

ORG   
 PERMANENT MODERNITY

# “Monument for an Open Society”

**Description of Intervention:**

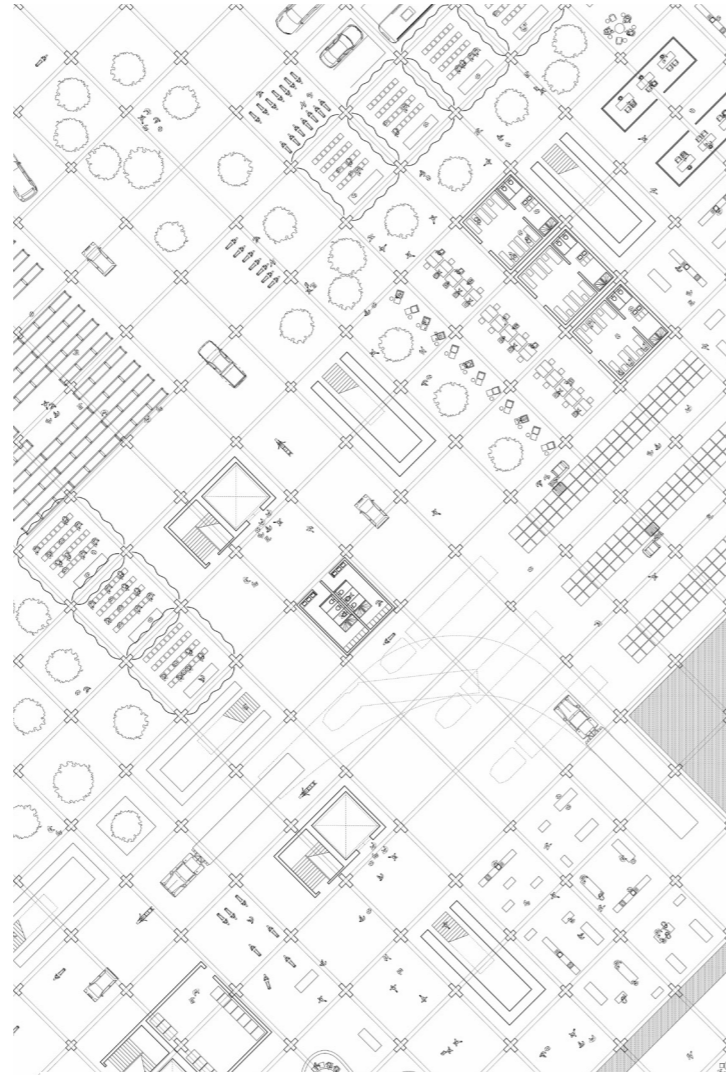
The Brussels Market is located in an immigrant neighborhood, less than 2.5km (1.5mi) from Brussels Central train station. The project includes industrial meat production facilities, various market stall types, logistics and parking spaces, and a large commercial roof farm (4000 m2, 43,000 ft2 currently under construction) with related retail programs including a farm-to-table restaurant. The phase 1 market building, and the phase 2 commercial roof farm and historic shed renovation are the first architectural steps towards realizing the District plan. The District plan outlines the gradual conversion of an industrial slaughterhouse into a mixed-urban environment.

The Brussels market is built with a consistent architectural language, called ‘platonic panels’. The panels are over-dimensioned porticos that combine in a many different ways. The platonic panels create an ‘urban warehouse’ building that is generous, flexible, and monumental. The dozens of large identical rooms, each connected with every adjacent one, are able to accommodate almost any use. Like Kazimir Malevich’s ‘White on White’, the space of the building reflects the self-identity and pluralism of its inhabitants: a “**Monument for an Open Society.**” Here, market life is celebrated and given a civic presence.

**Previous State:**

The Abattoir site is located a short distance from the tourist heart of Brussels. The site is in the Canal Zone which is changing rapidly. The Abattoir site has been a thriving industrial place since the late 19th century with meat packing and markets still present.

The surrounding immigrant neighborhoods are vibrant but lack sufficient public services and economic opportunities. Furthermore, the size of the Abattoir site has not always been fully conducive to public life, with large physical barriers that fragment neighborhoods. Concrete hardscapes dominate the terrain, favoring shipping and logistics over the human dimension.



Conceptual plan demonstrating flexible programmatic use of ‘Platonic Panels’

**Aim of Intervention:**

The phase 1 Brussels Market is an early enabler that begins the reformation of the historically civic importance of the industrial quarter. The project sets the stage for future development via its proportions, construction logic, and most importantly, by defining the edges of a new public space for a larger master plan.

Physical and visual connections in the existing fabric create multiple links between the Abattoir site and the surrounding neighborhoods. Diverse programs bring together a range of constituencies. In this way, the site becomes a physical and community focal point.

**Evaluation**

The Brussels Market Building has become an integral part of the city’s meat packing operations with the latest service and storage technologies. The market itself is always full of vendors both inside and outside the building. Furthermore, the building and public spaces have become a cultural icon nexus points for residents and workers from adjacent neighborhoods. The over-dimensioned interior and exterior public spaces have hosted: food awareness and after-school programs for children, culinary events, job fairs, as well as socio-cultural events, such as African dance shows and art exhibitions.



Above: Aerial view of Meat Packing District, 201  
 Below: Warehouse typology used to convert the district into a mixed-urban environment. Phase 1, completed 2015; Greenhouse under construction, Phase 2 in feasibility



Interior Courtyard: Brussels Mixed-use market