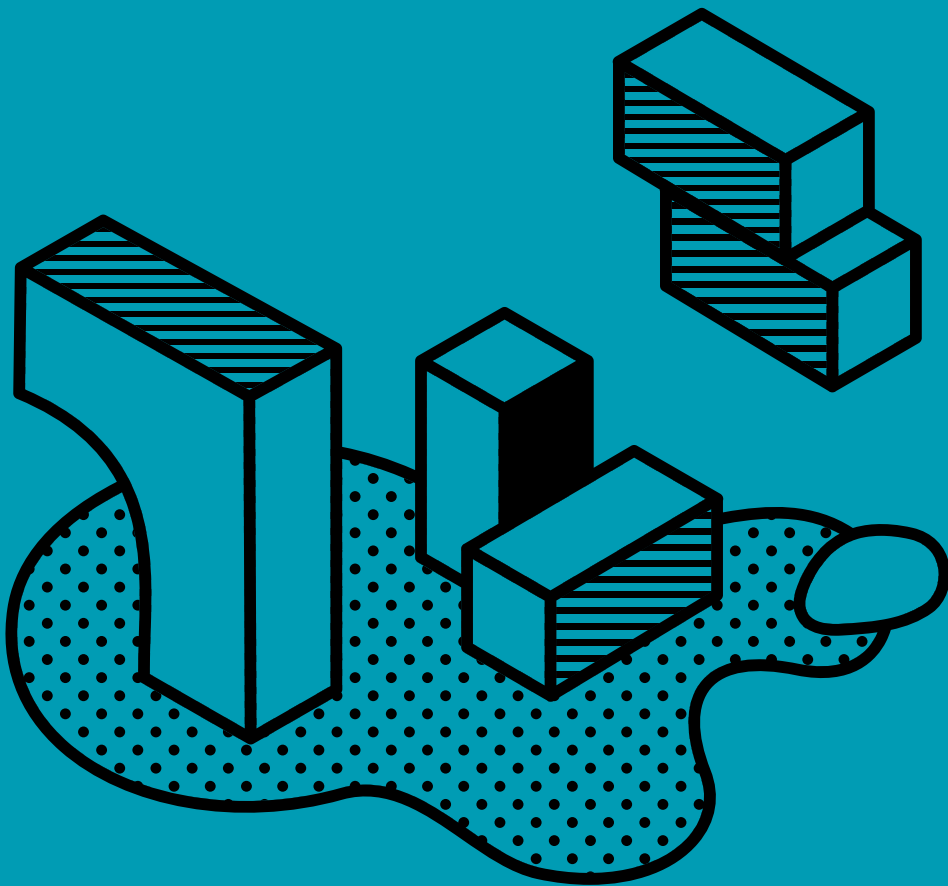# Designing Brussels Ecosystems

## Metrolab Brussels MasterClass II

**Bernard Declève**
**Geoffrey Grulois**
**Roselyne de Lestrange**
**Andrea Bortolotti**
**Corentin Sanchez Trenado**

**(eds)**

# Designing Brussels Ecosystems

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**(eds)**

<u>Work</u>

# Balancing work and life
# A project of doors

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**Sandrine Tonnoir (stakeholder)**
**Chloé Salembier (tutor)**
**Alberto Squizzato**
**Natalia Vera Vigaray**

# Introduction

Brussels is still dealing with what remains of a not so distant industrial past. Bringing back production to the city cannot be only a matter of competitiveness, demand and supply, or a matter of efficient organisation of the material and infrastructural supports. It is also a matter of working conditions and work spaces. As a group, we consider that working today should not be about making money but about remaking life.

A variety of situations — including those illustrated in the three case studies we consider here — suggests and experiments a different approach to the concept of work. The concept of 'a third place' could provide a pertinent entry point for describing emergent work spaces, by allowing to question the balance between work and other activities, e.g. between work and life. What seems to be at stake and at the core of the current transformations is not only the compatibility of these two realms, but also the fertility of their interweaving, in terms of both socio-spatial conditions and individual needs. What if work was about collective emancipation rather than just wages? What spatial conditions would be involved? Flexibility — and the resulting precarity — is as much about time as it is about space. And if we live while working and work while living, this requires appropriate conditions — as much as they have an impact — that go beyond the physical boundaries of a building. It is a matter of ecosystems, generated by the inter-weaving — in the same building or in the same neighbourhood — of the flows and rhythms of a different approach to work — or a different approach to life. The ecosystems approach is therefore understood as the relationship between work and life fuelled by a different system of values that generates specific spatial and social patterns and embedded different scales of analysis. As designers, we hence explored the work-life relationship looking at the different spatial implications, at the different scales and their atmospheres, from architectural to urban. We have observed that the balance between work and life is no longer about segregating, but rather about negotiating, playing, exploring. It is a project of doors, regulating compatibilities and incompatibilities, engendering the exchange of expertise, making possible the emergence of new solidarities. It is a matter of urbanity.

# Ecosystems & situations
# Attracting, protecting and voicing

The three case studies of Recyclart, LaVallée and Zinneke are different, both in terms of new values and rights and of socio-spatial characters. Recyclart is an art centre, a workshop for the manufacturing of metal and wood objects called 'Fabrik' and a restaurant. Started as a reclamation of the space of Chapelle railway station, where various art projects and cultural activities have been successfully developed for 20 years in collaboration with the Brussels-Capital Region, Recyclart supports a work training programme allowing vulnerable individuals to become self-sufficient by developing skills and starting a professional path. In terms of socio-spatial dynamics, Recyclart works as a magnet, attracting people and having a powerful impact on the perception of the surrounding urban fabric. LaVallée provides not only a co-working space but also legal, tax-related and financial support to freelancers and small organisations. While maintaining friendly relationships with the neighbouring activities, LaVallée is an 'introverted' space, working as a bubble of protection, spatially enclosing and providing an alternative form of security to flexible — and precarious — workers. Zinneke is a non-profit association mainly working around the production of a biennial parade — ongoing since 2000 — but also agglomerating projects such as 'l'Atelier Métal', for the training of those interested in special skills for the creation of metal artefacts; or 'Matos', for the collection and the recycling of waste materials. In the spirit of 'love for humanity' and 'curiosity towards the unknown', Zinneke celebrates solidarity and stimulates the public space to allow free expression. After a long nomadic life across the available vacant buildings in the city, Zinneke has finally gained the opportunity to occupy a former stamp factory for 20 years in the Masui neighbourhood, thanks to an ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funded project. The challenge today is to embed the life of the organisation in the neighbourhood, while involving its inhabitants in the governance of the building. The articulation of the needs of different actors around the same space is a matter of rhythms, accessibility, compatibility of different activities and requires what Zinneke's team defined as a 'project of doors'.

