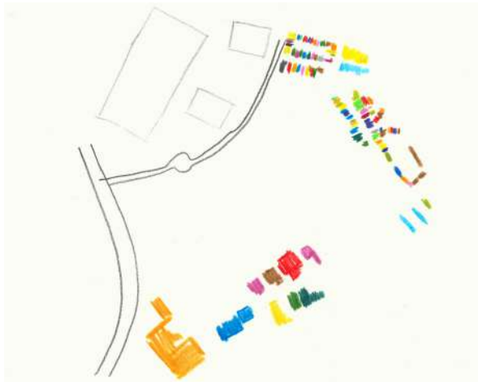
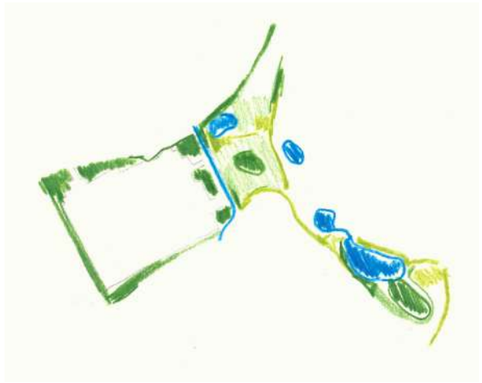
Union Saint-Gilloise stadium - ALLEZ L'UNION!

Arrhov Frick + Elmēs + Atmos Lab + Atelier Jean Chevalier

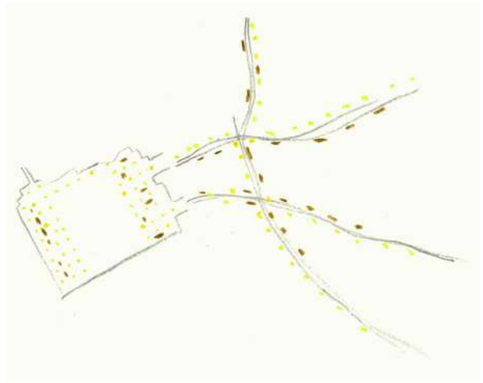
BRUXELLES, MA VILLE, JE T'AIME



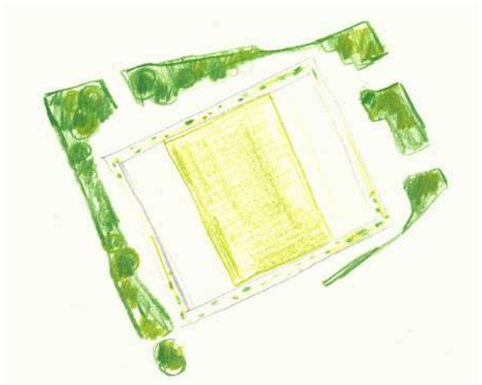
1. A lively neighbour-



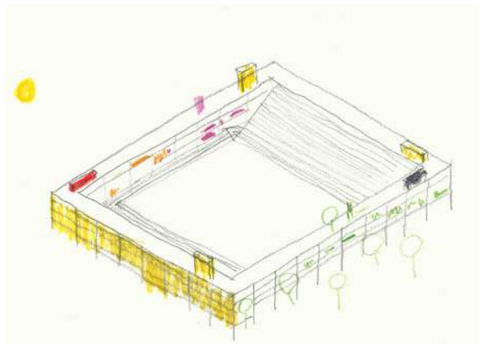
2. A resilient landscape



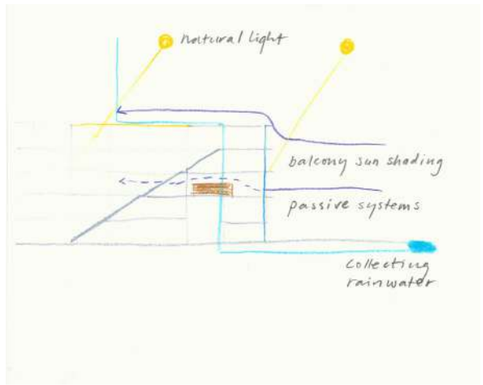
3. Bempt, a park



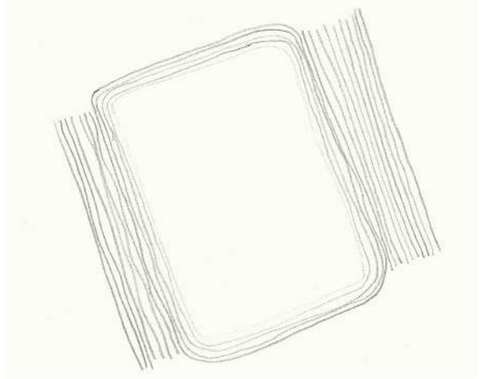
4. Union's gardens



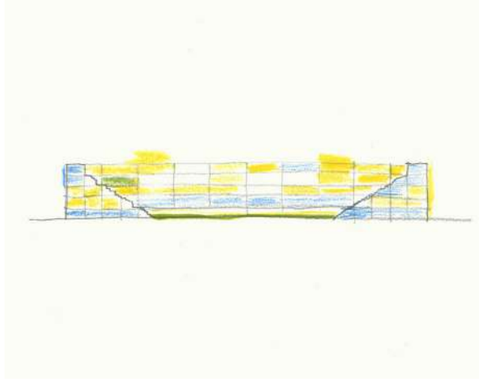
5. One stadium, four sides, endless possibilities



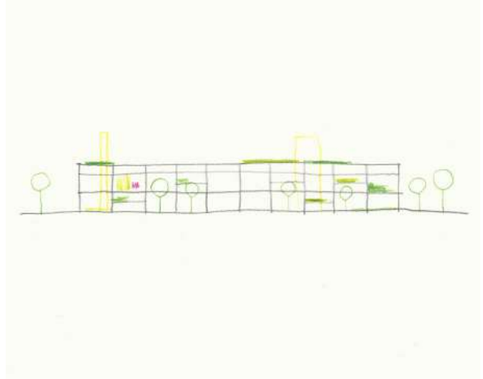
6. Green by design



7. An arena for RUSG



8. A home for Unionistes



9. A campus for Bemptois

With this booklet we are not presenting a mere architectural project. This seems presumptuous in light of the questions posed. What we want to collectively discuss are rather the metaphorical fundaments of a possible stadium project.

The ten following pages will therefore delve into ambitions, intentions, opportunities and strategies which could form the base for a collaborative process. As the past has shown, this project requires political acumen, subtlety, awareness and sensitivity.

Our approach has collected a wide range of voices. Which could establish a project from the bottom up rather than one from top down. What one could therefore distinguish throughout the booklet is a love letter. A letter which is addressed to Brussels, the neighbourhood and of course its club, Union Saint Gilloise.

1. A lively neighbourhood.
Various dialogues have been set up to understand the neighbourhood's pulse. These discussions led us to view the entire project as a *mutualized toolbox*, addressing the diverse spatial and programmatic needs that extends beyond the stadium's immediate requirements.

2. A resilient landscape
Assessing the current fauna and flora on the available construction site and integrating it as a *complementary biotope* in the *expanded Bempt park* will support the existing biodiversity. We believe the challenges of building a project of this scale, particularly *water management* and *soil remediation*, have to be tackled by effectively using and precisely integrating them into the landscape.

3. Bempt, a park
Bempt used to be a floodplain, an expansion area for the city, but never a park. This proposal envisages a *collective* and *inclusive infrastructure* as part of a *new green entity*, extending the ambitions regarding public space to the whole Bempt site.

4. Union's garden
In line with Union's current home, the ambition is to *integrate the stadium as a garden* within Bempt. The park surrounds the new open structure and at times permeates within it. *Various types of gardens* are utilized to translate the enchanting green setting of Duden Park to Bempt.

5. One stadium, four sides, endless possibilities
One continuous structure encompasses the necessary facilities to properly house a top football club. But it does more; like an oversized tailored suit, it allows *room to grow* in line with the club's ambition and operation. Wrapped around this structure is an *envelope that responds adaptively to the four different sides* of the immediate urban environment.

6. Green by design
The stadium aims to position itself among Europe's most sustainable stadiums, possibly leading the forefront. Leveraging Atmos Lab's vast expertise, the project emphasizes *a wide-ranging view of sustainability*, translating the analyses directly into precise spatial proposals, which optimise the climate within and around the stadium.

