

# BREEDING GROUND



## **SHRINKING CITIES** - Context

The concept of “Shrinking Cities” was born in Germany at the beginning of the 2000s, with the proof of the effects of the *Wende* on the economic and demographic growth of the cities of the Eastern Germany.

Dorignies and Flers are part of this decrease mainly because their prosperity was based on a mono-economy. Coal mining was not only a source of the big economic and demographic growth, but also the cornerstone of a life-quality and a social utopia.

Fourteen years after the closure of the coal mines, those parts of the city are still experiencing a decline in both their population and their economic attractiveness. The high rate of unemployment, the lack of public spaces and facilities, of jobs and of income enclose the area and isolate the population. If shrinking cities appear as direct results of the end of the coal crisis, they are certainly the breeding grounds for a new metabolism based on circularity and sustainability. The industrial past has shaped the architecture and the urban planning of these spaces, revealing large wastelands and strong infrastructures. These components are nowadays perceived as fractures and scars of the city. Yet the existence of waterways, railways and urban voids are a substantial wealth for the territory, allowing intelligent densification and profound economic changes.

## **A POSITIVE SHRINKING** - Intentions

If the term “degrowth” often describes an image of an area in decline, it is also a substantial keyword to sustainability. Therefore Breeding Ground is inspired by a positive and sustainable degrowth. The vacant and sparse urban fabric of Dorignies and Flers offers capable spaces. Those are able to host a wide variety of programs and substantially accelerate new forms of economy. Vacant spaces, time of the inhabitants, energy resources and lack of jobs are the driving forces behind a rapid

transition of economic and social practices. Therefore we must consider this decrease as an opportunity to re-invent these neighborhoods. The economic development of the area, still based on fossil resources (zinc for example) seems still weakened. Breeding Ground aims to be the driving forces for a new economy based on sustainable energies and social vitalities. The exploitation of Methane, but also of renewable materials such as the cultivation of mycelium are keys for the new economy. In the meantime a transition from the social housing park (renting) to a community land trust system will bring a new lease of life to the city. These proposals are based on low investments relying on existing infrastructure, such as transport (canal and railroad), mine galleries or garden cities. Building a renewable city means rethinking a social economy, embedded in the territory and meeting its needs: space, roof, energy, food and social interactions.

## **THE COMMONS** - Concept

“Batir sur les restes un or qui sera très accueillant “  
- Alain Vilain lors de la dernière remonté des mines de la fosse d’Oignies.

The collective memory written by the mining past reveals existing social mechanisms based on a will to do and a capability to reinvent itself. Sharing, mutual aid, and social structure have been the core of the urban fabric of these mining districts. The closure of the mines has forced these territories to renew themselves and despite a national desire to regenerate an economy, these territories reveal a nostalgia and an immense need for revitalization. What if the collective memory of mines was the ground for a new social economy? In this way, the mines wealth of the past will become the energy of tomorrow. Polluted land will be the site of new know-how and shared agriculture. The practical school will train professionals on circular know-how, inviting sustainable materials and energies. Dorignies and Flers will base their metabolism on a Community Land Trust in response to the old garden cities. The inhabitants will be the actors and the protectors of these possible spaces, where time and learning will be valued as much as generating economy. These new vitalities will be sources of sharing and social revitalization.

## **MAKE DO - FAIRE AVEC** - Methode

Make Do is *building with* the community, the resources and the available space. The process will urge to think-up, to locate, to program and to activate before starting building. Inhabitants, municipalities and design teams must create a tool box in order to weave the vital

synergy between programs and needs. Breeding ground symbolizes the growth of a territory rich in knowledge, time, resources and landscape. Therefore, the process is based on the logic of farming ( to plant/ to cultivate/ to pollinate ) generating the vital needs for the community. At the heart of the process, clear project phases must be established, starting with a first vital intervention: the permanent lab or house of the Commons. This phase 1, “to plant” responds to the urgency and the need to start revitalization tomorrow. A strong activation process can allow the fast implementation of the project in a modest and evolving economic framework. The involvement of the community is at the heart of this process. The second phase, “to cultivate”, aims to engage projects on a larger-scale. Directly inspired by the first phase of activation, these urban interventions are established in a lasting and permanent manner. They will become the perennial components of the Douaisis. The third phase “to pollinate” marks the clear transition towards a deep urban renewal made possible by a new economy. The impact of this profound revitalization will attract and produce a growing economy enhancing the urban and social renewal.