**ART**
**Soft infrastructure**
Mobile Furnishing, Flexible spaces
**Horizontal organisation**
**Informal relations**
**Expression related**
Spontaneous, Personal
**Community**
**Self-mobilisation**



3rd place

to work

to enjoy                    to express

to share         to communicate
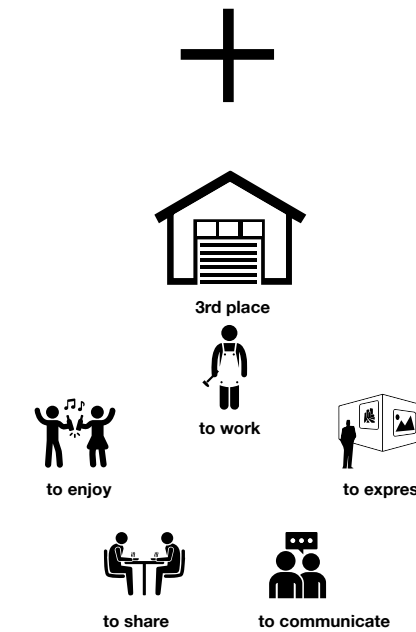
**WORK**
**Hard infrastructure**
Fixed Machinery, Defined Working Spaces
**Hierarchic organisation**
**Formal Relations**
**Task related**
Evaluated, Efficiency
**Individual**
**Scheduled activities**

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**A NEW SYSTEM OF VALUES**

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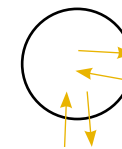


**A DOOR**

**ZINNEKE**
Cooperation
Voicing
Self-expression
Valorising spaces and people
New relations work-art
Creativity
Informal training
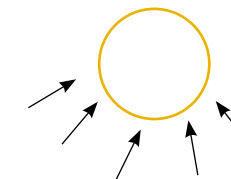
**A MAGNET**

**RECYCLART**
Cooperation
Emancipation
Self-expression
Offering spaces and tools
Mixed uses
Creativity
Pedagogy
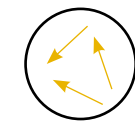
**A BUBBLE**

**LA VALLÉE**
Cooperation
Protection in the job market
Self-expression
Appropriation of spaces and tools
Welfare protection

**Third places as a new system of values**
Working places are often characterised by fixed spaces and scheduled activities. Time and work have no quality, are only a part of the same equation in which profit is the only goal. Third places seek to impose a new system of values. Each of the three situations we have investigated act in different ways with different levels of reformism or radicalness. They are three situations of resistance that redefine rights and values around the concepts of protection, voicing and emancipation as they redefine the relationship between work spaces and the ecosystem of the city around the figures of the magnet, the bubble and the door.

**RECYCLART**
**Magnet**

Les Brigittines
Restaurant

Fabrik
Workshops

Arts center
Concert and
exhibitions hall

Offices
Administration
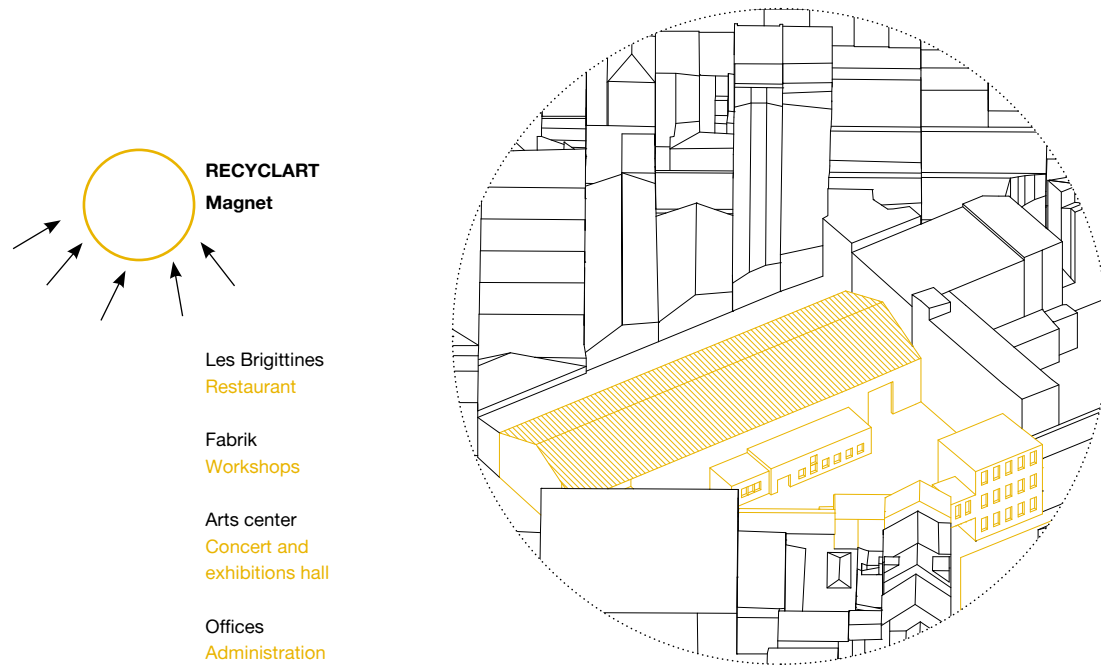
**Re-centralisation of the project**

In the Chapelle railway station, Recyclart has been a successful experience interacting and impacting the neighbourhood. Nowadays, the project is scattered across different places. Moving to Rue Manchester can be an opportunity for the project to re-centralise all its activities. This new location generates a new condition of accessibility (from the city and from the street) and of integration within the urban tissue.

**Recyclart (a magnet)**

This picture was taken on January 28, 2019 around 5 p.m. It shows the new entrance of the Recyclart project recently displaced near the canal, in a former printing factory located on Rue Manchester in Molenbeek. On the left side, the showcase is used to promote the production made by Recyclart Fabrik currently still located in the Marolles neighbourhood.
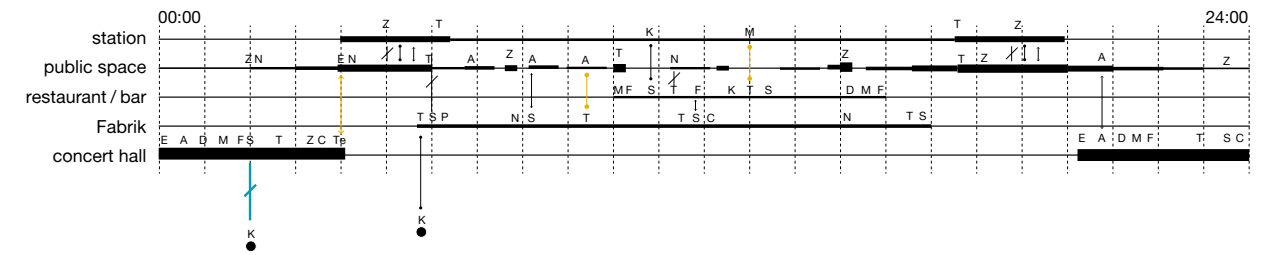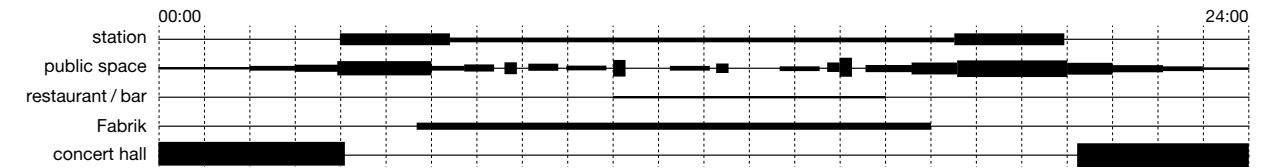
**Exchanges**

| | |
|---|---|
| Conflicts | Z Neighbour |
| | E Entrepreneur |
| | T Trainee |
| Transactions | S Staff |
| | A Artist |
| | D Designer |
| Transmissions | M Media |
| | F Food |
| | K Stakeholder |
| | P Provider |
| | C Craftsman |
| | Z Citizen |

**Describing a specific ecosystem, 'One working day at Recyclart'**

The diagram shows the multiple uses of the place and the social interactions through a day. The lines represent the spaces while the columns are the hours of the day. The arrows are the three types of exchanges between the agents. We highlighted here the conflict that opposed the railway company and the project regarding security issues.

