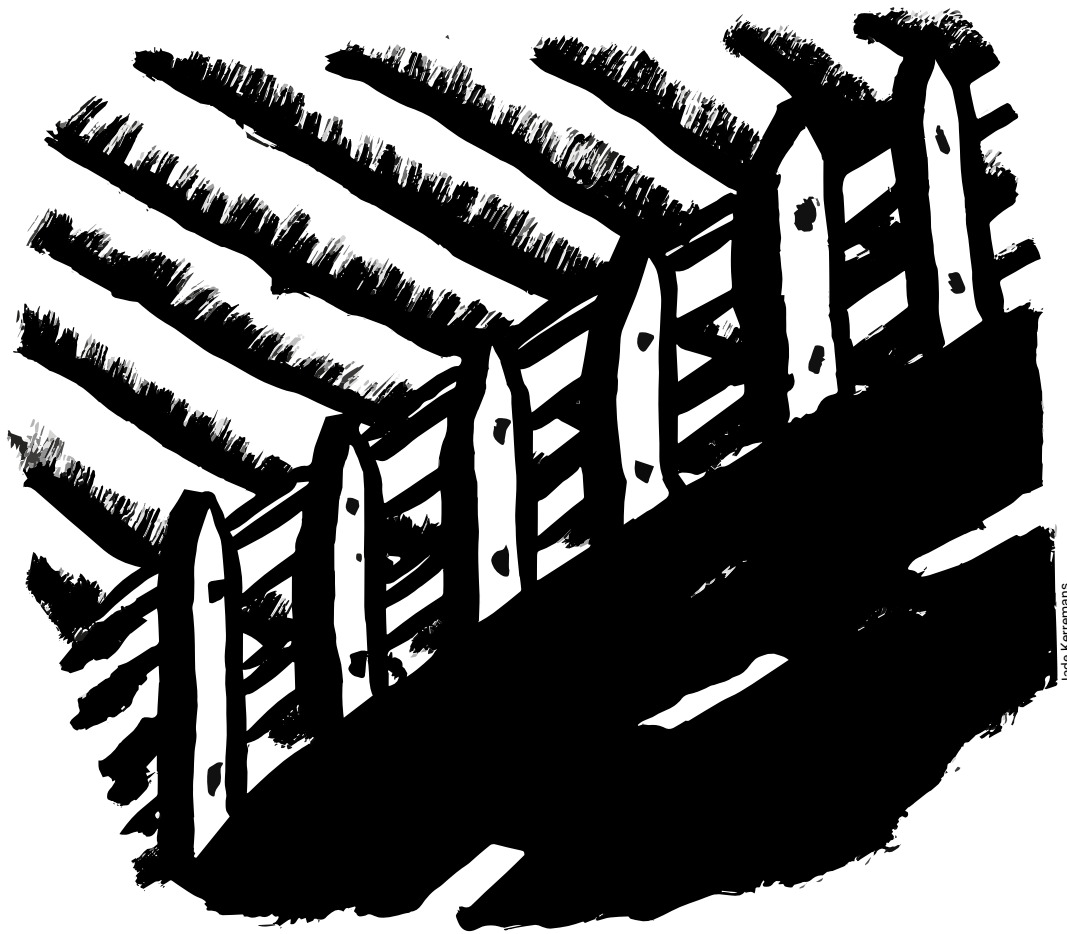




Agroecological Urbanism Future Heritage

Aesop4Food Intensive Programme, Ghent 2023

STAD &
ACADEMIE

Introduction

Following the intensive program in Madrid (June 2022), we welcome you to the second edition of the *AESOP4FOOD Intensive Programme* in Ghent. In the following eight days, we will work together on the farmland in public ownership of the city of Ghent and explore how this land can be leveraged to support the agroecological transition of the city region and its food system.

CONTEXT

The urban food policy of the City of Ghent ‘*Gent en Garde*’ has been the subject of international recognition including several prestigious prizes. At the same time, the systematic sale of public farmland in the peri-urban fringe has placed the city in conflict with traditional and new farmers who are looking for land but are being outbidded. The city has placed a temporary stop on the sale of public farmland and has drafted a pioneering vision on farming in the region. Against this background, the *Intensive programme* aims to explore how public farmland may contribute to the agroecological transition of farming in the peri-urban fringe.

Within the context of *De Stadsacademie**, civil society actors, farmers, urban civil servants, students, and researchers have been engaged in the development of alternative policies regarding publicly owned farmland and agricultural heritage more in general. The land, a significant portion of which has been sold by the city, is the fruit of historical investment in urban agricultural heritage that has been handed down over several generations and is an integral part of the permanent improvements (infrastructure, public space, heritage landscapes, drainage systems, etc.) that made farming possible.

Contemporary urban constituencies care little for the future of this heritage. The selective treatment of the urban food question in the recent history of cities in Europe has led to a commonly held position that it is convenient (and cheaper) to produce food ‘elsewhere’ and that there is little reason to hold on to this historical land. Within the *intensive programme* we will construct alternative positions that not only question the current sale of farmland but also reserve a role for public land management in the construction of an agroecological urbanism, that is, a way of urbanising that actively supports the care for soils and the growing of food in an equitable and ecologically sustainable way. We will try to imagine new forms of urban infrastructure and future heritage that contribute to the local support of agroecological farmers and re-inscribe the farming activities within a new urban geography of farming.

The Intensive Programme is organised by the University of Ghent & De Stadsacademie in collaboration with the Ghent City Museum (STAM) and the Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research (ILVO).

Organisation & coordination:
Michiel Dehaene
Elke Dhaenens

Support:
Fien Vansevenant
Glenn Willems

Interesting links:
[Building an Agroecological Urbanism](#)
[De Stadsacademie](#) (in Dutch)



	SAT 8/07	SUN 9/07	MON 10/07	TUE 11/07	WED 12/07	THU 13/07	FRI 14/07	SAT 8/07
	PART 1 - hypothesis			EXCURSION	PART 2 - strategies			Finalé
9h00 - 13h00		introduction assignment screening voices and places	work session		kick-off part 2 work session	mid review/ feedback	work session	final presentation
14h00 - 17h00	seminar Coline Perrin Esther Beeckaert Hans Vandermaelen Michiel Dehaene	work session group feedback (18h30-20h00)	work session		work session	work session	work session	goodbye lunch!
17h30 - 20h00	welcome drink!	lecture Andre Viljoen	group discussion		work session	work session	work session	
						late night atelier ★★ (untill max 23:30)		

Programme

SEMINAR - SATURDAY JULY 8TH

- 13h45Welcome
- 14h00Introduction
Michiel Dehaene (Ghent University)
- 14u30**Public farmland: an asset or a common good? A longitudinal study in the South of France**
Coline Perrin (PhD, Senior researcher, INRAE, UMR Innovation, Montpellier, France)
- 15u15**Ghent Land: a Historical Perspective**
Esther Beeckaert (STAM Gent)
- 16h00Break
- 16u30**Urbanising the Agroecological Reproduction of Soil Fertility: a Matter of Land Policy**
Hans Vandermaelen (ILVO, Ghent University)
- 17u15**Agroecolical Urbanism from a Public Policy and Investment Perspective**
Michiel Dehaene (Ghent University)
- 18u30Welcome drink

