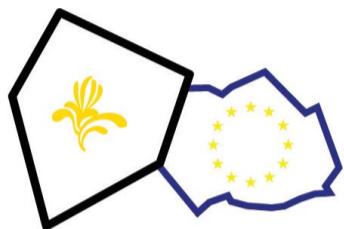




## UNITED IN DIVERSITY: THE CAPE OF THE EU



### BRUSSELS

Brussels is a city of contradictions, chaos and utter diversity... it is equally cherished and hated for its capacity at formalizing problems and not solving them. Too often has Brussels been the setting for a large academic discussion on urbanism and urban complexities... revolving around so many highly intelligent, articulated but intricate and obtuse elucubrations orchestrated by brilliant thinkers and resulting in yet more non-propositional architectural quiproquo... too often have we been the witnesses of this constructed manege and have been disappointed by its esoteric outcome... we believe Brussels now needs a series of key projects, real projects, specific projects, acupuncture points, made in actual contexts in need of change and revitalization... The definition of an urban form on the Rue de la Loi and its surroundings encapsulates best this potential and the new relevance that Brussels wants to stand for today and for the years to come. Here the needs and ambitions of the European Union will meet the aspirations of private developers, the Region and the city of Brussels to crystallize into a new symbiotic neighborhood.



### THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union's motto is 'United in diversity'. There is a clear maturity that understands the complexities and maybe incapacities of creating a singular union. The European project is in movement and embraces its differences of components and actors, currents and to become. By essence it outlines a body that is undefined in shape, size and taste. There has been sufficient writings made on the definition of the European machine to avoid another attempt. We will extract a few aspects that seem sufficiently recurrent to hold relevance in our quest for a European project as such:

- the Union grows. In 50 years more than 20 countries have been added to the 6 founders.
- the Union hasn't profiled itself with architecture unlike other institutions tend to do.
- the EU is located in Brussels and aims at solidifying its presence in the Belgian capital.
- the Union is in the making
- the Union is not finalized



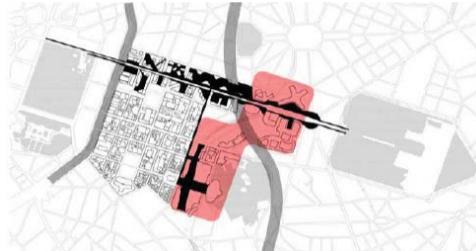
### RUE DE LA LOI

Our project for Rue de la Loi was given two main goals: widen the realm of public space along the street, and build a strong image of the presence of the European sites in the heart of Brussels. These two goals are strongly consistent in our proposal, and joined in the same symbolic dimension: the European space needs readability and refuge corners; the city needs to cross them with its urbanity, its movements, its various activities. The Europe at the centre of Brussels cannot live without superimposing itself to the space of the City. In our project Europe is, symbolically and spatially, a vast shared cape: under it the flows of the city are self-governing. Starting from these two main goals, a series of regards triggers over the city and the program, and two operational strategies that we initially studied one by one, in extreme stretched scenarios: the tabula rasa and the stratification. The two scenarios are guided with the objectives of widening the public realm and elaborating a new urban image. They show not a solution, but the potential of each approach and the urban rules that could follow.

The final proposal is composed of a series of possible spatial configurations, using the rules prepared in the 2 scenarios. They interpret also the different urban themes, the given program, the condition of each plot and the status of their buildings. The rules determine a toolbox giving the instruments for the urban design of the Rue de la Loi.



## RUE DE LA LOI: 4+1 URBAN THEMES



The hypothetic densification of the Rue de la Loi is not only a major opportunity to increase the quality and the quantity of public space but also to rethink its relationship with the rest of the City. 4+1 urban themes have been organized to define a new network of public spaces that would guide the said transformations.

### 1. The monumental artefact campus and the triangular promenade

The Berlaymont Parliament European quarter has already been defined (by Rem Koolhaas) as a campus populated by diverse objects, European institutions that have not created generous public spaces fit for the roles of the buildings. The idea of the promenade along the railway line, although already evoked in the past, was maybe brushed aside too hastily. We think it very important to reconsider this to give constancy to the fragments of existing space (the large empty space in front of the parliament for example). The promenade idea could be rethought as a triangulation between Parlement, Berlaymont the new Commission headquarters.

