CASE STUDY: ECUB PROJECT
(rehabilitation of an old veterinary surgeon school into an urban "Eco-Centre", Brussels).

SECTOR : Holistic
COUNTRY : Belgium

BACKGROUND
At the beginning of the 20th century, the king of Belgium Léopold 1th decided to construct a veterinary school in the Cureghem's district, in Brussels. The principal architect, Seroen, inspired himself from the Hanover veterinary school and its suburban plan. A homogeneous unit of 20 buildings was then built on a 4 hectares' site. It was inaugurated in 1910 with the Brussels universal exposition.

As the veterinary school has been incorporated in the University of Liège, the school has to move, and the site remains abandoned since 1990. The extent of the site and its particular structure do not allow any easy re-conversion.

Finally, in 1998, a big Belgian publicity agency, called AIR, get interested in the site and decided to establish its offices in it. Nevertheless, the agency was aware of the need of a global project proposal for the reassignment of the whole site, park and buildings. In fact it would have been unhappy to dismember such a homogeneous and remarkable architectural unit. Then, it was decided to establish there an "Eco-centre".

The environmental "Eco-centre" combines on the site numbers of different functions. The synergy between them should allow the centre to contribute to the district's sustainable development, in a social way too. The developers want to integrate in an existing real estate complex, a diversity of functions, which would mutually reinforced themselves to impulse a new dynamism in the district.


Old veterinary school, Cureghem, Brussels

The project will have to integrate the following dimensions:

- **A balanced articulation between ecological, social and economical development.**
  The action in favour of environment will be thought in an integrated approach, taking account of the socio-economic characteristics of which it forms part. This urban Eco-Center must also procure a social and economic benefit
- **To promote sustainable development by local tangible actions able to spread their positive effects.**
- **The concrete development of eco-construction axis in building's construction and restoration.**
- **A multi-functionality project that could lead to the district's revitalization.**
  Various activities (offices, social housing, companies' headquarters, sport infrastructure, congress rooms, etc.) are planned in this urban area, leading to a diversified occupation in space and time (diurnal/nocturnal). Taking the districts characteristics and in particular the commercial activities into account, any commercial activities will be developed on the site.

- **A multi-actors partnership.** The project requires the mobilization of the public, private and associative sectors.
  Concerning the public sector. For a city like Brussels, different authority's levels must be implicated and are already supporting the project : the communal, regional, but also federal and European ones.
  Concerning the private sector. Companies which are active in the environmental waste processing or energy sector and companies known as "Eco-Dynamic", (certified like such, or making notable efforts in favour of the environment) are particularly implied in the project.
  Concerning the associative sector. Environmental, socio-economic and socio-cultural associations, as well as consumers associations might be involved in the project.
- **Promote public transport and urban mobility.** Eco-Center takes mobility/accessibility aspects into account, in particular to answer the city congestion problems. A notable element is also the proximity of the Midi station
- **Provide information and promote "Eco" principles.**
- **Develop a scientific research axis ("new technologies" aspects in sustainable development).**

INDICATORS

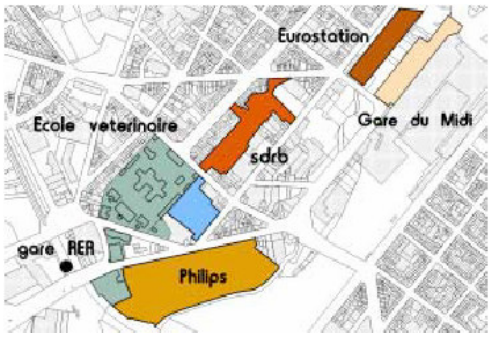
Until now, there aren't any genuine indicators established for this project.
However, several investigations and studies were carried out on the zone:

- *Social studies:* district inhabitants' interviews were carried out to know their needs, their wishes but also the image the site conveys, etc. ...
- *Economic surveys:* investigations were led to identify the potentiality of such a site located in a very economically underprivileged area, etc. ...
- *Environmental studies*: researches on new Eco-Construction techniques, mobility investigations, etc. were done.

Moreover, to guarantee the project's sustainable objectives, a total co-administration of the Eco-Center will be formalized between the project's developer and the users of the site. All the future tenants or owners will have to respect the established sustainable development *charter*.

