

SINTROPHER* PARTNER SEMINAR

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INDIRECT EFFECTS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT ON LAND USE:

TWO LEGAL INNOVATIONS IN BELGIUM

Pierre LACONTE, President Foundation for the Urban Environment, Honorary Secr. General, UITP.

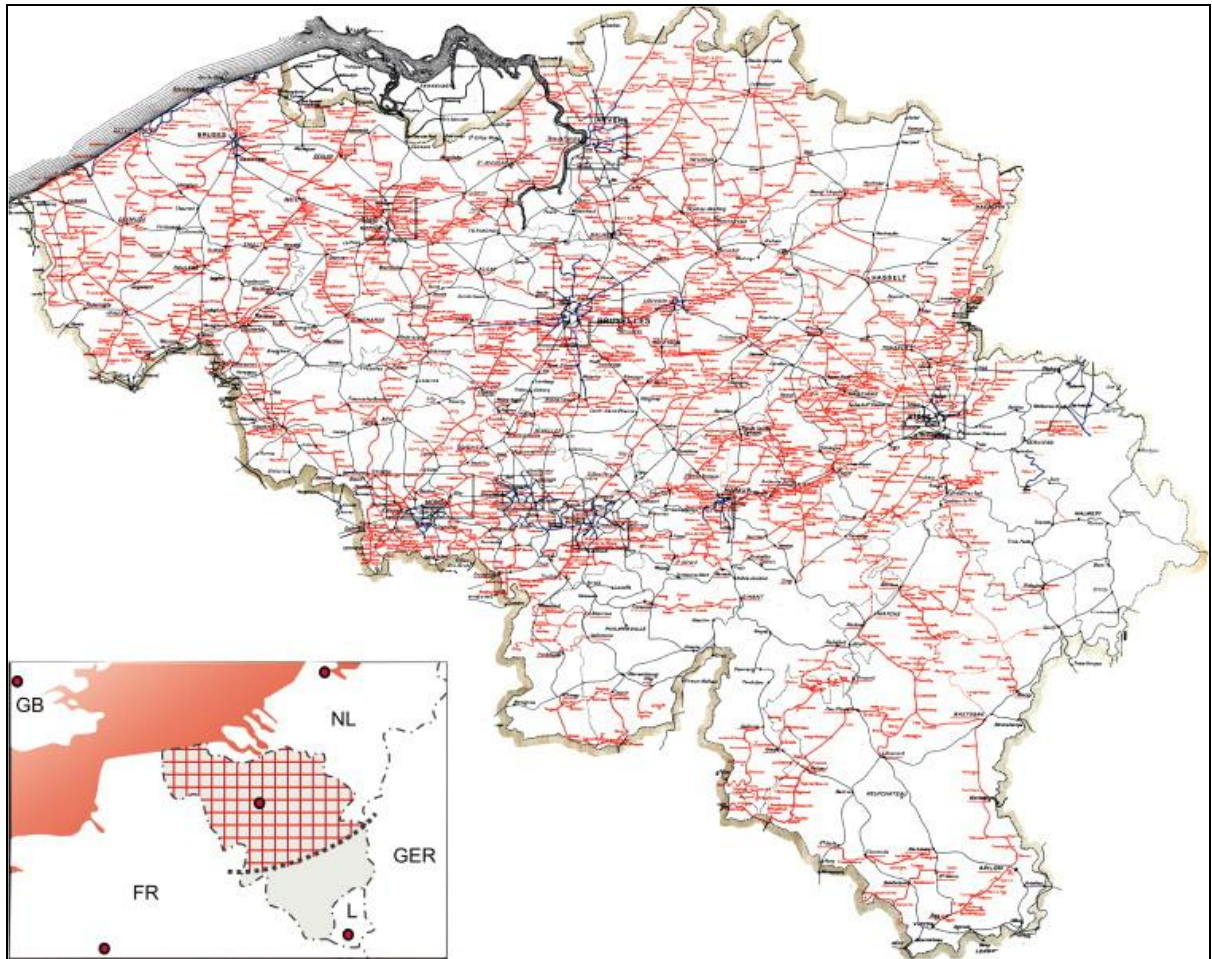
The paper presents two case studies of legal measures that resulted in the linking of public transportation and land use: a Law allowing cheap commuter rail travel for workers all over Belgium and a Decree fixing minimum level of access by public transport throughout Flanders.