### 2. Tissue and percolation

The Leopold is structured around a grid by blocks that maintain a certain degree of permeability. The opening of the blocks has varied though the years. A fine combed on-site analysis of a number of the blocks, those of the Rue de la Loi included show that either the ground floor, or further up the buildings, the tissue is permanently being by passages and walkways. Even today, although most closed or private, one can still appreciate the richness of this urban device and its possible interpretations. These percolation spaces in a porous environment could be reinforced and spread to the Rue de la Loi with a densification project.

### 3. The Etterbeek Valley and the elastic boulevard

The Etterbeek Boulevard, recently redesigned with a new tramway, has a very interesting ornographic position at the end of the Rue de la Loi. It links together a number of very precious green fragments. Where it meets the Rue de la Loi the height difference greatly dramatizes the space: a green, inclined, tilted surface is topped by one of the European buildings. Our idea is to work with the slope opposite where the new Commission head quarters will be developed creating a new continuation on the different levels- metro and boulevard. The possibility of a continuing, sloping public space winding across a series of spaces seems a great asset to enlarge either the Boulevard or the Rue de la Loi. The boulevard is interpreted as an elastic space, that can expand into mineral or greener spaces. The length of the boulevard the new housing will be interspersed with the institutions, crossed by public space.

### 4. The inner ring and filter spaces

It's a major urban space that, at a glance, doesn't seem to be part of the Rue de la Loi project. Without wanting to monumentalize our investigation site, the public space could have a much more predominant role.

### +1 the street and the traverses

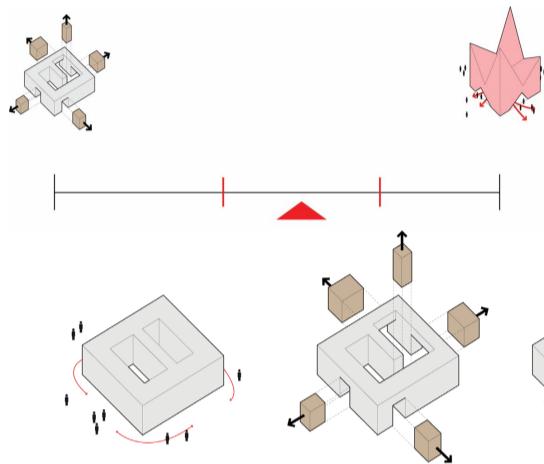
The Rue de la Loi is boarded, traversed, and followed by the preceding themes, although today it is completely impermeable to anything about its context. For this reason we envisage crossing and enlargement of the linear organization as fundamental approaches for the project. Making the most of the large basements, where public transport, car parks, and some shopping could be a starting point for a new, fluid public space. In particular the project unveils the possibility of continuity between the Avenue des Arts, the chaussée d'Etterbeek and Rue de la Loi through a banked public space that enters under the Commission head quarters, orientating the project.

The 5 urban themes and their public spaces orientated our proposition for the Rue de la Loi and guides its densification process. They are the basis of the rules for its transformation. To really understand them, in relation to the objectives announced in the competition program, we have tested two opposing strategies...





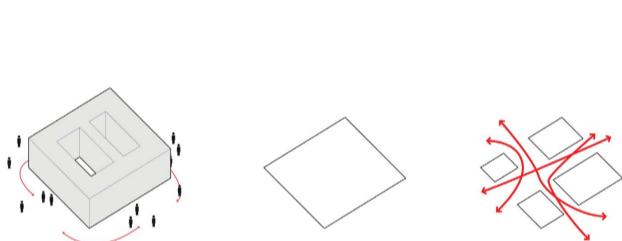
## STRATEGIES: TWO SCENARIOS



The scenarios are tools for exploration and reasoning. They are the percolation of a series of hypotheses and choices. With this in mind we have opposed two very different, yet compatible transformation sequels. The first analyses the potentialities and limits of the Tabula Rasa, the second those of a stratification process.

### STRATIFICATION

This scenario is derived from the conviction of the regenerative capacities of the City, that its richness lies in its ability to evolve, adapt and stratify itself over time and space, both horizontally and vertically. The scenario asks how one can obtain the quantities required by the program with the qualities of public space evoked in the first scenario without demolishing the existing tissue.