INTRODUCTION INTENSIVE PROGRAMME - SUNDAY JULY 9TH

- 9h30Welcome
- 9h45Introduction assignment
- 10h30Film - voices and places
- 11h30Group division and questions
- 13h00Worksession
- 16u00Group feedback of the day
- 17u00**Continues Productive Urban Landscapes Continued**
Andre Viljoen (University of Brighton)

EXCURSION - TUESDAY JULY 11TH

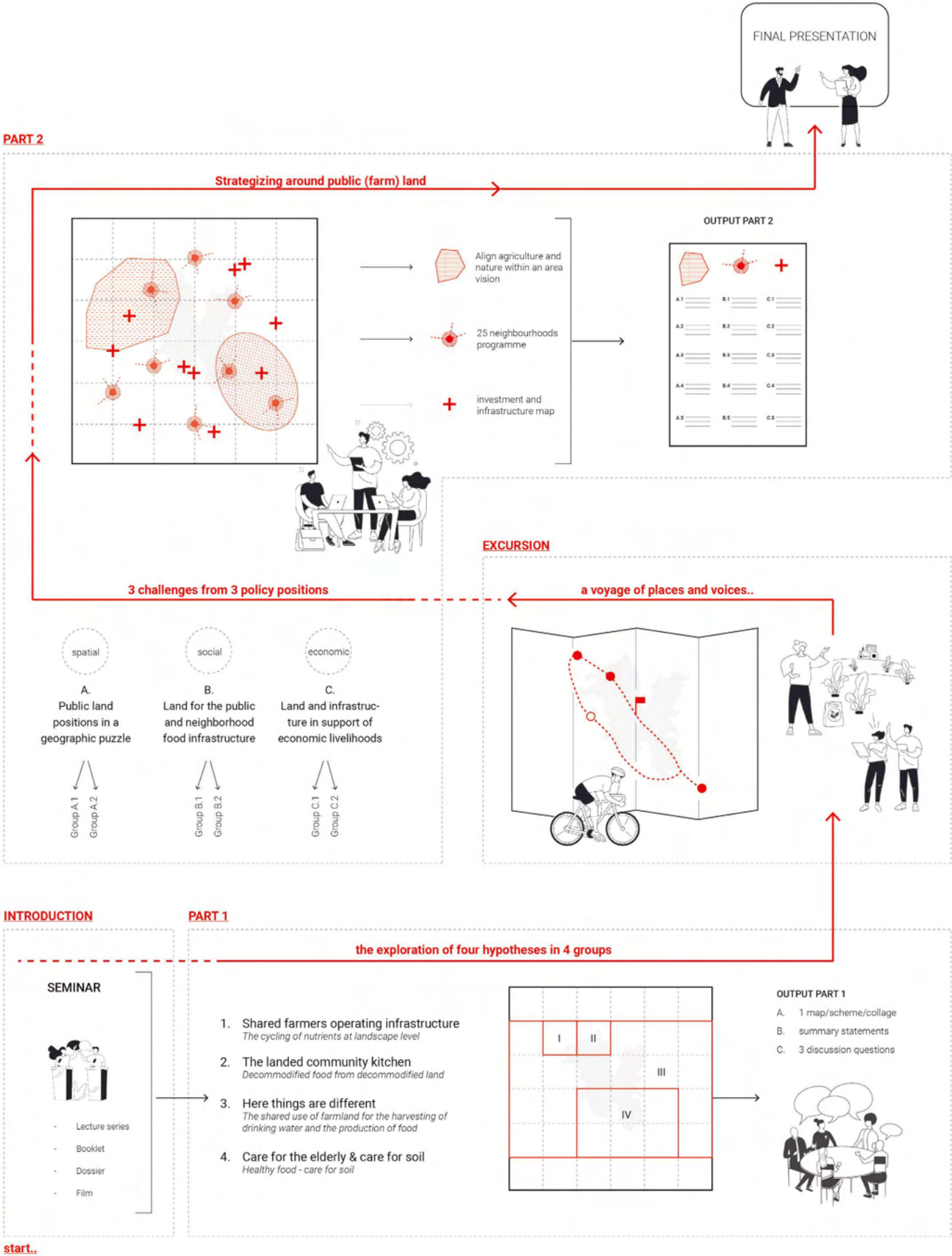
- 8h30Meeting at *De Krook* (pick-up point bikes)
- 8h45hDeparture
- 9h45Arrival ILVO, Lemberge
Meeting **Koen Willekens** (ILVO)
- 11h15Departure
- 12h45Lunchbreak
- 13h30Departure
- 14h15Arrival Oude Kale
Meeting **Toon Spanhove** (Natuurpunt)
- 16h00Departure
- 17h45Arrival Guislain
Meeting **Simon Allemeersch** (Ghent University)
- 18h45Departure
- 19h00End

The cycling route can be found via this QR-code:



FINALÉ - SATURDAY JULY 15TH

- 9h30Final group presentation
- 13h00Goodbye lunch



Assignment

Linking the agroecological transition and public land management is not an easy task. The aim is not to simply project fancy ideas on the public land positions. That might be part of the game, but it is not the task of a local authority to start prescribing the economic activities that need to take place on individual pieces of land. What we are interested in is to inscribe the question of public land management in a broader outlook on the future of the city region food system.

The aim of the *intensive programme* is to develop transition strategies and back them up by public land management policies. We will do that in two steps. First, by looking at potential entry points for an agroecological transition in Ghent. In a second phase, we will explore three different policy perspectives with different public actors in the lead.

FOUR IDEAS TO START WITH

In the first phase we use four starting points to explore possible 'external' claims that could be made on public land. Public land figures within these 'hypotheses' as potential assets that could be leveraged to facilitate development in a certain direction. We work in groups to study the documentation behind these four hypotheses and plan the excursion to confront the peri-urban landscape to which these hypotheses respond.

These hypotheses are based on the strategizing work developed within the Urbanising in Place project and were systematized in the online resource agroecologicalurbanism.org. Some of the places and possible stakeholders that could be gathered around these ideas were documented in interviews and video portraits that were produced by a group of students of the architecture and planning programme as part of a research seminar.

