THE ODD COUPLE

An educational microcosm of Belgium

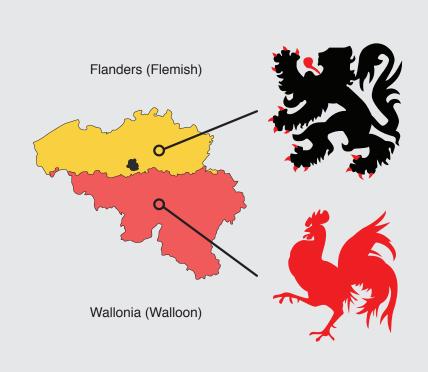
Nobody misses the irony that the country which is headquarters to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and whose national motto is "Unity makes Strength" is itself, on the brink of breaking up into independent states.

Belgium has a long history of internal social, political, and economic struggle that can be observed through the scope of language. Belgium is ethnically divided into four groups: the Dutch-speaking Flemings in the north, Francophone Walloons in the south, small German cantons in the east, and the bilingual capital of Brussels.

The socio-political structure of Belgium, a whole containing disparate parts, serves as the catalyst for The Odd Couple: two individual secondary schools in Brussels, one Dutch-speaking, the other French-speaking, sharing the same site. The common element shared among the two schools is the public realm. Rather than shunning the public, the public is encouraged to actively engage in activities within the building. In this way the common spaces throughout the building take on the role of serving the needs and desires of both schools and the public, resulting in the necessity for dialogue and cooperation. By filtering program through a socio-political lens, a "school" typology emerges that emphasizes interaction and extramural learning.



Belgium is home to the EU and NATO, but may itself cease to exist in the near future...





This is largely due to animosity and competing interests.

The Industrial Revolution made Wallonia economically strong due to coal mining and steelmaking. In contrast, the economy of Flanders in the north was based in agriculture, and they had comparatively little political strength. he Walloons flexed their economic and political might in part by banning the Dutch language in government and education, thus limiting the upward 1930 Flanders and Wallonia legally became unilingual regions Beginning in the 1960s, through a series of constitutional reforms governing official language use, Belgium has transformed from a unitary state to a federal state with regional and community governments operating under a 1962 Formal linguistic borders established along with elaborate rules protecting 1968 Student unrest resolved by splitting Catholic University of Louvain into two separate universities - one Dutch and the other French. 1970 Flemish and Francophone cultural councils established with authority in matters of language and culture. Each of the three economic regions - Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels - was granted a significant measure of 1984 German language community established 1989 Constitution amended to give additional responsibilities to the regions and communities. The most sweeping change was the devolution of educational responsibilities to the community level. As a result, the regions and own legislative assembly and executive. 1992 Belgium ratified Maastricht Treaty on European Union. 1993 Constitution reform changed Belgium from a unitary state into a federal state. As Wallonia's heavy industries began to decline due to increased competition and labor costs, so did Wallonia's influence. At the same time, finance, nigh-tech and service industries began to grow in Flanders, and today Flanders has the majority of population and affluence. 2010 Belgian Premier Yves Leterme's government collapsed after negotiation broke down to resolve a long-simmering dispute between Dutch and 2010 Belgium voters gave a stunning win in general elections to the New Flemish Alliance, a separatist party that wants Dutch and French-speakers to end years of acrimonious linguistic disputes, or go their own way and break up