7. An arena for RUSG
The stadium is conceived as a *generous open structure* that seamlessly integrates the intended program and more. This open structure also manages to entirely *enclose the football field*, which not only enhances the atmosphere but also improves the playing conditions.

8. A home for Unionistes
To ensure a smooth transition, several strong spatial features of the urban and stadium setting are translated from Marien to Bempt, honoring the city club that RUSG represents.

9. A campus for Bemptois
The open nature of the building and various specific spaces accommodate *communal programs* during non-match days. The dialogues held have already led to an initial concrete, yet non-binding programmatic proposal.

10. Working with
As one team, we aim to support the ongoing design dialogue with an open yet concrete spatial proposal. Our aim is to collectively establish *a set of shared ambitions* that can serve as a solid foundation for the continuous

1. A LIVELY NEIGHBOURHOOD

RUSG de Bruxelles La fierté

The Bempt was cultivated by farmers and their livestock for centuries until it was gradually encroached upon by emerging industry in the mid-19th century. Until today, Bempt is considered as expansion space for Brussels without much urban planning vision. The neighbourhood faces numerous socio-economic challenges outlined in the sustainable neighbourhood contract '2 cités'. While there are several socially engaged organizations active in and around Bempt, they often struggle with limited resources or outdated spaces.

A project on the scale of a football stadium has the potential to bring about significant changes both spatially and socio-economically in the neighbourhood. In this way, RUSG can present itself as a genuinely socially engaged city club, and the stadium as an opportunity for a vibrant neighbourhood.

Maintain dialogues

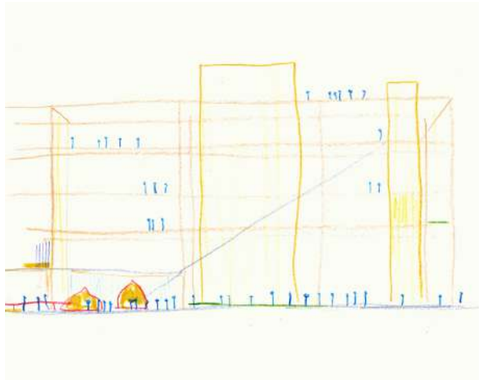
At the start of this project, our team thoroughly studied not only the sustainable neighbourhood contract but also actively engaged with a few local stakeholders.
A conversation with *Patricia Vanbellinghen (FC Forest)* and *Rachid El Madih (RS Forestoise)* provided valuable insights into the practical and spatial challenges of managing sixteen football clubs and numerous teams across these five pitches throughout the week. It also shed light on the potential pressures and advantages that the stadium project could bring for them.
Végétalab couldn't join due to ties but expressed the wish to expand and diversify their activities.

These conversations have enriched our vision formation and the eventual proposal. As an integral part of our project, we propose expanding and maintaining these discussions as necessary. Not only to learn and benefit from their knowledge of the location but also to stay updated and ultimately share intentions and the project's progress.

A Mutualised toolbox

We're not just planning the stadium and its surrounding public spaces with RUSG's optimal functioning in mind, but also as a *catalyst* supporting initiatives from neighboring stakeholders and aligning with the vision and mission of the Union Foundation. We genuinely believe that inviting and facilitating a diverse range of neighbourhood activities (including sports, education, community events, nature activities, a microbrewery, workshops...) can generate essential synergy between

The stadium blends into the surrounding neighbourhood, and vice versa.



The stadium appears not only as a high-performing football venue but also as an open and *mutualised toolbox* that is inspired by the current working of the neighbourhood.

Municipal plant nursery Végétal-ab wants to diversify and expand their activities around and within the stadium.

2,000 players, split across 16 football clubs, train and play their matches on weekends at Bempt.

The little steam trains are the true attraction in the current Bempt Park.

The allotment gardens represent the original use of the Bempt

1. Complexe Sportif du Bempt (Fc Forest, RS Forestoise, Maccabi Forest, Olympique club Forestois, APSA,...)
2. Le cairn
3. Végétalab
4. PTVF
5. Ecole les marroniers
6. Ecole du Bempt
7. Sportshall école du Bempt
8. Potagers
9. Petanque club
10. Audi Forest
11. Outside Gym
12. Trainstation Forest - midi
13. Tramstop Bempt
14. Tramstop Max Weller
15. Tramstop Neerstalle
16.'Yellow blocks'
17. Katanga area
18. Garden city
19. Place St. Denis
20. Abbaye de Forest
21. Parvis de Bempt
22. RUSG Stadium
23. Wintergarden
24. Wild microlandscape
25. Talud garden
26. new offices football complex du Bempt

2. A RESILIENT LANDSCAPE

La fleure des sports grandit
Sous une aube vermeille

Bempt, sometimes also spelled bempd or beempt, literally means prairie, referring to the meadows that were once prone to flooding. Although reduced in size, the remaining green space encompasses several biodiverse habitats that are exceptional for this part of Brussels, as well as a pond that is by far the largest body of water in the area. The present flora (poplars, willows, and beeches) stand as living witnesses to the consistently damp conditions of this low-lying part of Brussels.

Our landscaping proposal utilizes the available raw materials (water, contaminated soil, ruderal, and pioneer vegetation) to create a holistic landscape design.

Expanding the park

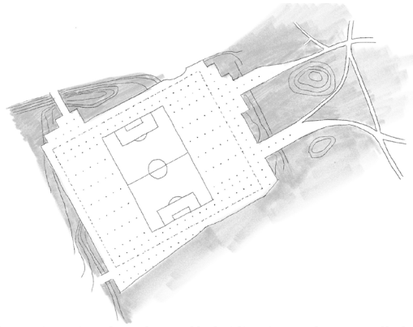
Despite its accidental origin, the present ecosystem holds significant biological value. This proposal aims to expand the Bempt Park and include the stadium site as a new program element, transforming it into a *complementary biotope*. Currently, a portion of the building plot serves as a dumping ground for the roadworks department, yet it also constitutes a biologically important green space. This residual landscape is partly preserved, protected, and connected wherever possible. Consequently, the *micro-landscapes* that emerge can serve as and remain breeding grounds for birds and vertebrates and, more generally, areas for biodiversity development.

Constructing landscape

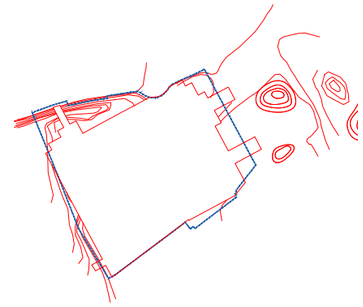
The construction of the stadium will inevitably involve a significant amount of earthwork. The landscaping leverages this fact as a quality by proposing that the excavated soil be used on site, creating *a new landscape topography*. This exemplifies the stadium-park relationship, surplus materials from one project meet the needs of the other. It also saves on soil disposal, both financially and environmentally (by avoiding numerous soil transportations). Thereforee, the new RUSG stadium can not only become the most ecological stadium but also fulfill these aspirations at a neighbourhood level.

Connecting water

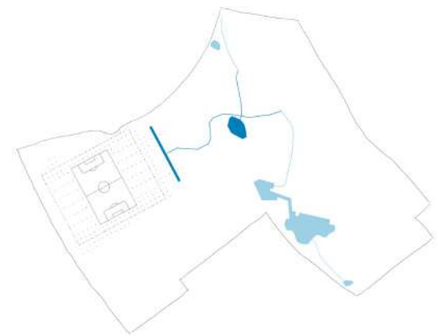
The issue of water management is currently more significant than ever. It's crucial to recognize that the inclusion of the stadium and the surrounding paved areas directly challenges the water management of the site. Furthermore, the sustainable neighbourhood contract '2 cités' expresses the wish for a local rain network linking existing rain gardens with different other water surfaces.
These concerns will be addressed by installing *a buffering canal* as a connector between stadium grounds, the larger Bemptpark and the neighbourhood.



The project aims for a form of hybridization and a mutually beneficial relationship between these two entities.



The existing topography around the stadium is preserved where possible and the excavated soil is used to create a new landscape in the surrounding areas.



The current blue network links existing and future elements on a larger scale to manage water across the entire site.

Diverse existing biotopes complement each other and will form an expanded park.

Inaccessible microlandscapes host biodiverse wildlife.

