



BRUSSELS

AREA DEVELOPMENT + URBAN FARMING

# Parckfarm

From an illegal dumpsite to an urban farming laboratory

THIS IS ABOUT

- Area Development
- Green
- Sustainable
- Urban Farming
- Vacancy

IN **Brussels**



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Parckfarm



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*'Heterotopic eco-social practices are really vital, now, at this moment in history. Creating a melting pot of different cultures is not so easy, it should be a special place, and Parckfarm did the trick.'*

*Lieven De Caeter, cultural philosopher*

**If you live in Brussels or have the opportunity to visit the city, you will find, in the western part, a real treasure called Parckfarm. It is a co-created park and urban farm, on a 3 hectares land that used to be, until not so long ago, a left-over space. It is typically what urban practitioners label an "in-between space". It was a physical border which morphed into a transition between distant universes, geographically but also in term of social dynamics.**

Parckfarm is located at the border between three municipalities (Molenbeek, Jette and Laeken), surrounded by the metro and railway tracks. This site was part of a former freight railway path, known also as 'Line 28' used to transport goods to a large warehouse and custom clearance center along the canal called Tour & Taxis. Products coming from all around the world converged to this industrial hub, waiting to be dispatched all over Belgium. Later, the buildings and the industrial lands surrounding it were bought by a private investor. Due to its impressive architecture and historical value, they have been preserved and converted into fancy offices, exhibition halls and concert venue. This place is now a well-known vibrant cultural spot and a key element in Brussels' economic development.

As for the former railway, it is a completely different story. In the eighties and nineties factories closed one after another and the Line 28 was shut down. On one hand, this wasteland became an eyesore, a physical limit between poor neighbourhoods already suffering from a negative image. Some parts were used as a dumping site, full of garbage brought by inhabitants, while in others few homeless people built their precarious shelter.



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On the other hand, human's disinterest for this site, set the conditions for a high level of biodiversity to develop within this artificial valley. Nature took over the place and shaped a chaotic landscape of wild and invasive plants, a temporary home for many species threatened by urban activities.

## ***A Russian dolls planning strategy***

Parckfarm is the result of quite interesting multi-layered process involving different levels of decision-making, local and regional interests, but also combining long term with short term strategies.

The real impulse started when the Brussels-Capital Region took over the whole area surrounding Tour & Taxis, owned by a private investor and initiated a masterplan for this 45 hectares perimeter, including the site that would later become Parckfarm. The local population has long been expressing the lack of green spaces and recreational activities in this part of Brussels. These preoccupations were voiced in a manifesto entitled “Tour & Taxis: TouT Publiek” published in 2006. Two years later, the development plan that followed aimed to transform the former railway path into the largest park of the capital. It would become a green corridor that links the canal and Tour & Taxis to surrounding residential neighbourhoods.



In a second phase, Brussels Institute for Environmental Management (IBGE), the public agency in charge of parks and green spaces for the whole region, was entrusted with the task of determining the design and a strategy to make this project happen. The Institute selected French landscape architect Michel Desvigne's proposal, which comprises sequences of various landscape patterns along the Line 28 axis. Therefore, these parks would act as meeting points for inhabitants, workers, visitors who contribute to this multifaceted territory.

But to fulfil this ambition, the masterplan, which represents a top-bottom and traditional planning instrument, is not enough. So in order to shed the light on this abandoned site and increase public participation, the IBGE opted for much more unconventional approach. The IBGE chose this site as the location of Parckdesign 2014, a festival that aims to attract While public authorities were still in control of the large scale project, the institution wanted to test a new model of place-making in Brussels that would intensify public participation. —>to prepare this 4 months festival, commissioned [Taktyk](#) (practice) and [Alive Architecture](#) (practice), Petra. who came up with urban farming project link

***Bridging field experts and inhabitants as local experts***

***An experiment on "social urban space" curated by Alive Architecture and Taktyk***

With the

2 main challenges : co-creation and transform an ephemeral project into a durable socio-spatial dynamic



Establishing a permanent urban Parckfarm and inspire other City Makers

Commons

## Involved city makers



**Petra Pferdmenges**

Founder of Alive  
Architecture, researcher



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