1830 A provisional government declared independence from the Netherlands.

1831 Constitutional monarchy established.

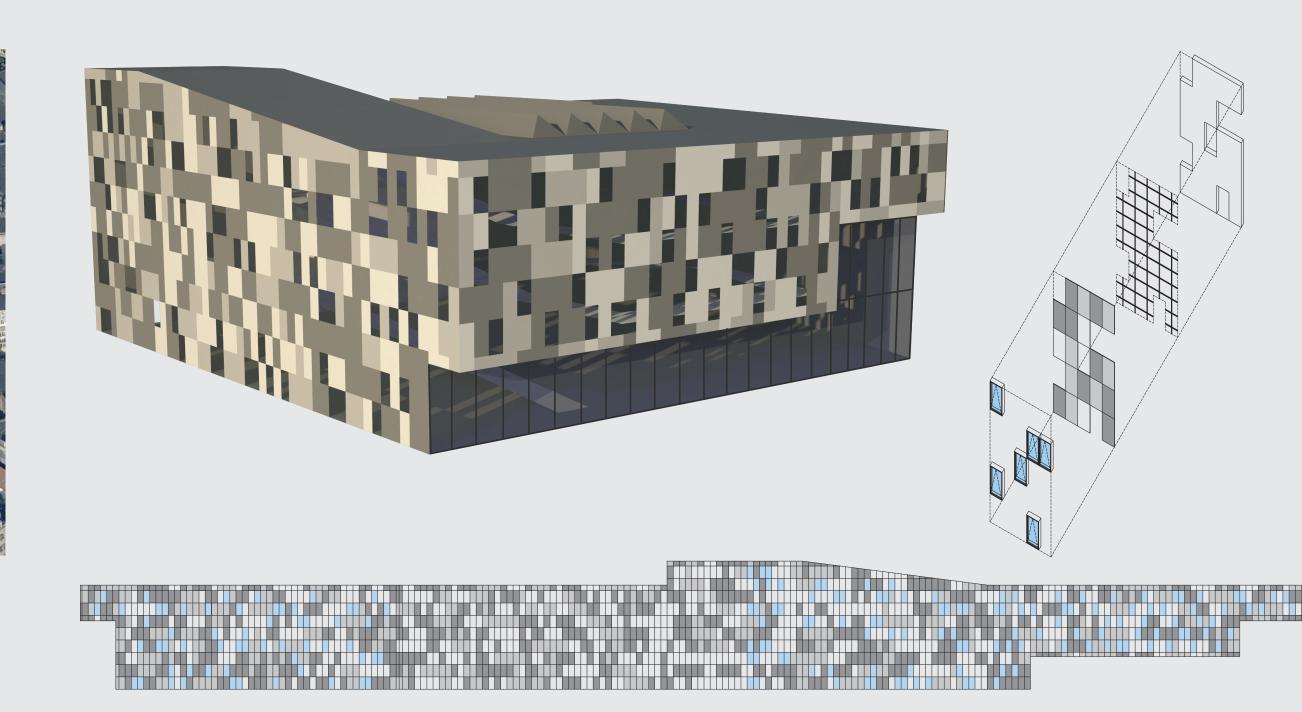
Over time regional autonomy has been encouraged.

