

# ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY AS A COMMON CONCERN

*European conference on  
architectural policies*



FÉDÉRATION  
WALLONIE-BRUXELLES

cellule.  
archi,

**BWMSTR**



Vlaamse  
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# **0 Introduction**

For over 20 years, the European Conferences on Architectural Policies (ECAP) have been a means of sharing, on an international stage, the main concerns regarding the quality of our built and unbuilt environment, and its evolution.

Over the past few years, these policies have been widely developed at both European and national levels. As the climate transition has gradually become part of political agendas, numerous declarations and initiatives stress the importance of considering a more cultural perspective in favour of a technical-economic one in this transition, based on the development of a common, high-quality 'Baukultur'.

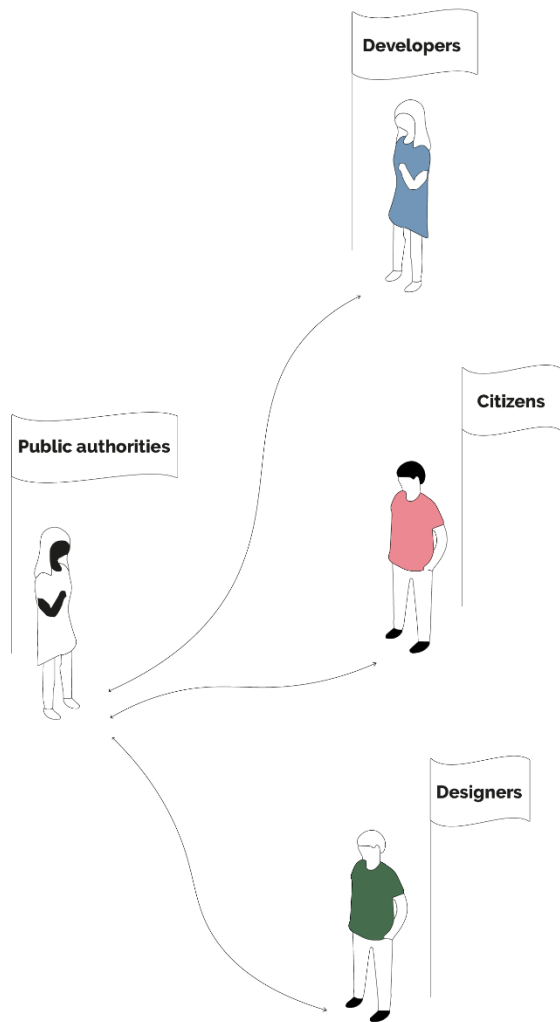
However, while tools have been created to provide a better understanding of this quality, the spaces where it can be tangibly established together have yet to be developed.

One of the many questions raised is that of the 'co-construction of public action', in terms of the ability to mobilise the various actors in a project. Although they have been invited to review their practices, many public organisations are still largely at a loss as to how to implement this renewal.

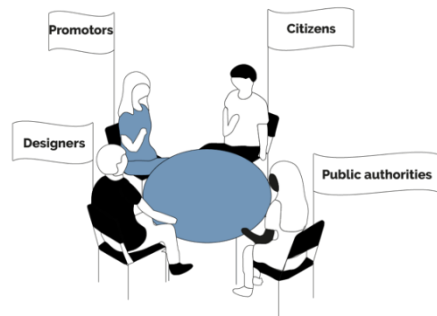
**In project development, how can public project leaders interact with such diverse actors as private developers, designers and, even more so, citizens? What role do these different actors play? When? And through what mechanisms? Above all, how can we make the question of project quality central to these interactions?**

By looking at each of these actors in turn, **the conference aims to examine how they can be mobilised by the public authorities.**

In preparation for the conference, **we hope to be informed about interesting projects by the EDAP and NEB partners.** Can you in one sentence describe the case study, indicate why the project fits the theme and provide us with a contact (mail and phone)? **We look for two supplementary projects per roundtable session.**



