

NORTH TRANSECT

Spring 2021

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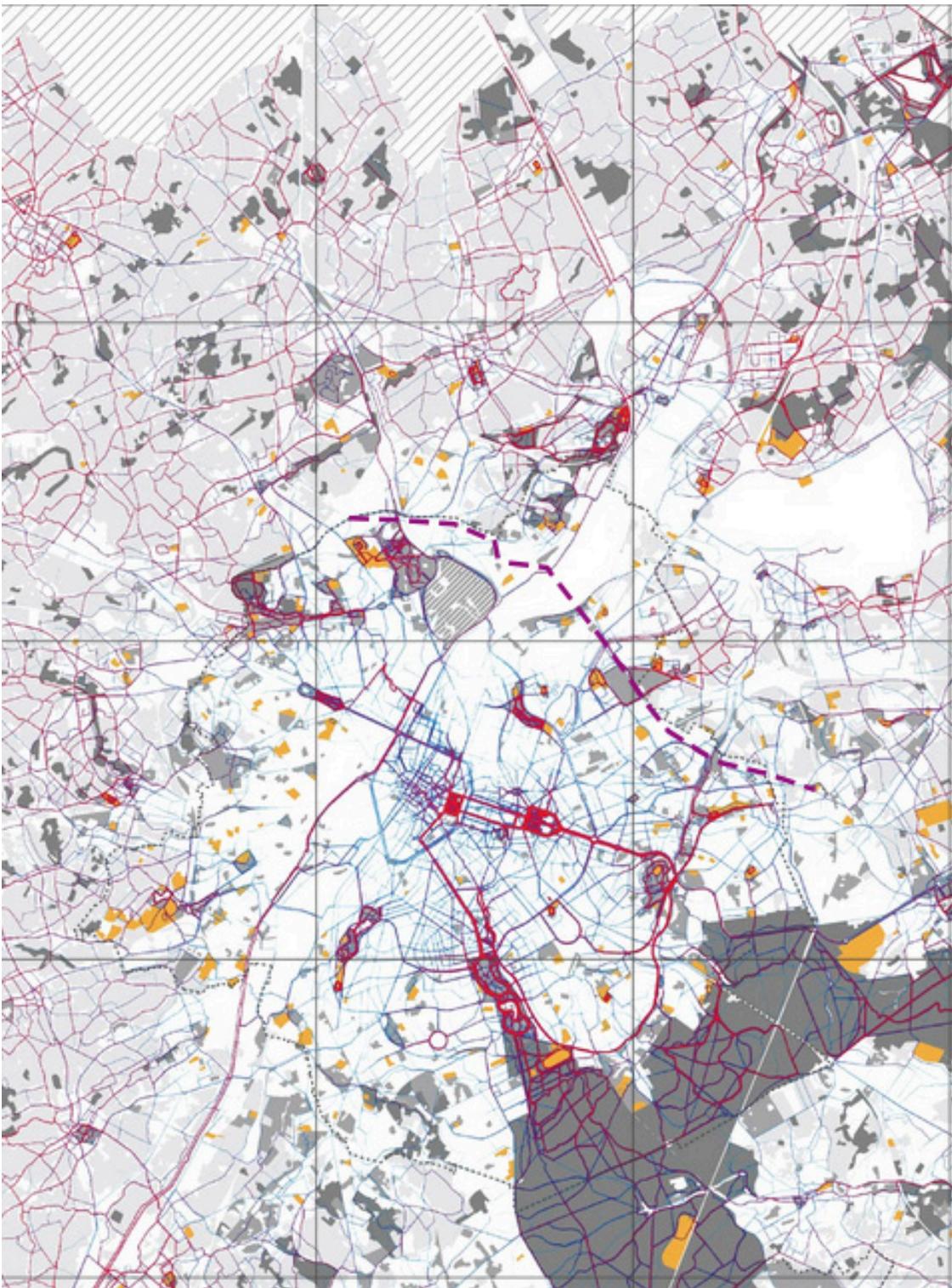
ABOUT THE STUDIO

Urban Assemblages is a research by design studio linked to the Laboratory of Urbanism, Infrastructure, and Ecologies (LoUIsE). The studio starts from two convictions: (i) the capacity of cities to cast light on our present and (near)future; (ii) the need to start a socioeconomic and ecological transition in them as the premise for a sustainable future anywhere else.

To be able to accompany such transition, the studio invites spatial designers to move beyond the object-centered legacy of urbanism and towards a systemic understanding of cities that does not exaggerate their agency. This requires seizing up flows, actors (humans and non-humans) and places into their proposals of urban transformation.