**ZINNEKE**
**Door**

Ex-fabric factory
providing materials

Empty shed, at Masui
The realisation
of the work of art
Stocking place, waiting for the
performance

The dance school in
Molenbeek
Regular rehearsal space

Masui
Organisation
of the parade
Temporary workshop
Atelier Metal

Place Bonnevie in collaboration with the
municipality
Final rehearsal /public space
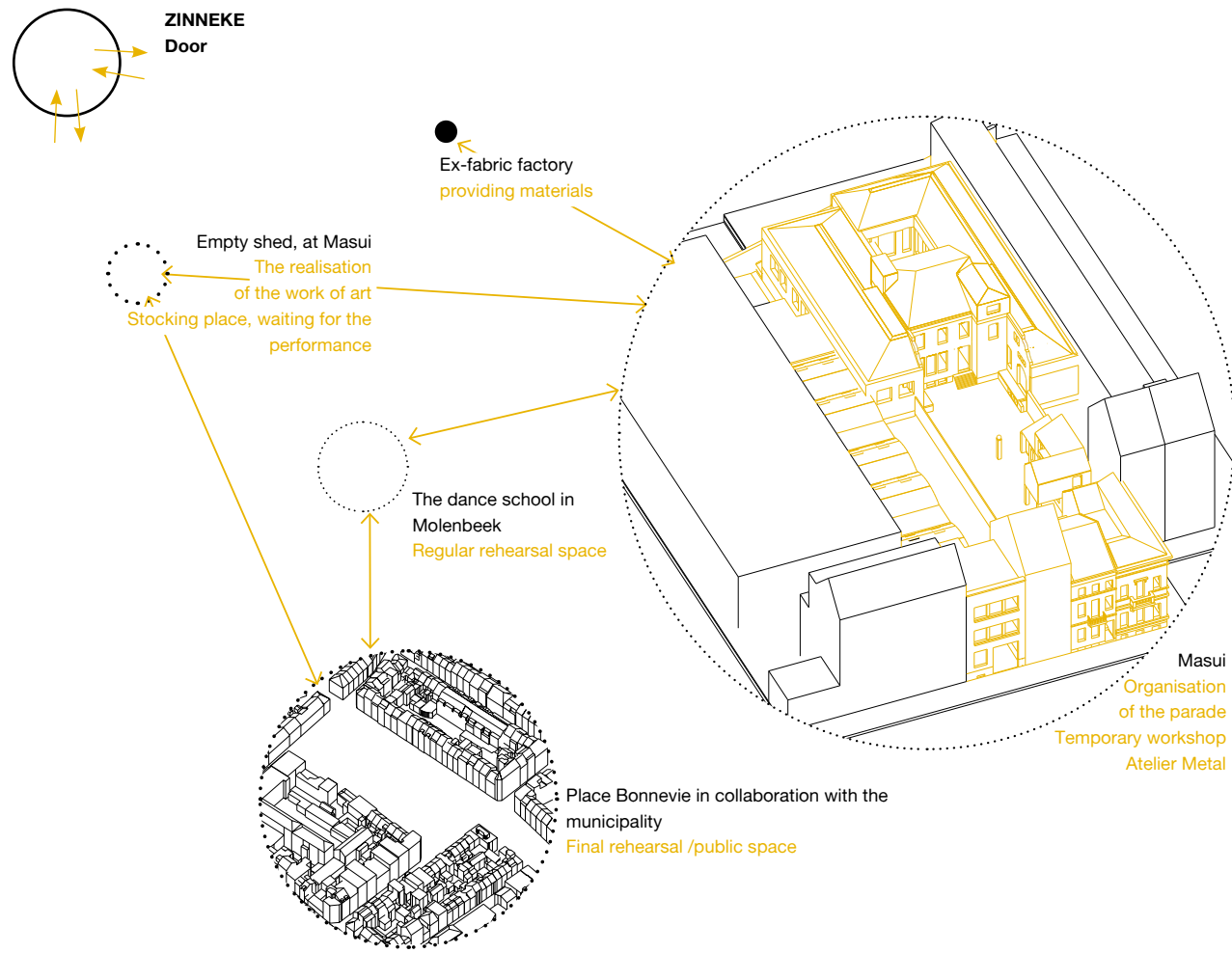
**The rhizomatic spatial pattern of a Zinnode**
A Zinnode is a group composed of various partners creating a common
artistic project. Through workshops they develop a theatrical concept
around the Parade's theme (www.zinneke.org). For each biennale around
20 Zinnodes are composed and interact with various places and public
spaces in the city at different stage of the creation process.

**Zinneke (a door)**
This picture was taken on January 29, 2019 around 11 a.m. The Zinneke
association is transforming a former general stamp factory into a large
permanent space for meeting, creation, training and production adapted
to the needs of the Zinneke project and, more broadly, to those of the
city and its neighbourhoods. The transformation of the building is a pilot
project for the development of infrastructure through the reuse of building
materials, with maximum respect for the existing building. As much
as possible, the work is carried out by people trained in the versatile
trajectories of artisanal reconstruction work.

00:00                                                                    24:00

Storage
Courtyard
Flexible space
Workshops
Office

00:00                                                                    24:00

Storage
Courtyard
Flexible space
Workshops
Office

| Exchanges | | |
|---|---|---|
| Conflicts | **Z** | Neighbour |
| | **E** | Entrepreneur |
| | **T** | Trainee |
| Transactions | **S** | Staff |
| | **A** | Artist |
| | **D** | Designer |
| Transmissions | **M** | Media |
| | **F** | Food |
| | **K** | Stakeholder |
| | **P** | Provider |
| | **C** | Craftsman |
| | **Z** | Citizen |

