alternatives, ranging from mixed to fully public. The central proposal of the team is the creation of a new entity that takes on a central role in the project's management, mediating between associations, potential private actors, and public entities. It is intended to guarantee the public interest in the site's activity schedule.

On this basis, the team revisited both the project's activities and its spatial dimension.

Due to time constraints, the spatial formalisation of the scenarios and the proposal for an alternative governance process could not be taken beyond raw illustrative sketches. In any case, we believe the proposals interest lies in the questions it raises on what the private management of a public space involves. Such questions are worth looking more into, taking into account the complex relationship that exists between the economic requirements for accessibility and a project's hospitality qualities. This exercise confirms that designing a proper project management structure is as important as designing a space so as to guarantee its public interest — and hence its hospitality — through in both space and time.

Beyond these specific proposals, the question of guaranteeing public interest remains open. Probably for contextual reasons (composition of the team, specificities of Brussels for urban planning), this work relates it to the presence of the associative sector rather than to public policy itself. However, this valuable hypothesis does have limits; it places the burden of public interest on people who gather around common goods, though their ability to represent a plurality of political principles, and even more pragmatically the plurality of communities, is not proven.

Finally, the question arises of which political and social requirements should be added to European funding when it benefits private actors — the corollary being the need to protect the public good, which remains under the remit of public policy, even when public institutions delegate their mission to private managers. We make the assumption that the University, by fostering debates in the course of action, can play an essential role here.

¹ In this regard, we suggest reading the document entitled 'Four Challenges of Inclusion in Brussels', which includes a presentation of the sites in question (p. 22).

² The concession to exploit the Hippodrome site was granted in November, 2013.

³ Such criteria may relate to funding, urban planning, heritage, or other factors, and they are laid down by the ERDF funding rules, the requirements for public procurement contracts, and the various regulatory and strategic plans for land use planning at the regional level.