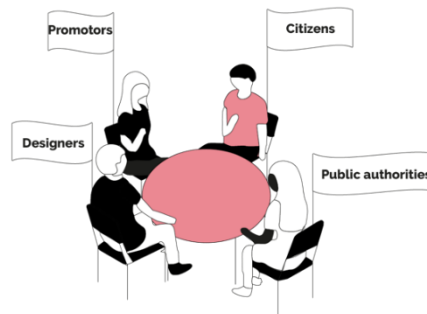
# Three interactions, seven thematic workshops



## Interactions with Developers

Workshop 1.1.  
Providing support for the private project of a developer/investor

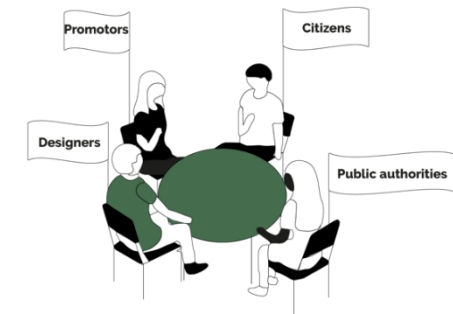
Workshop 1.2.  
Getting support from the investor developer for a public project



## Interactions with Citizens

Workshop 2.1.  
Getting support from citizens for a public space project

Workshop 2.2.  
Getting support from users for a housing project



## Interactions with Designers

Workshop 3.1.  
Designers assisting public authorities

Workshop 3.2.  
Design Expertise embedded in a policy context

Workshop 3.3.  
Design Research informing policies

# Preparation of the conference

For each theme, we will look at a Belgian case study representative of the current local political practices. We provide a summary of the project's history, and identify, based on a "classic" project procedure timeline, the key turning points in terms of spatial quality.

Standard project procedure timeline



Preparation: these are all the stages before the launch of a project. This phase covers several key stages, such as drawing up regulatory or strategic plans, purchasing land, carrying out technical studies to gain a better understanding of the site, launching studies to define or programme the project to determine the requirements, etc.

Procedure: Once the framework has been established and the idea for the project defined, the second phase consists of selecting the team that will develop the project. This phase involves drafting specifications, analysing tenders and bids, and then awarding the project.

Project development: Once the project team has been appointed, the project development phase begins. This includes preparing a preliminary design, applying for planning permission, drawing up a pre-construction file, and, finally, supervising the construction work.

Use: Once the site is completed, we will discuss the usages, management, maintenance, and life of the project.

**01** **Theme 1**  
**Interactions**  
**with**  
**Developers**

# Introduction

We propose to discuss two types of interactions between public authorities and property developers:

1. Providing support for the private project of a developer/investor: This section examines the role of the public authorities in providing a framework for the development of a private project, even though they are not the initiators or promoters of the project.
2. Getting support from the investor developer for a public project: This section specifically addresses the issue of public procurement, and how the public authority and the developer-investor interact to complete a public project. It focuses on the best way to develop a DBF(MO)-type PPP.

# 1.1 Providing support for the private project of a developer/investor

- How can public authorities provide support for the completion of a private project led by a developer/investor?
- What mechanisms are available?
- What are the key moments in terms of architectural quality?