A buffering canal works both as a connecting and dividing element

3. BEMPT, A PARK

The current Bempt Park is situated on the eastern side of the Bempt was never deliberately designed but has been altered by various infrastructural interventions to become the park it is today. In the 1970s, an interchange took up approximately half of the plain, only to be demolished before it was put into operation. The meadows that made way for it were subsequently repurposed into municipal football fields, and the excavation dug to serve as a storm basin became the final pond in Bempt Park. We view the establishment of the stadium and its grounds as an opportunity to finally approach urban planning differently on the Bemptsite, setting a good example for potential future developments.

A common landscape

Creating the expanded Bempt Park necessitates a shared landscaping vocabulary. We thereforee propose expanding the necessary infrastructure for the new stadium project (lighting, furniture, etc.) across the entire Bempt site, in coordination with the municipality. This approach allows RUSG, as a new player in the area, to contribute to the safety and quality of life of the entire zone. Conversely, our intention is to reintroduce around the stadium distinctive elements from the current Bempt Park (utilizing its plant palette, incorporating water features, etc.).

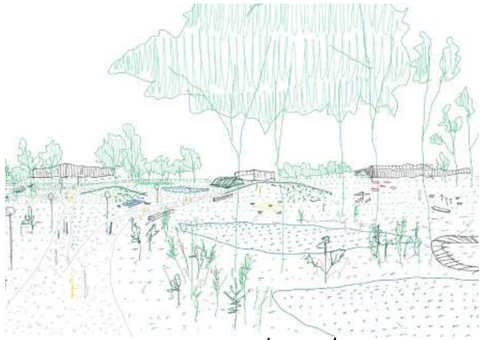
An accessible place

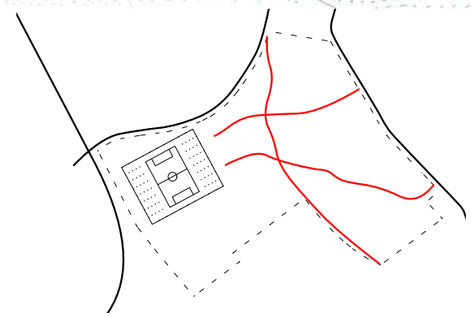
With the stadium project comes a well-thought-out mobility offering that will contribute to increased accessibility to the stadium for supporters and to the park for residents of Forest and Brussels. We support the ambition to utilise the existing neighbouring parking lots and, except for the eliminated municipal parking spaces, not provide any additional parking spaces. Additionally, the project takes into account sufficient permanent bicycle parking, partly integrated into the stadium. The operation of the sixteen existing sports clubs is ensured by providing their access via a semi-paved park road, situated at a practical distance from the stadium's boundary.

An inclusive infrastructure

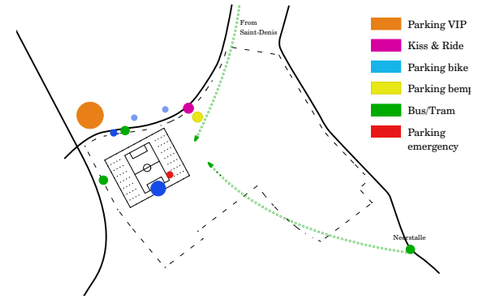
As the park was scarcely consciously designed, its infrastructure remains substandard to this day. Patricia Vanbellinghen (Fc. Forest) mentioned that the absence of lighting compels local residents to avoid the park after sunset, and Fc. Forest explicitly prohibits their young players from crossing the park, guiding them instead to the nearby Sint-Denijsplein. Not only on a macro scale but also on a micro scale, we envision an upgrade of the entire site's accessibility, by installing urban furniture, decent trip free paths and a lighting system.

1. Entrance gates
2. Access road to the sports club
3. Shuttle bus
4. Permanent bike parking
5. Temporary bike parking
6. Kiss & ride
7. Municipal parking
8. VIP parking
9. Visitor's parking
10. Promenade verte





The entire site is being made accessible, not just the stadium, both on a macro and micro scale.



Various interventions allow for relieving both the neighbourhood and the rest of the park during match days.

Bempt in 1900, the floodplain once defined by little canals and adjoining willows.

Bempt in 1987, an expansion site for Brussels to receive a colourful mix of uses.

The Olympic Park in London was planned not only for the games, but also with a view to its later development as an urban park.

Diverse and inclusive urban furniture facilitates various gatherings in park spoor noord, in antwerp.

4. UNION'S GARDEN(S)

Ici la tribune est du parc Duden
on la compare à notre jardin d'Eden

The Stade de la Butte, as the Joseph Marien Stadium originally was named, nestled itself in the former excavated vegetable garden of the Duden estate. Since the first whistle, the mature greenery of the park has served as a backdrop for the successes that Union Saint-Gilloise has generated.

Integrated into the park

The building is far from an object on an empty plain, but is part of the evolving landscapes around it. A precisely designed garden surrounds the stadium, reflecting the enchanting setting of the Duden Park. This garden consists of a multiplicity of greeneries that will ensure both seamless transitions and natural boundaries The stadium project fits into the existing landscape by preserving it as much as possible and maintaining its residual nature as a third landscape.

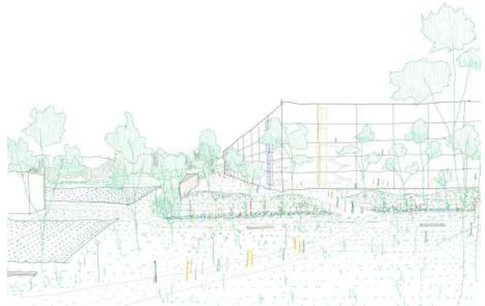
Natural borders

The proposal fully utilises the available landscape elements to create a natural boundary, distinctive on each side. The existing embankments **(1.)** to the north and west, forming a zone of development for the Brussels ecological network, will largely be retained. The lush vegetation along the ring road and the Boulevard de la 2ème armée Britannique is thereforee maintained, and access to the stadium is provided through a wide, recessed path **(2.)** within the embankment. To the east, the principle of conserving the existing topography is followed and combined with water management. Resembling picturesque gardens, a canal **(3.)** will form a natural boundary on match days. Thus, akin to Marien, these natural boundaries delineate the stadium and shape the experience of the place.

Gardens

Not only will the stadium be integrated into the park as a garden, but different types of gardens will be integrated into and around the stadium. To the east Parvis de Bempt **(4.)**, a vast mineral square efficiently manages the significant flow of spectators. The large groves **(5.)** created during the earthworks will frame the square and form a vegetal interface with the park. On the west side of the stadium, there is a proposal for a large winter garden **(6.)**, which acts as a generous foyer serving as a circulation space but also mediating the climate. Diversifying and densifying the flora of the highway embankment transforms it into a high-quality vertical garden **(7.)**.

Joseph Marien Stadium as a garden integrated in the Duden Park.



The stadium grounds, akin to those of the Joseph Marien stadium, are demarcated by natural borders

A canal both buffers the water and connects to the local rainnetwork and creates a border during matchdays.

A canal functions as a first border between park and stadium grounds **(3.)**

Wild micro-landscape protected from human access guarantee habitats for wildlife **(1.)(5)**.

The mineral square extends within the contours of the building **(4.)**.

The constructed landscape becomes a playground for both the young and old **(8.)**.

A winter garden serves as a foyer mediating between the interior and exterior **(6)**.

The highway embankment is diversified and intensified into an authentic garden space **(7).**

5. ONE STADIUM, FOUR SIDES, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

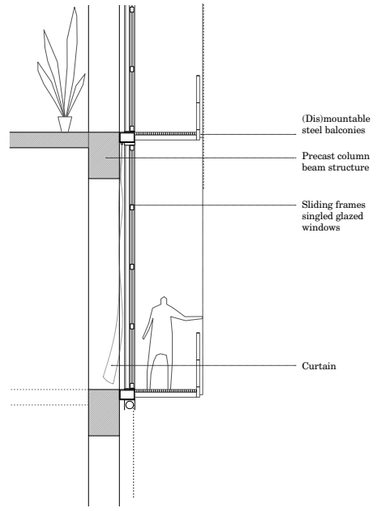
Union un jour
Union toujours

The proposition from KSS and ESA orchestrates the operations of a premier club in a respectable manner, adhering to contemporary standards and safety prerequisites. Our vision embraced this design as a blueprint, upon which we overlaid our intentions to envisage a stadium akin to an (oversized) tailored suit, accommodating efficient operations today and permitting potential modifications in the future.