## LA MAISON DE LA COMMUNE - *House of the commons*

### A SPACE TO CULTIVATE - Un espace à cultiver



#### ACTIVATING

The House of the commons is located next to the existing centre culturel de Dornigies creating a social hub. Therefore the house of the commons becomes the main center for the making of the urban fabric. This place will invite a co-creating process in order to design the future programme and spaces of the area. The collective action is essential in order to generate a new metabolism. The social link is embedded in the collective design binding different range of ages. The architecture of the space stand out by its program, therefore it offers capable spaces hosting mixed uses.

- 1- Mixed use hall
- 2- Physical model of the area
- 3- ideas labs
- 4- Information display and advertising of the urban transformation.
- 5- Winter gardens .....

#### A PLACE TO LEARN AND SHARE

An inclusive process can be generate by local actors or temporary residence of architects, urbanists and landscape designers. The temporary lab will help to design tools and activate the first intervention to transform the neighborhoods. Further, the mixed use hall will be used as an event space but also communities brainstorming. The making of a physical model will help to map and located the micro actions necessary to revitalize the area. The Community Land trust will begins thanks to the house of the commons framework.

#### INCLUSIVE PROCESS

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#### WORDS FROM THE INHABITANTS

**“In Dornigies there is no job and no perspectives for the youth. We would like to get some guidance and help on making a curriculum or looking for new skills. We feel like nobody cares. We are forgotten.”**  
**Group of young men hanging at the train station.**



## CLT : COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

The Community land trust, CLT, is an cooperation which combines the individual ownership of assets (housing, collective space) with a collective ownership of land.

A CLT is based on connecting three ideas:

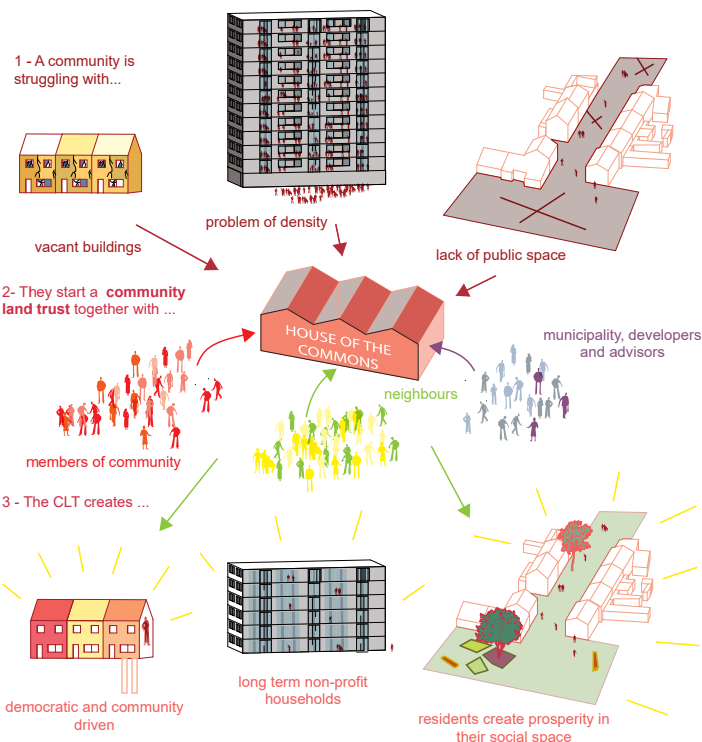
- Ground and materials
- Use (Housing, Agriculture, Public space, etc.)
- Community

The goal is to have long term benefit for the community in regards of ecology, inclusivity and economy.

A CLT is run by the community, they own together the land and decide what the people need. It follows 10 key values:

### Non profit

- Dual ownership: ground of the trust, buildings of the trustees
- Ground leasing with the CLT als guarantee for the long term
- Payable, if an owner change the price stays fair
- Permanent responsibility of the ground
- Local participation, the inhabitants have the right to vote.
- Local control, 2/3 of the board are inhabitants.
- Triparty organisation, representation of 1/3 owners, 1/3 area, 1/3 government
- Focus on sustainable growth by local embedding
- Flexible development



## URBAN REVITALIZATION

### POP-UP STORES

The amount of vacant buildings is high. These spaces can be simply refurbished with a little paint. While the CLT create plans for the spot, a shop can use it to test its concept. It succesful it can stay or relocate in the community.



### CHATEAU DELATTRE

A refurbishment is needed on the tower. The height is not fitting the area nor the high density. The plinth gets open and the facade is extended with a wintergarden. The existing windowsframes get replaced by big entrees to open up the garden according to the climate.

### REFURBISHMENTS OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING

Together with the inhabitants the old miners houses are refurbished. Because of their repetitive design a new extension framework is added with the necessary upgrade in MEP. The inhabitants create/design their own infill.