# Belgian case: Tour&Taxis

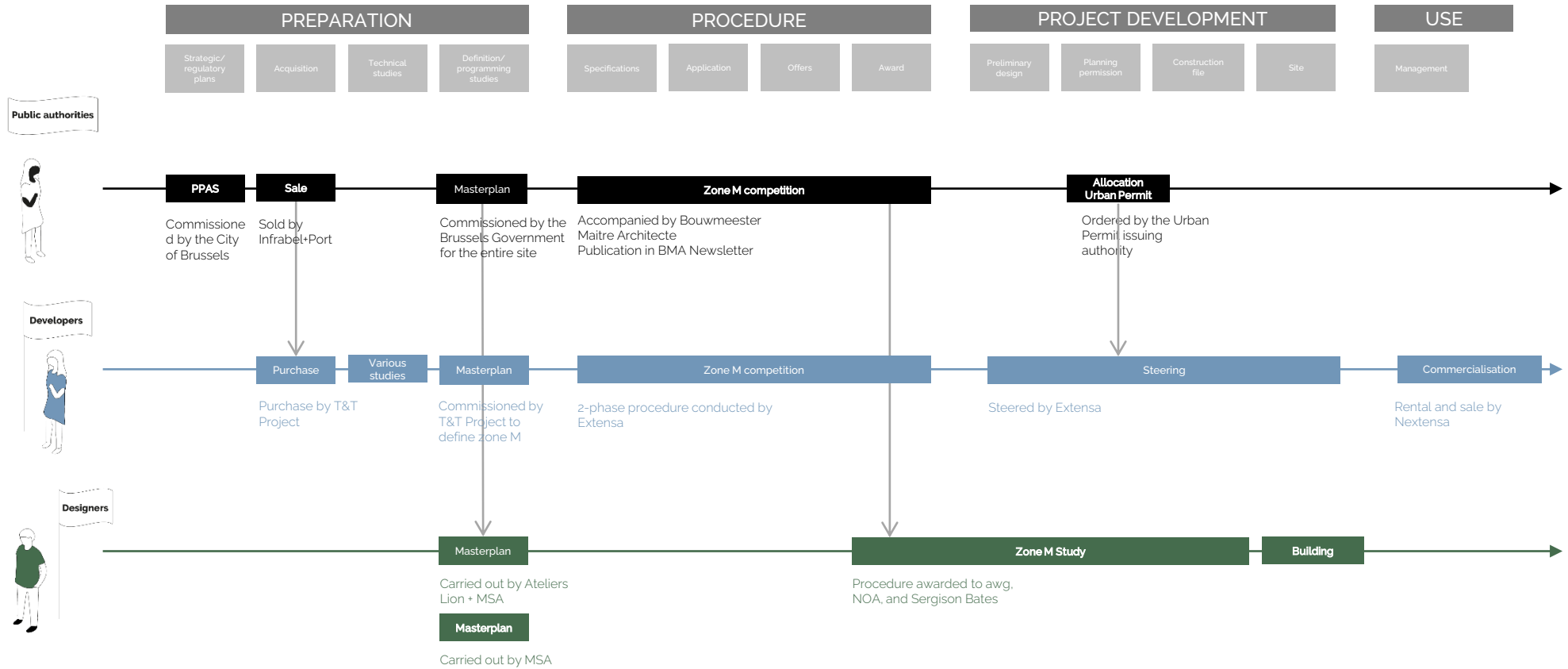
- Conversion of a 42-hectare former railway site into an inspirational new sustainable district
- Tour & Taxis, Brussels - Belgium



Completion of  
Zone M ©  
Nextensa

# Belgian case: Tour&Taxis

- Timeline



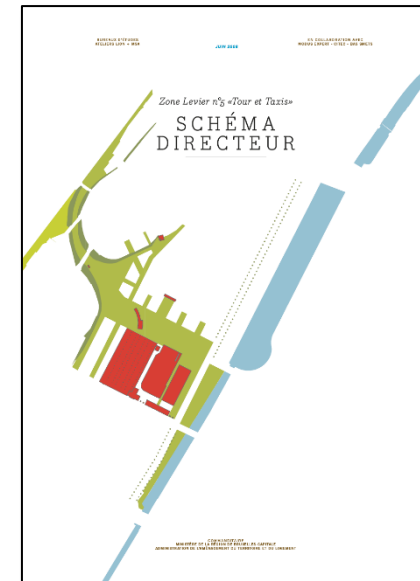
# Belgian case: Tour&Taxis

- Narrative

Bordering the Canal and very close to the historic centre of Brussels, the former Tour & Taxis railway site is undergoing an important revival.

Until the late 1990s, the warehouses were rented out to importers operating lorries. In 2001, the publicly-owned land (railway company) was purchased (without any special conditions) by the public limited company Project T&T, which later became Extensa, and then Nextensa, currently the private manager of the site. The potential for conversion was examined, but the first drafts of the project were highly controversial (respect for heritage, programme, mixed-use, green space, attention to architectural quality, etc.).