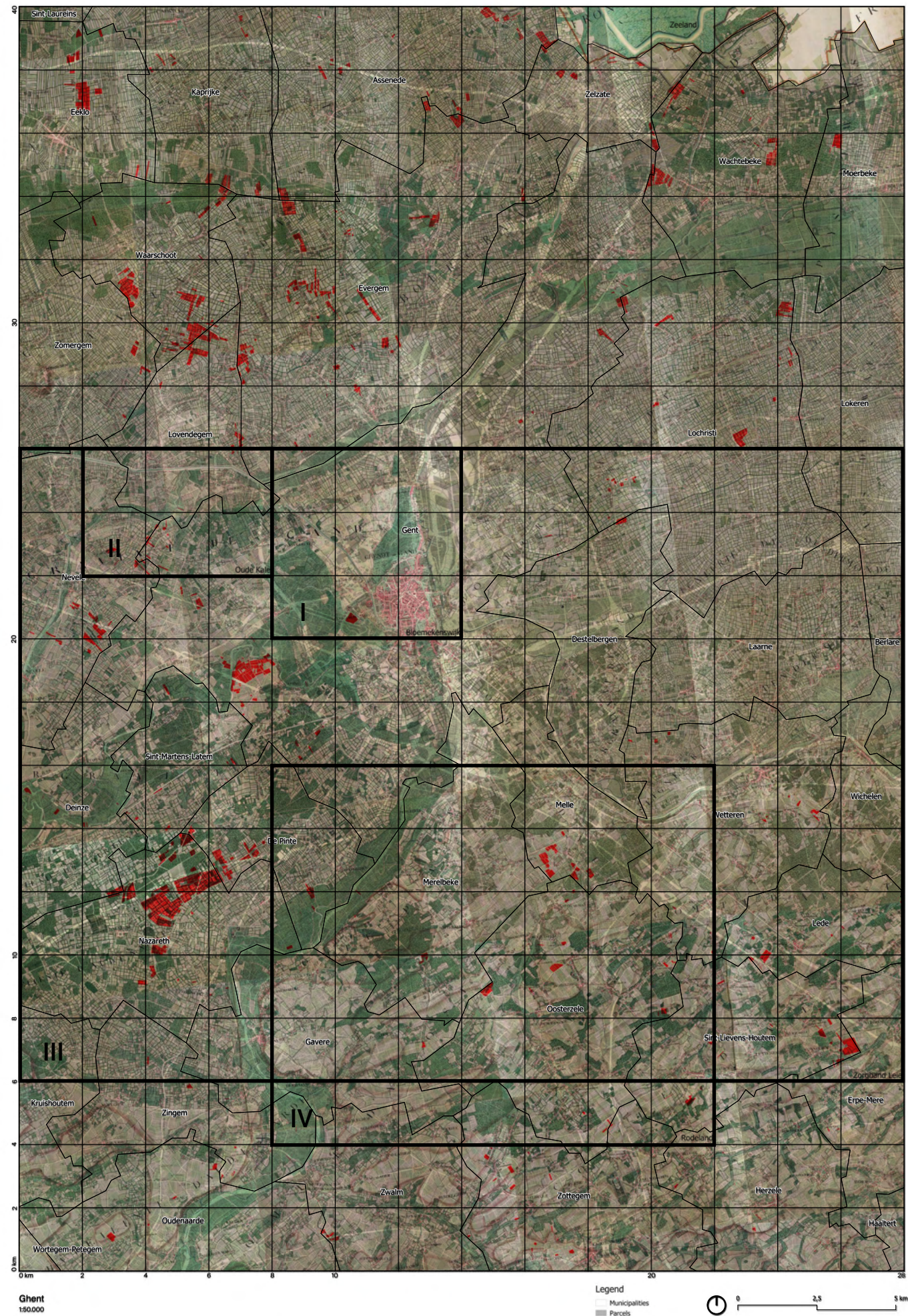
THREE LINES OF PUBLIC POLICY

In the second part of the *intensive programme*, we want to explore more explicitly different strategic policy positions around public land that would accelerate an agroecological transition of the city region food system. In each instance we adopt a different 'virtual setting', namely a different set of public actors (the planning department, the public health and welfare department, and the economy department) that have requested a vision on public land management. Departing from these three positions, we wish to explore different ways in which public land management could be inscribed in public policy and mobilize different concepts of change that could serve the agroecological transition.

DOCUMENTATION

More information and documentation for each hypothesis can be found via the following links:

- Film [Voices and places](#)
- [Online library](#)
- Website [Building an Agroecological Urbanism](#)



Four ideas to start with

1 - SHARED FARMERS OPERATING INFRASTRUCTURE

For nutrient cycling at landscape level

Agroecological farmers in the peri-urban area are ‘dependent’ farmers who face great difficulties to realize the goals of closing loops and regenerative soil care on the level of the farm. The agricultural sector, and consequently the farmers, are on the losing end in this struggle. In addition to the loss of agricultural land (to other land uses), phenomena such as climate change, land speculation, and pollution pose a significant threat to the survival of farmers. It seems that, despite all the challenges, the landscape is not taking into account the farmers’ needs. This leaves opportunities to facilitate some of these processes ‘at landscape level’ and to rebalance the relation between what happens on and off farm. The development of such relations at landscape level could start with the resourcing of farmers through nutrients harvested in the management of nature conservation areas, as well as the management of trees and hedgerows. This does not only require tools and manpower to do so, but also places where biomass can be stored and composted, or be made available (throughout the year) for on-farm composting activities.

The maps document the distinctive landscape features of the *Rodeland* with distinct elements such as furrows, creeks, and small landscape elements that contribute to the agricultural character. Functionally it showcases a mix of grasslands, meadows, tree nurseries, vineyards, and farmland, interspersed with pockets of woodland and scattered residential areas. The map diagrammatically indicates how this landscape could be activated through biomass squares that could be supported by the existing knowledge hub(s).

The knowledge hubs are strategically located and serve as centres to attract external alliances and disseminate information to various entities such as residents (including gardens), healthcare campuses, equestrian centres, and school campuses. These hubs act as knowledge-sharing and collaboration points. In another area of the map, you’ll notice the biomass squares. These designated spaces serve the purpose of efficiently collecting biomass from farmers’ properties. Space for such activities may be found on declassified and de-paved roads and the transformation of decommissioned farmsteads. The collection is facilitated through agri-environmental groups.



