



Table of Contents

Visitatie?	6
What is the BMA doing today?	12
What recommendations can be made to the BMA?	16
What orientations for the future for the BMA?	34



'Le Petit poucet'
Charles Perrault
1697

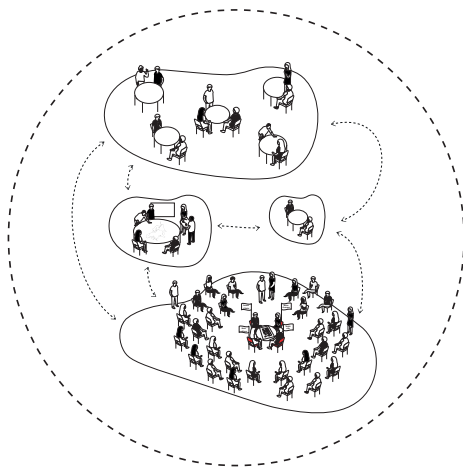
In your articles and interviews, you often use metaphors. (...) In 2012, you used the term 'Little Thumb' to compare projects to leaving a trail of breadcrumbs. (...) Don't we need a new metaphor that directs our gaze to the future, without wanting to go against what already exists? What metaphor would be best suited to an ideal future BMA situation?

OLIVIER BASTIN **Every mandate has its own narrative. In Flanders, there were three successive narratives, those of Bob Van Reeth, Marcel Smets and Peter Swinnen. This narrative is evolving and is a positive factor. In Brussels, the first narrative was that of negotiation, without spooking stakeholders, by preparing and handling in a rather benevolent approach. I followed this tactic, not just because it is in my nature to do so, but also because the somewhat proactive approaches that I had were immediately stopped.**

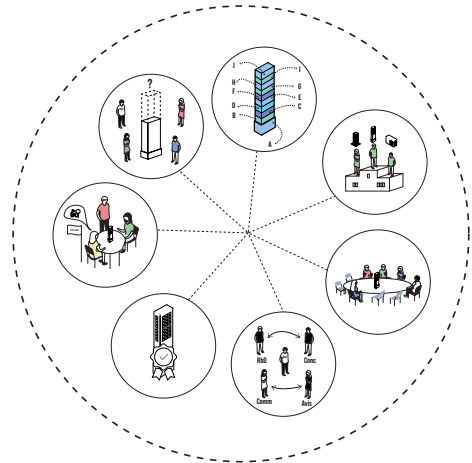
Man of Thoughts
2014

Visitatie?

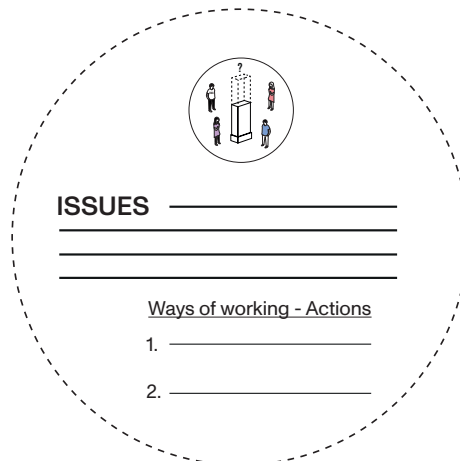
Settings for debate



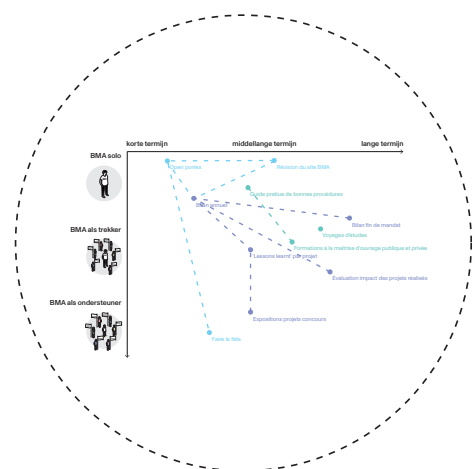
7 themes



25 challenges / 79 actions



4 strategic objectives / 13 clusters of actions



A collective reflection

In his statement of intent for the current mandate of Bouwmeester-Maître Architecte (chief government architect-BMA), Kristiaan Borret suggested organising a 'Visitatie'. The term, drawn from academic practices, has been interpreted here as a collective reflection on the function of Bouwmeester, after two terms (Olivier Bastin 2009-2014 and Kristiaan Borret 2009-2014), with the ambition of placing the function in its context, and drawing up suggestions for recommendations.

From a methodological point of view, it was therefore important to give a voice to a wide variety of stakeholders, required to interact with the BMA and their team. The work thus made it possible to give several 'views' on the function.

Looking Inwards

This first view is from the team BMA itself. An inside exploration of the team: positioning, composition, profiles, tools mobilised. By means of an historical contextualisation we situate the function within the urban history of Brussels. This analysis made it possible to identify the involvement of the BMA during various project phases in a clear way. This resulted in an encompassing scheme that visualizes the current function of the BMA, which facilitated the conversations

with various actors and contributed to the development of a collective vocabulary. Finally, we conducted an interview with the current BMA: Kristiaan Borret.

Looking Outwards

It was then necessary to place the function in the ecosystem of Brussels stakeholders. Created to improve the quality of projects in the territory, its arrival inevitably changed practices and balances. 5 workshops were therefore organised to survey groups of stakeholders called upon to work with the BMA. The exercise therefore allowed, for the first time since the creation of the function, to have an overall idea of the perception that the stakeholders have of the BMA, its tools and its operation.

Looking Elsewhere

The Brussels BMA is obviously not the only body in Europe working on the issue of spatial quality. Many countries and cities have mobilised to meet this challenge. The purpose of this third view was therefore to place the work of the BMA in a broader perspective. How do others do it?

Two workshops and several meetings were organised to compare the Brussels context with other ways of working, other methods and other tools.

Looking Forward

Finally, it was necessary to look to the future. On the basis of the first three 'views', 7 working themes were formalised in a major Brainstorming day where the 5 groups of stakeholders gathered together, were able to formulate concrete proposals. This day, rich in ideas and meetings, made it possible to put together various stakeholders around the table, fuel the dialogue and formulate proposals. From this work emerged an extremely broad content of what needs to be done to improve the spatial quality in Brussels. 79 actions were identified to strengthen, for example, the governance of projects, the organisation of 'research by design' or competitions, citizen involvement or work on the cultural context.

Recommendations

The final step was to focus on the work of the BMA itself. During the meetings, workshops, debates and research, it was possible to intersect the themes and identify 4 main strategic objectives for the BMA in Brussels. Of the 79 actions, we identified the actions or clusters of actions that could be the subject of work by the BMA to meet these 4 objectives.

The document you have before you summarises the outline of the process described here. Our main focus lies on the recommendations that provide a framework for the future functioning of the BMA. It is therefore a 'short' version of a longer document which is also available, and which includes all the contributions and analyses.

4 strategic objectives

The diagram here shows the progress of the collective reflection of the Visitatie to reach the BMA's 4 strategic objectives and the clusters of actions corresponding to them.