Commissioned by the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, a master plan\* was drawn up by the MS-A and Atelier Yves Lion design offices and adopted in December 2008. The main principles of this master plan relate to green spaces, active mobility, mixed-use, heritage valorisation, and sustainability. These guidelines were then set out in a local land use plan (PPAS)\* approved in May 2017. This plan (PPAS) advocates the development of at least 18,500 m<sup>2</sup> of community facilities, a total of 2,312 medium and high-standard homes totalling 185,000 m<sup>2</sup> and 148,000 m<sup>2</sup> of offices and productive activities.



Tour&Taxis masterplan  
© Ateliers Lion & MSA

# Belgian case: Tour&Taxis

Tour&Taxis park ©  
perspective.brussels



The warehouse and sheds, two buildings of outstanding heritage value erected between 1904 and 1907, constitute the first focal point of this redevelopment. Since 2010, they have housed businesses and shops, trade fairs, and exhibitions (books, art).

The centre of the site is organised around a new park, which opened in 2014. Negotiations around this park included an obligation for the private sector to provide a single 10-hectare green space in the centre of the site, linking up with a vast 20-hectare (public) network of open spaces between the commune of Laeken and the city centre.

In 2015, with the support of the BMA\*, Extensa launched the architectural competition for the first phase of housing (zone "M"). The procedure is split into two phases: a selection phase and an award phase. Given the scope and complexity of the contract, design consortia must submit bids from three architectural practices, one of which must be an "emerging" practice. International teams are also welcome. This is one of the first private competitions supported by the Brussels BMA\*.

The contract was awarded to the "awg, NOA, and Sergison Bates" teams, who divided up the design of the various buildings. The buildings have a strong urban identity that transcends the generic and recognises and deploys a typology specific to the Tour et Taxis site. Three rows, three types of building. Together, they invite visitors to explore the park.

The Zone M buildings were handed over in 2023.

# Belgian case: Tour&Taxis

- Glossary

- **Master Plan:** This tool prefigures the major development or redevelopment trends for strategic areas of regional interest. It does not have a regulatory authority but provides an overall vision before other development plans and defines an operational framework for action. It is the subject of an implementation decree that reflects its options and invites local authorities to draw up regulatory documents, most often PPASs.
- **PPAS:** Local land use plan: This local planning regulatory tool precisely defines, graphically and literally, how the area in question should be organised. It establishes the permitted uses for each zone, specifying or supplementing the Regional Land Use Plan.
- **BMA:** Brussels Bouwmeester Master architect
- **BMA Newsletter:** this BMA communication tool is used at certain key stages, mainly during the competition phase. Over the years, it has helped to open up the market (visibility and centralisation of calls for tender, which is very practical for design offices), and to build up a very positive and dynamic image of the Brussels architectural scene.
- **Project Lines:** Instrument introduced by the BMA to enable public authorities to jointly draw up a cohesive urban development framework of constraints and ambitions to accompany the sale of property. This restricts speculation, ensures transparent and equal treatment of all potential buyers, and improves the quality of the project that will result from the sale.
- **Urban Ruling:** Advance planning permission decision
- **Research by design:** Integrated since 2016 into the Brussels public authorities, this tool aims to promote the spatial quality of projects, in a very specific way: The drawing is at the heart of the work. Whether formulating the right questions, clarifying the framework of an architectural competition, or improving projects by devising realist counter-proposals, project-based research is always based on a contextualised approach, carried out with all stakeholders involved and working as "upstream" as possible in the procedure.
- **PPP:** Public-Private Partnership
- **Project meeting:** Meeting prescribed by the Brussels Town and Country Planning Code (CoBAT), which may be requested by the applicant before the submission of a permit application. This meeting enables a dialogue between the applicant, the architects, and the issuing authority to correctly steer a project from the outset.