1. THE VANDERVELDE LAW OF 1869 ON CHEAP COMMUTER TRANSPORT AND ITS INDIRECT EFFECT ON NATIONAL LAND USE.

The law provided that private railways (heavy rail and light rail – 1 m. gauge) had to deliver low cost commuter passes, which were made available exclusively to workers (POLASKY 1995).

Effect of the law.

Workers continued to live in their villages instead of congregating into workers' slums (Mietkazernen, banlieues rouges, etc.). Village culture and traditions remained active. Illustration 1 shows the railway and light rail network in 1929 (DE BLOCK 2011).



ILL. 1. Map of the system.

Density gradually increased around the railway and light rail stations and stops. New settlements developed around stations, such as the coastal resort of De Haan. 50 hectares of State land were leased (on a 90 year concession) to a development company and became a garden town, designed by British and German landscape architects. Later resort cities were developed along the same coastline. The steam propelled light rail (1 m gauge) lines were also used for freight, parcels, postal services etc. **The network reached up to 8.000 km of long distance and local rail.**

The system faded away with the growth of the automobile but had a lasting effect on land use in Belgium when compared with neighbouring countries.



ILL. 2. The light rail vehicles (1 m gauge) were also used for freight, package delivery, postal services etc.

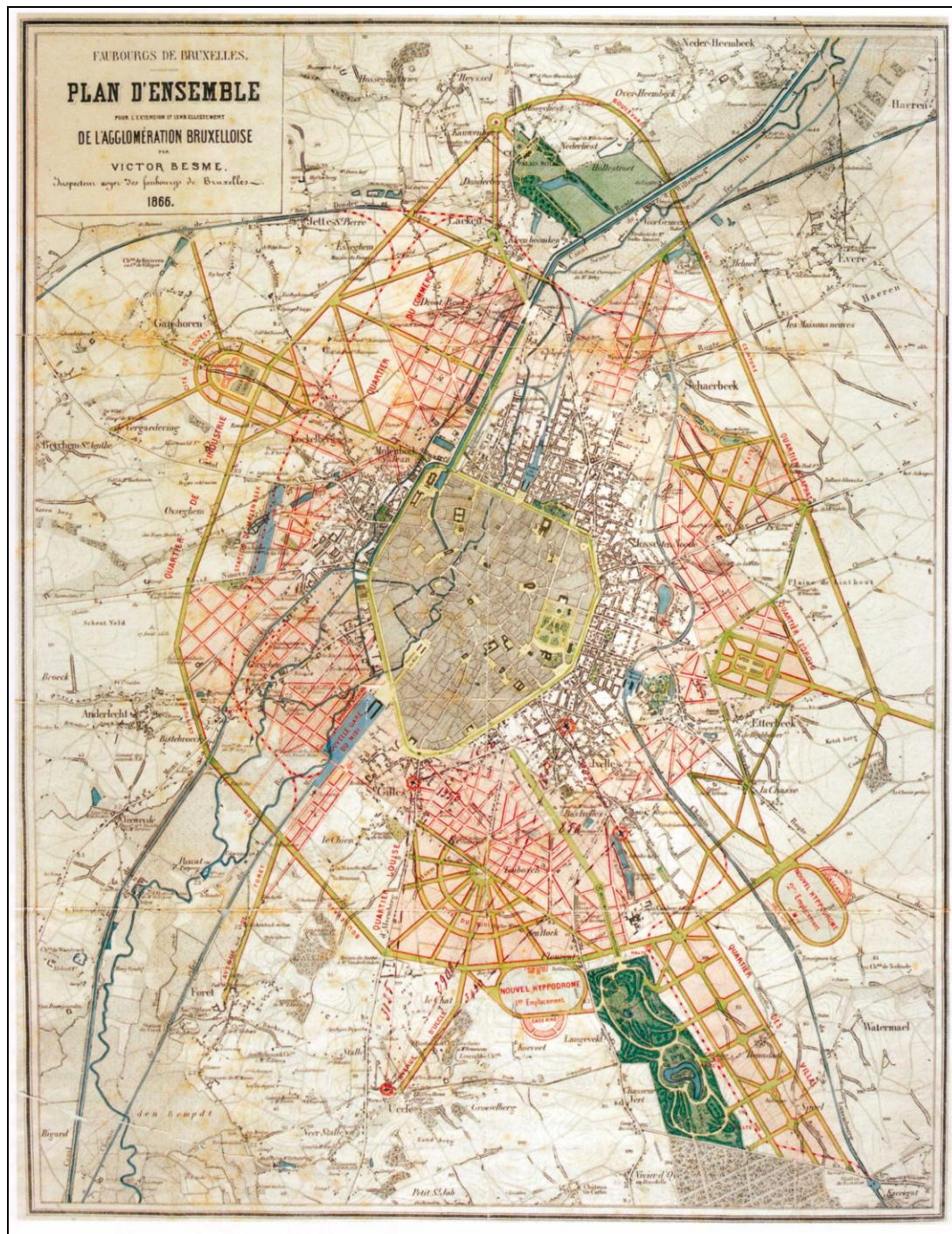


ILL. 3. New settlements developed around stations, such as the coastal resort of De Haan.



ILL. 4. De Haan. 50 ha of State land were leased (on a 90 year concession) to a development company and became a garden town, designed by British and German landscape architects.

In the case of the largest cities, while Paris was redeveloped by Haussmann in a centralised and systematic fashion, basically using three types of apartment buildings, Brussels and Antwerp developed in a decentralised fashion, varying according to the individual municipalities and developers in charge of infrastructure. This allowed greater diversity, ranging from high density-low rise terraces, with each house being different from its neighbours, to garden cities built in the town and country planning tradition.



ILL. 5. Brussels Master plan by Victor Besme. While Paris was redeveloped by Haussmann in a centralised and systematic fashion, basically using three types of apartment buildings, Brussels developed in a decentralised fashion, varying according to the individual municipalities and developers in charge of infrastructure (LACONTE 2007).