### TABULA RASA

The first scenario pushes the limits of the quantities proposed by the program with the replacement of all allowed buildings. Due to its radicalism, a new image can be created, public space is optimised and reconfigured both for the Rue de la Loi and the Bd. Eterbeek, total permeability and mix of functions and program are made possible.

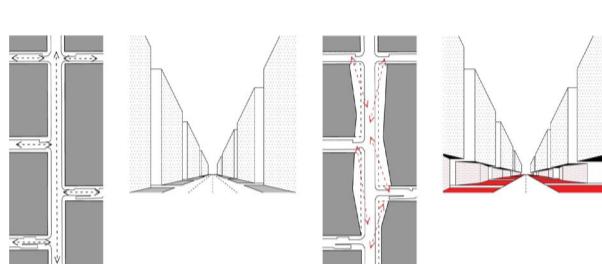


### POROSITY

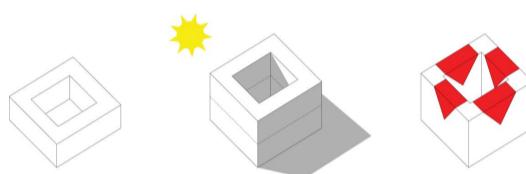
The porosity on each site is achieved for pedestrians.



## TOOLBOX OF RULES

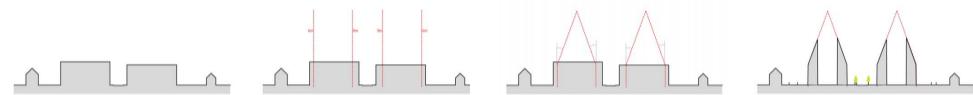


What one learns is the advantages and limits of the 'pure' strategies. Their force lies in the guidelines laid down, that will be used in all the spatial configurations possible, in short, medium and long term. If some conditions seem more likely than others –the radical transformation of the new Commission Head Quarters for example - others are less clearly defined. One is not just talking about new transformations but also spatial qualities, sometimes hidden in the hearts of the blocks and often intertwined in a stratification that would be a shame not to consider. A spatial answer is possible to the question asked by the program; 400 000m<sup>2</sup> on the Rue de la Loi is only possible if all that is there is demolished. That maybe it's the question that is not quite right... For wanting to give everyone the same volume standard one could be forced to reduce the transformation capacities of the existing urban tissues. A more generous solution, less ambitious in terms of pure quantity could allow a greater transformation for the Rue de la Loi and its public spaces.



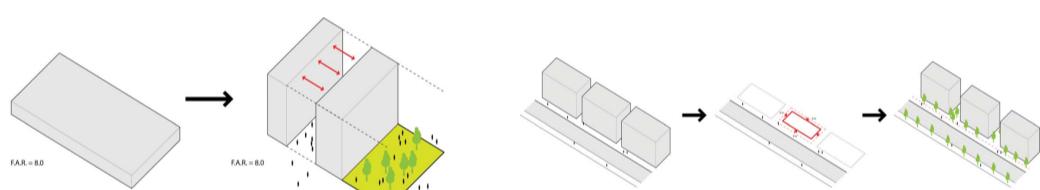
### PEAKS

Rather than creating blanket density and height which have negative conditions of darkness and vis a vis, we propose to create series of peaks of juxtaposed masses that alternate, meaning that more people will gain views and light.



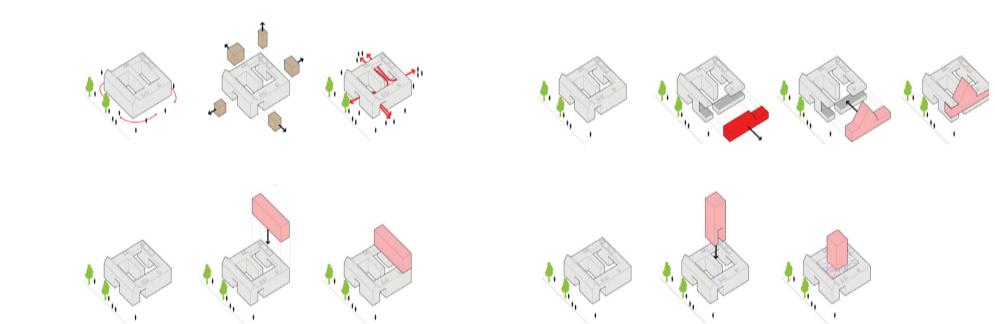
### ZONING

We create a zoning rule where there are setbacks as the street goes higher to create more light, air and quality for the street.