# Czech case : Gallery Vaňkovka – shopping center

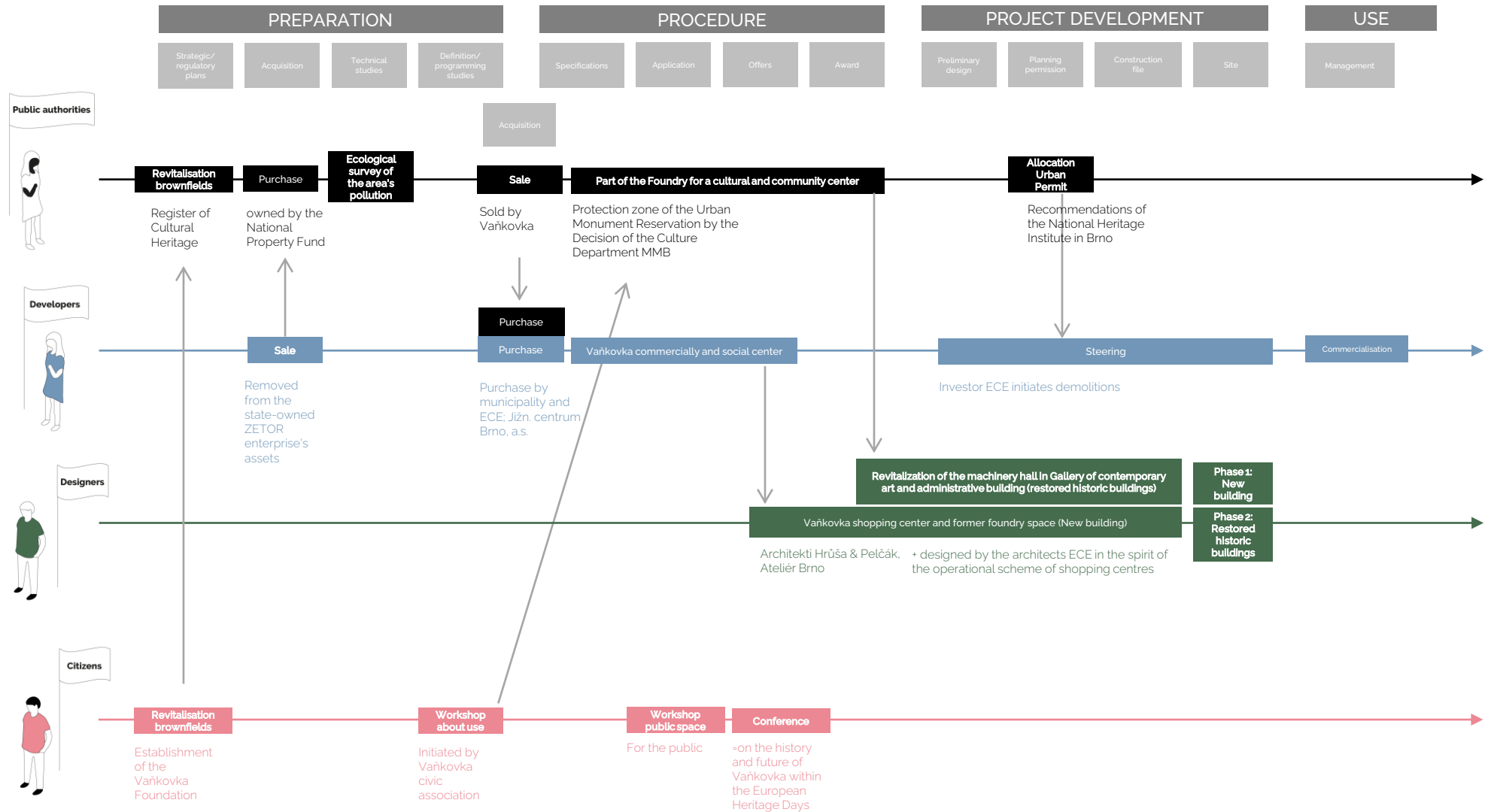
- Construction of a shopping mall in collaboration between public sector and developer to preserve portions of the original industrial structure
- South of the main railway station in Brno, Czech Republic



Photo: <https://www.archiweb.cz/b/rekonstrukce-administrativy-a-strojirny-v-arealu-vankovka>