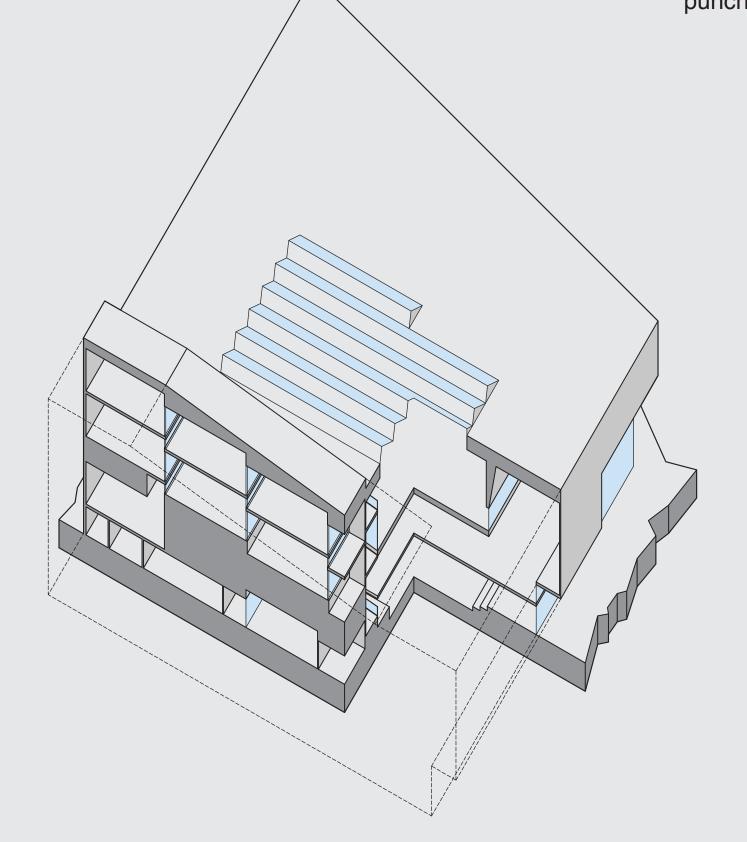


The project takes place in Brussels, Belgium.

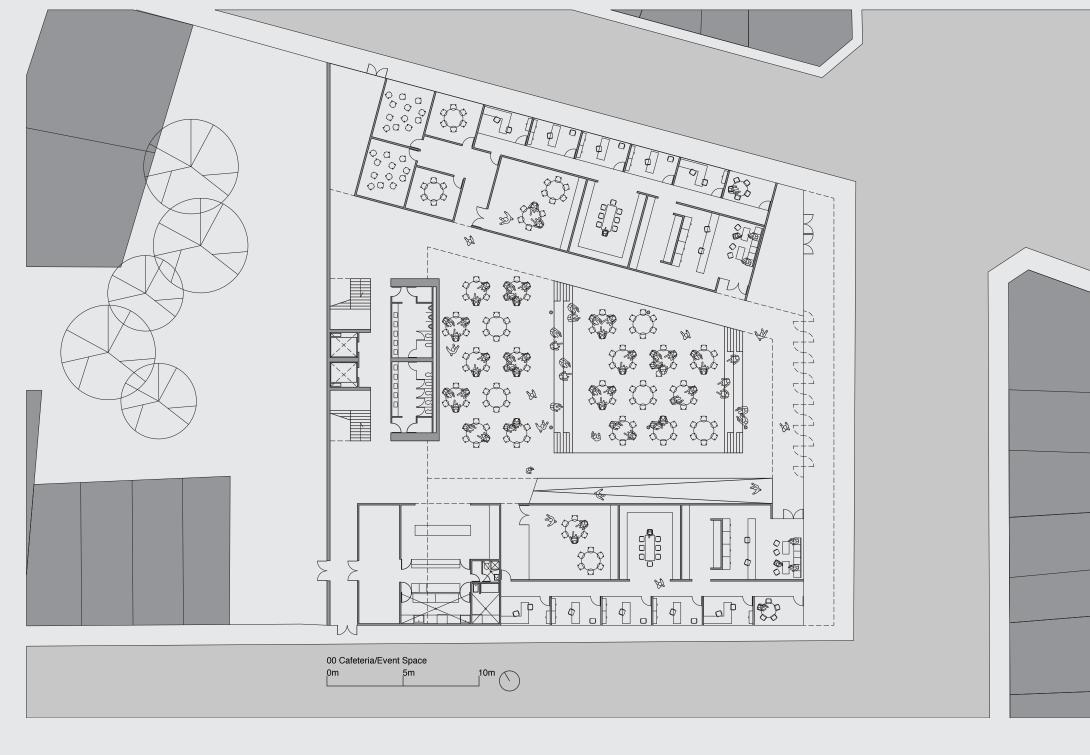


The facade is conceived as a pixelated curtain that lifts up to form an entry and allow the public generous views inside. The random pattern allows for windows to occur where dictated by the constantly changing levels inside. A single unit dimension is adopted for both the panel system and punched openings to ensure maximum flexibility.