Cities are indeed woven into material and energy flows and stocks, and depend upon specific nature-technical entanglements and socio-economic processes of production and consumption (1). Any intervention in urban space necessitates to incorporate into the design of physical places the unsteady assemblages those flows and actors trigger (or are the result of), recognizing the heterogeneity that urbanism artificially convokes and links together to form a whole (from humans to other living beings, to “stuff” and ideas). Sustainability will only be viable if it recognizes this larger whole, moving beyond the advancement of human interest only.

(1) This approach is known as Urban Metabolism (UM), clearly defined by Kennedy and fellow scholars as “the sum total of the technical and socio-economic processes that occur in cities, resulting in growth, production of energy and elimination of waste.” (in Kennedy, C., Cuddihy, J., & Engel-Yan, J. (2007). “The changing metabolism of cities”. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 11(2), 43-59).



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The pandemic has had a lasting effect on our uses and perceptions of the city and the territory. Among other things, the notions of promenade and journey have taken on considerable importance. Several factors explain this evolution, mainly related to the generalisation of teleworking.

From functional to leisure / From commuting to strolling.

With teleworking, mobility is partly less linked to functional requirements. People actually move no longer to get to work, but to get away from it, to air out, to take a break from work. We move around to relax, visit, marvel. Walking and cycling allow you to take your time, to stroll.

From leisure to functional / From strolling to displacement

Paradoxically enough, this shift

from commuting to strolling tends to confer a new functionality to the promenade. On the one hand, the walk is used to do something else: to deliver something, to visit someone, to do some shopping. On the other hand, we cover distances we thought of impossible before just to avoid using the public transport.

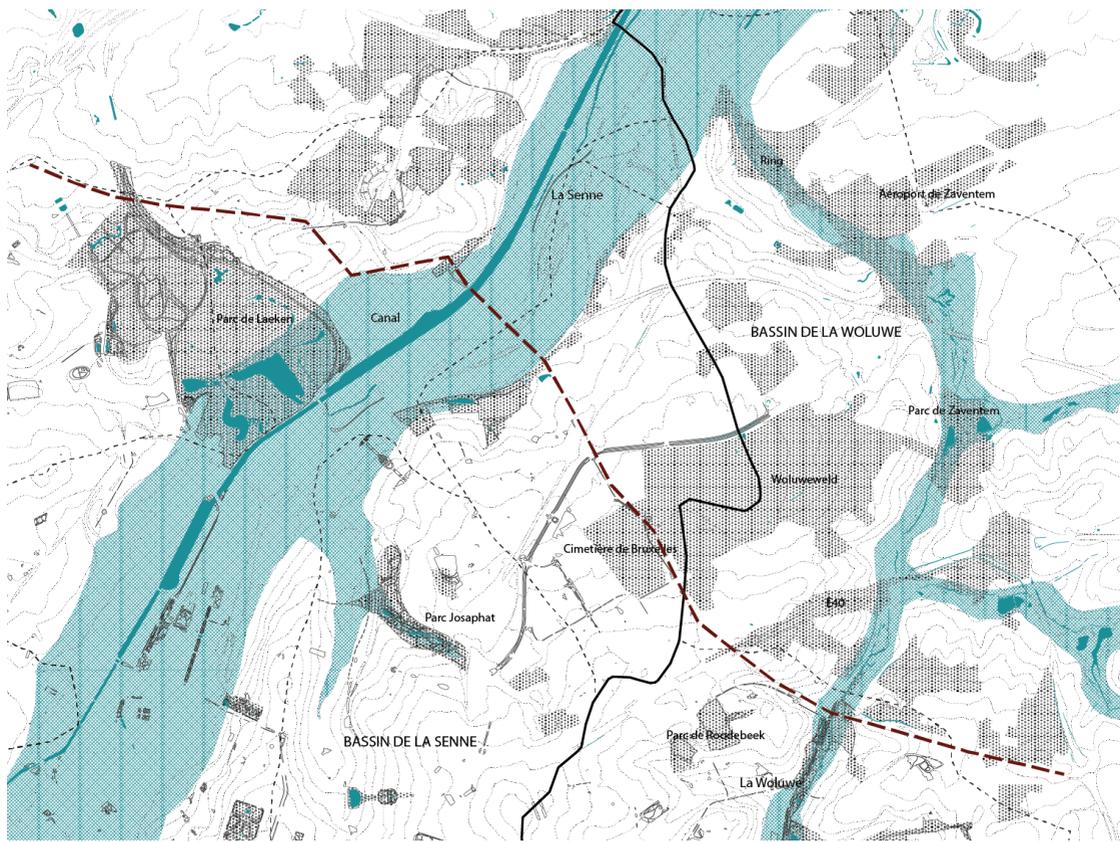


Promenade

Within this new mobility pattern, the idea of “promenade” is getting a new importance, complementary to classic recreational walks inside parks, woodlands or forests. It further highlights the major crossing lines of the urban territory.