### ADJACENT TALL BUILDING

Where a building has a tall building next to it, the building can be tall but it should create an amenity or public space



### OFFSETS

We propose to create offsets on the Rue de la Loi of 9m and on the surrounding streets of 6m in order to generate more public space.





INTERIOR OF THE EUROPEAN GARDEN LOOKING TOWARDS THE ETTERBEEK



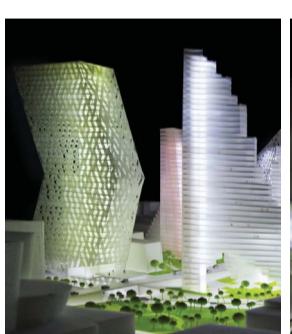
EXTERIOR LOOKING DOWN ON EUROPEAN PROMENADE FROM BERLAMBOT BUILDING



CHURCH TO CHURCH

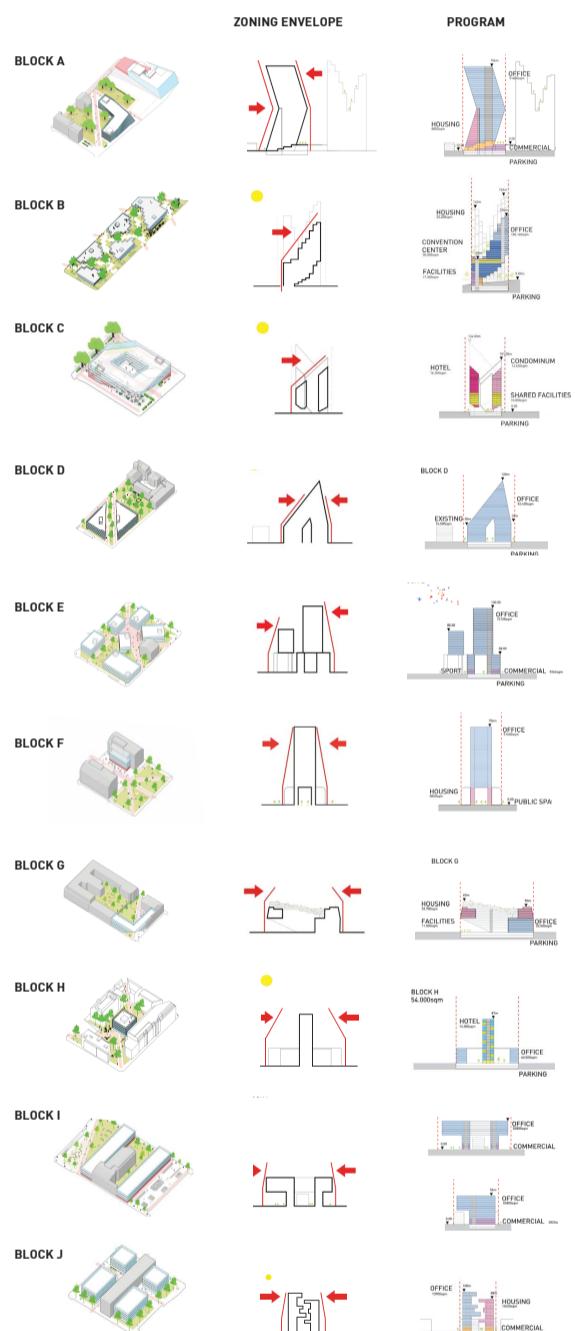


RUE DE TREVES: A EUROPEAN PROMENADE



PARK TO BLOCK B

## BLOCK ZONING



## PHASING



IMMEDIATE



SHORT-TERM (6-10 YEARS)



MEDIUM-TERM (10-20 YEARS)



LONG-TERM (20-50 YEARS)