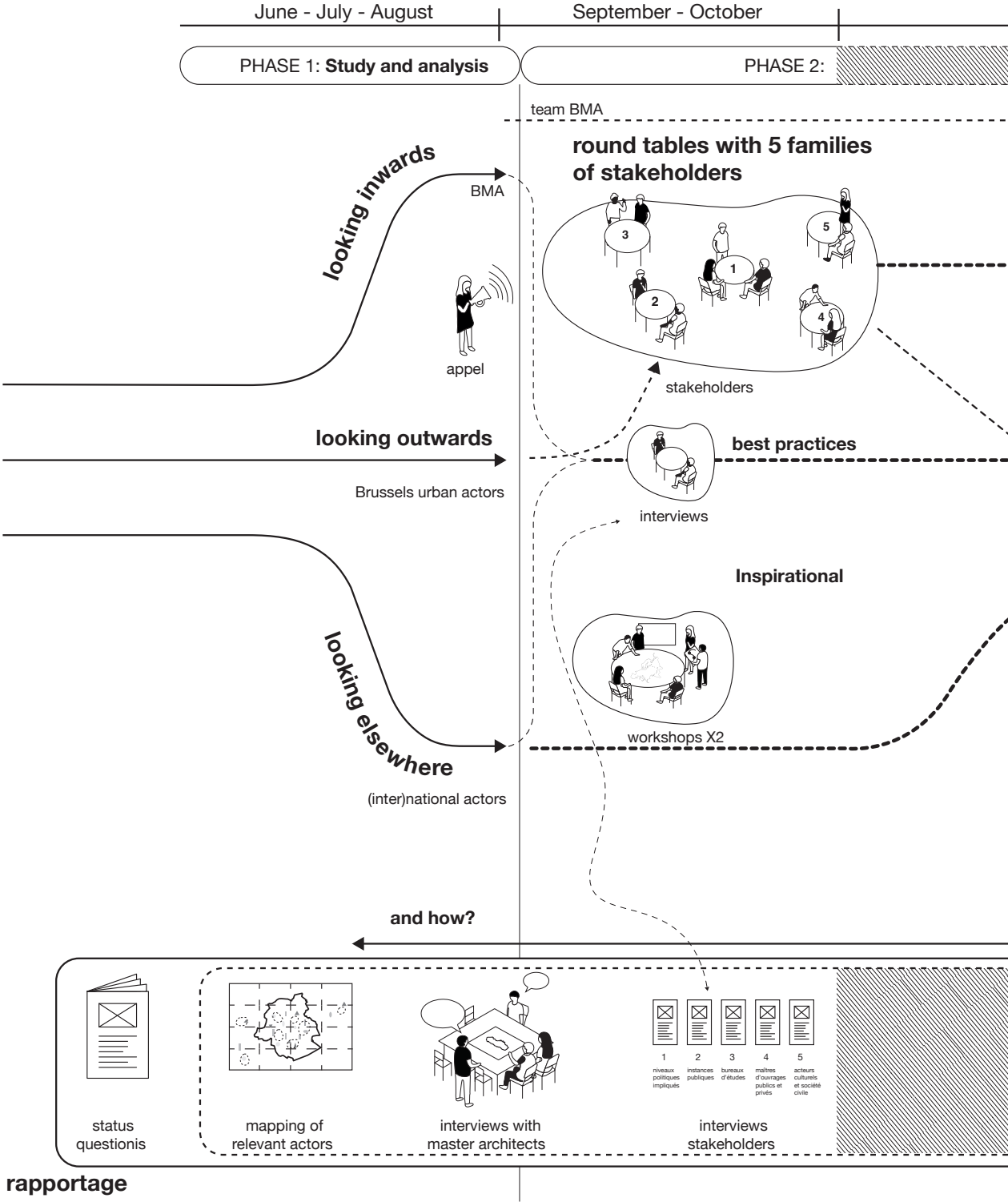
I-Strengthening the Brussels ecosystem

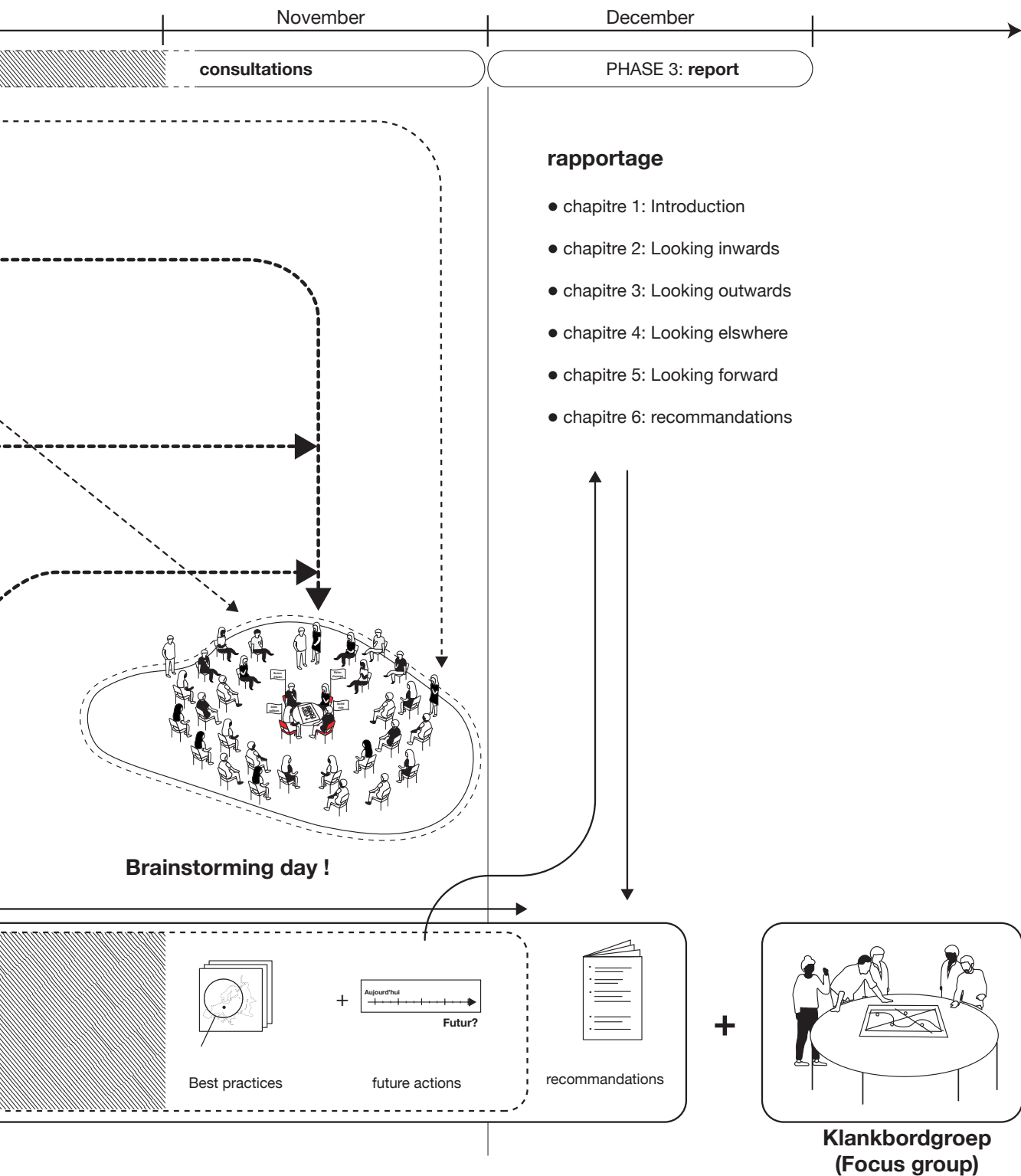
II-Improved procedures

III-Making room for renewal

IV-Building a collective learning environment

Working method





What is the BMA doing today?

● **RbD : reserach by design**

Research by design is a tool used by the BMA team to create a space for debate on spatial quality. Research by design makes it possible to professionalise the support of projects (public and private) by the public authorities by mobilising different mediums to supplement the reflection: models, hand drawings, 3D drawing, illustrations, photomontages etc. The tool therefore does not consist in 'drawing in place of' but rather in creating a space for dialogue, based on images and not only on figures.

● **Comp : competition**

The BMA's main tool is supporting the organisation of architectural competitions. It has emerged as an ideal solution for raising architectural quality in Brussels, as new projects are brought to the market in a transparent way, using public tenders, allowing for a discussion on architectural quality. It currently takes place very generally in two stages. Based on good diffusion of the call to tender, the first step consists of selecting candidates (on references). Then, the selected candidates formalise an architectural proposal (paid) evaluated on architectural quality criterias by a jury.

● **PM : project meeting _ Rev : review**

Review

Since September 2019, the CoBAT stipulates, in Article II/1 that a review of the BMA must be attached to planning permit applications for all projects above 5,000 m2 floor area.