A continuous structure
A continuous concrete column and beam structure on a grid of 8,2m by 16,4m organise the program in a clear manner. The structure encompasses the field and the two stands, running continuously, allowing for diverse and perhaps unforeseen connections between programs. The straightforward prefab construction principle ensures a shorter construction time and minimal disruption to the neighbourhood.

An open ended system
The Joseph Marien Stadium grew and shrank with the successes and declines of RUSG, but now faces its spatial and legislative limits. It would be naive to assume that the new stadium at Bempt will not, in the future, need to change in scale or form again. The continuous structure is an *open-ended system* that can be reprogrammed precisely. If necessary, capacity can be increased or reduced, more hospitality or community functions integrated, or simply more openness created. Thereforee, the structure is not filled to the brim today but rather leaves room where it can.

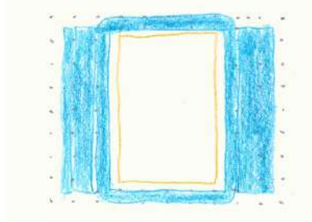
Responsive facades
The layered approach to constructing the facade allows the building to *present itself to its surroundings in diverse ways* while maintaining unity. Both the north and south sides of the stadium feature a *transparent facade*, offering views to and from the surrounding neighbourhood. On the east side, *the facade opens up towards the extended Bempt Park*, inviting not only the supporters but also the community. A *climatic facade* regulates wind and climate and buffers the sound from the ring road on the western side and functions as a billboard for cardrivers entering the city.



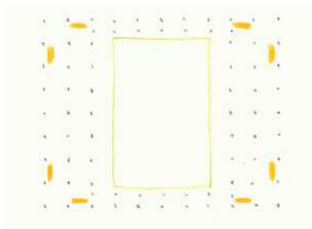
The facade, a kit of parts

On the west the stadium appears as a welcoming billboard.

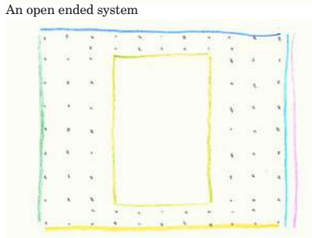
The stadium as an open-ended system, functioning as a premier football arena on matchdays and a communal facility throughout the year.



A continuous structure



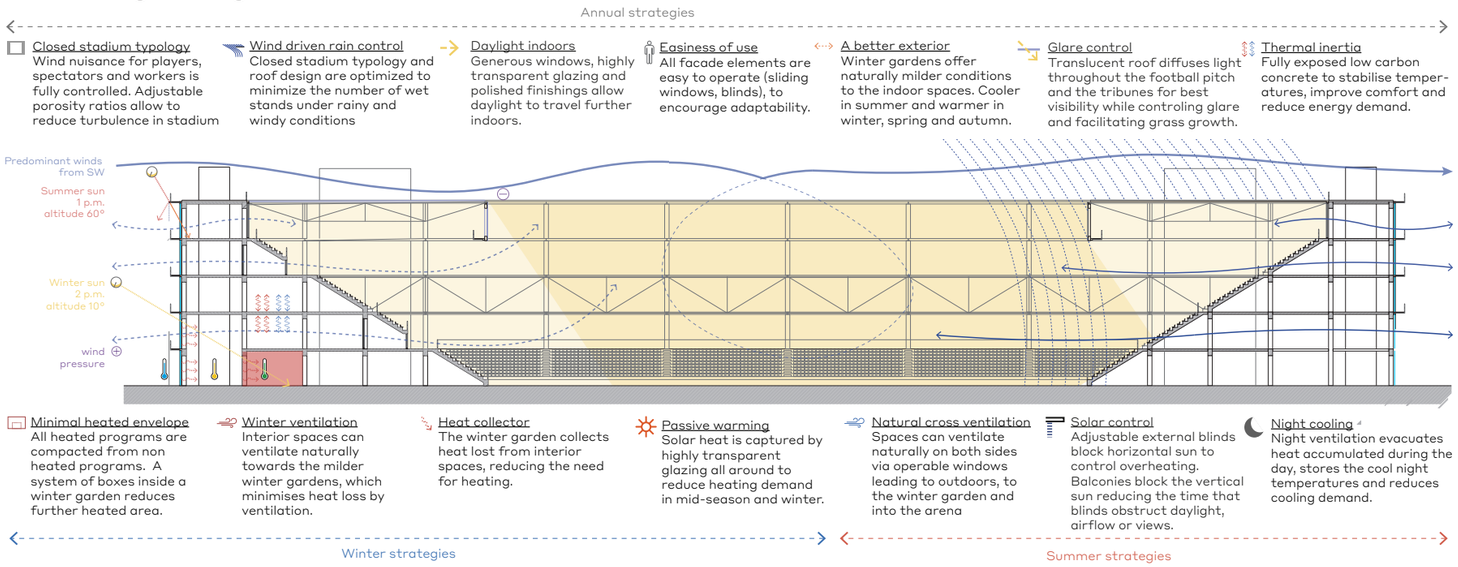
An open ended system



Responsive facades

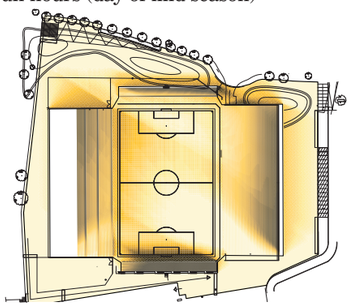
6. GREEN BY DESIGN

Passive design strategies

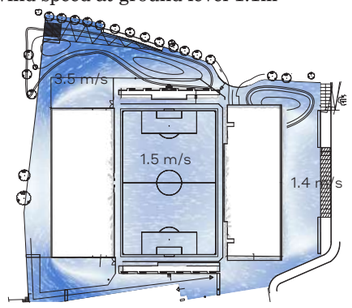


Diagnosis of existing proposal

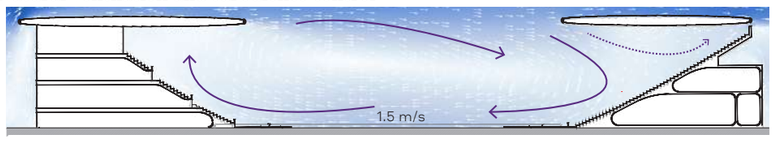
Sun hours (day of mid season)



Wind speed at ground level 1.1m

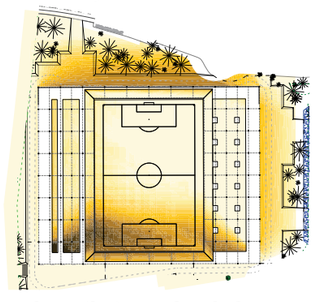


Natural ventilation and turbulence control

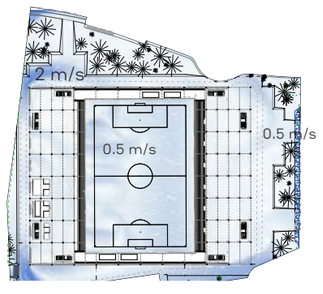


Project performance

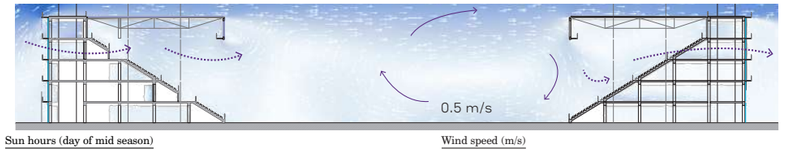
Sun hours (day of mid season)



Wind at ground level at 1.1m



Natural ventilation and turbulence control



Sun hours (day of mid season)

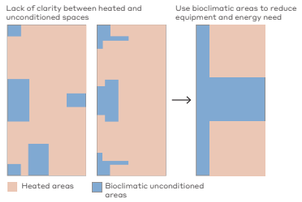
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Wind speed (m/s)