ILL. 6. Terrace housing, closed blocks (Ixelles) © Google Maps 2013.



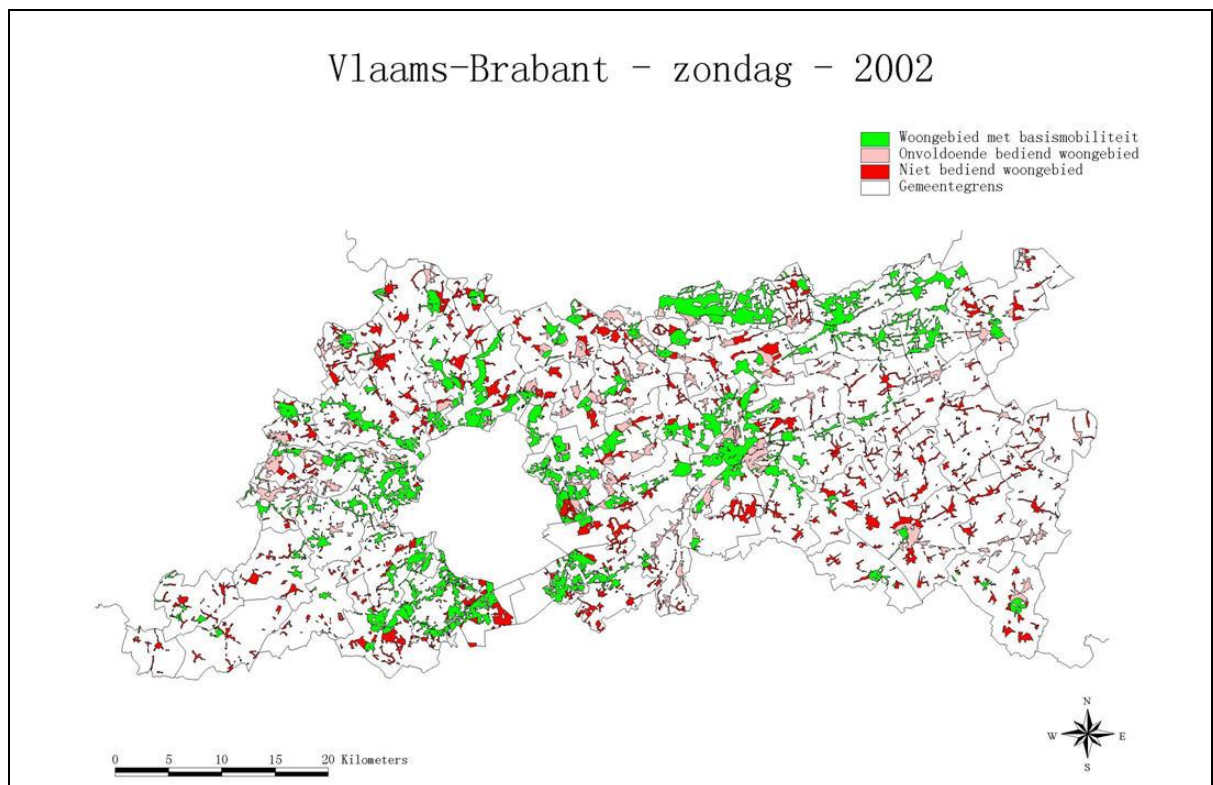
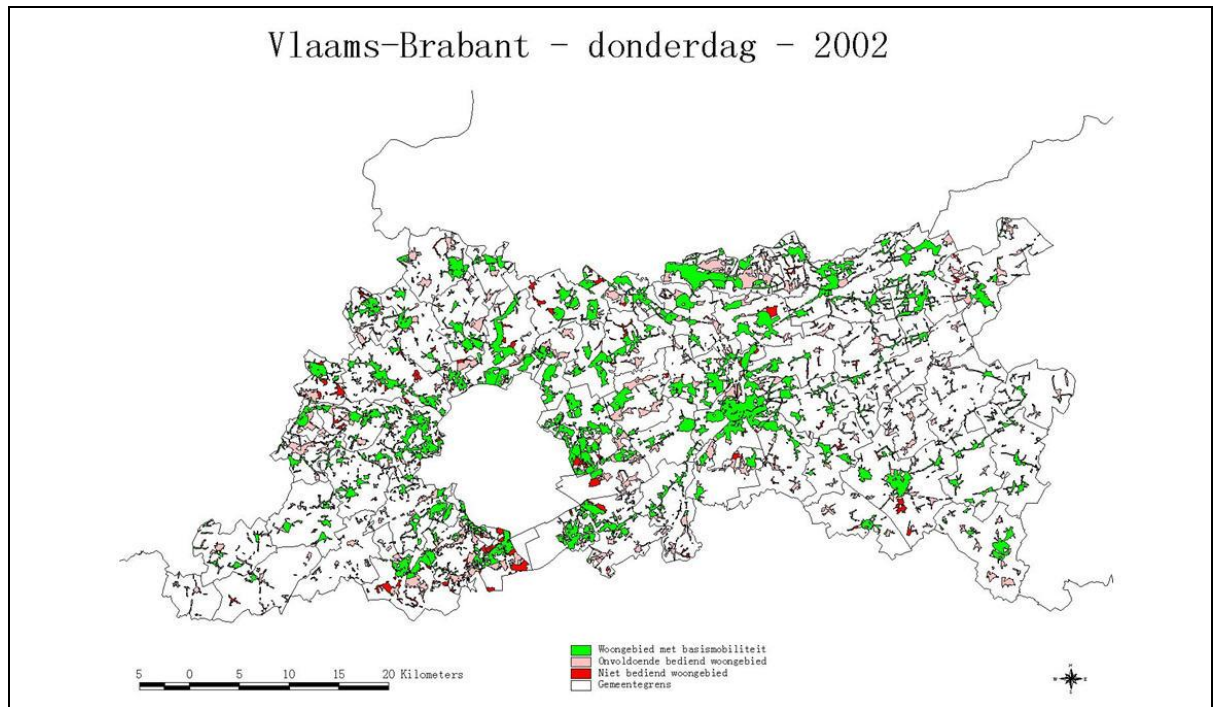
ILL. 7. Garden city in the British & German tradition (Floreal). © vincent duseigne / Genval, janvier 2005 - PHOTOS TCHORSKI.