**Describing a specific ecosystem 'One working day at Zinneke'**
Showing the different uses of the spaces, we highlighted how this
new place can impact the local economy becoming for example a client
for the food providers settled in the neighbourhood.
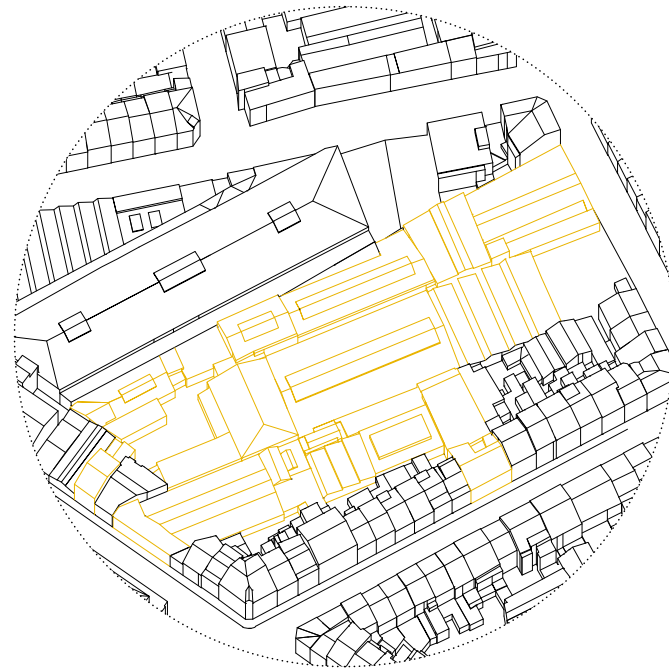
LA VALLÉE
Bubble

**A specialised equipment**
LaVallée is a specialized equipment from Smart (which headquarter is in Saint-Gilles) that integrates different kind of co-working spaces and ateliers. Individuals or collective workshops and working spaces for creative activities are organizing around two courtyards and a big event hall that can host all kind of activities.



**LaVallée (a bubble)**
This picture was taken on January 30, 2019 around 12 p.m. at LaVallée in Molenbeek. LaVallée is a shared space provided by Smart. As a mutual society for artists, Smart has been the largest cooperative in Europe since 2016. Its objective is to relieve artists, creators and technicians of administrative burdens related to their professional activities. LaVallée is based in a former laundry building and is organised around several common spaces that foster intimate interactions (such as kitchens, salons, courtyards, terraces).



00:00                                                          24:00
courtyards
indivuduals workshops
co-working spaces
collective workshops
events hall and bar-saloon

00:00                                                          24:00
courtyards
indivuduals workshops
co-working spaces
collective workshops
events hall and bar-saloon
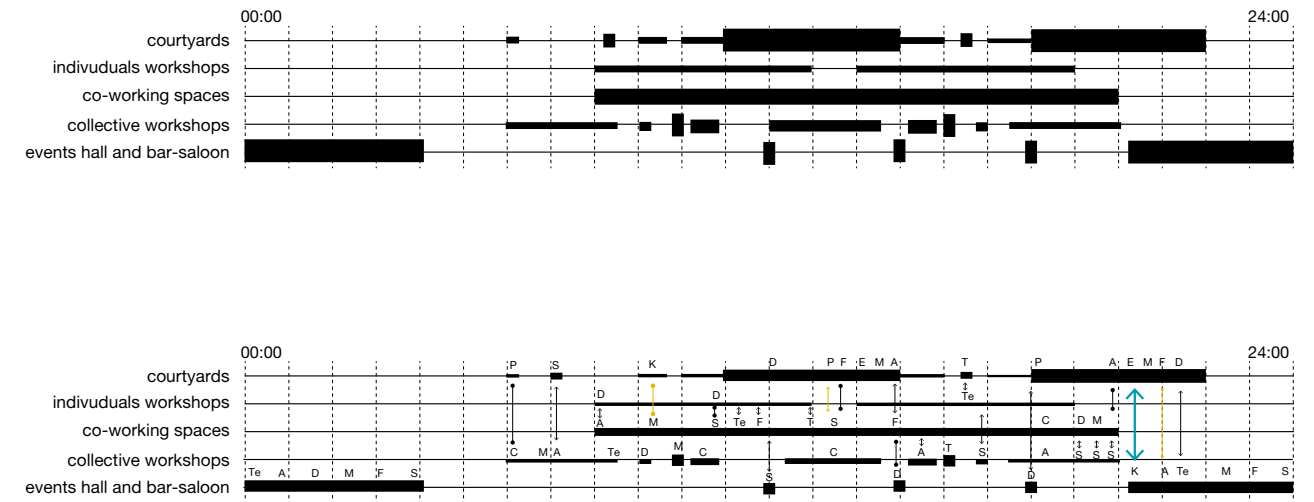
**Exchanges**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Conflicts | Z | Neighbour |
| | E | Entrepreneur |
| | T | Trainee |
| | S | Staff |
| Transactions | A | Artist |
| | D | Designer |
| | M | Media |
| Transmissions | F | Food |
| | K | Stakeholder |
| | P | Provider |
| | C | Craftsman |
| | Z | Citizen |

**Describing a specific ecosystem 'One working day at LaVallée'**
The space favours the proximity and exchanges between autonomous workers having complementary activities to work together on a project or working in the same sector in order to mutualise functional costs.

# Designing ecosystem transition
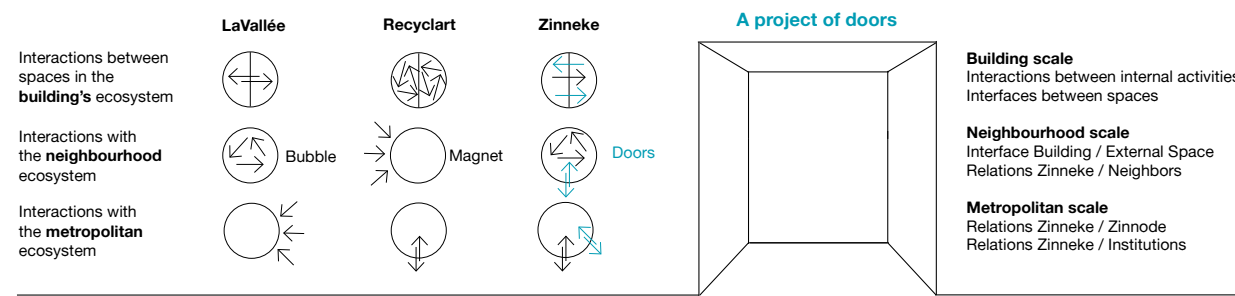# A project of doors

The combination of the socio-spatial framework within which Zinneke operates and of the challenge this actor set itself in terms of governance and relationships with the neighbourhood defines an interesting situation to be explored from a design perspective. The project of doors of Zinneke, by involving other local actors in the governance of the building promises to expand beyond the walls of the building, having the potential to transform the ecosystem of the whole neighbourhood. The concept of doors can be read as a metaphor rather than an operation.[1] Doors can refer to the entrance of a home, the security gate of a city or a neighbourhood but also to a psychological barrier or a way to isolate oneself. The coexistence of life and work in this part of the city allowed us to identify three possible relational situations concerning actors and the character of spaces. Conflict situations are those where some kind of friction is perhaps inevitable, requiring acknowledgment more than pacification. Transactions describe forms of material exchanges such as those of a market, implying a temporary shift in the role of the space, allowing the interweaving of life and work. Transmissions are about filtering and hybridisations, of spaces and expertise: from the private to the public, through semi-public and semi-private conditions, allowing to experiment different work rhythms and mixed forms of governance.

We asked ourselves how doors could intervene on these three different situations, and we tested three possible 'door sites' and related to their nature, three possible actions developed as part of Zinneke's spatial-relational strategy. The first is about invading the heavily industrialised front of the canal for unusual walks or 'disruptive' events, thus taking

advantage of the industrial landscape. The second is about negotiating along the Parc de La Senne, still under construction, as an alternative marketplace, while establishing some forms of collective life — e.g. community gardens and workshops for arts and crafts — along the long corridor of the park. The third is about experimenting theatrical performances in Place Masui, as an occasion to extend Zinneke's operational space beyond the walls of its building.