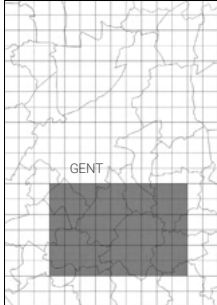
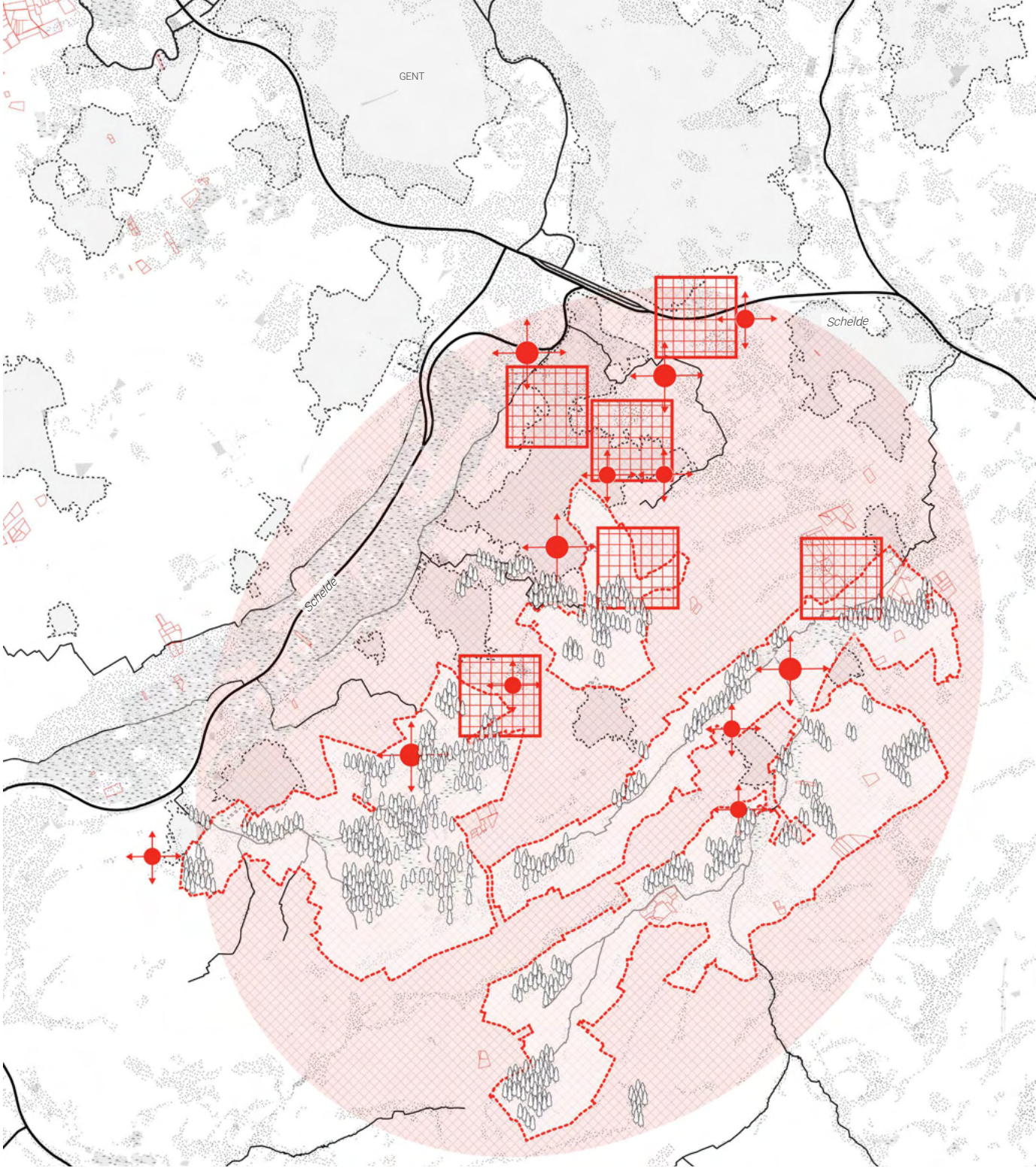
Compost pile with compost turner and tractor with water tank: compost slurry is turned for aeration and moistening of compost - ILVO



The yellow areas on the map show the Reconfirmed Agricultural Areas. The perimeter of Rodeland lies between these areas, which may give the illusion that agriculture has no place has in the landscape of Rodeland - master's dissertation Terpstra & Vaneennooghe, 2022



Rodeland: the transition from a flat landscape with farms and meadows to a slightly hilly area with forests is clearly visible - Luc Bauwens



Positioning in relation to Ghent

2 - THE LANDED COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Decommodified food from decommodified land

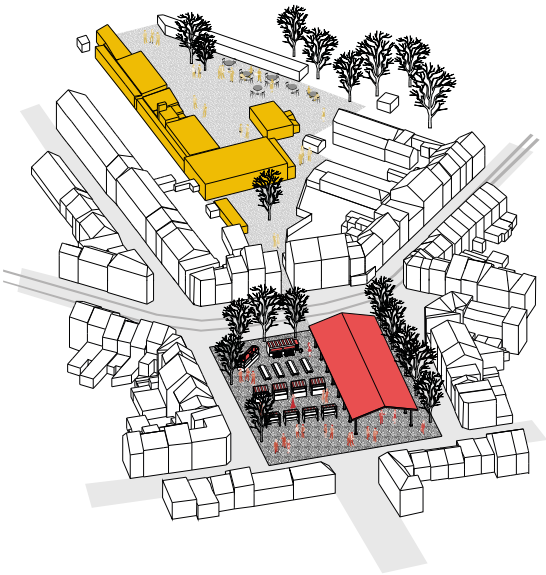
Many initiatives that seek to address food poverty and supply food support rely on surplus food from supermarkets. This leads to the contradictory situation that efforts to correct the failures of the food system are resourced through the failures of the food system. Moreover, while these initiatives may contribute to the reduction of the amount of food going to waste, these initiatives lack broader ecological objectives. One way of trying to break out of this dependency on surplus food is to try to make food support initiatives more self-resourced and link up to fair, and ecological local production.

The imaginary of the landed community kitchen seeks to link neighbourhood-driven initiatives with agroecological farmers, to build solidarity across the urban rural divide in an effort to decommodify the food supply. If dynamics of urbanisation have progressively removed big parts of the food system from urban centres and have systematically substituted production here by production elsewhere, the kitchen remains strongly attached to logics of proximity to the concentration of mouths in urban centres. In the case of the community kitchen, this proximity is matched with an ethos of place-based solidarity with the neighbourhood or district within which a kitchen is located.

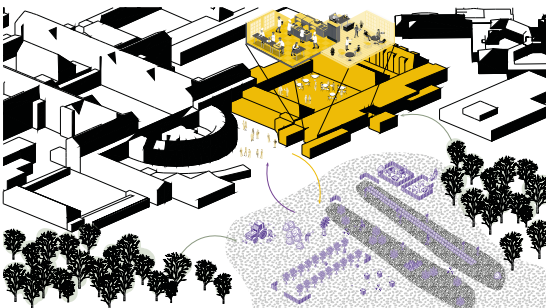
It is, however, not easy to make durable connections between food initiatives serving social objectives and ecological growers. The reasons for this are plural. One of the obstacles in local ecological food production, however, is access to land. This is where a link can be made with public land. Growing food on publicly owned, decommodified farmland is a major step towards regaining control over the prices at which food can be made available, especially to economically precarious groups and individuals. Hence the formula: decommodified food from decommodified land.

This imaginary is projected on the *Bloemekenswijk*. It is a vibrant neighbourhood in the North-West side of Ghent, characterised by its many social initiatives, as well as its industrial past. The neighbourhood was built next to a cluster of large-scale textile factories that moved out of the centre at the turn of the 19th century. The textile industry is gone and today the neighbourhood is part of a constellation of large institutional campuses, reconverted textile factories (including a social economy cluster), the nineteenth century western cemetery of Ghent, and the cluster of historical workmans' houses in the centre, clustered around streets fanning out from the *Van Beveren* square.

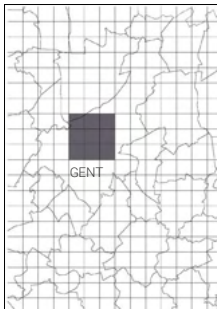
There is a significant number of collective kitchens in and around the district. Some of them are public, generally directed towards socially vulnerable groups, but most are private institutional kitchens, providing for large institutions or local schools. There is also some recently decommissioned food infrastructure, including a bakery of the *Psychiatric Hospital dr. Guislain*. Furthermore, there are also a lot of points where food is available, at pick-up points for box schemes, communal vegetable gardens, self-pick areas, etc. The neighbourhood sits in relative proximity to the northern peri-urban fringe, formerly 'the vegetable garden of Ghent'. Today, there is still a large percentage of farmland present, of which the city owns some big clusters. Could it be possible to link this land to some of the kitchens in the *Bloemekenswijk*, and set up collaborations with other organic farmers in *Evergem* and the broader *Meetjesland*?