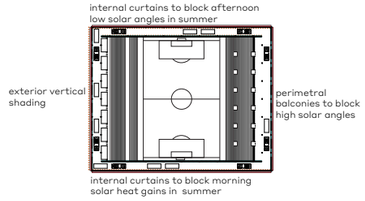
1.5 3 4.5 6

Passive design concepts

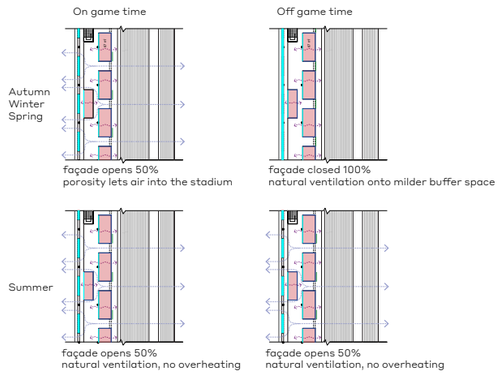
Heated envelope optimization



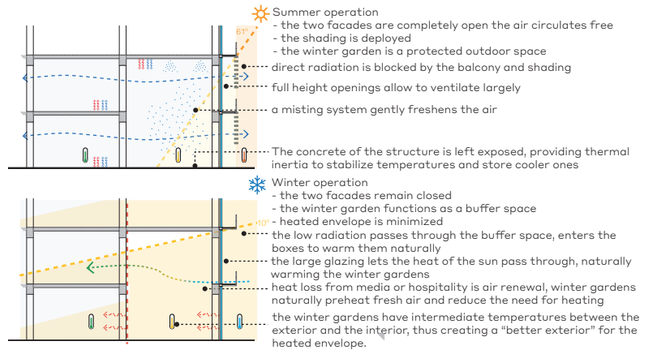
Solar control per orientation



Plan layout for airflow control & natural ventilation



Façade and winter garden strategy



In line with Union inspires' ambition, the stadium should become one of the most sustainable stadiums in Europe. Sustainability can be interpreted in many ways. Fuelled by Atmos Lab's critical knowledge and experience, we keep the scope on sustainability as broad as possible while translating our analyses into very concrete spatial proposals.

A durable stadium

To achieve a truly durable building, interventions need to be climate responsive and site specific with three key themes to tackle: (i) the typology to create desirable conditions for pedestrians around the stadium, players and spectators inside the stadium, (ii) the envelope to create adequate indoor conditions, and (iii) the carbon impact over its life cycle. The stadium's performance should be optimized to deliver the best usability all year long while requiring the minimum energy and carbon. At this stage, the project's design considerations were aimed to first resolve the most frequent risks that could occur: the risk of wind drafts on the pitch (annual) - impairing the players performance -, the risk of wind nuisance over tribunes (3/4 seasons) - causing cold stress -, the risk of rain and wind-driven rain over tribunes (annual) - causing wet seats -, the need to control solar exposure outdoors and over the tribune (3/4 seasons) - increasing thermal and visual comfort. The energy demand of all indoor programs are minimized by bioclimatic design as much as possible to reduce operational cost, plantroom size, embodied and operational carbon emissions.

Approach

The design of the project benefits from the lessons learned from the existing proposal designed by KSA. An environmental diagnosis was conducted to evaluate its current performance and to highlight the risks in regards to the key themes mentioned above. The design decisions of the project are tested and justified scientifically on an iterative basis in order to optimize the environmental performance and increase the time with naturally desirable conditions. Passive design strategies and concepts are identified and grounded on scientific research and implemented to best respond to the sustainability ambitions. Local weather data (Uccle) averaged over the past two decades is used to design as well as future data representative of the climate in 2050.

Diagnosis of the existing proposal

The diagnosis shows that an open stadium with four independant tribunes topped with an opaque roof allows heterogenous solar access which could be improved to increase thermal comfort, visibility and grass growth. Furthermore, the south tribune is shaded all year long and glare could occur unevenly throughout the pitch and the seats. Such configuration induces undesirable windy conditions around the stadium with wind accelarations close to 3,5m/s around the north west corner, and around 1.5m/s on the northern and southern tribune which can cause significant cold stress during 3/4 of the year. The section of the existing proposal shows also sustained turbulence vortex patterns at the center of the arena causing wind and wind driven rain to sweep the northern and southern tribunes and to potentially impair games.

(i) Typology of the stadium

The stadium and the landscaping create a wide range of microclimates around which can suit the needs of various activities. For instance, the North West area of the existing proposal is intended to host a fan zone while it is partially sunny and very windy. The project proposes to increase the vegetation mass upstream of the dominant winds to reduce velocities from 3.5 to 2 m/s, which will help make the outdoor area more comfortable during the colder period. North East areas are sheltered from winds and from the sun and can be a convenient cooler zone for sports activities in summer. The southern sides are sunny all year whenever there is sun, the project also proposes to densify the vegetation to mitigate wind gusts and further increase winter comfort. Research on stand arrangements and canopy design (Van Hoof et al. (2011)) shows that an enclosed stadium provides steadier wind conditions overall and less wet seats when also topped with a flat or downward tilted roof in comparison to other stadium typologies with different canopy designs. Large pressure differences between the exterior and the interior stadium environment can create a vacuum effect and introduce turbulence in the playing field area. A porosity of around 40 % to the windbreak walls may contribute to favourable wind flow conditions in the occupied areas. The project proposes an enclosed stadium with fully operable transparent façades to let as much desirable sunlight through when the sun is lower in the sky, while sheltering spectators from excessive cold drafts. The façade allows to control the stadium's porosity on the west and east tribunes in order to mitigate turbulence on the pitch. In comparison to the existing proposal, the project divides by three the wind velocities on the pitch and also the turbulence overall. The plan layout of the west tribune accomodates for staggered wind corridors to control incoming air whenever needed. The ventilation scheme of the stadium has great potential to renew the air naturally and flush out any pollutants. The indoor spaces also take advantage of these wind corridors to naturally ventilate even deeper into the plan. The roof is flat with a tilted edge to divert winds and wind driven rain away from the tribunes. It is made of a translucent material to provide maximum sunlight while diffusing any visual glare. All tribunes are well exposed to direct sunlight which will improve winter and mid season thermal comfort. Overall sun hours are much more homogenous with an average of 6h per day during the mid seasons.

(ii) Envelope of the stadium

The exterior façades are fully operable and transparent and create winter gardens in which the heated programs can be organized as "boxes inside a box". This large and bright buffer space creates a milder exterior, more temperate, that captures the solar heat gains during the cold period and also collects all internal heat gains. The exposed heated envelopes of the boxes are minimized to reduce the heat losses and thus the energy demand. Furthermore, the heated programs are compacted together to minimize the exposed envelope and mutualize equipments. In summer the balcony blocks the high sun angles, and shading devices (exterior blinds or reflective curtains) are specified per orientation if need be to block lower sun angles. The façade opens fully to ventilate effectively and evacuate all heat to counter risks of overheating. The exposed concrete structure provides the necessary thermal inertia to stabilizing temperatures all year round and notably storing cooler night temperatures longer through the hot summer days.