While reflecting on the governance and the spatial impact related to the activities of Zinneke, based on the understanding of the modus operandi of this organisation, two scenarios seem to combine: the first of temporary activation of local actors and sites, responding to short-term actions and initiatives, more or less related to the organisation of the parade. The second is the long-term establishment of a neighbourhood governance, which would concern Zinneke's former stamp factory and other surrounding vacant sites and buildings, for example, in the form of a Community Land Trust.

1.   The third place as a door answers the statement raised in Elements of architecture by Koolhaas, Westcott and Petermann (2017, p. 257): 'Door. A traditional element once invested with physical heft and graphic iconography has turned into a dematerialized zone, a gradual transition between conditions registered by ephemeral technologies (metal detector, card readers, body scanners) rather than physical objects. The transformation took place concurrently with a transformation in society: whereas isolation was once the desired condition, our aspirations now are for movement, flow, transparency, accessibility — which the door, by definition, stands in the way of'.
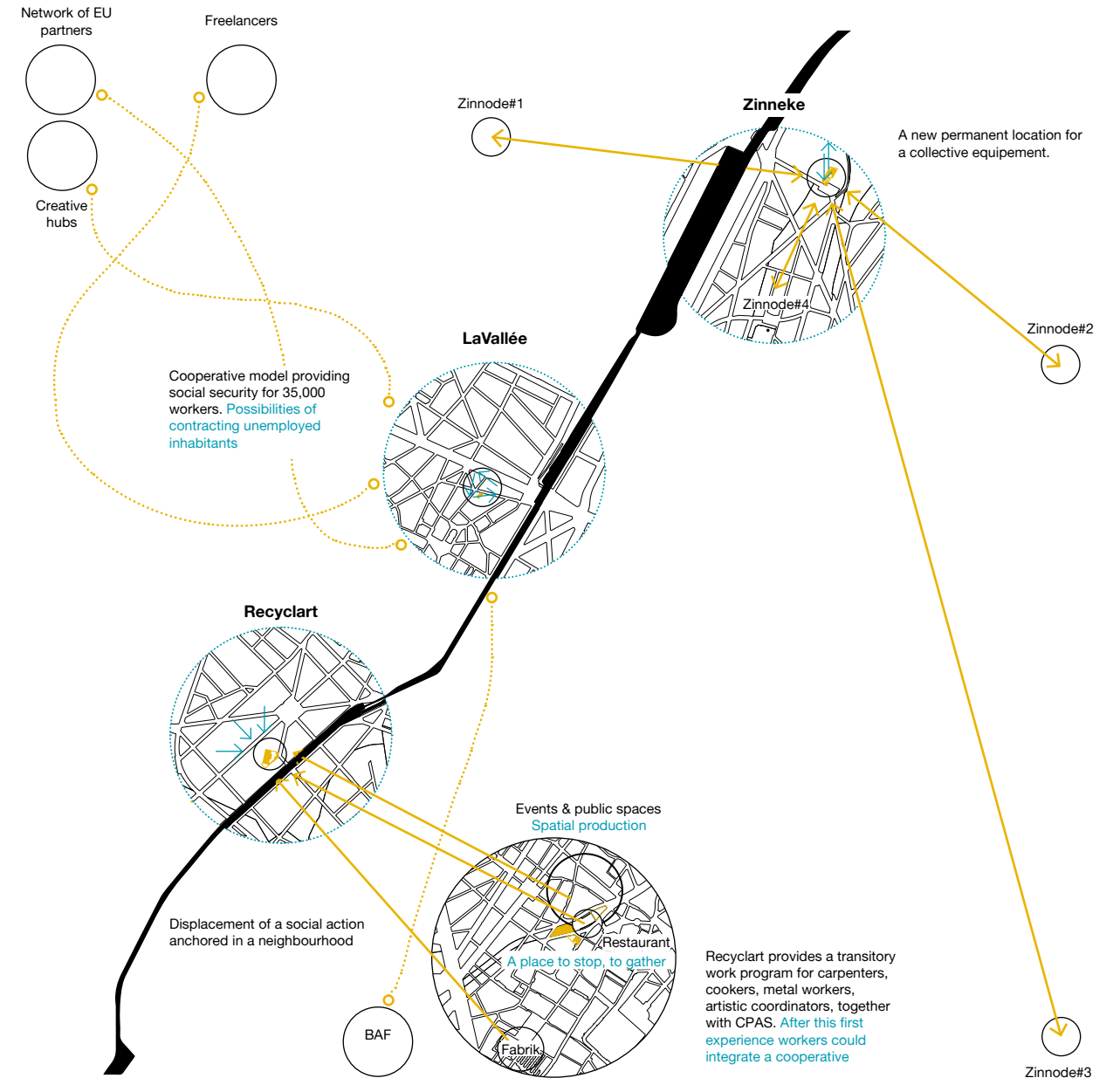
**A project of doors**

| | LaVallée | Recyclart | Zinneke | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interactions between spaces in the **building's** ecosystem | | | | **Building scale** Interactions between internal activities Interfaces between spaces |
| Interactions with the **neighbourhood** ecosystem | Bubble | Magnet | Doors | **Neighbourhood scale** Interface Building / External Space Relations Zinneke / Neighbors |
| Interactions with the **metropolitan** ecosystem | | | | **Metropolitan scale** Relations Zinneke / Zinnode Relations Zinneke / Institutions |

**A matrix of ecosystem interactions**
The interactions between the projects and the city is complex and changes in relation to the various scales. However, by analysing the projects at the scale of the neighbourhood, it is possible to understand three different ways in which the ecosystems of LaVallée, Recyclart and Zinneke interact with the wider ecosystem of the city.

Network of EU partners

Freelancers

Creative hubs

Zinnode#1

**Zinneke**

A new permanent location for a collective equipement.

Zinnode#4

Zinnode#2

**LaVallée**

Cooperative model providing social security for 35,000 workers. Possibilities of contracting unemployed inhabitants

**Recyclart**

Events & public spaces
Spatial production

Displacement of a social action anchored in a neighbourhood

Restaurant

A place to stop, to gather

Recyclart provides a transitory work program for carpenters, cookers, metal workers, artistic coordinators, together with CPAS. After this first experience workers could integrate a cooperative

BAF

Fabrik

Zinnode#3

**Verbing the actions**

In the process of designing, we brainstormed how to turn the three types of exchanges into actions. The results are a list of verbs that can interact in the three types. As the idea was to attract people to collective events, we choose to keep the verbs that express some radicalness but stay positive.