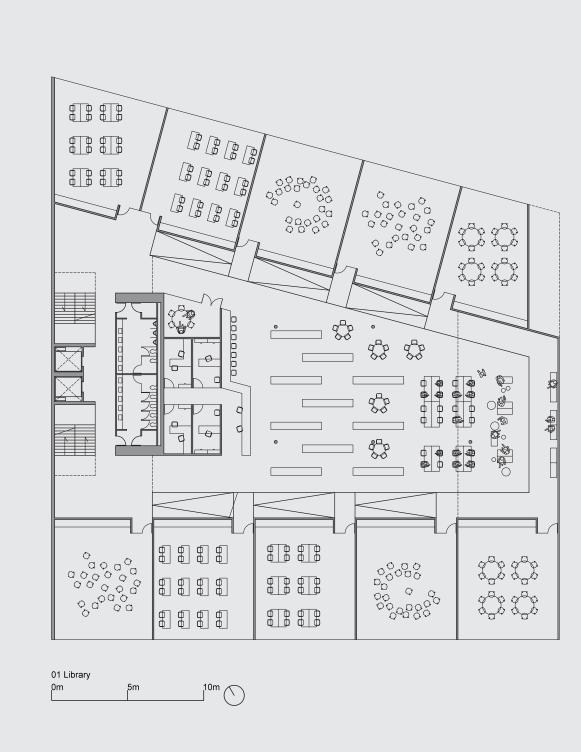


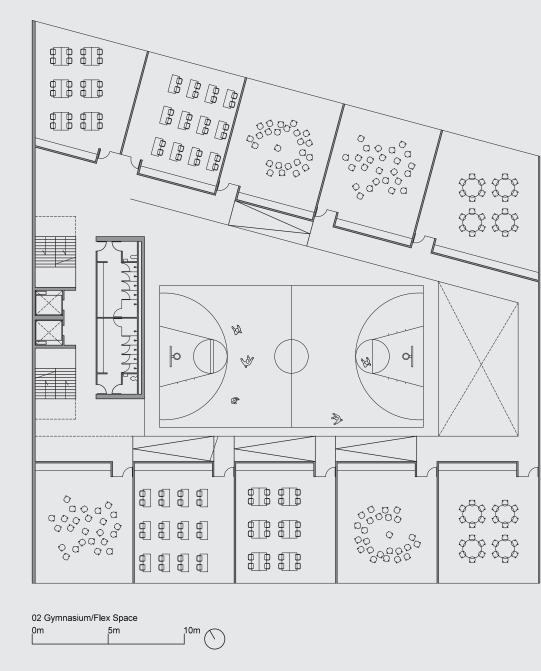


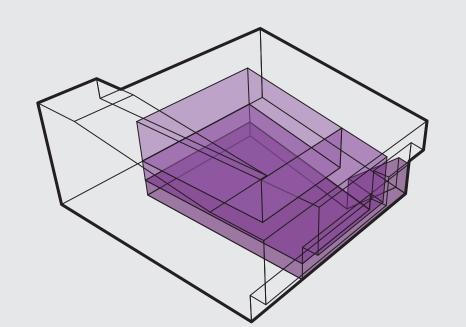
The classrooms are arranged in a manner to allow for indirect views to spaces above and below.