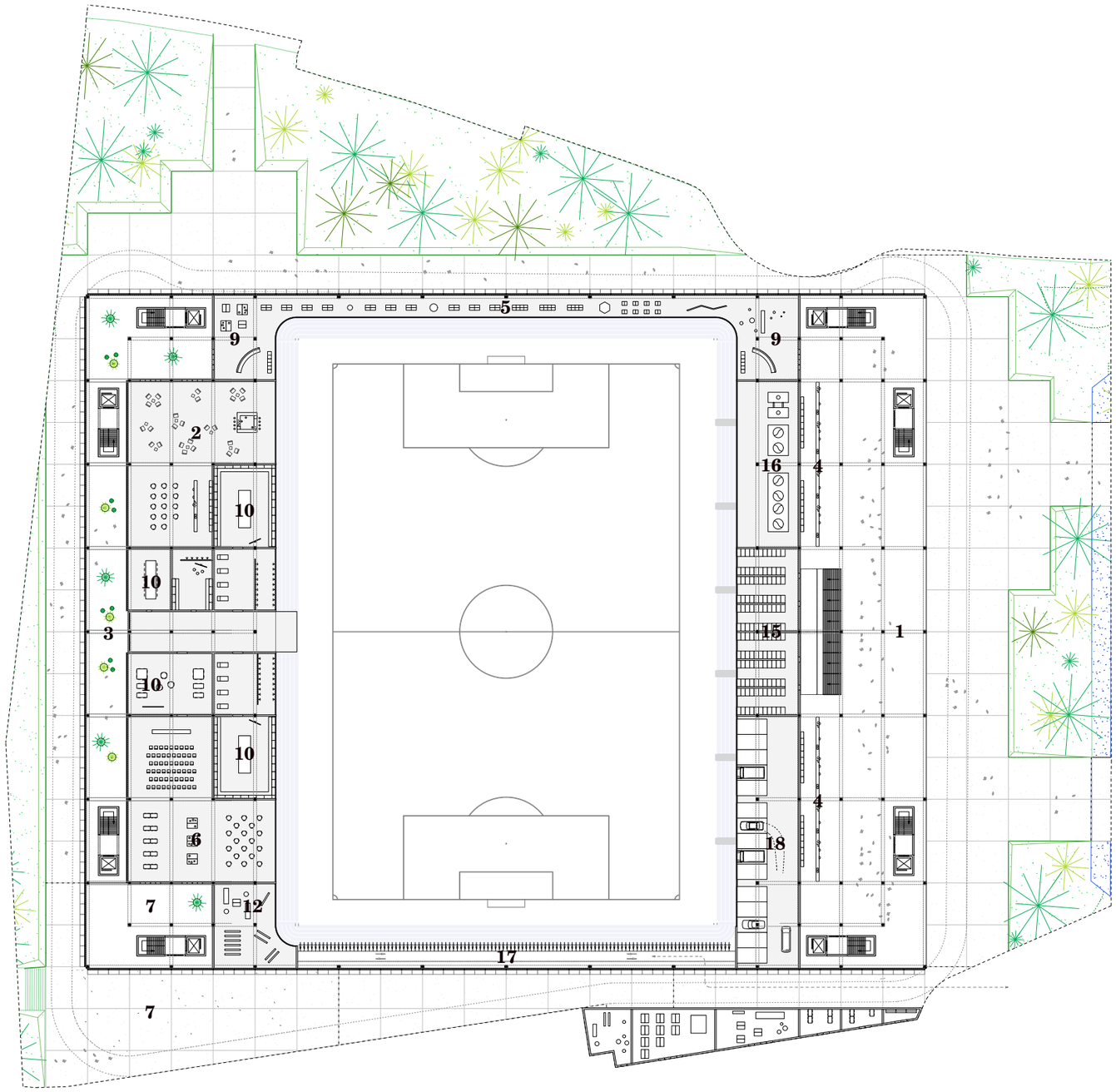
(iii) Low carbon stadium

The median embodied carbon footprint for all types of Sports and equipment buildings in the EU is ~750 kgCO2/m2 (Rock et al, 2022), while FIFA suggests that low carbon stadiums have a footprint below that value for medium sized ones. The largest contributors to the carbon footprint are the structure and building services, with a combined 64% of the total. To mitigate these, the project incorporates the following strategies at this stage: (i) prefabricated low carbon concrete structure for best efficiency, which can be disassembled or reused at the end of life, (ii) reduction of heated areas, which are grouped together to reduce ductwork and heat loss to outside, (iii) bioclimatic spaces that mitigate heat loss in winter and allow natural ventilation in summer to reduce plantroom size and operational emissions. Additional opportunities will be investigated in the park area to minimise waste and material sent to landfill. Overall, a whole life carbon framework will be established at the outset of the next design stage to measure and reduce the impact of the project as much as possible.

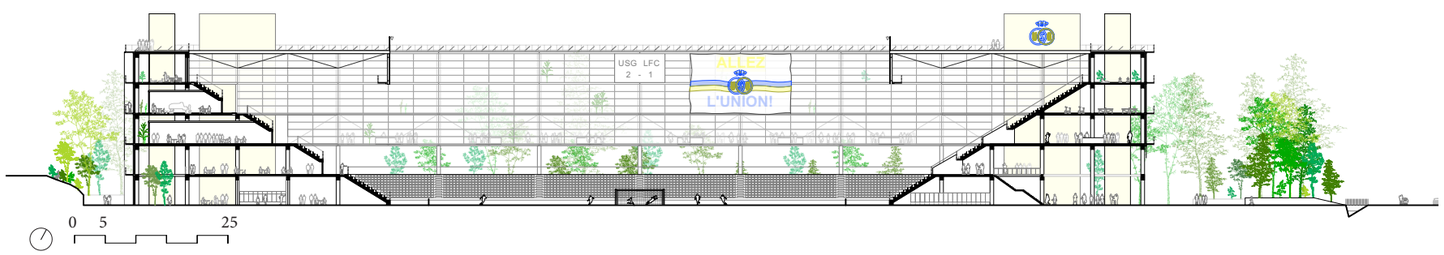
BREEAM certification

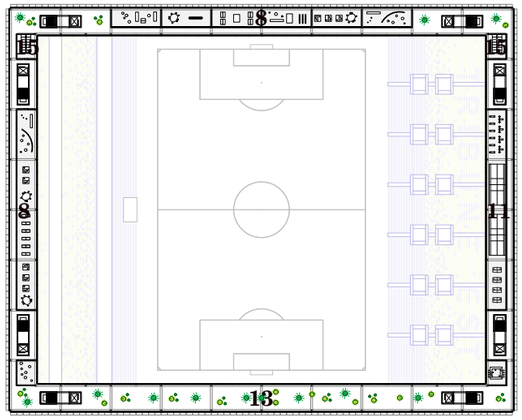
A preliminary conversation with BREEAM Certifying body has highlighted the following points of attention: (i) the project would be the first to register a Football Stadium for a BREEAM Infrastructure Assessment in Belgium, (ii) the West stand would be certified as BREAAM New Construction while the rest of the project would be certified as BREEAM Infrastructure, (iii) a third party consultant external to the design team would be required to assess the New Construction element, while Infrastructure could be done by the team.

7. AN ARENA FOR RUSG

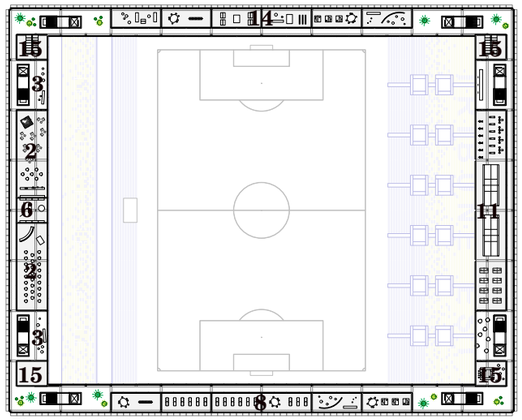


Plan +0 (+0.00m)

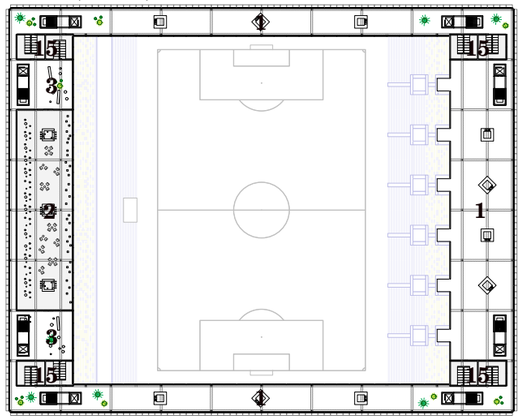




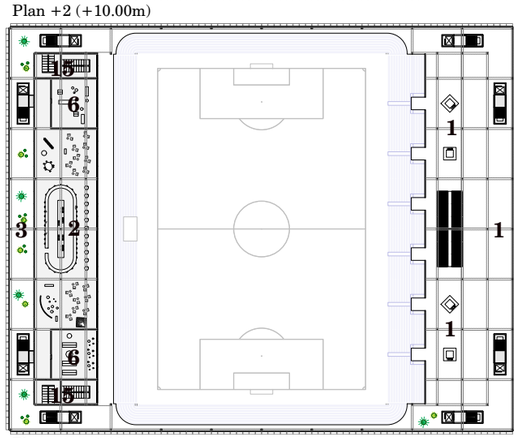
Plan +4 (+20.00m)



Plan +3 (+15.00m)



Plan +2 (+10.00m)



Plan +1 (+5.00m)

C'est l'union qui sourit

Since classical antiquity, stadiums have evolved from integrated urban forms to closed objects in desolate plains on the outskirts of the city. It would be disheartening if RUSG had to undergo a similar evolution. On the contrary, by consciously positioning itself as open and transparent structure, the new arena will actively become part of it. The life within and around the arena remains visually connected at all times, being part of that urban life.

An enclosed pitch

The continuous open-ended structure completely encloses the field and the stands, benefiting not only the acoustics and atmosphere within the stadium but also limiting noise pollution to the surrounding neighbourhood. The enclosing of the pitch meets an ambition that was still on the design table, as we've understood during the intermediate workshop session.