Building up Masui Zinnode          Invading Canal Banks          Negociating The Parc de la Senne          Performing The Square Masui          CLT Masui

Feb. 2019          May 2020          Dec. 2020

Tomorrow          Parade          New fund

Conflicts itineraries          Transactions itineraries          Transmissions itineraries

The new coalition of actors integrates the building in a community land trust or a cooperative

Door-to-door#1: involving local actors in the new coalition
Door-to-door#2: thematic reading of the neighbourhood
Door-to-door#3: involving manpower in the local actions

**Short-terms actions**

The short-term project is an ecosystem of actions that precedes the project of community land trust and the Masui cooperative. Each type of exchange is challenged in a cycle of three itineraries through the neighbourhood that ends up in a collective action (and festive event), which aims at revealing the synergies Zinneke can have with other economic, social actors and inhabitants present in the neighbourhood. In the long term, the cooperative becomes the manager of the three public spaces that have been activated (banks of the canal, Parc de la Senne, Place Masui).

<u>**Poster campain**</u>
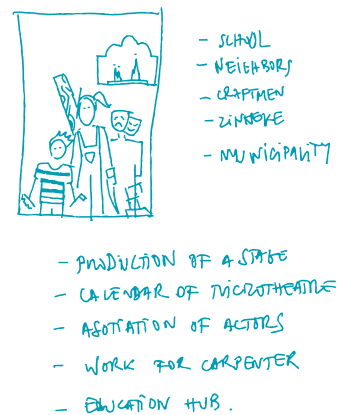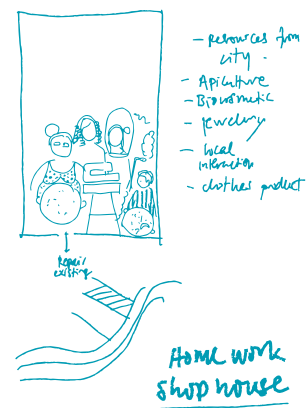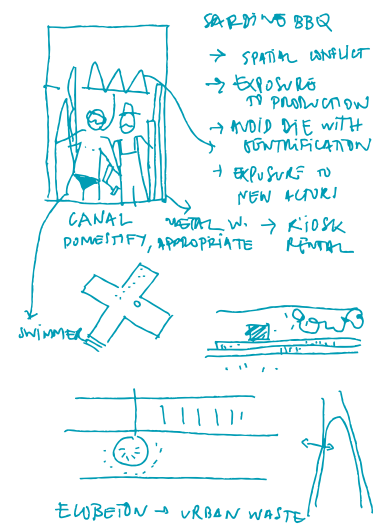
<u>**Actions**</u>

<u>**Itineraries**</u>



**Invading** The Canal Banks

This action aims at allowing the appropriation of the canal banks for activities related to metal transformation. It aims at creating a synergy between a metal recycling factory, the metal workshop in Zinneke and skilled migrants.
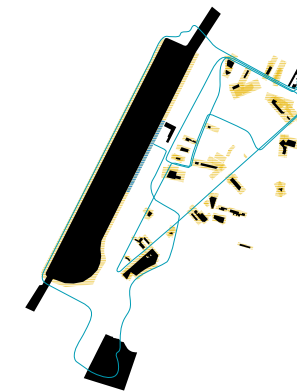


**Door-to-door#1:** Involving A.Stevens & Co
**Door-to-door#2:** Fluxes of material. Metal in the neigbourhood
**Door-to-door#3:** Energy flow. Manpower from Parc Maximilien



**Negociating** The Parc de la Senne

This action aims at allowing the residents living along the parc de la Senne to open their doors and sell homemade food, crafts or offering a service for repairing objects, clothes etc.



**Door-to-door#1:** Involving the residents from Parc de la Senne
**Door-to-door#2:** Fluxes of material. Food, clothes, objects...
**Door-to-door#3:** Energy flow. Unemployed people and local shops



**Performing** The Place Masui

This final action aims at bringing the activities of Zinneke on the Place Masui. A small theater built by students from a carpentry high school will stage a play with the children involve in the associations of the neighbourhood. The vacant buildings and working sites are activated by the activities.
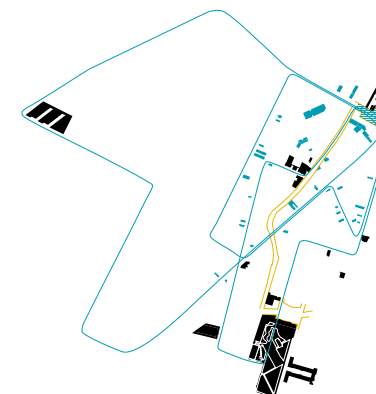


**Door-to-door#1:** Involving schools and social actors
**Door-to-door#2:** Fluxes of material. Wood transformation
**Door-to-door#3:** Energy flow. Students and wood workers
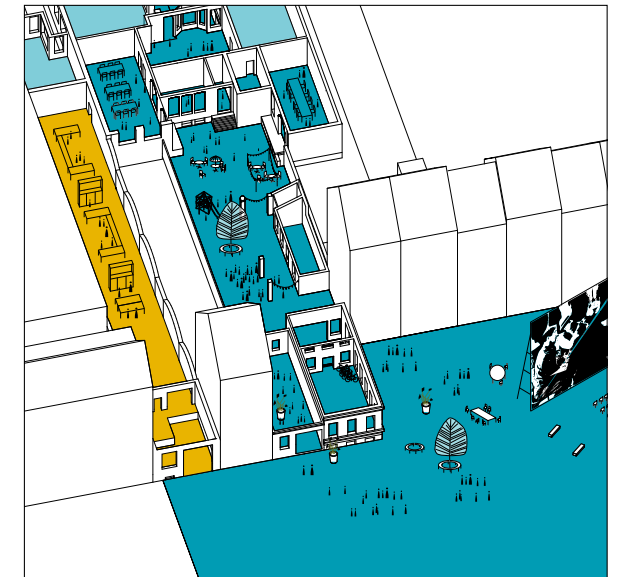
**To invade: Doors for Invading**
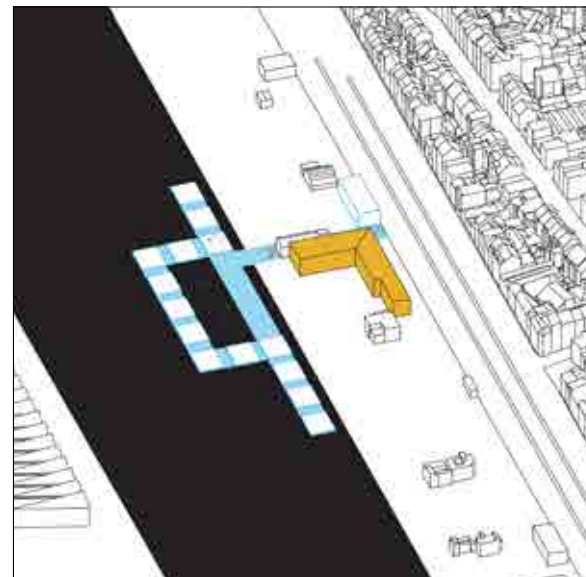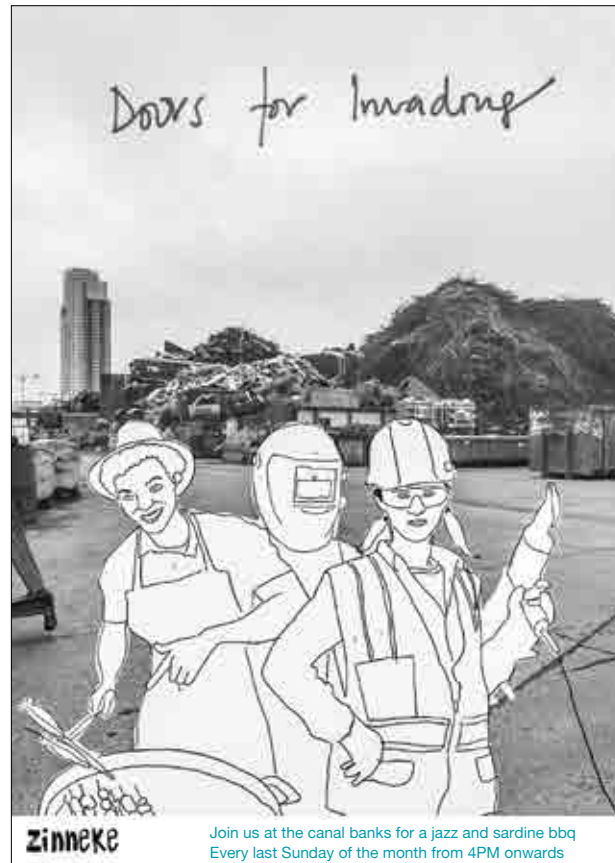