# Czech case : Gallery Vaňkovka – shopping center

- Timeline



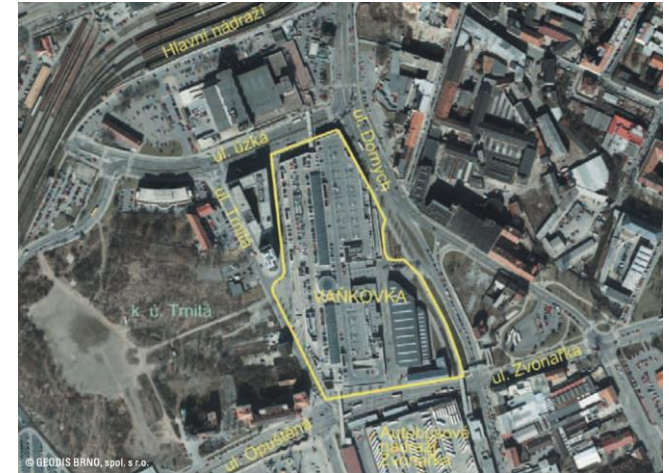
# Czech case : Gallery Vaňkovka – shopping center

- Narrative

The former machine factory was located in the area of today's so-called South Centre between the main railway and bus railway station. In 2003-2005, two listed buildings were renovated and a business and social centre was built.

This large-scale project can be considered a symbol of the revitalisation of brownfields in Brno. After more than 15 years, the urban space has been revitalised here, serving residents and visitors alike and appealing for its diversity. It is a place that has its own face and captures the spirit of the location, which is helped by a well-thought-out composition of commercial sectors, restaurants, furniture, greenery and spaces for social and cultural events.

[https://urbancentrum.brno.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2013\\_Brownfields\\_2013\\_CZ.pdf](https://urbancentrum.brno.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2013_Brownfields_2013_CZ.pdf)





# Czech case : Gallery Vaňkovka – shopping center

- Narrative

The administrative building of the former armory is a work of Brno architecture of the late eighties and early nineties of the 19th century and an exceptional representative of buildings in industrial areas. Decades of purely utilitarian function left its mark on the building with a wooden and brick partitions, walls or broken-down doors where they were simply needed. In addition to the fact that the building was in a desolate state, its original concept disappeared under the influence of these modifications.

The reconstruction doesn't significantly change the original space of the building. The intention was to clean the building of inappropriate interventions, renovate the historic facades and modernize the interiors. The entire reconstruction was conceived as a rehabilitation of the original state.

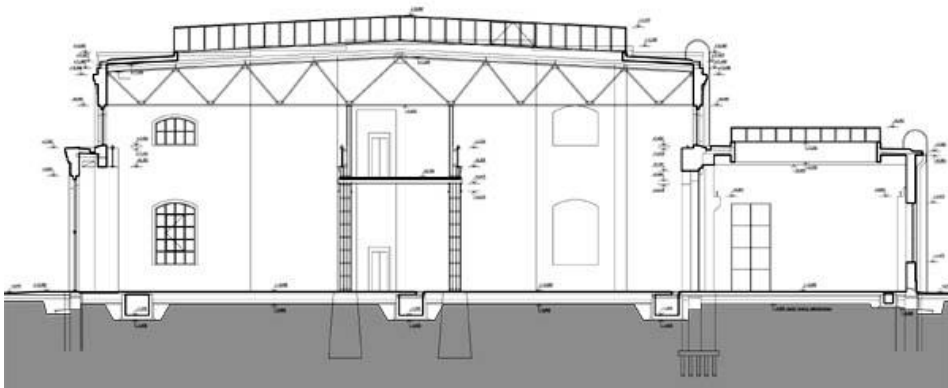


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The exposed masonry facades were sensitively repaired. Both gable facades are treated very soberly, admitting their different role and making the decorated facades stand out.

In the interior, ordinary materials are used (steel frames, concrete floor, etc.). The aim of the authors was to keep as much of the original wooden elements of the ceilings and roof as possible, if they were not destroyed or damaged. The color solution is moderate, shades of gray are complemented by black steel elements, terracotta, concrete, wood floors and beams.