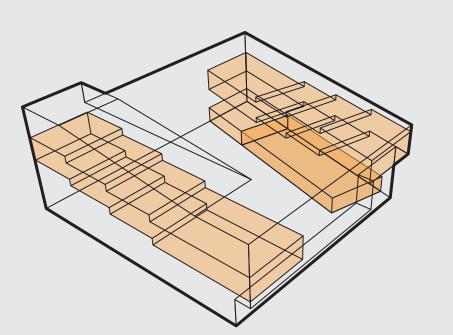




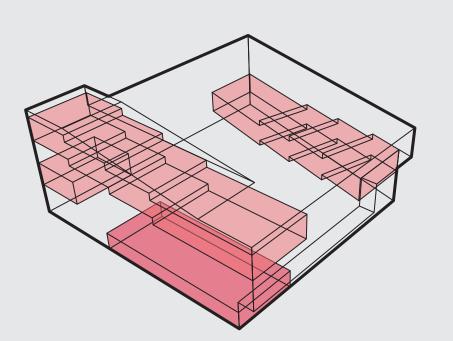




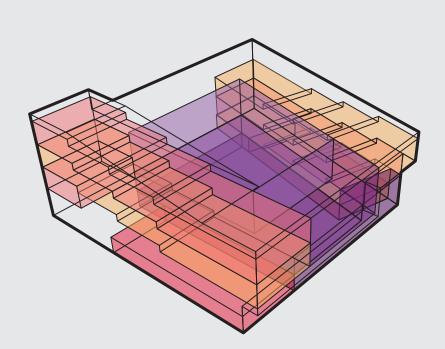
Common spaces shared with the public: Cafeteria/event space, library and gymnasium/flex space