The 19th century city left a legacy of great promenades, the avenues, today transformed into the main axes of car mobility, e.g. the Louise Avenue, the Tervuren Avenue, the boulevard Léopold II,... This legacy has been enriched during the last 30 years with the creation of a series of recreational promenades such as the Green Promenade or the one running along a former railway line between the Leopold Quartier and Tervueren. But the most obvious and structuring promenade axis today are linked to the two main Brussels valleys: the canal underlining the Senne valley and

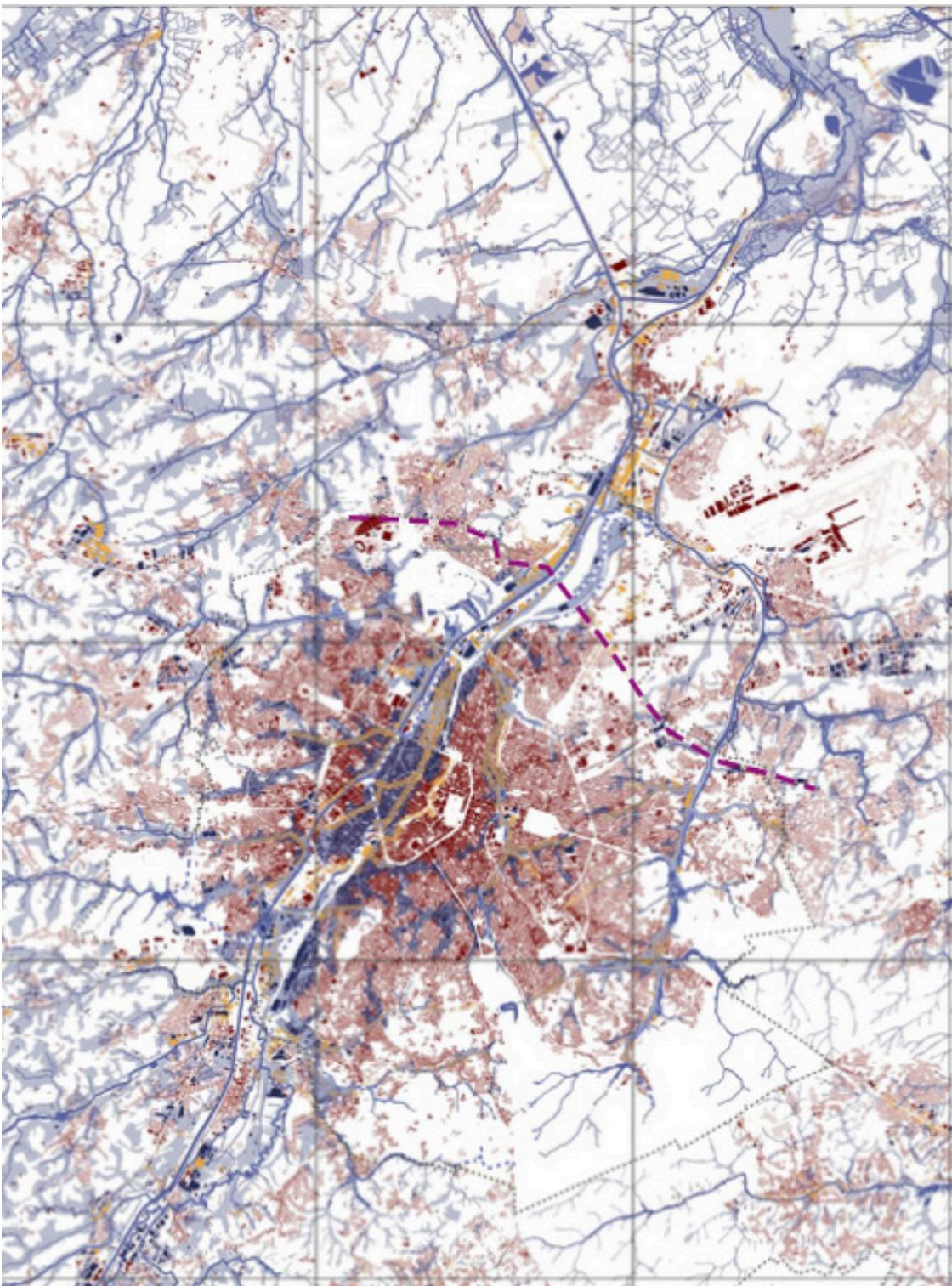
the Woluwe valley. The latter crosses territories as diverse as the economic and logistical zone of the airport or the Sonian Forest.