Potentialities of the site
The site of "the Old School Veterinary surgeon of Cureghem" presents various aspects, particularly interesting for this kind of project :

- A large dimension (4 ha), number of exploitable buildings as well as public spaces.
- The possibility to add new built entities to the legally protected restored ones
- The situation at a walking distance from the "Midi station" and the various existing possibilities of public transport
- The situation in one of the most underprivileged area of the Brussels-capital region, at the hinge between an housing area and an industrial park (challenge for the district)
- The area is designated like "interest area" in the regional plan of ground assignment (PRAS) of Brussels
- At the communal level, there is a district contract ("Goujons-Révision") on the area registered to the Communal Plan of Development (PCD). Then it profits from a particular revival policy.
- The prestige of the site, its historical and architectural interest



Old veterinary school of Cureghem situation.

EVALUATION

As the project is just beginning, we could just formulate some practical remarks and observations.

- All the different authorities' levels concerned by the project have been involved in it. The project is then supported by a real political will which could play a significant role in the operation's success.
- The success of the project can partially be evaluated regarding the infatuation of some companies known as "Eco" to belong to the project.
- To ensure social cohesion with the district, the project's drivers consider as a necessity local associations and NGO's to be present on the site.

<u>Some indirect consequences:</u>

- To maintain the park, there will be a need of human resources. It was then decided to set up a formation to give the districts inhabitants the possibility to pursue this job.
- The non achieved Cureghem's project, already lead to other development projects in the district : HOT, PHILIPS, EUROSTATION. One could see there the trigger effect that was expected.

BENCHMARK DATA

The project data were rather based on personal experts' experiments into different fields.

ARTIM is the contraction of ART and IMMOBILIER (real estate), it's a company of two shareholders, AIR (a great Belgian advertising agency) and J-M GHISLAIN.

Thanks to his environmental preoccupations and his experiment in buildings and town planning J-M GHISLAIN could develop the project. He has constituted an office of experts in various fields.

Moreover, he has developed a close cooperation with the IBGE, (the Brussels institute for the environmental management) that includes many specialists in environmental fields (air quality, waste management...) and in assessment methods (consequences on the neighbourhood population...)

LESSONS LEARNT

The large dimension and the particular structure of the site do not allow easy re-conversion.

For this kind of project, 2 characteristics must be studied in-depth:

- The financial feasibility.
- The permeability of the site to the district.

The financial feasibility aims to combine strong and profitable economic functions with weaker functions like equipments and housing.

The permeability is considered both on the human and physical point of view.

TRANSFERABILITY

The contextualisation of such a project is obviously very significant. One particular aspect of this kind of sustainable development is the built site singularity: high patrimonial, cultural, architectural value in a very underprivileged district. In this case, the verification of the two criteria stated above seems to be very significant.

IMPACT ON SUSTAINABILITY AREAS

Environmental: MEDIUM (Eco-construction : used techniques but also promotion and information).
Social: pretends to be HIGH (revitalization of the district, active public participation, development of services, functions mixed, restoration of a built site of high cultural value, etc.).
Economic: pretends to be High (re-dynamisation of the district, indirect consequences).

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FÉDÉRATION BRUXELLOISE DE L'URBANISME
The renovation of the site of the old veterinary surgeon school,
Cahier de l'urbanisme Bruxellois, may 2002.

Ecology		**Economy**		**Social aspects**	
Are emissions to air, water and soil within the restrictions set locally and internationally? Are the emissions decreasing?		Is the cost/effectiveness and/or cost/benefits of the system reasonable compared to other systems? Compared to other needs in the city and to political goals?		Has the planning and decision-making for the infrasystem been done in a democratic and participative way?	
Management of the site to reduce them (not enormous effect).		Financial feasibility studies.		-Social enquiries. -Public brainstormings	
Is the use of natural resources reasonable compared to other comparable systems? Is the use decreasing? (e.g. fossil fuels, water, phosphorus, potassium)		Are the citizens willing to pay for the services offered? Are the services affordable to all citizens?		Is the function and the consequences of the system transparent to and accepted by the citizens? Is the system promoting a responsible behaviour by the Citizens?	
-Monitoring of the energy consumption. -"Eco"-construction.		-Social housing. -Free public 's equipments.		-Inhabitant formations. -"Eco" charter	
Is the system allowing a reasonable bio-diversity with regard to the kind of area studied? Is the bio-diversity increasing?		Is the organisation(s) that finance, maintain and operates the system effective?		Is the system safe to use for the citizens? (hazards, health, well-being)	
Rehabilitation of the existing park but not the main goal		Too early to give comments		Lot of efforts in this direction (well-being)	
Is the system more or less sustainable than a conventional system regarding ecology?		Is the system more or less sustainable than a conventional system regarding economy?		Is the system more or less sustainable than a conventional system regarding social aspects?