Potential transformation of the Van Beverenplein, Bloemekenswijk Gent - master's dissertation Glenn Willems



Potential transformation of the Dr Guislain site, Bloemekenswijk Gent - master's dissertation Glenn Willems



Positioning in relation to Ghent

3 - HERE THINGS ARE DIFFERENT

The shared use of farmland for the harvesting of drinking water and the production of food

Environmental requirements (such as nature objectives, restrictions on nitrogen emissions, water quality levels, etc.) have far reaching consequences which often infringe on the way in which farmers may cultivate the soil. This leads in many cases to the further loss of farmland and active farmers. Some of these environmental requirements do not need to lead to the banning of farmers, but rather to the specialization of farming activities to forms of farming that are compatible with these environmental requirements. The drinking water production centre in *Kluizen*, for example, relies on surface water from the Valley of the *Oude Kale*. Further expansion of the harvesting of drinking water is not possible because of the impact of farming activities around the nature reservation area.

The gradual transition to other forms of farming could change this situation and extend the period in which water can be harvested. Additionally, sustainable farming would also have a positive impact on the quality of the water, because structurally improved soils act as a filter. There are, however, some contradictions between the different claims to the land and resources. For example, for nature development, a slow meandering stream with wet areas is highly valuable, whilst for drink water production, the companies opt for a rapid run-off of water.

This topic is linked to public (farm)land in the sense that it calls for a new strategy. Today, this public land is used to compensate farmers when farmland is converted to nature conservation areas. Can we imagine a policy in which farmers would be supported to transition to other ways of farming, rather further displacing farming activities? Can we imagine shared investment in water quality improvement, nature development, and agroecological food production, as all three would benefit from each other's presence? Healthy ecosystems provide cleaner water, agroecological farming benefits from the diversity that nature provides, along with all its ecosystems services, and nature itself is extended through these agroecological fields.

Looking at the map, the presence of the Oude Kale is noticeable in the landscape, especially in the long rectangular plots along its banks. The nature development project which has been realized in this area contributed to the reconstruction of a fragment of a historical farming landscape, namely the wet part of the landscape, with permanent grasslands and pollard willows. Part of the intensive maintenance of this historical farming land is done by farmers active around this nature reserve. The historical farming landscape is completely disconnected from the rest of the landscape. Historically the wet grasslands used to be part of an integrated landscape known as a 'kouter and bulken' landscape, with cattle grazing in the low-lying bulken (as have been reconstructed in the Oude Kale) and arable farming on the higher kouters. Both landscapes were part of an integrated nutrient and energy cycle geared at the reproduction of soil fertility of the arable land.

Such mixed farming models are the kind of agriculture that new entrants from the biodynamic and agroecological farming community are dreaming of. Such farming models would not only contribute to landscape development. Involved agroecological farmers could also collaborate with Natuurpunt, the organization that manages the nature reserve of the Oude Kale, and maintain the grasslands with their ruminants in an ecological and cost-effective way. Healthy soils, a ban on the use of agrochemicals, and the elimination of chemical fertilizers, can increase the water retention capacity, preventing droughts in summer, and contribute to the possibility of harvesting drinking water during a longer period of the year (including part of the farming season), and from a wider area.



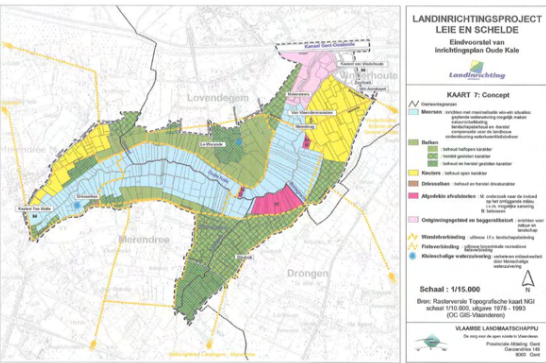
Valley of the Oude Kale (Ferraris)



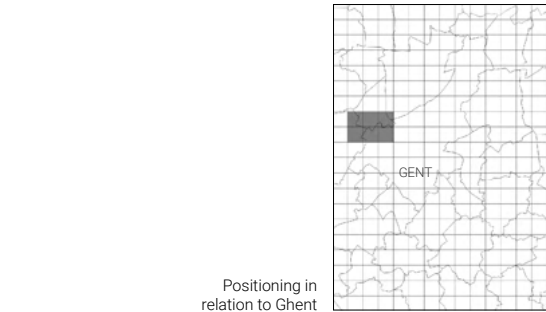
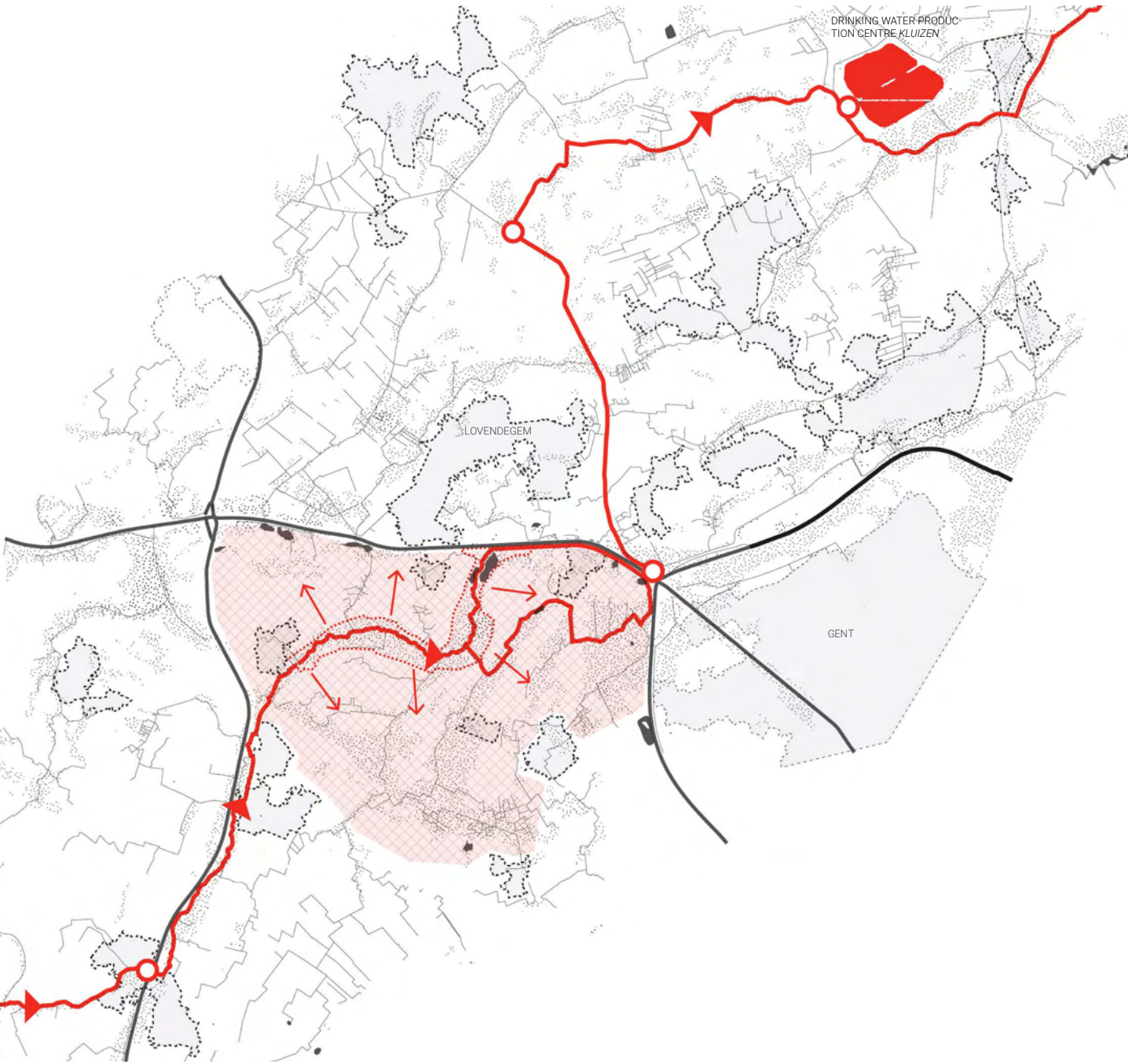
Valley of the Oude Kale (VLM)