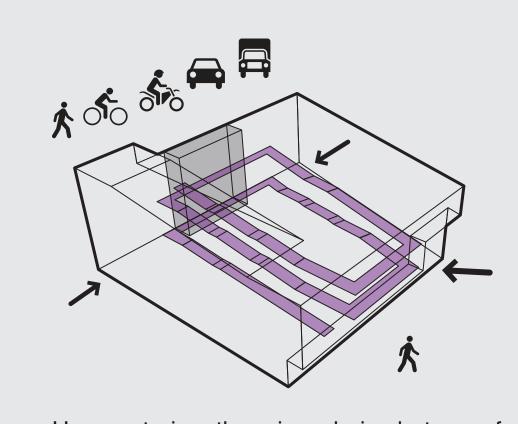
Classrooms and administration



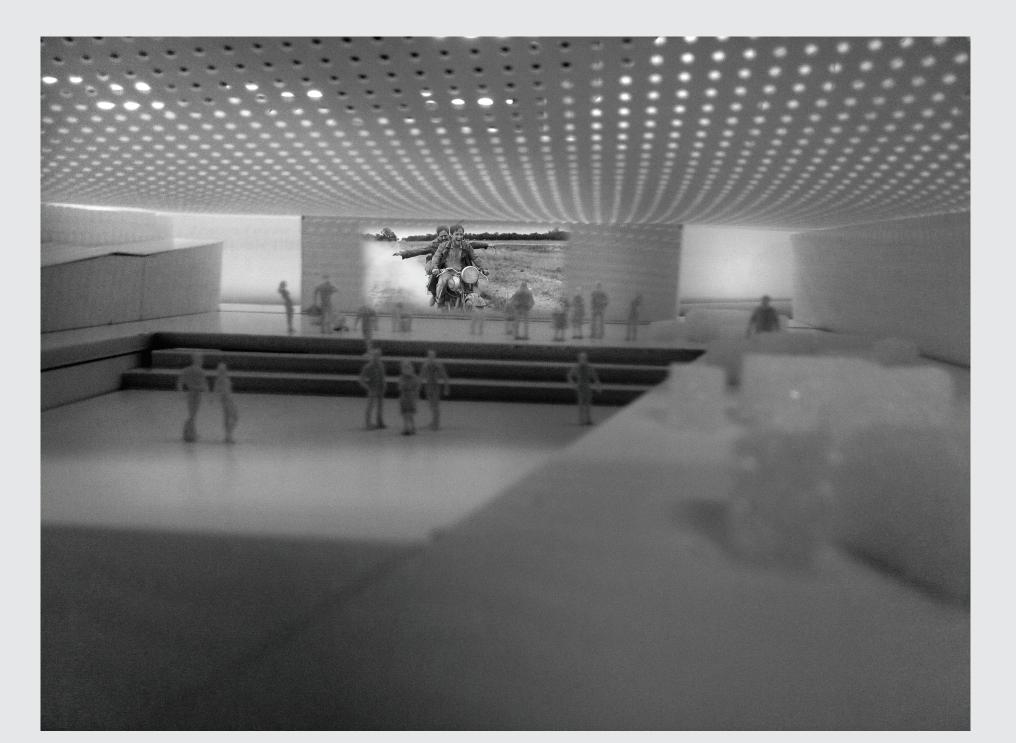
More classrooms and administration



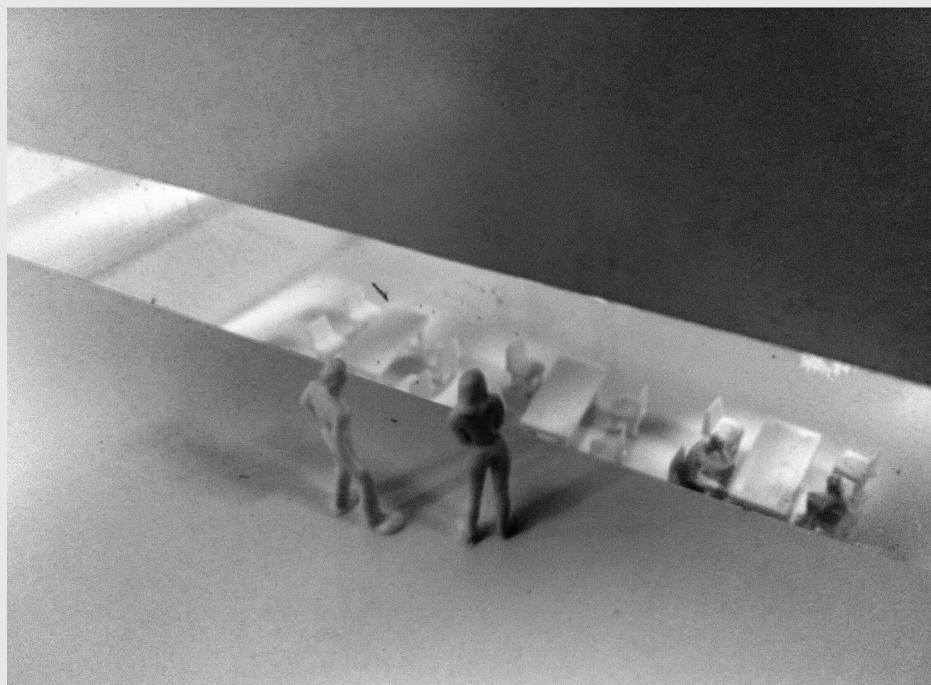
The spiraling nature of the classrooms accomodates change over time should the size of one school change in relation to the other.



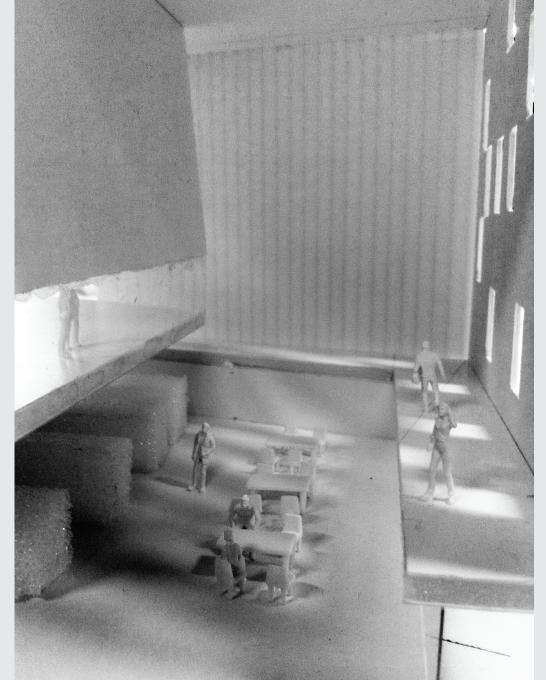
Upon entering, there is a choice between fast circulation with stairs and elevators, or slow circulation that wraps around the common spaces.



The cafeteria opens to the street and may also accomodate other activities such as film screenings or live music.



The gymnasium sits above the library and may be used for large scale art installations in addition to school-wide dodgeball tournaments.



The library's reading room.