A practical layout

The west wing features a double-height *foyer* serving as a buffering circulation space for all the program elements. The hospitality functions expand into this tempered outdoor space on the upper floors. At the very top are the offices of RUSG, offering a view of the field and the Flemish hinterland.
The east wing hosts the popular '*Tribune Est*,' which, together with some generous concourses, has been designed for pragmatic efficiency as well as a scenic experience. Before and after the match, these areas will accommodate the blue and yellow masses, offering views of Bempt and lower Forest.
The north stand is an integral part of the continuous structure. Atop the stand lies a concourse that provides views on the football pitch even during the match. Below the stand a route or legends connects the shop.
The south stand is conceived in a similar manner and accommodates the visiting supporters.

1. GA Concourse
2. Hospitality
3. Winter Garden
4. Concessions
5. RUSG Museum
6. Media
7. Media Compound
8. Offices
9. Club Shop
10. Players/Officials
11. Sport facilities
12. Groundsmen
13. Vegetalab
14. Micro Brewery
15. Toilets
16. Technical space
17. Bike parking
18. Emergency parking

Up to 40,000 supporters stood shoulder to shoulder on the continuous stand, surrounding the field

0 10 50

8. A HOME FOR UNIONISTES

Le Marien est notre maison
la RUSG notre passion

The home that Marien is today, is shared by a diverse audience. Over recent years, the loyal supporters have been joined by a significant influx of young, new Brussels residents and expatriates, including a higher proportion of women and families compared to other football clubs. Our proposal aims to accommodate this fan base in a qualitative manner, not only by designing the stadium to be welcoming but also by considering the entire habitat of the club, essential for the matchday experience.

Parvis de Bempt
Once descended to Bempt and beyond the natural boundaries, a urban forecourt with the *Clubhouse* welcomes the yellow-blue fan base. This square further extends itself as generous concourses within the contours of the stadium. Up until shortly before the first whistle, supporters can relish the view of Bempt and lower-Forest.

A diverse matchday experience
The fanbase is offered the opportunity to experience the matchday in their preferred way. On the ground floor of the Parvis de Bempt, stalls will ideally offer the pizzas from Brasserie des Alliés and Brazilian croquettes from Doce Pimenta once again. A microbrewery run by 'En Stoemelings' and 'Cantillon' above the northern stand generously flows with the 1897 beer, emphasizing the motto 'against sober football'.

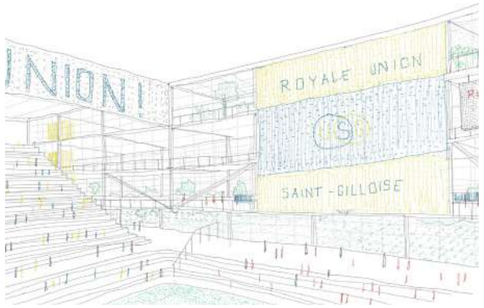
Tribune est
As of old, the popular *'Tribune Est'* flanks the field as one continuous blue-yellow plane, where a repertoire of Union songs will be sung at full volume by 9,000 sets of lungs. The fully enclosed stadium and its roof willingly serve as an amplifier. The stand has been partly equipped with safe-standing seats to ensure the original experience. Supporters with reduced mobility won't be relegated to some corner of the stadium but will have a prominent place on the first Concourse.

A scenographic framework
Between the east and west stands, the continuous structure extends as two open scaffolds that serve as both light towers, scoreboards, and tifo walls. A sophisticated lighting design will paint the light grey concrete structure and circulation cores into a yellow-blue arena, both indoors and outdoors.

Wintergarden
On the west side, a double-height winter garden welcomes diverse guests and serves as an extension of the various hospitality facilities. This space allows for discussions about football and other matters before and after the match, offering a panoramic view over the ring and the Pajotse hinterland.

A RUSG museum
Under the north stand lies the RUSG museum, providing a permanent residence for the "Route of Legends" and the exhibition organized to celebrate 125 years of RUSG, at BRASS earlier this year. This allows the club's history to find a place in their new home, sharing the stories of various club legends (Union 60, the 11 league titles, the Zwanzederby, etc.) as well as the recent rise of the club with its supporters.

Parvis de Bempt reintroduces the tradition of enjoying food and drinks together on Chaussée de Bruxelles or the surrounding streets



The north and south stands will act as substantial structures to showcase the Tifos of the Union Bhoys and Apaches.

A lush winter garden welcoming the players, staff and visitors of the west stand.

The stadium offers a varied matchday experience to cater to the diverse array of unionistes.

The RUSG museum will showcase both the timeless legends and the new heroes.

9. A CAMPUS FOR BEMPTOIS

The open-ended building structure enclosing the field ensures the optimal functioning of the stadium during the 25 match days, but furthermore offers a diverse program for the Bemptois and Bruxellois on the remaining 340 days.
Based on discussions with potential community organizations, we are proposing a varied mix of urban programs (inclusive sports fields, a greenhouse for gardening services, classrooms, a microbrewery, workshops etc.) that can find a home within the stadium, fostering a vibrant synergy between the club and the neighbourhood throughout the year.

Parvis de bempt

The ground floor, as a covered outdoor space, expands on the existing facilities (basketball, skate park, playground activities, etc.). The *clubhouse* will have a daily presence here, providing necessary social oversight.
At the very top, there's a double-height space that offers various inclusive sports fields (badminton, table tennis, yoga, gym, dance, etc.). The Union foundation can use this space to ground their ccollaborations with Sport2be and other organisations within the stadium.

Wintergarden

On the opposite side of the field, the winter garden serves as an urban interior where staff, players and a diverse set of guests casually meet. The hospitality spaces located on the upper floors will be rented out for various purposes on non-match days.

A communal south stand

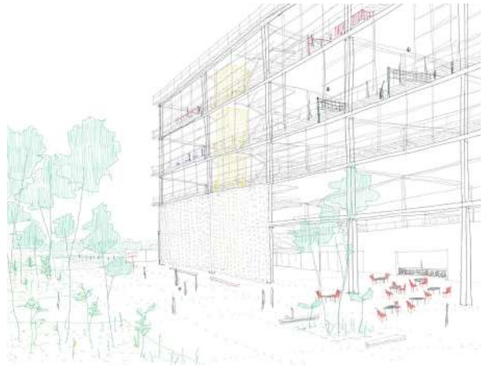
The first and second floors accommodate spaces used as game and classroom areas in line with the operations of the community center, Le Cairn. The top floor houses a greenhouse that fully benefits from the southern orientation. This arrangement allows the further diversification and support of Végétalab's activities, literally providing the stadium with a green setting.

A productive north stand

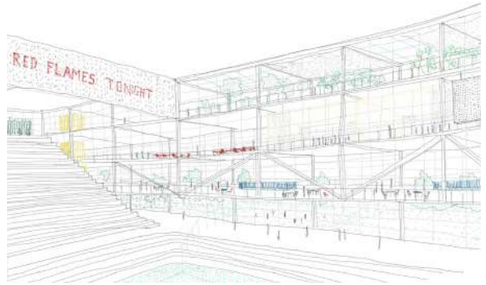
The first floor is partly occupied by a microbrewery for En stoemelings/Cantillon to brew their RUSG beer 1897 within the stadium itself and sell it during matchdays. The floors above offer various spaces serving as an urban incubator, providing a workspace for various young or fragile initiatives. In line with the surrounding industry, the northern end of the stadium presents itself as a collection of small-scale production.

A flexible scenography

The specific experience of the stadium as the stage for RUSG and its Unionists can effortlessly transform due to the open character of the design and the lightness of the techniques used to color the stadium. This way, various other users (Red Flames, Black Devils) will enjoy an equally compelling backdrop during their matches.



The Parvis de Bempt is an integral part of the urban space and serves as a meeting point on non-match days for all other sports facilities already present in the park.



On non-matchdays, the stadium hosts a vibrant array of communal activities organized by local stakeholders.

Végétalab expands their current organisation with professional education and a professional green house

Organisations like Sport2be will also use the stadium as their home turf.

Microbrewery in Tottenham hotspur stadium

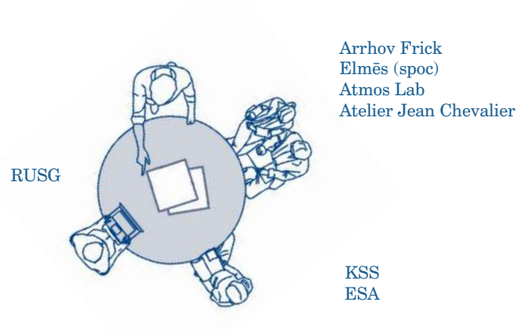
The methods employed to create the scenographical framework enable the stadium to alternate easily in appearance.