Agricultural landscape Oude Kale + land in ownership of Natuurpunt



Final proposal of development plan Oude Kale (Lys and Scheldt land development project, 1978-1993)



Positioning in relation to Ghent

4 - HEALTHY FOOD FOR THE ELDERLY

Care for the Soil

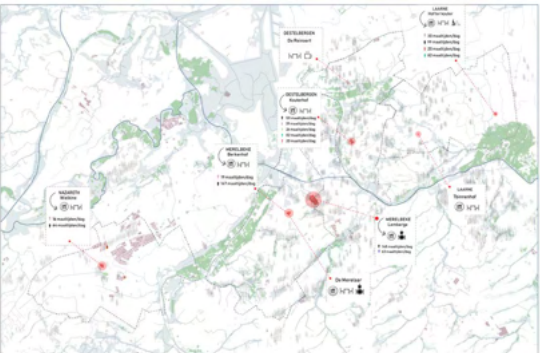
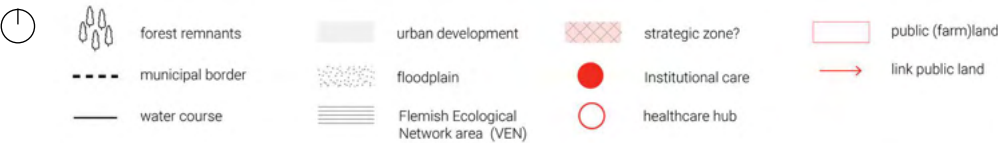
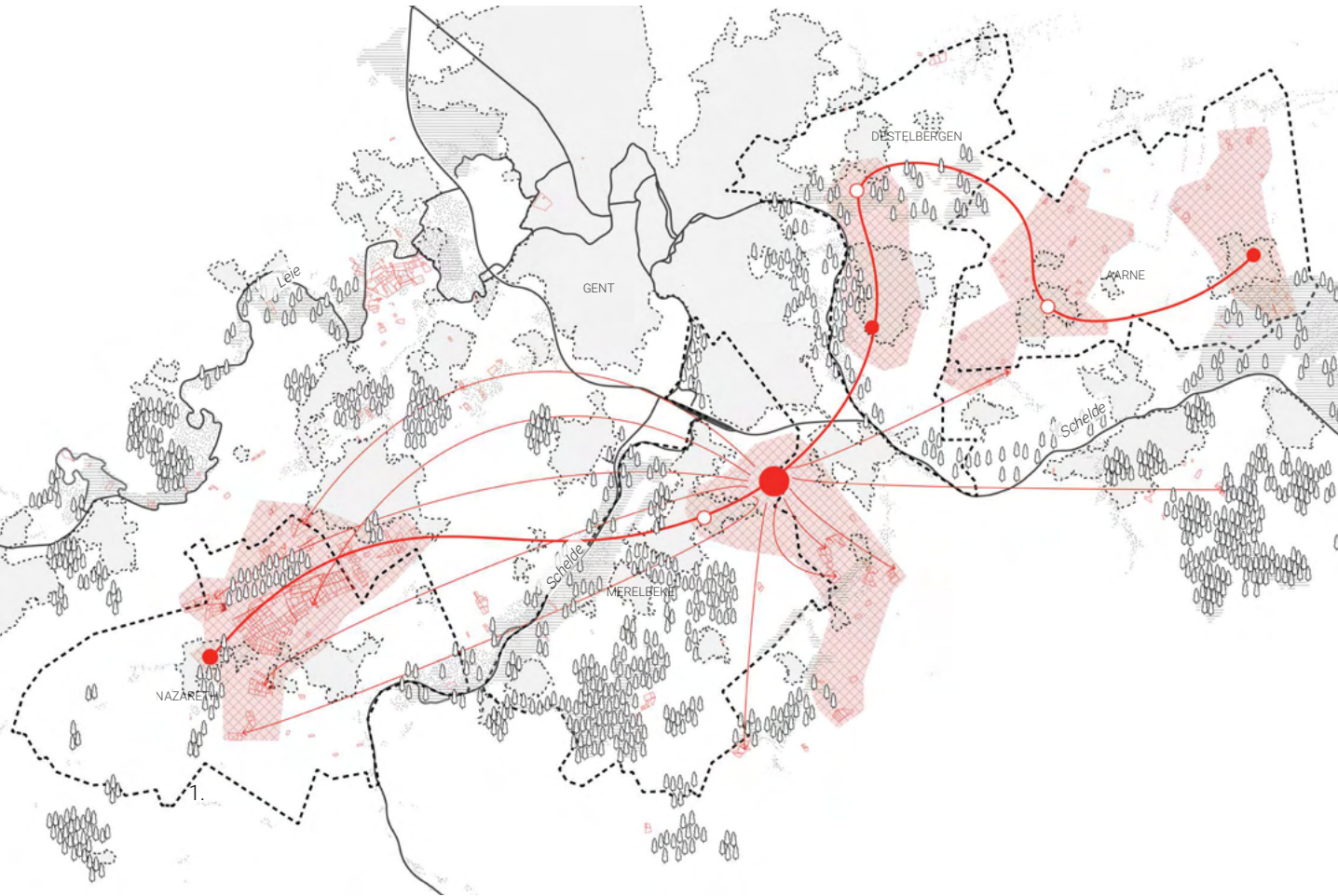
Most of the publicly owned farmland was historically owned by urban care institutes such as the *Bijloke* Monastery. These farmlands were part of the assets these institutes build up over the years. They were an integral part of the financial independence and stability of these institutions, and also played a direct operational role in their activities (especially the supply of food and wood, but also as places for rearing animals). Perhaps the most obvious move away from the sale of public farmland would be a scenario in which the care organization operating within the institutional context of the OCMW would actively use the farmlands to support their own food supply.