Transect

Between these two valleys, on the North-Eastern side of the Region, there exists a virtual axis linking them, formed by a chain of heterogeneous public spaces. It constitutes a veritable territorial transect, and is mainly formed by the Bordet Avenue and the Hof ten Bergh street, an old road linking Woluwe Saint-Etienne and Haren through the vast Tornooveld plateau. The axis extends via the Schaerbeek railway site on the other side of the Senne, through Nederover-Heembeek towards the Heyzel plateau and the Roman roadway, along the historic sheep road. This axis collects a series of sites and infrastructures characteristic of the 20th century, mainly functions that the historic city could not or no longer wanted to host: tram depots, business parks, cemeteries, shopping facilities, supermarkets, hospitals, car

garages. Some of these elements form, along with others, real urban barriers that are now insurmountable, such as the Schaerbeek railway site or the port area.



Transect as a project for the urban

The axis of the transect crosses the Brussels urbanization of the 20th century. This urbanization is actually formalized by a collection of morphologically, geographically and/or functionally specific patches, most of which operate according to their internal economic logics. Those patches are today seen mostly as the source of many negative externalities like congestion, pollution, or conflict. In fact, any city can be seen as a forever trade-off between the accommodation of functions governed by internal economic logics and the regulation of the positive or negative social, cultural and environmental impacts they engender. Working on the territorial transect across the Northern of Brussels offers an opportunity to reconfigure those scattered patches and territorialize them. The general objective of the transect

should be to physically link while building awareness of the large-scale territory urbanized during the 20th century, which is now perceived as fragmented and reliant on private car mobility.

The transect, seen as a lever for assemblages and agency, also allows the territory to be approached through its urban metabolism. The transect is not only a question of “linking”, represented by the image of an “avenue” that would cross this territory and become the support of the 21st century urbanity, but also of “rooting” the city into the soil.

Week

1	Fri	5-févr	Kick-off
2	Tue	9-févr	Visit on site
	Fri	12-févr	Seminar
3	Tue	16-févr	Fieldwork
	Fri	19-févr	Fieldwork
4	Tue	23-févr	Fieldwork
	Fri	29/2	Fieldwork
5	Tue	2-mars	Fieldwork
	Fri	5-mars	Jury
6	Tue	9-mars	Assembling
	Fri	12-mars	Assembling
7	Tue	16-mars	Assembling
	Fri	19-mars	Assembling
8	Tue	23-mars	Assembling
	Fri	26-mars	Jury
9	Tue	30-mars	SIP
	Fri	2-avr	SIP
SPRING BREAK			
10	Tue	20-avr	Project
	Fri	23-avr	Project
11	Tue	27-avr	Project
	Fri	30-avr	Project
12	Tue	4-mai	Project
	Fri	7-mai	Project
13	Tue	11-mai	Project
	Fri	14-mai	Project
14	Tue	18-mai	Project
	Fi	21-mai	Green light jury
EXAMS			
		23-juin	FINAL
		24-juin	JURY

METHOD

1. Kick-off seminar

2. Fieldwork :

The transect is subdivided into portions. Each student (of students' group) receives a portion, analyses it and problematizes it, through one final synthetic cartographic document.

a group of 2 students maps the transect's zero scenario, i.e. all current or future projects, and draws up a map at the end of the fieldwork, using the synthesis mapping of each section.

3. Assembling

Scenario production for projects for sites highlighted during fieldwork

4. Projects

Kick-off seminar program

Friday 5th february : Kick-off

Tuesday 9th: Meeting on site

Seminar Friday 12th

1. Morning : about the territory

- LoUIsE: the Brussels urbanization of the 20th Century: an overview
- Karbon'/Lattitude: PAD Bordet
- Perspective.brussels : ongoing strategic projects along the transect
- BUUR : open spaces pattern along the transect
- 10-10

2. Afternoon : urbanization

- Géry Leloutre : isotropy, an historical perspective
- Michiel Dehaene : interpreting urbanization. The urban moment.