Project meeting

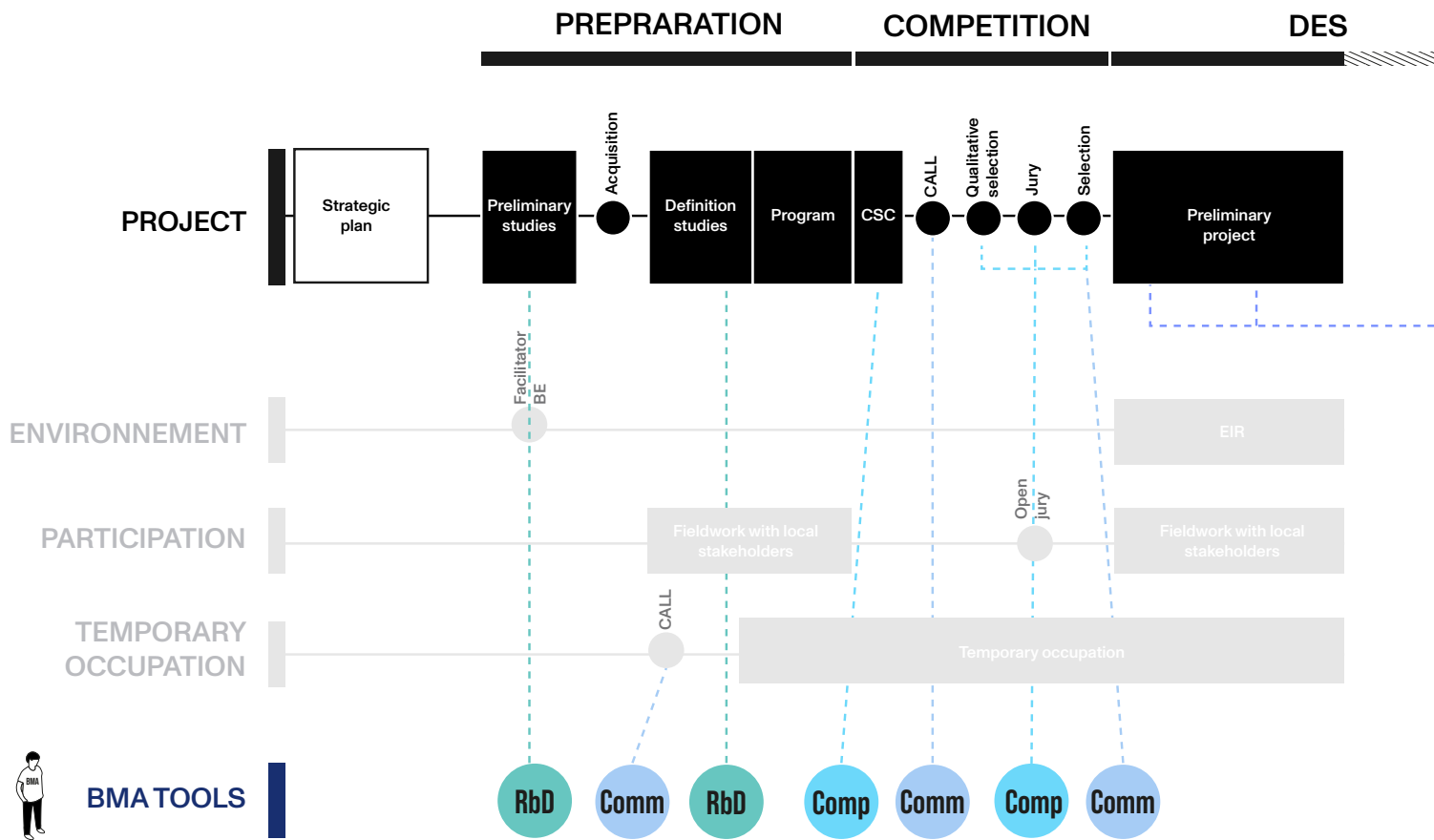
The project meeting, organised by Urban.brussels, brings together all the stakeholders involved in the development of a project (generally at the pre-project stage as part of the preparation of a planning permit application). It allows a project to be refined by creating a space for discussion on spatial quality.

● **Comm : communication**

Communication is built around a newsletter and presence on social networks at certain key moments, mainly in the competition phase:

- Calls to tender are published
- Site visits
- Results of competitions via Factsheets

This very effective communication has made it possible over the years to open up the market (visibility and centralisation of calls is very practical for design offices), and to build a very positive and dynamic image of the Brussels architectural scene.



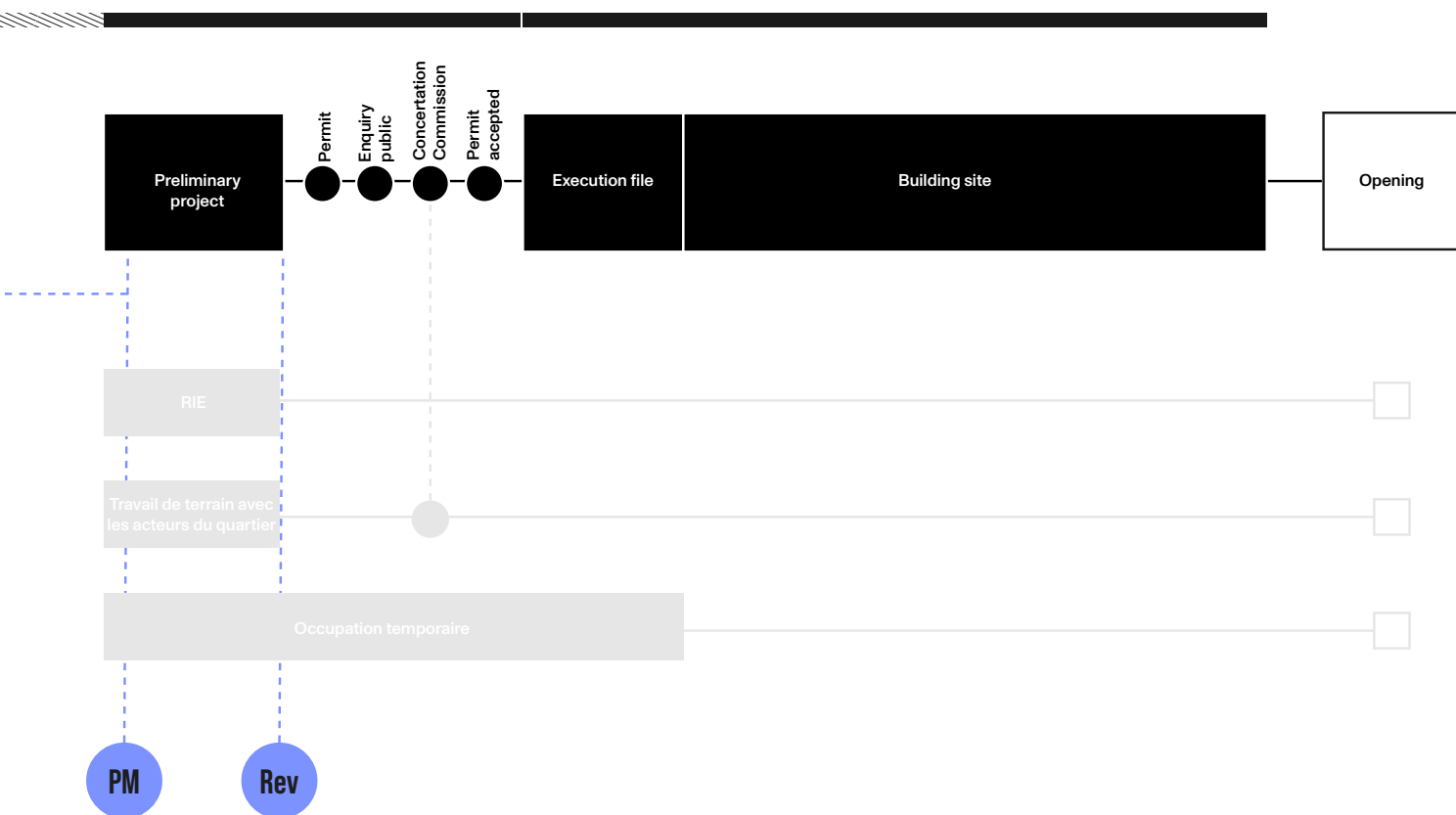


To organize the discussions, we have proposed an outline of the key stages of an urban project. Necessarily theoretical and simplistic (not all projects are done in such a linear way), this scheme has the advantage of building a common vocabulary on the main stages of the management of an urban project.

It also shows that the tools mobilised by the BMA to support spatial quality materialise at specific times in this process, with the concerned stakeholders at each stage. The lines in grey complement on different themes the exemplary management of a project.

IGN

EXECUTION



What recommendations can be made to the BMA?

I	Strengthening the Brussels ecosystem	18
II	Improving procedures	22
III	Making room for renewal	26
IV	Building a collective learning environment	30

I Strengthening the brussels ecosystem

The BMA and its team are actively and responsibly monitoring the spatial quality of the environment in Brussels. The BMA has become the largest Bouwmeester team in Belgium. It should be noted that despite this, several Brussels stakeholders are calling for an increase in the team's skills. In recent years, the BMA has sought to promote cooperation between various public administrations through a number of initiatives and tools. However, apart from a few temporary initiatives, there have been no permanent cooperation structures. More transversal cooperation between the stakeholders in Brussels, which are now organised rather vertically, could nevertheless offer new prospects. In particular, the possibility of working at regional level in a more collective and structural way on architectural policy, spatial quality, the formalisation of an urban vision or the operationalisation of projects on the ground. The BMA and its team could play a facilitating role in this area. Consideration can also be given to broadening the skills of the BMA team through occasional reinforcements. The current core of the team will remain the base, but may occasionally be strengthened. In general, it remains important to continue working on the integration of the BMA team into the ecosystem of Brussels stakeholders and to continue actively seeking cooperation in this regard.