Enterprises door opened on the canal banks
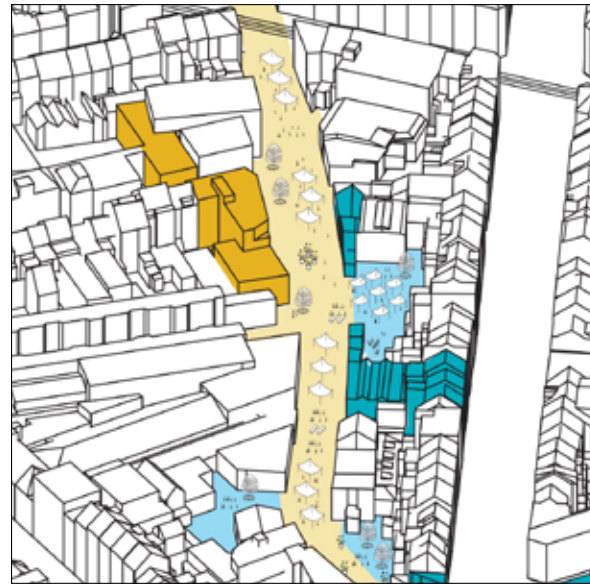
**To perform: Doors for Performing**





Associative door opened on the square

**Doors for invading**
For each type of exchange, we identified a public space to be activated through an action that characterised a socio-political change, a specific material to work with and the manpower it needed in order for the cooperative to provide work. Here, we turn the conflict exchange into the action of invading. This action aims at appropriating the canal banks for activities related to the transformation of metal. It intends to create a synergy between a metal recycling factory, the metal workshop in Zinneke and skilled migrants from the Parc Maximilien. The poster promotes the event as a festive time (barbecue and party) showing the public it intends to attract. The axon shows the principle and the potential setting of the partying event.

● canal banks
    metal workshop, barbecue and
    party

    Metal
    coming from recycling
    companies and car repairing
                activities

            work provided by the cooperative
            5 bike fixers, 5 jewellers,
            20 welders ...

**Doors for performing**
For each type of exchange, we identified a public space to be activated through an action that characterised a socio-political change, a specific material to work with and the manpower it needed in order for the cooperative to provide work. Here we turn the transmission exchange into the action of performing. This action aims at activating the square in front of the Zinneke building to overflow the associative live inside the public on the public space. A small theatre built by students from a carpentry high school will stage a play with the children involve in the associations of the neighbourhood. The poster promotes the event showing the public it intends to attract. The axon shows the principle and the potential setting of the theatre.

● Place Masui
    wooden stage & theater play

        Woodcraft
    coming from recycling
companies and  from the
        Sonian Forest

            work provided by the cooperative
            10 carpenters
            1 artistic director
            20 actors (children from local
            associations) ...

**Doors for Nagotiating**





Private doors and public equipments
opened on the green walk



Interface 3

■ Vacant plots, transformed by temporary and long term uses

■ Existing associations and local actors, involved in the CLT project

**Doors for negotiating**
For each type of exchange, we identified a public space to be activated through
an action that characterised a socio-political change, a specific material to
work with and the manpower it needed in order for the cooperative to provide
work. Here, we turn the transaction exchange into the action of negotiating. This
action aims at activating the Parc de la Senne (going from Place Masui to Place
Gaucheret) to allow the residents living along the park to open their doors and sell
homemade food, crafts or offering a service for repairing objects, clothes, etc.
The poster promotes the event showing the public it intends to attract. The axon
shows the principle and the potential setting of the local market.

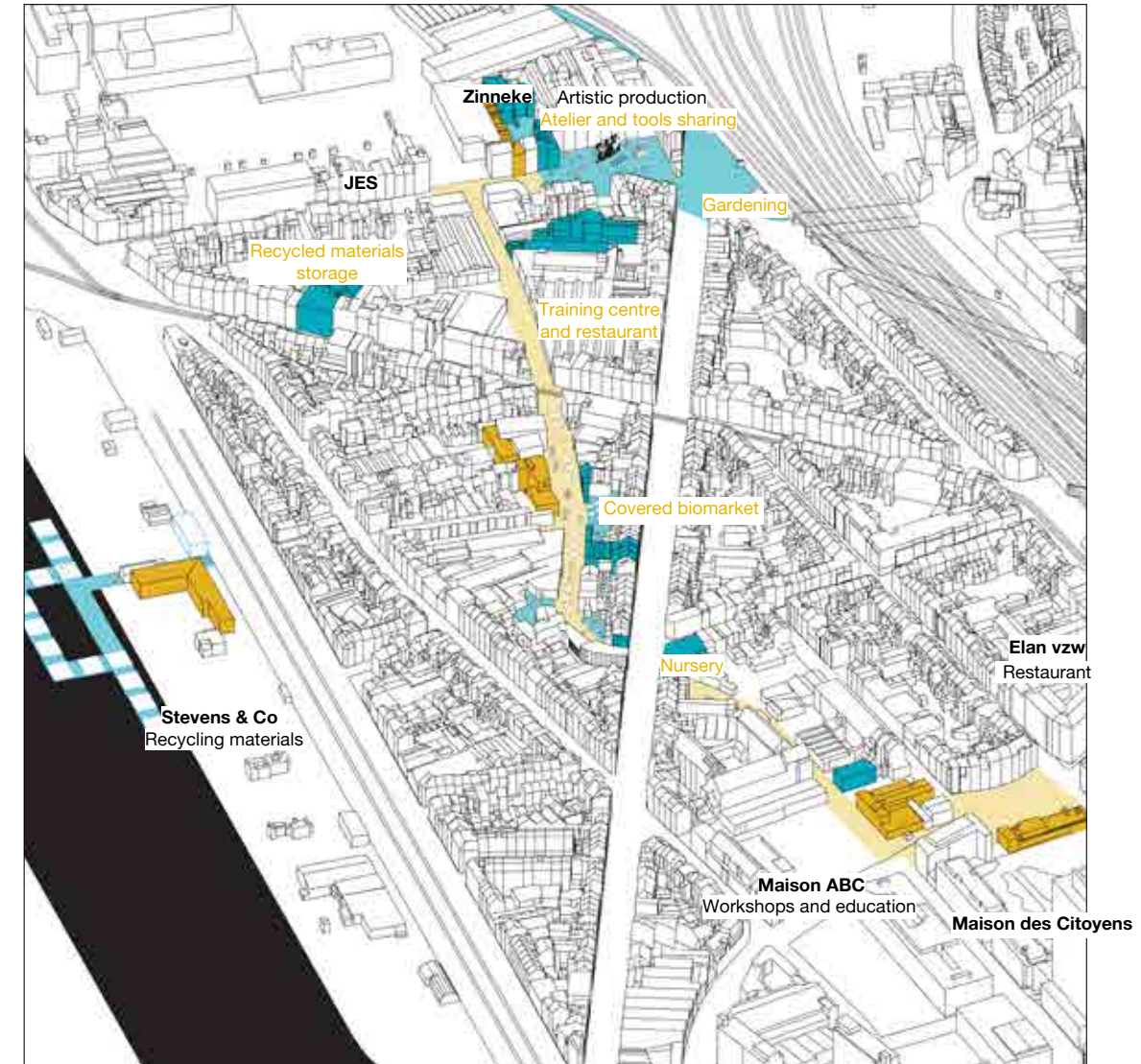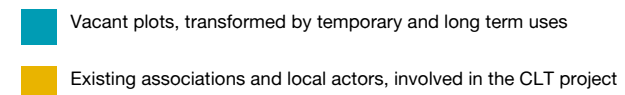● Parc de la Senne
  local market