Zorgband Leie en Schelde, the merger of OCMW care facilities of the municipalities of Nazareth, Laarne, Merelbeke and Destelbergen is currently rethinking its food strategy, simultaneously addressing questions of malnutrition, reduction of food waste as well as increasing the local share of its food supply. Could such a strategy be supported through public land management? *Zorgband* is thinking of building a new central kitchen that could serve as a hub for the food delivered in the care facilities of the network. They are exploring how such a kitchen could be organized and staffed in such a way that it is ready to process food production of local farmers. Taking inspiration from other experiments (eg. AZ Zeno in Knokke), it is exploring how the use of state-of-the-art food conservation techniques would help in addressing questions of seasonality while offering a variety in meals fit for various dietary requirements.

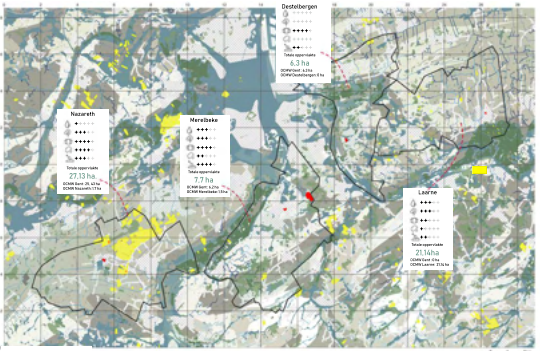
Many of these care institutes established themselves in the peri-urban fringe in search for the peace and quiet of the open landscape. These landscapes suffered from the suburbanisation in which these care institutes played their part. Control over a number of land assets would not only help to resource this strategy. It would also reposition this care network as a steward of the valley landscape it is part of. As the network would begin to establish stronger relations with farmers in the area, it could team up with other players who share an interest in the quality of the *Leie-Schelde* landscape, its heritage and ecological qualities.

The different issues surrounding the sale of these valuable grounds and the problems we encounter with malnutrition in elderly care provide the motivation to further investigate this topic. It is not only a matter of considering how to implement a local food strategy in collaboration with *Zorgband Leie en Schelde*, but also involving all key stakeholders in the area, the distribution of the kitchen and how we can use the heritage as a lever in this story. And all of this while respecting the landscape in which it is situated.

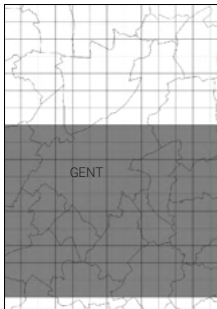
The map delineates some of the main landscape structures. The region is not only crisscrossed by small rivers, but is also prone to flooding. Additionally, there are scattered remnants of forests and heathland throughout the landscape. The healthcare facilities have been grouped in two categories: the hub, which mainly provides supportive care for elderly individuals living at home, such as cleaning services and day-time care services. These two categories could entertain a different connection to the centralized kitchen infrastructure and could also relate differently to their immediate surrounding landscape and nearby village centres.



Current kitchen infrastructure - master's dissertation Fien Vansevenant, 2023



Position land owned by the OCMW - master's dissertation Fien Vansevenant, 2023



Positioning in relation to Ghent

THREE LINES OF PUBLIC POLICY

Part 2 Intensive programme

In the second half of the Intensive Programme, we will be working towards transition plans, leveraging public land from three different perspectives

1. PUBLIC LAND POSITIONS IN A GEOGRAPHIC PUZZLE: THIN-KING NATURE-FARMING COLLABORATION WITHIN A REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Imagine you are working in the context of a joint exercise of the city of Ghent and the Province of East Flanders that are engaged in an exercise concerning the open space structure of the metropolitan area of Ghent. The plan is trying to correct the focus of earlier plans in which mainly recreational, water and nature development goals were central to the plan. The plan aims for a better integration of green, blue and yellow. They are trying to understand the role public farmland management could play for an agroecological transition of the city region food system.

You are asked to build a public land strategy from a future vision on the geography of farming and nature development in the area around Ghent. In the peri-urban area agriculture exists in conflict and competition with many other claims on the land. This strategy aims for a spatially differentiated and area-based vision on the future geography of farming in which specific forms of farming could respond to specific spatial conditions and specific functional links within a series of new farming landscapes with dedicated rules.

This strategy addresses a series of current shortcomings:

- Cities open space plan de facto produces a green blue open space structure within which agriculture is not conceptually included.
- There is an new vision on agriculture but this is not embedded within a vision on the geography of farming.
- The land leasing regulation today prohibits specifying ways of cultivation within the lease. Area-based strategies could provide an answer.
- Constraints on farming now threaten the continuation of farming – the introduction of specific models of farming that are compatible with these restrictions may be the best option to secure continuity of farming.

Relevant Building Blocks to draw inspiration from:
Agroecological Park / Farming the Fragmented Land

2. LAND FOR THE PUBLIC AND NEIGHBORHOOD FOOD INFRA-STRUCTURE

You are working for a conference of the OCMW's of Ghent and the neighbouring municipalities and a representation of the 25 neighborhoods of Ghent. They are trying to establish a public procurement strategy for public and neighborhood kitchens, exploring how far they can get in adopting principles of resource sovereignty. They are interested in the extent to which public land can be leveraged to reinforce the autonomy of public food supply and immunize local food infrastructure against geopolitical instability and financial speculation on food, energy and land.

Starting from what is left in terms of decommodified food infrastructure (i.e. publicly owned and publicly managed food infrastructure), such as school canteens, restaurants and kitchens of elderly and hospitals, social restaurants, student restaurants, etc., this strategy tries to imagine how a new landscape could be built in which these public kitchens could become more self-resourced and looks at the public land as the backyard of a landscape of public food infrastructure.

These strategies address a series of current shortcomings

- The playing against each other of social and ecological goals
- The current dependency of food support initiatives on surplus food
- The rapid loss of farmers
- The lack of solidarity of urban constituencies with peasant farmers

Relevant Building Blocks to draw inspiration from:
Community Kitchen and the Territorial Food Hub

3. LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN SUPPORT OF ECONOMIC LIVELIHOODS

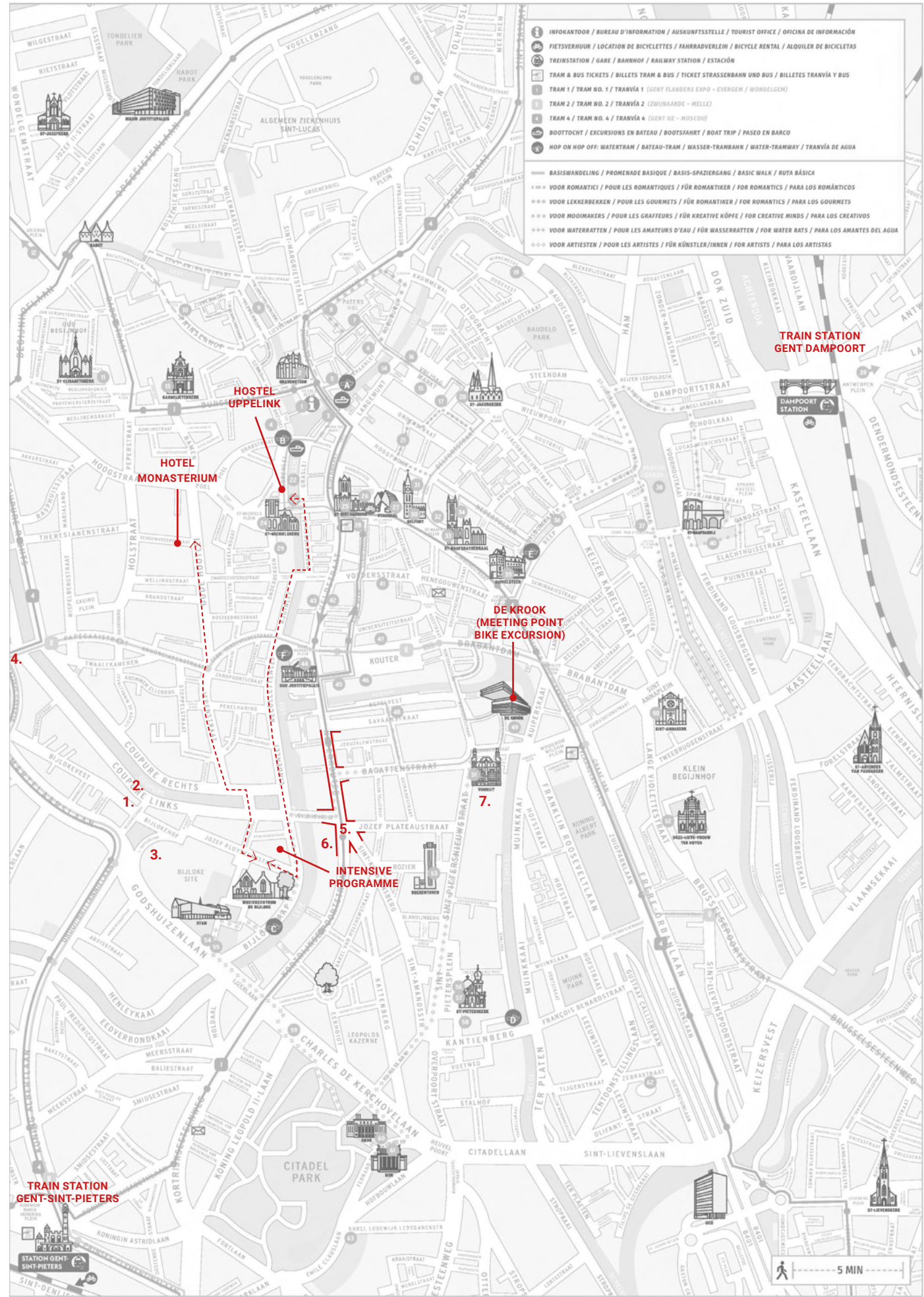
You are working for the economic department of the city and the Vlaamse Landmaatschappij (Flemish land company) who are together exploring the possibility of launching a new generation of land readjustment plans in the peri-urban area of Ghent. These organisations are concerned with the high age of farmers, the lack of succession and the difficulties faced by new entrants. They are exploring how investment in public infrastructure, maintenance and training could contribute to the economic viability of farming. They are trying to understand the role public land could play in such a strategy.

Starting from an understanding of the current constraints imposed on agroecological farmers and the economic strain they are under, this strategy tries to think how more favourable conditions can be created for agroecological farmers. Agroecological farmers aim for autonomy but are locked in situations where this cannot be achieved at farm level. Can we create an enabling environment in which agroecological food production is economically viable in its own right?

These strategies address a series of current shortcomings

- The rapid loss of farmers
- Problems with access to land for new entrants
- Excessive use of agrochemicals and chemical fertilizers.

Relevant Building Blocks to draw inspiration from:
Land and Market Access Incubator, Farming the Fragmented Land



Practical information

MAIN LOCATION

Campus Rommelaere, UGent
Jozef Kluyskensstraat 27, 9000 Gent

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WIFI

Wifi is available via Eduroam
Or via UGentGuest:
Login: guestUmmers
Password: geYRbWn4

Make a wireless connection with “UGentGuest”. If you have set up to request an IP address automatically, you will receive an IP address starting with 193.190.8x.

Now you are connected, but not yet authenticated. You should start a webbrowser and you will be redirected to a logon screen. If not surf to <http://www.ugent.be>. Enter the username and password as mentioned above. After correct authentication you can use the Internet connection.

Your connection to this wireless LAN is not encrypted. To protect your personal data, please use encrypted connections like https, imaps, ssh etc. or a VPN client.

FOOD

Lunch and dinner is not provided with the exception of lunch during the excursion and the goodbye lunch. There are several eateries or supermarkets in the area that serve tasty and affordable lunch and/or dinner. We provide on-campus dining options on site and the ability to keep purchased food fridge fresh.

Some recommendations:

1. VEST by Harry and Rika: sandwiches, salads, wraps, soup, ...
lunch; only take away
2. De Kokmadam: sandwiches, salads, pasta, etc.
lunch; take away or eat in
3. KASK café: various dishes and daily specials
lunch and dinner, eat in
4. De Walrus: food café, daily specials
dinner, eat in
5. Area of Nederkouter: multiple lunch spots, coffee bars and cafés
most of them good
6. SPAR Nederkouter: supermarket + fresh sandwiches
7. VIERNULVIER Café: food café, daily specials, nice terrace
lunch and dinner, eat in

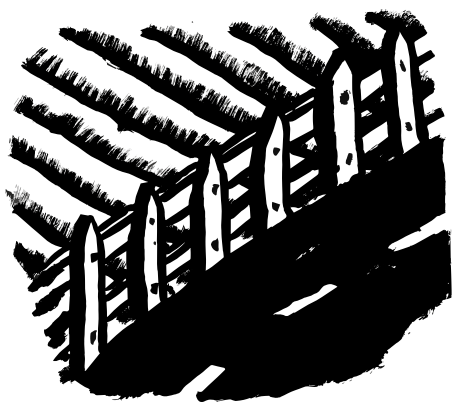
*Take into account that some lunch places are not open on Saturday and Sunday. Most supermarkets are closed after 19-20h00, on Sunday and public holidays.

GENTSE FEESTEN

In the final weekend, starting on friday July 14th, there is *De Gentse Feesten*, one of the biggest folkore festivals in Europe that takes over Ghent's entire city centre for ten days. The programme includes both free and paid activities. In addition to outdoor activities, you have various paid activities spread throughout Ghent such as theatre shows, guided walks, visits to monuments and museums, ... More information about the programme can be found [here!](#)

OTHER

For tips about pretty much anything else in Ghent, visit [this website](#).



Agroecological Urbanism
Future Heritage

Aesop4Food Intensive Programme, Ghent 2023

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