1. Reinforcing multidisciplinary approaches

The first group of actions proposed offers a response to the request of various stakeholders in Brussels for a more multidisciplinary BMA team, without expanding the team and thus sacrificing its current room for manoeuvre. The BMA team may temporarily appoint external experts from other disciplines (e.g. landscape architecture, legal expertise, real estate expertise, social expertise) for a short or long term, possibly through framework contracts. In addition, the team may choose to outsource certain tasks (e.g. on certain aspects of communication), so that communication can focus even more on priority tasks. The involvement of external experts should allow the team to gain skills internally, in order to strengthen and broaden the skills of the team itself in the long term.

2. Exchange of knowledge and experience

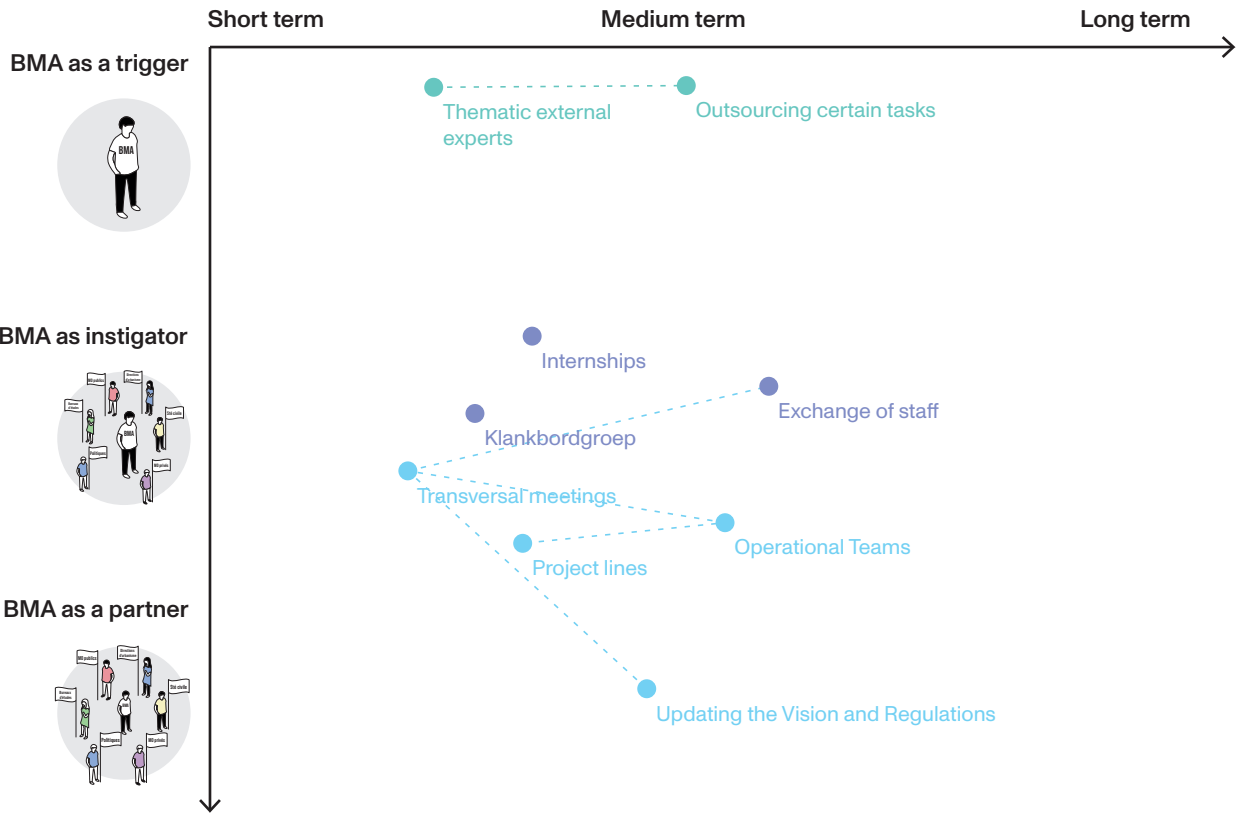
During the Visitation, it became clear that the various Brussels administrations need to better understand their respective working methods, and that there is also a great need for exchange of knowledge and experience from non-Brussels contexts. In this way, both the BMA and the Brussels administrations could strengthen their own organisations by bringing their expertise and experience, as well as good practices from other contexts, to Brussels. At the same time, this can contribute to a better understanding of the functioning of the BMA team, which will strengthen its integration into the Brussels ecosystem. For example, the BMA team could organise exchanges of employees, during which a member of the BMA team would participate temporarily in the work of a Brussels administration active in urban development, and vice versa. An addition to this exchange between

Brussels stakeholders, the inclusion of a trainee in the BMA team is also a possibility, for example from a (inter)national institution active on spatial quality issues (other bouwmeesters). Finally, a more structural exchange of knowledge and experience can also be organised by setting up a think tank ('klankbordgroep'). This more regular group would allow the BMA team to benefit from an ad hoc input of professionals external to the team to discuss specific issues related to its own operation.

3. New governance structures

In this group of actions, the focus is on improving urban governance and the functioning of the Brussels ecosystem, in order to ensure an ambitious architectural and urban policy, a widely shared urban vision and a more effective operationalisation of this vision on the ground. Bringing more transversality into a highly vertical ecosystem can be achieved through several potential actions. Thus, the BMA could, in the short term, organise more systematically transversal meetings between regional public administrations and municipal operators who are engaged in similar initiatives. In this way the municipalities or regional bodies learn from each other in the development of their strategies. The BMA team could also propose the establishment of operational teams, in the spirit of the "Canal team", to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of urban projects. These transversal governance practices can also be strengthened by making the project lines tool more widely available. The 'project lines' define the lines of the future programme of a site upstream of the process, even before there is an architectural project. This is a very concrete way of implementing the regional strategic plans on the ground. Finally, the BMA team must support the competent administrations (Perspective and Urban) in the development of strategic plans, as well as in the updating of urban planning regulations.

I. STRENGTHENING THE BRUSSELS ECOSYSTEM



1. REINFORCING MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

THEMATIC EXTERNAL EXPERTS

Temporary external experts can bring specific skills to the BMA without permanently expanding the team: legal knowledge related to town planning regulations, technical, social or economic expertise, etc.

OUTSOURCING CERTAIN TASKS

By outsourcing certain tasks, the BMA can reduce the workload. For example, by appointing a freelancer or an external editor to write 'Factsheets', which is time consuming.

2. EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE OF STAFF

Through one-off or temporary internships, members of the BMA team can join other public administrations, and vice versa. This allows each stakeholder to better understand the functioning of the other, which promotes mutual cooperation. Each organisation is also strengthened by the expertise and experience gained.

INTERNSHIPS

The BMA team can offer internships to employees of another Bouwmeester team or another public administration involved in spatial quality in Belgium or elsewhere. This intern brings to the BMA the knowledge, experience and good practices of their environment, and vice versa.

KLANKBORDGROEP (FOCUS GROUP)

This think tank, or committee of experts, is composed of professionals and (inter)national experts, outside the team. It has an advisory, reflective and inspirational role and can be solicited for specific questions. It can take the form of a more structured group, which will serve to strengthen the BMA team and its integration into the Brussels ecosystem.

3. NEW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

TRANSVERSAL MEETINGS

Transversal meetings between regional and municipal administrations could promote greater coherence between the urban visions of these different stakeholders, by coordinating ongoing studies, or by facilitating the exchange of experiences for entities engaged in working on similar topics (e.g. canopy plans, or school streets, developed by several municipalities).

OPERATIONAL TEAMS

A 'task force' has been set up around the Canal Plan, composed of representatives of the BMA and the competent regional and municipal administrations. This team focused on operationalisation by translating it into concrete urban projects, using an innovative method of co-creation. The BMA can also put the deployment of such an operational team on the agenda with partners in other areas or themes.

PROJECT LINES

The 'project lines' define the outline of the development framework of a very upstream project, by indicating the programme, density, public facilities, etc. The BMA team has already used this tool several times in the framework of 'flagship projects', in collaboration with other Brussels administrations (Perspective.Brussels, Urban.Brussels). The BMA could propose that 'project lines' become a more common practice.

UPDATING THE VISION AND REGULATIONS

Spatial quality is partly determined by urban development regulations. The BMA team must therefore be able to support the relevant Brussels administrations in updating town planning regulations and drawing up strategic plans.

II Improved procedures

Since its creation in 2009, the BMA has put in place tools to support architectural quality: first by proposing organisational modalities for the designation of architects (architectural competitions), then more recently by formalising Research by design, project meetings and BMA reviews. The widening of the scope of this support is gradually bearing fruit. It strengthens the capacity of public authorities to oversee projects. It puts architectural and spatial issues in a stronger position. It thus leads to an improvement in the spatial quality of projects in Brussels. This dynamic is the Brussels version of an international trend emphasising the raising of the level of spatial quality. The implementation of these tools has, however, shaken up habits and inevitably raised questions. These new procedures must therefore be continuously questioned, evaluated and improved. The aim here is therefore to formalise, on the basis of the discussions during the Visitatie, groups of recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency, openness and transparency of the procedures put in place, with regard to contracting authorities, design firms or the general public.