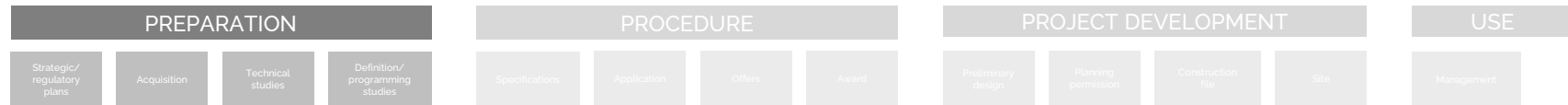
# Czech case : Gallery Vaňkovka – shopping center

- Glossary

- **Vaňkovka Foundation:** (since 1997 Vaňkovka Civic Association) with the aim of supporting the reconstruction and revitalization of the area for commercial, cultural, and educational purposes.
- **Brownfield:** is a property (land, building, premises) that is underused, neglected and may be contaminated. It arises as a remnant of industrial, agricultural, residential, military or other activity. Brownfield cannot be used appropriately and effectively without a process of regeneration. (Definition according to the National Strategy National Strategy for Brownfield Regeneration)
- **Revitalization:** bringing again into activity and prominence

# Questions

- Preparing the ground for high-quality architecture?



## Framework:

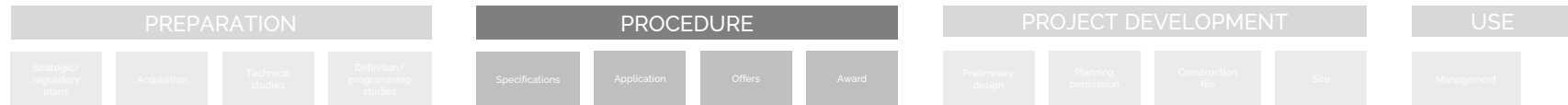
- How to establish high-quality regulatory and strategic plans providing a framework for the project? For example: templates, authorised programme, master plan\*, etc.
- What conditions should be attached to the sale of public land?

## Support tools:

- What tools should be used to ensure that a project is properly defined? For example: conditional sale, project-lines\*, urban ruling\*, research by design\*, etc.

# Questions

- Choosing the right team to deliver a high-quality project.



## Procedure:

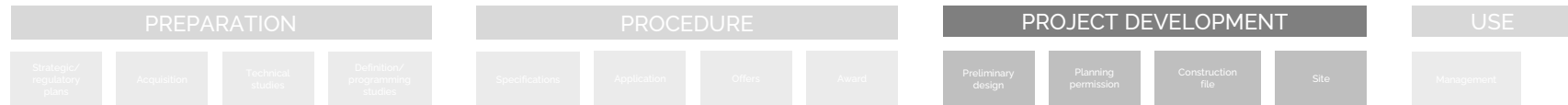
- Choosing the right procedure? Guidelines for choosing a procedure?
- Defining the specifications Award criteria The right balance between price and quality?
- Opening up competition and avoiding working with the same companies time and again?

## Support:

- Providing information on the tender procedure: what channels should be used? Example: BMA\* newsletter in Brussels
- Participating in the award of the contract Involving the people who will subsequently be involved in the project Authorities issuing permits, etc.

# Questions

- Maintaining the quality of the project, from sketch to completion?



Framework:

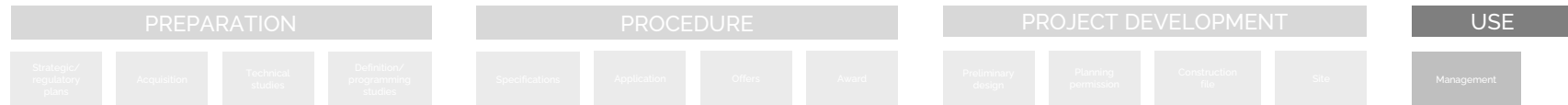
- Preparing to apply for planning permission For example: project meetings\*

Support:

- How much flexibility is given in developing the project? What key figures can be involved in providing support?  
Examples: support committee, urban planning consultant, BMA, etc.

# Questions

- What are the long-term guarantees once the project has been completed?



Framework:

- How do you ensure the quality management of the project? Example: setting conditions for resale

Support:

- What role will the support committee play at the end of the project?



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