Clothes, objects, food
homemade and second hand

work provided by the cooperative
50 street traders, 1 jeweller, 2
welders, 1 carpenter, 15 cookers
6 sewers, 1 shoemaker...

**Community land trust and the Masui cooperative**
The community land trust is built on the long term at the scale of the neighbourhood.
The actors and spaces we identified as resources are either public, associative or
private. The cooperative manages public spaces and activates some vacant plots
providing equipment, facilities and work for the neighbourhood and its inhabitants in
gardening services, building maintenance, food market, cultural activities, training and
educational services, in which they would have the opportunity to invest in order to
reduce their time at work and spend more time at life.

# Conclusion

**Lucile Ado, Marine Declève, Verena Lenna, Dima Mannoun,
Luis Antonio Martin Sanchez, Alberto Squizzato, Natalia Vera Vigaray**

**The project of doors has been designed based on Zinneke's
purpose and project and is based on a double move:
to embed in the neighbourhood while involving local actors
in the building's governance.**

However, this could be tested in relation to other territorial conditions and adapted to the needs of the related actors. LaVallée creates an 'introverted' dimension of protection that also suggests the relevance of a project of doors. The ability of Recyclart to establish conditions of accessibility in the dense urban fabric of Molenbeek will be the result of the identifying doors and rhythms so that culture could become part of the daily lives of the inhabitants of this municipality, while transforming the very idea of work. A door is not only about opening: it is also about closing, regulating, protecting. Especially in consideration of the fact that most of these initiatives are established in neglected neighbourhoods, hence having a gentrifying potential. In a similar perspective, a project of doors provides the occasion to address the governance of a neighbourhood: to regulate accessibility and uses according to the needs and rights of the communities involved. The Community Land Trust model that we suggest is only one among other possible examples of a form of governance acknowledging the right to decide on different converging communities — the inhabitants, the local actors, the administration — and enabling the interweaving of different scales and their related concerns and responsibilities. And most importantly, allowing to resist gentrification processes. Still, the intuition and our working hypothesis is that more broadly, a horizontal, plural governance is a matter of increasing the capacity of resilience of an ecosystem, allowing to draw on the site-specific resources of a neighbourhood and the communities involved, not to mention their motivation to preserve their living environment. At the moment of looking at the balance between work and life, it looks like the reflection goes beyond labour conditions or the concept of work. It looks like an ecosystemic approach is what is needed to come to terms with the complexity implied by a more human-friendly approach to work. To come to terms with the city as what it is by definition: the natural environment where work and life intersect

and synergise, beyond functionalist attitudes. As a result, the city is reclaimed on the grounds of a capacity to re-establish urbanity, thus resisting the alienating processes increasingly triggered by the interventions of multinational corporations and their speculative interests. As a project of doors, third places appear to make a political statement and can be read chronologically as exit doors from the current system (they may prefigure an alternative that is no longer an alternative), as gateways (between two modes with contradictions), as doors to enter another world.

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# Stakeholder insights – Smart

**Lieza Dessein, Strategic project manager
formerly working at Smart**

**Social interactions and work dynamics are increasingly digitised and automated, which results in a hyper-individualisation of society. This process is intensified by a lack of diverse spaces offering adequate environments for socialisation and work. This is why we need to design inclusive gathering spaces. The work undertaken during the MasterClass has been a boost to express this issue.**

Many buildings that were formerly used by industries or transportation infrastructures that are now shrinking could be repurposed. These buildings are often located near city centres, and their surrounding neighbourhoods suffer from this lack of proper repurposing. Additionally, there is a need for cities to attract (creative) entrepreneurship. In Brussels, creative hubs could provide a wide array of possibilities to do so.

Creative hubs bring back a collective dynamic to a scattered workforce, by hosting artists, freelancers and SMEs. This unique environment creates a resilient ecosystem for entrepreneurship. Creative hubs have a positive social impact on their environment, but political support is essential to fostering an inclusive regeneration of neighbourhoods.

The positive impact that hubs have on their communities is strongly linked to their business models. Granting precarious occupation too often results in gentrification. Private initiatives struggle to adopt a social approach, while top-down public initiatives often fail to be economically sustainable or to reach their target audience. Inclusive creative hubs can emerge through long-term ventures involving multiple stakeholders. We need to design economic models that take into account the needs and contributions of cities, inhabitants, workers and hub managers.

# Stakeholder insights – Zinneke

**Sandrine Tonnoir, Coordination of Masui site renovation**



**We used to say amongst ourselves that renovating a building is actually a project of doors. Referring to this expression, the contribution of the MasterClass has been fruitful because it is a topic we want to further explore. While the door has been more studied as an abstract concept in the contribution, we could also approach it as an actual physical object. This is especially true in terms of chronology. Indeed, as physical objects, doors are really one of the last parts of the construction process.**

Only at the very end do we think about how to place them, how to reflect on the dynamics of extreme openness or confidentiality. For the Zinneke organisation, this question is important because as much as we want to remain as open as possible, there are also questions of management and security.

As long as the doors are open, you need to care about what is outside. It is a question of management, but also one of logistics. You offer a public space and provide something to it, but this raises the question of how you work and how you manage the underlying logistics of your activity. Even though we don't see it, this requires as much energy as the event itself.

In Masui, we interact with the neighbourhood in order to integrate our activities into the local life. Meanwhile, the place we intend to create is a place where people from the neighbourhood can meet people from other parts of Brussels and build something together. It is a general dynamic geared not just towards events in Masui, but also towards something bigger in the entire city of Brussels.