1. Effectiveness

Here, we focus on increasing the effectiveness of existing procedures. This can be done by making these procedures more systematic, clearer, or by reducing the workload involved. This is the case with the idea of strengthening the use of standard specifications, or systematisation in the use of selection criterias. These standard documents can themselves systematise practices that save time (e.g. limit the number of references requested, etc.). 'Candidate pools' are also a means of reducing the workload, by bringing together the work of selecting candidates for several missions at the same time. In terms of effectiveness, specific questions were posed regarding the organisation of 'project meetings' or the drafting of 'BMA reviews'. In both cases, the reflection to be carried out goes beyond this mission and requires the establishment of a specific collective process. All these actions require strengthening the communication and dissemination of the tools proposed to public and private patrons, in order to improve practices beyond a support by the BMA team.

2. Accessibility

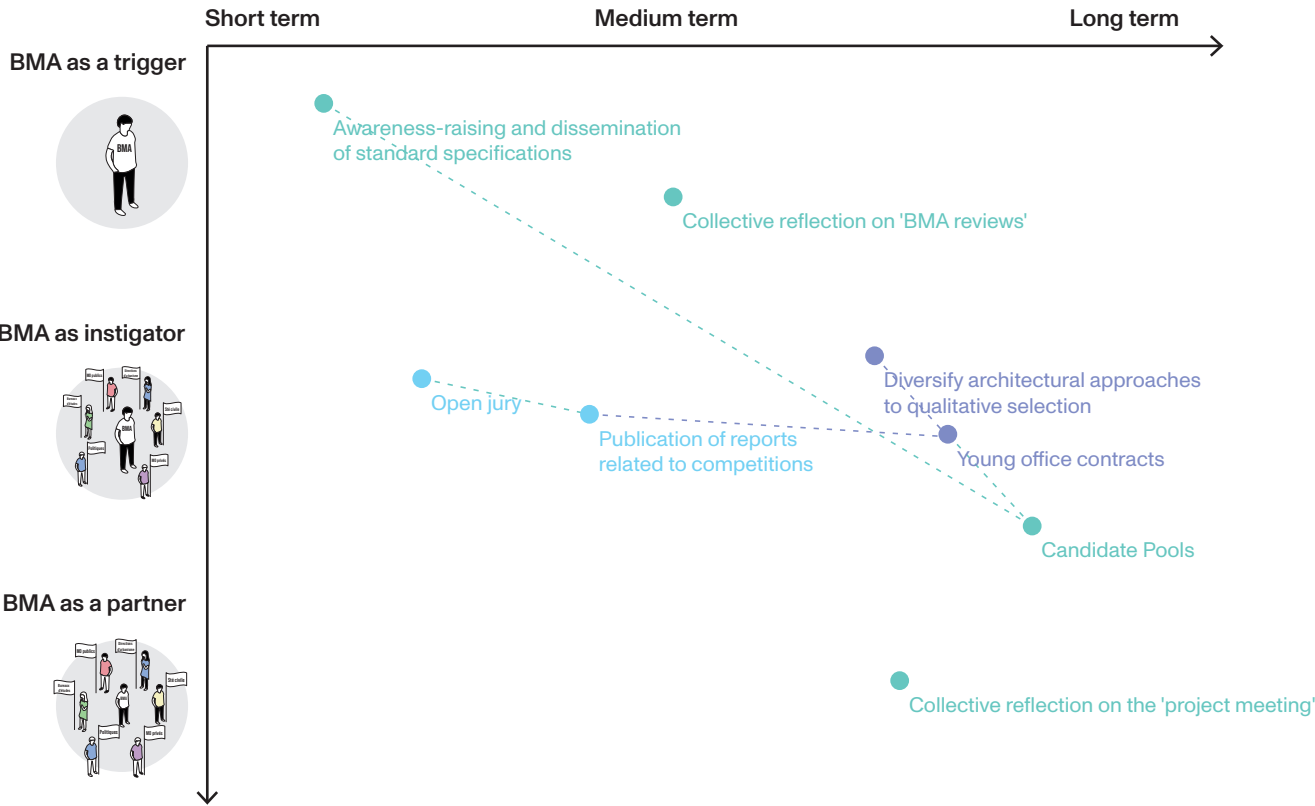
The question of the accessibility of competitions, and therefore of the Brussels market, is perhaps the point which generated the most debate during the Visitatie. While the opening of the market is considered a very positive point because it boosts the Brussels scene, it has also been criticised because it leads to an overload of work (see previous point), and also because it creates more competition. The group of actions here aims to further strengthen the Brussels architectural scene, and to further improve the accessibility of the procedures: create a favourable framework in order to contribute to the selection of a

greater diversity of offices. This may involve the systematisation of 'young office' specifications, focusing on the emergence of new offices with little experience. This can also involve adapting, for private contracts in the first instance, the organisation of qualitative selections, to ensure a diversity of team profiles, depending for example on the level of experience or the architectural approach. In this way the BMA contributes to the dynamism of the Brussels architectural scene.

3. Transparency

This third group of actions aims to ensure better transparency of the new procedures put in place for spatial quality support, vis-à-vis the general public, as well as professionals. This concerns primarily the stage of competitions, but a similar reflection can be conducted on the upstream and downstream stages. The aim is to achieve this through better access to information on procedures, better formalisation of reports where decisions are taken, and greater inclusion of certain external stakeholders in procedures. The BMA team can contribute in several ways. In the short term, the team can expand the practice of open jury, where citizens can attend deliberations. In the medium term, it may be necessary to work on the form and publication of selection reports, at the application stage and then at the tender stage (see 'factsheets'). Awareness-raising work must be done with the contracting authorities, who have the final decision on these potential actions. In the longer term, additional efforts may be needed to stimulate the collective debate on spatial quality, and to actively involve citizens in urban development projects.

II. IMPROVED PROCEDURES



1. EFFICIENCY

AWARENESS-RAISING AND DISSEMINATION OF STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS

Standard specifications exist (theses can be found on the BMA website). They make it possible to propose standard formulations for certain parts of the procurement documents (such as the award criteria). These documents are too little known and too little used. The aim here is to raise awareness and disseminate these documents.

COLLECTIVE REFLECTION ON 'BMA REVIEWS'

The BMA must provide a formal notice in the procedures for projects of more than 5,000 m². The aim here is to assess the impact and usefulness of this review in improving architectural quality. Similar work was done at the Vlaams Bouwmeester level.

CANDIDATE POOLS

Gather at one time the work of selecting candidates (first step of the procedure) for several missions that are close or similar (for example on social housing projects or on certain types of public spaces). This makes it possible to systematise certain procedures, to limit the workload (both for the contracting authorities and for the design offices), and to save time.

COLLECTIVE REFLECTION ON THE 'PROJECT MEETING'

During the Visitatie, the project meeting was hailed as a breakthrough (stakeholders meeting at once, space for discussion on architectural quality). But many questions have emerged about its organisation and philosophy. The action here aims to extend the exchanges that took place during the Visitatie, and to ensure the participation of the BMA in a collective reflection on the organisation of the project meeting. Reflection which should in this case be organised by Urban.

2. ACCESSIBILITY

DIVERSIFY ARCHITECTURAL APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE SELECTION

The action proposes here to draw inspiration from French or Swiss examples and to ensure, for certain contracts, a diversity of approaches and profiles in the offices included at the stage of the selection of candidates. This was done in Paris, under the mayorship of Bertrand Delanoë until 2008. As the legal framework linked to the Public Procurement Act needs to be clarified as regards public developers, private operators could play a pioneering role here.

YOUNG OFFICE CONTRACTS

In the same logic, the idea here is to improve the accessibility of the market to stimulate the organisation of contracts (on the basis of standard specifications) aiming at the emergence of offices with little experience.

3. TRANSPARENCY

OPEN JURY

Already tested on some 'flagship' projects (Maximilian Park), the action here aims to allow citizens to attend presentations made during the jury.

PUBLICATION OF REPORTS RELATED TO COMPETITIONS

Ensure publicity for selection and award reports, in order to allow a good understanding of the elements that led to a decision. A parallel reflection is conducted on the 'fact sheets' (document published on the BMA website with information on the designation of winners), both on the form and on their publication.