10. WORKING WITH

The design question posed by RUSG, the challenges imposed by Forest the Region, but also discussions with local stakeholders and academic experts, as well as our own expertise, formed the basis for properly assessing the current proposal by KSS and ESA and integrating it accurately into the urban fabric in and around Bempt. This collaborative approach seems essential to successfully continue the project.

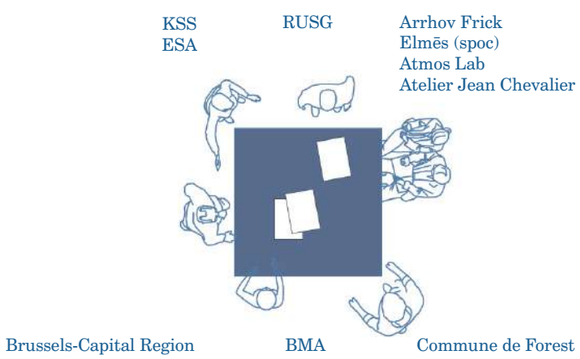
Concept and design meetings

Weekly dynamic and open design dialogue with all architects, engineering firms, and RUSG around the table propel the project forward. Together with ESA, we'd like to explore the possibility of setting up a shared workspace in Brussels, where plans, technical documents, models, and other visual materials can be worked on side by side.



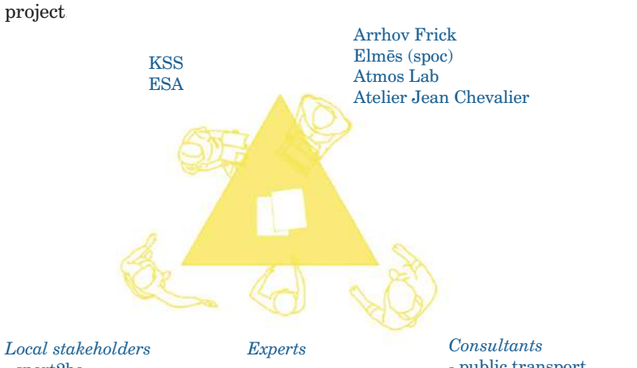
Quality chamber exchange

The project is fueled by the ambitions set forth by both the municipality and the region. We anticipate two moments: one midway through and another a month before submitting the environmental permit application, to be able to integrate comments that will come along.



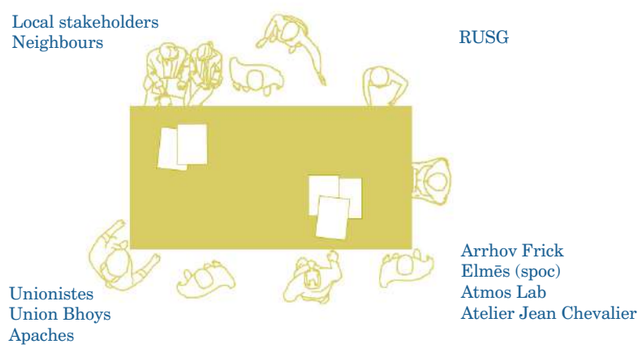
Program/Technical input

These moments involve input from various consultants. Both technical, academic experts, and local stakeholders are part of these sessions to further develop the building and program. The focus of these meetings, especially in the first half, will be on realistically incorporating their input into the project



Public exchange

These moments involve input from various consultants. Both technical, academic experts, and local stakeholders are part of these sessions to further develop the building and program. The focus of these meetings, especially in the first half, will be on realistically incorporating their input into the project.



RUSG, shared ambitions

This vision document brings to the fore ten clear ambitions and should be seen as an invitation to consolidate these and other desires of RUSG. This way, we can arrive at an shared starting point, allowing the project to be executed with a renewed vigor.

KSS + ESA, divided responsibilities

To organise the process as smoothly as possible, it's crucial not only to consolidate a shared set of ambitions but also to efficiently distribute responsibilities within the extensive construction team. This vision and spatial proposal recognises the expertise of KSS and ESA as experienced stadium designers and builders. The qualities encapsulated in the preliminary design were thus acknowledged and complemented by our multidisciplinary expertise.

External expertise

Local stakeholders

The collaboration between Union Foundation and **Sport2be** is supported through this vision. In the next phase, we'd like to invite **Jill Boon** and her co-founders to see how their operation can use the new stadium as their home turf. We're keen to discuss with **Cantillon** and **En Stoemelings** how their ties to the club can be strengthened and their operations can be present within the stadium. Additionally, we envisage a potential partnership with a community center like **Le Cairn**.

Experts

This vision document has been enriched by discussions with (football) historian **Kurt Deswert**, who drew our attention not only to the history and evolution of football in Brussels but also to the current context and challenges. Professor in sociology **Jean-Michel Dewaele** aided us in understanding the Unionists, their customs, and character. He also supported the proposal's ambition to include socially engaged programs in the design. The groundhoppers from the **Santos podcast** have helped us translate the enchanting setting of Marien, one of their favorite stadiums, into a contemporary context at Bempt.

Consultants

In a next phase we'll bring public transportation organisations (**Mivb, De Lijn, NMBS & TEC**) around the table to meticulously align the mobility plan. **Suppliers** and **producers** will already be invited in the initial phase to achieve all ambitions at stake.

Quality chamber

The vision will continue to evolve through a collaborative and transparent exchange, integrating the concerns about mobility, accessibility, safety, and noise pollution as raised by the **Forest commune**.

The metropolitan ambitions of the **Brussels region** will be refined and incorporated into the project through discussions with relevant organizations such as Bruxelles Environment.

Although the **BMA's** function is to oversee this competition, we would still like to invite them to the table to share their expertise in the next phase and contribute to the joint strategy.

Public/society

Not only during the conception and construction phases can we be responsive to the **Unionists**' desire to establish a genuine stage for the game. Even after completion and during the initial period of use, a reassessment can be crucial to create a vibrant arena and ultimately make them feel at home again.

Not only do we aim to broaden the ongoing discussions initiated with local stakeholders such as **FC Forest** and **Renaissance Forestoise** by involving other local actors.

Our complementary team

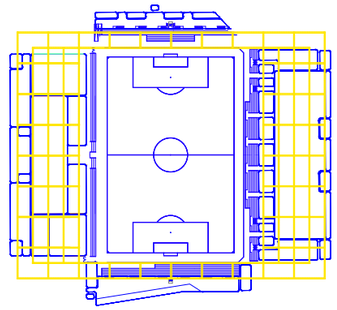
Similar to the player core of RUSG, our multidisciplinary design team is characterized by a European spirit and a familial atmosphere. A dynamic and open design dialogue formed the basis for our design process and the resulting vision. The mutual trust among all four team members ensured that all available expertise could be shared in a fair and direct manner, leading up to this vision.

Arrhov Frick is our Swedish powerhouse and brings a metropolitan flair to our collaboration. Johan Arrhov (1979) and Henrik Frick (1977) founded Arrhov Frick in 2010 in Stockholm, Sweden. In recent years, the office's work has been internationally recognized and featured in multiple monographs (El Croquis, 2G) and was nominated for the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award in 2019.

Elmēs, as Brussels based practice, embodies the role of a local advocate anchoring the design dialogue within the urban and social fabric around Bempt. Their practice is driven by a robust academic dedication, shaping this proposal into a socially and culturally engaged project. The trilingual office and their associates have accumulated extensive experience handling intricate, collaborative projects.

Atmos Lab is a London based autonomous environmental design consultancy, seamlessly integrating environmental science into the architectural discussion. Consistent with the overall proposal, they view the stadium as a living organism, responsive to environmental factors like temperature, sunlight, or wind, while also having the capacity to adapt to these conditions through proper design.

Atelier Jean Chevalier adopts a cross-disciplinary approach to landscape, contributing to the stadium's integration within the local environment. With a background in landscape design, Jean Chevalier leverages his expertise in heritage to enrich discussions encompassing historical, natural, and cultural dimensions.



The lessons learned in the trajectory were used as a blueprint to work with by our team, leading to this vision.

Our team offers an extensive array of instruments to visualise the project and share it with the larger public.

Union Saint-Gilloise stadium - ALLEZ L'UNION!

Arrhov Frick + Elmēs + Atmos Lab + Atelier Jean Chevalier