III Making room for renewal

Currently, the BMA team focuses on a 'project-oriented' approach, in other words it implements its support and tools directly by following the projects and the stakeholders who develop them. The team is therefore directly involved in a large number of projects, and contributes directly to the debate on spatial quality and its practical implementation. Most of the stakeholders during the *Visitatie* stressed the importance of the innovation role of the BMA in breaking habits and renewing practices. However, in the current way of working, the project-oriented approach creates a high workload, both for the BMA team and for the supported stakeholders. In order to maintain its innovative role and contribute to the necessary culture change, it will be important to refine the team's priorities. This includes making choices about the number of projects supervised by the BMA. In the future, the BMA team could be more selective, by a thematic clustering of projects or by focusing on projects that are symbolic, reproducible or representative of a change in practice. In this way, the team would make room for innovation and renewal. In addition, the BMA team can work towards greater involvement upstream of the project process, or free up space for prospective design research. By creating levers to activate local knowledge much earlier in the process, the BMA team can also work on innovation in relation to current urban issues, and on methodological innovation in the field of co-creation.

1. Making choices

In this group of actions the idea is to focus on quality rather than quantity, giving oneself the possibility to select the supported projects. The BMA team could thus favour a commitment to projects that are innovative, reproducible, exemplary or symbolic in nature. In addition, the team could decide to fully support only projects that meet a certain predetermined level of ambition, in terms of choice of procedure or spatial quality. It is then a question of imposing preconditions for a good involvement of the BMA with private or public patrons. It is in a way a logic of 'BMA label' which allows to anchor the level of ambition of the projects. This label may take the form of a declaration of ambition at the beginning of the collaboration, starting with an accompanying interview, eventually leading to the drafting of a cooperation agreement, in which both parties approve the ambitions and conditions of the support.

2. Projects as a lever for innovation

The BMA team could also decide to focus more on projects linked to certain themes (e.g. productive city, circular construction, health-related facilities), or parts of the territory. This makes it possible to pool efforts on certain specific challenges, thus increasing the innovative impact of the project-based approach, without the need to significantly increase the number of projects supervised. The idea of 'project pools' already mentioned above could reinforce this logic, by organising calls for tender on specific themes or areas and grouping contracts to save time. This grouping of missions by theme or area can highlight some new, urgent or complex urban issues. To support the pool of thematic or area projects, the BMA team may also engage external thematic experts to provide support to these projects. In addition, the BMA team may take

the initiative to publish essays or short opinion publications on these strategic themes or areas. In this way the BMA participates in the public debate on the city and gives incentives when necessary. These publications can go hand in hand with the compilation of a guide of 'good practices'. Both instruments could contribute to develop a critical mass in order to tackle urban and societal challenges. This critical mass can help to ensure that the efforts of the BMA team are broader in scope than those of the projects actually supervised.

3. Prospective design research

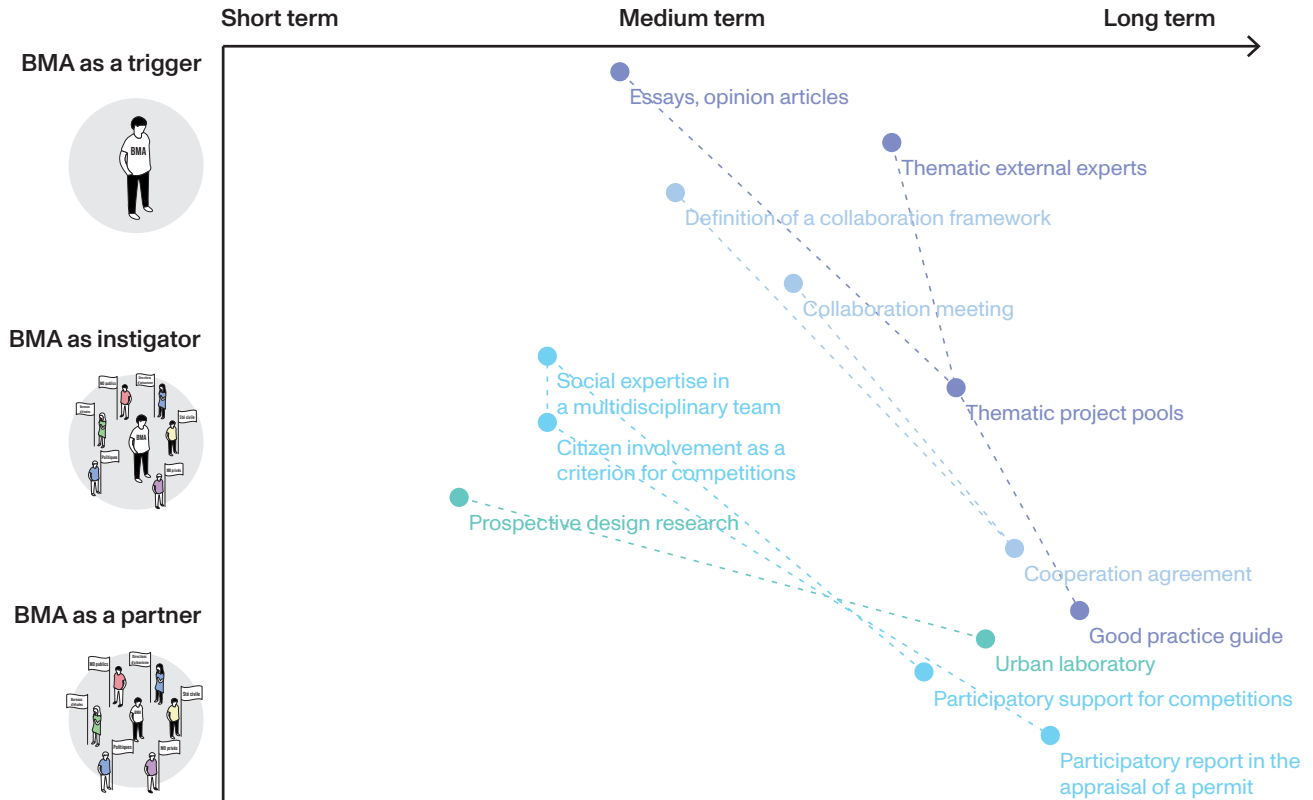
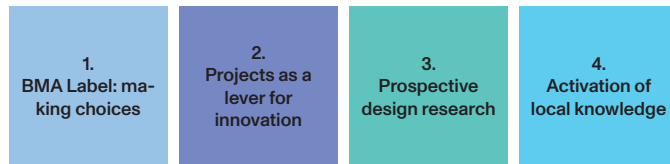
Beyond a reflection on what projects or groups of projects can bring as levers of innovation, the BMA team could also invest energy in a more structural way in prospective design research by exploring certain broader themes constituting a major urban, social and environmental challenge for the region or for certain parts of the territory. The research here therefore goes beyond feasibility studies on a site or a group of sites. This spatial reflection not only makes it possible to translate abstract intentions into urban development hypotheses, but also aims to stimulate dialogue between the various stakeholders involved in a theme or part of the territory. The prospective design research underway on the 20th century outskirts is a good example. The hypotheses resulting from this research can be tested concretely on certain urban development projects supported by the BMA team. This dynamic of work (concrete research-application) could be formalised in an 'urban laboratory' that would bring together the relevant institutional actors (Perspective, Urban). Each year the laboratory could define the themes to be explored according to the challenges of the moment.

4. Activation of local knowledge

Making room for renewal also means strengthening the place of inhabitants and civil society in project processes. The integration of this local knowledge, the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants and users in the projects improves both the spatial quality and the quality of the living environment. The BMA team does not have the capacity, nor mandate to facilitate this activation of local knowledge itself. However, the team can create a number of levers to facilitate

the participation of civil society in concrete projects. The BMA team could advocate the inclusion of a 'quality of participatory methodology' criterion in the award criteria, which would make it possible to strengthen the consideration of the social context in the final choice of the winner. This award criterion could be reinforced in the description of the team profiles sought, by directing it towards multidisciplinary and the integration of social expertise. The BMA team can also suggest to the contracting authorities the opening of the competition procedure to the inhabitants (via site visits or open jury). Finally, the team can encourage public and private patrons to organise participatory processes that accompany the various stages of a project, and to formalise them in a participatory report, which summarises the main conclusions and can be included in the appraisal documents of an application for an urban planning permit.

III. MAKING ROOM FOR RENEWAL



1. BMA LABEL: MAKING CHOICES

DEFINITION OF A COLLABORATION FRAMEWORK

The action aims for the BMA team at formalising the conditions for the involvement of the BMA in the support of a project. It is necessary for the team to define how to make the best use of the time allocated, and to concentrate efforts on projects that can serve as an example, or of a symbolic nature, or reproducibility.

COLLABORATION MEETING

The BMA team meets the client and sets the framework for the support that will be carried out during this meeting. This framework can then be formalised in a cooperation charter.

COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Based on the criteria defined by the team, and the

collaboration meeting, the BMA label could then be formalised through a cooperation agreement, which could address procedural issues (choice of procedure, use of standard clauses, organisational principles such as the remuneration of bids, for example), or the organisation of the process (carrying out a feasibility study, involvement in research by the project), or a degree of ambition on spatial quality (environmental and programmatic targets).

2. PROJECTS AS A LEVER FOR INNOVATION

ESSAYS, OPINION ARTICLES

By publishing reflections on spatial or urban themes, the BMA can put them on the political agenda and mobilise a critical mass, both in policy-making administrations, sponsors and civil society.

THEMATIC EXTERNAL EXPERTS

External thematic experts may support BMA on a

temporary basis, possibly as part of a pool of thematic projects. The expert acts as a project manager, always in tandem with a member of the BMA team, so that the transfer of expertise is guaranteed.

THEMATIC PROJECT POOLS

A regular, thematic or area-based call for projects, addressed to public and private clients, makes it possible to group design competitions by theme and over time. The preparation and publication of the specifications, the qualitative selection and the jury take place simultaneously for the different projects; the design teams can submit (the same) offer for one or more of these projects. This reduces the workload for BMA and clients, and the urban vision translates into concrete projects.

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

This guide summarises lessons learned from a pool of projects, thematic or territorialised thinking, or inspiring practices from other contexts. The guide may contain guidelines, scoping or recommendations to inspire or influence new projects. The guide can also help stimulate the debate on space quality and make it more accessible to the general public.

3. PROSPECTIVE DESIGN RESEARCH

The BMA team could more systematically launch prospective design research on structural urban issues or around a specific territory. In this way, the team can contribute to the discussions on the development of an urban vision. The lessons learned from the prospective design research also guide the concrete support that the BMA team is doing on the projects.

URBAN LABORATORY

To give a clear framework to this research through the prospective design research, it seems useful to integrate it into an urban laboratory bringing together several institutional actors (Perspective, Urban). That laboratory could identify each year the issues to be reflected on, guide the work and reflect on their practical use.

4. ACTIVATION OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AS A CRITERION FOR COMPETITIONS

Good citizen engagement is facilitated when those involved in a process have a clear approach and methodology to achieve it. The aim here is to lay down specific criteria on the quality of the participatory methodology. This guides the choice of a team also on its approach to the subject.

SOCIAL EXPERTISE IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

It is also easier to involve citizens well in a process when the people involved in a process have expertise on the subject. It is therefore proposed here to orient the skills required of a team towards multidisciplinary and in particular towards social expertise.

PARTICIPATORY SUPPORT FOR COMPETITIONS

The BMA team can suggest to the contracting authorities to organise the involvement of the inhabitants in the competition procedure, for example through site visits with the candidates, or open juries.

PARTICIPATORY REPORT IN THE APPRAISAL OF A PERMIT

Once the participatory process has been formalized at the various stages of the process, it becomes possible to write a report summarising the expectations of the stakeholders who participated in the process. The aim here is to include this report in the planning permit application documents. The voice of the inhabitants is clearly represented in the appraisal of a project.

IV Building a collective learning environment

The function of the BMA was created in particular to raise the quality of architectural production in Brussels. While this improvement requires project support (a 'project-by-project' approach) and the tools put in place in recent years, it will also require a greater general awareness of architectural quality among public and private patrons, authorities and the general public. For this reason, it is a question of improving the 'cultural context' on spatial quality, in other words the management of quality outside the intervention of the BMA and its team. The involvement of civil society in quality reflection processes should therefore be improved. The media, urban associations and academic and cultural institutions also have an important role to play. Here, we focus on the role that the BMA can play in creating a collective learning environment to improve the 'cultural context'. The aim is to adapt the accompanying tools so that they also include a pedagogical dimension, to open up to the general public, to show the backstage of work on spatial quality, to facilitate exchanges of good practices or to ensure good citizen involvement in debates.

1. CAPACITATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PATRONS

The group of actions here aims to reach the contracting authorities (public and private) in a more indirect and more structural way, leaving behind project-by-project support. Take a step further on the issue of improving practices and see how to ensure that the right reflexes are generated among the contracting authorities without the intervention of the BMA or its team. Based on the principle that not all project managers have in-house knowledge or skills, these actions aim at their capacity on architectural and spatial issues, where necessary. This may involve the formalisation of 'guides to good practice'. These make it possible to guide developers with less experience on choices of procedures or practices that take into account spatial quality. They can take the form of standard specifications that can help them frame contracts with the right guidelines. The idea of training in project management may also be mentioned. The idea is to encourage the staff of the project management structures to train themselves on spatial quality issues in Brussels. Finally, it is also possible to envisage the organisation of study tours, which make it possible to experiment concretely with quality projects outside Brussels, and to create positive group emulation between public and private patrons.

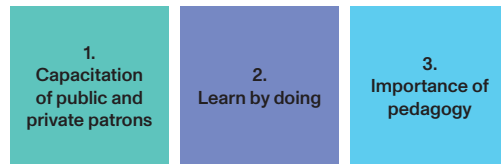
2. LEARN FROM PRACTICE

This involves creating regular and collective higher perspective on the practice of the BMA. This perspective is essential to 'learn' by doing. Sharing these moments of reflection beyond the team itself helps to reinforce this collective learning. We are therefore in a logic of 'lessons learned': the work on all the projects must make it possible to draw lessons for the support provided. This moment of achievement could be

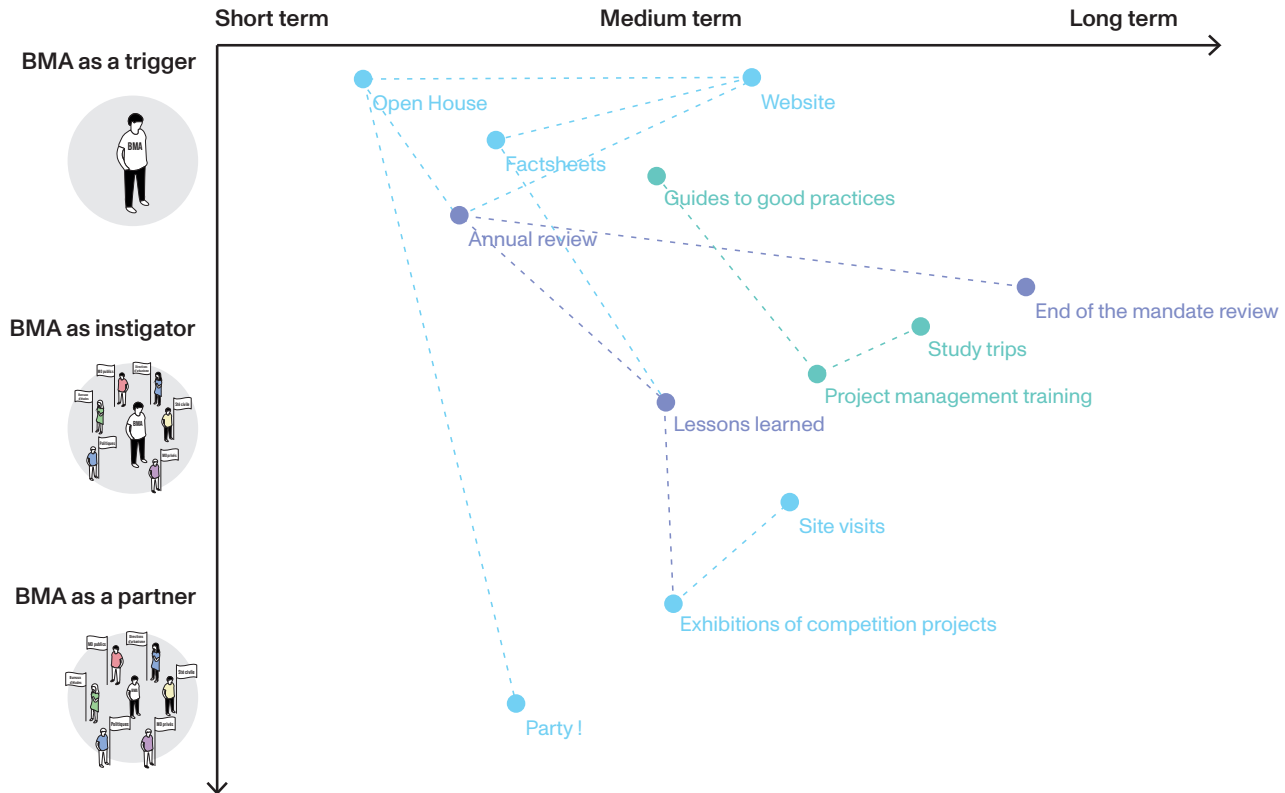
formalised during the drafting of the annual report, where all the projects of the year must be reviewed and presented. In another timeframe, reflection can also be done in an end-of-term review, with the aim of drawing lessons from the work carried out and outlining the challenges of a subsequent mandate. This end-of-term review may be the subject of a collective reflection process, resulting in a publication and/or an exhibition. The focus group of external experts (klankbordgroep) can also of course play a strategic role in taking stock of the work carried out.

3. IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGY

The aim of the latter action group is to strengthen education on spatial quality issues among the general public. This pedagogical work can be realised in several ways. This involves, for example, adapting the BMA's current communication tools to make them more accessible to the general public: factsheets for example, or more generally the website. It could also be fuelled by a reorientation of certain current tools towards the general public: such as site visits prior to competitions, open juries, or exhibitions of competition projects. If the public and private patrons agree, these actions allow the general public to be in contact with the concrete questions that will arise on spatial quality. It is therefore a question of direct capacity-building of the general public on quality issues. This pedagogical work can also materialise in moments of contact between the work of the BMA and the general public, such as a systematisation of 'open doors', allowing the public to see 'behind the scenes', to better understand the role of the BMA and give guarantees of transparency. Finally, spatial quality must also be able to be part of a calendar of cultural or festive events, which will make it possible to create a link between the stakeholders, informal moments of exchanges and meetings to facilitate the architectural scene.



IV. BUILDING A COLLECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



1. CAPACITATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PATRONS

GUIDES TO GOOD PRACTICES

Create a guide to good practices for contracting authorities, in order to gradually generalise practices taking into account the issue of spatial quality. This makes it possible to reach a wider audience than that which is actually supported in the projects.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Offer training modules on architectural and spatial quality issues for the staff of project management structures (public or private). This broadens the scope of people with a good understanding of spatial quality issues.

STUDY TRIPS

A group study trip is the ideal tool to experiment together with quality projects outside Brussels and to create a

group dynamic between public and private patrons. They can be organised on an annual basis, starting with an initiative of the BMA or another regional body.

2. LEARN BY DOING

LESSONS LEARNED

Formalise a collective moment on a regular basis to take note of the work carried out by the BMA team on the projects, and to draw lessons for the support provided.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The annual review makes it possible to gather all the work carried out by the team during the year: support of various types, tools, contacts, etc. It also makes it possible to assess the impact of the work on the ground. The aim here is to take advantage of this higher perspective to ensure a useful collective reflection for the following years.

END OF THE MANDATE REVIEW

Formalize a collective reflection work on the practice of the BMA team at the end of 5 years upon conclusion of the mandate, in the form of a publication or exhibition. This is basically the same idea as for the annual review but at mandate level. The goal will be to take a higher perspective and set the work for the next bouwmeester.

3. IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGY

FACTSHEETS

Today, the BMA team is creating a Factsheet to inform about the results of a competition by presenting the framework of the competition, the winner, and images of projects not selected.

In the future, it would be interesting to mobilise this tool in a pedagogical logic allowing not only information on the winner but also a clear and simple explanation of the criterias and elements that played a role in the final choice. This will allow readers to understand how the winning project brings added value to its environment and to the architectural landscape in Brussels.

WEBSITE

Adapt the current website to meet an educational objective that is more accessible to the general public. Today, the website is very logically designed for professionals, the action here also aims to allow a wider audience reading.

SITE VISITS

By including residents in the site visits organised at the stage of the selection of candidates for a competition (with the agreement of the public or private patrons), it becomes possible to make citizens more aware of the challenges, constraints and opportunities of a site and a project. It is a fairly concrete way of stimulating reflection on space issues.

EXHIBITIONS OF COMPETITION PROJECTS

The aim here is to organise exhibitions open to the public with the results of competitions. All projects, winners and others, are presented to the public. The exhibition becomes an opportunity for exchange and very concrete discussion on architectural issues.

OPEN HOUSE

Organise an annual open house for the public to see how the BMA team works. This will give the public a better understanding of BMA's work and architectural and urban planning issues. This moment may coincide with the higher perspective linked to the annual review.

PARTY!

We believe it is important to include architecture in a calendar of cultural and festive events open to all. Organising informal parties creates a link between the stakeholders and boosts the local architectural scene.

What orientations for the future for the BMA ?

In 2014, Olivier Bastin, the first Bouwmeester, bowed out and presented his results at an exhibition. He recalled the reasons for the creation of the function: to raise the level of spatial quality in Brussels, after several decades of deterioration of the architectural context. And he used the 'Petit poucet' metaphor to describe his work during this first mandate: leaving a trail of breadcrumbs, showing the way. A mountain path, sometimes rough and steep, where you have to find the right balance.

In a way this Visitatie has led us to reflect on what has become of these little breadcrumbs. What direction did this take, what balance was found? Floris Alkemade, during the Visitatie, evoked the dilemma of any bouwmeester: to favour a 'projects' approach or rather a 'cultural' approach. In the first, the BMA team puts itself at the heart of decision-making processes and tries to directly influence them, project by project. In the second, it acts more as a reference point on spatial quality, supports certain specific projects and works through 'virtuous contagion' on the processes, cultural context and ecosystem of the stakeholders.

Each mandate had to strike the right balance between these two approaches. Olivier Bastin laid the foundations for a 'projects' approach (focus on the right procedures, systematisation of competitions, etc.) while exploring the 'cultural' approach. During his first term in office, Kristiaan Borret strongly strengthened the 'projects' approach, putting in place the tools that now frame what is being built in Brussels. At the same time, he worked on a cultural change of the Brussels administrations on architectural issues. This attention to governance was based on the premise that the functioning of public authorities on the subject should first be strengthened, before

stimulating a broader debate on spatial quality.

Where do we stand for Kristiaan Borret's second term, and for the future? We want to think that the context is now more ripe to lean towards a broader cultural approach. The tools are there, they must be appropriated by the stakeholders. The BMA can therefore afford to 'make choices', and take on even more of this role of 'facilitator' of spatial quality. On the basis of the many exchanges we had during the Visitatie with a wide variety of stakeholders, many relevant and concrete suggestions were put forward to give substance to this development in the years to come. By being more selective and focused on 'quality monitoring', the BMA team can free up time to support innovative initiatives and work upstream on urban transformation processes. In addition, the focus can be on strengthening the ecosystem of Brussels stakeholders, public administrations and also more broadly private operators, cultural and academic institutions, citizens. The authorities (and the BMA team) will therefore not be the only ones concerned here. It will be necessary to mobilise society at large to build a new framework for collective intelligence, cooperation and learning on urban issues.

There is still a long way to go before reaching the top, but we start to have a nice view.

Preparation

- The BMA is part of the eco-system of stakeholders, but retains an independent position
- The BMA forces discussion on spatial quality
- The BMA proposes the tools and the procedures, it is up to the stakeholders to use them
- The BMA is a team, a collective work
- Each BMA is a courier who prepares the work of the next.

Discussion

- The BMA is a facilitator, it sets the framework for a dialogue between partners
- The BMA simplifies procedures and makes work more efficient
- The BMA proposes and assumes a vision of architectural quality
- The BMA ensures transparency of procedures and builds trust
- The BMA must convince rather than impose

Experiment

- The BMA is a pioneer, and contributes to improving the urban context
- The BMA chooses its battles and does not follow all projects
- The BMA builds space for experimentation, breaks habits, moves debates forward
- The BMA acts as the devil's advocate, testing ideas
- The BMA is gaining perspective, always questioning itself

Learn

The BMA thinks, and knows that you learn 'by doing'

The BMA contributes to strengthening the cultural context on architecture

The BMA provides a framework for collective learning on spatial issues

The BMA contributes to the inclusion of civil society in the urban debate

The BMA demonstrates pedagogy and speaks to all audiences



Francis Alÿs
'When Faith moves Mountains'
2002

KRISTIAAN BORRET **After a first mandate where Olivier Bastin had prepared the ground well, smoothly, it was necessary for the second BMA to be able to move the lines, at the risk of sometimes shocking a little. Olivier had worked on the competitions and that's to be expected. First things first. I wanted to broaden the support work by proposing new tools that are now in place, upstream and downstream of the competitions, on architecture and on the urban vision. It was also necessary to broaden the scope of clients supported, particularly with regard to the private sector**

Interview with Kristiaan Borret as part of the Visitatie mission, 2021

The project is not finished yet, although it has already gotten off to a great start. Making the city is no longer the exclusive preserve of traditional institutions but is the result of a large constellation of 'city-makers', in a form of collective intelligence.

Statement of Intent, 2020-2024

Colophon

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SUMMARY

BMA

VISITATIE