The 1958 Brussels World Exhibition provided the occasion to develop the road network, while surface public transport was not modernised and went into decline. The 1962 Law on planning made the *laissez-faire* approach in both urban and rural areas official. (LACONTE 2012).

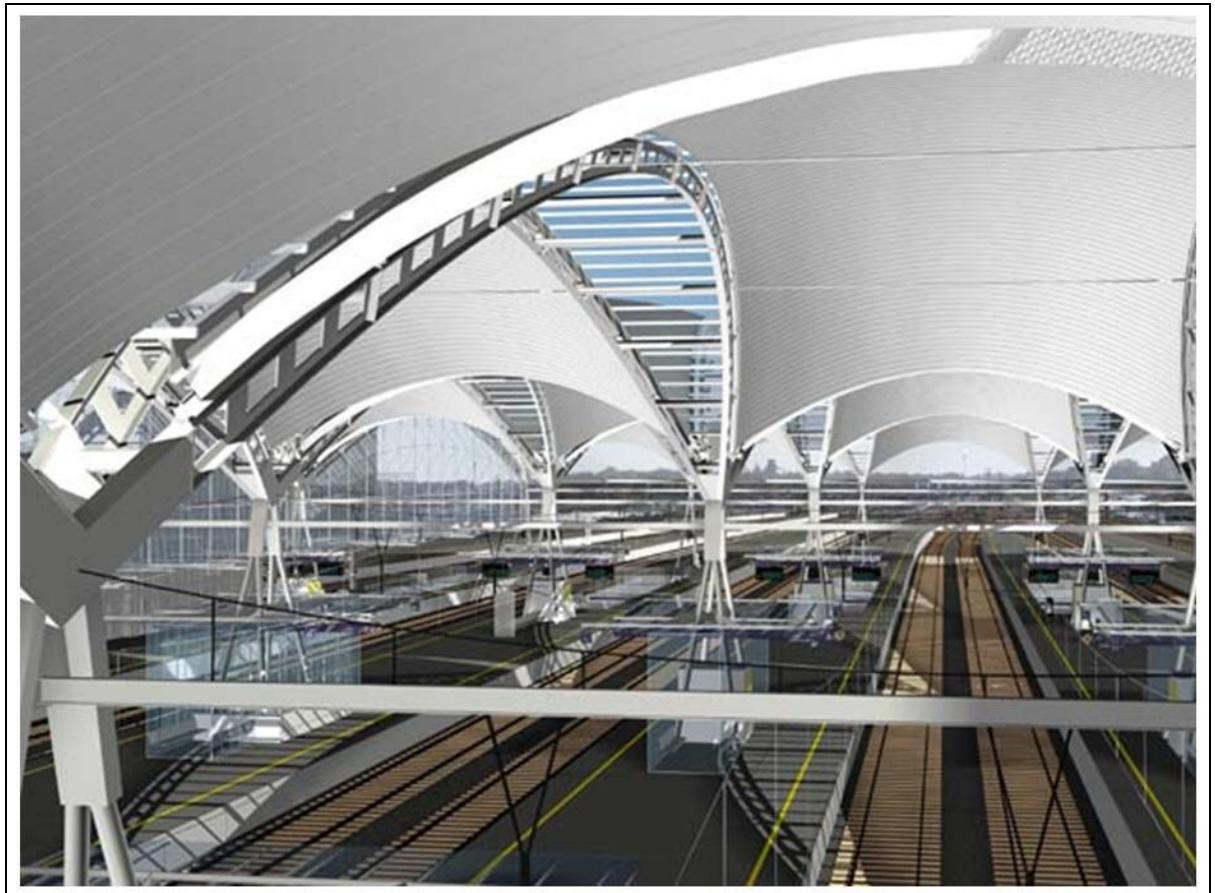
2. THE STEVAERT DECREE OF 2001 AND ITS INDIRECT EFFECTS ON LAND USE.

The Decree was based on a set of maps covering the entire territory of the Flemish Region which classified the existing settlements (cities, villages and hamlets) into green, yellow and red categories according to the quality of access to public transport services, on workdays and at

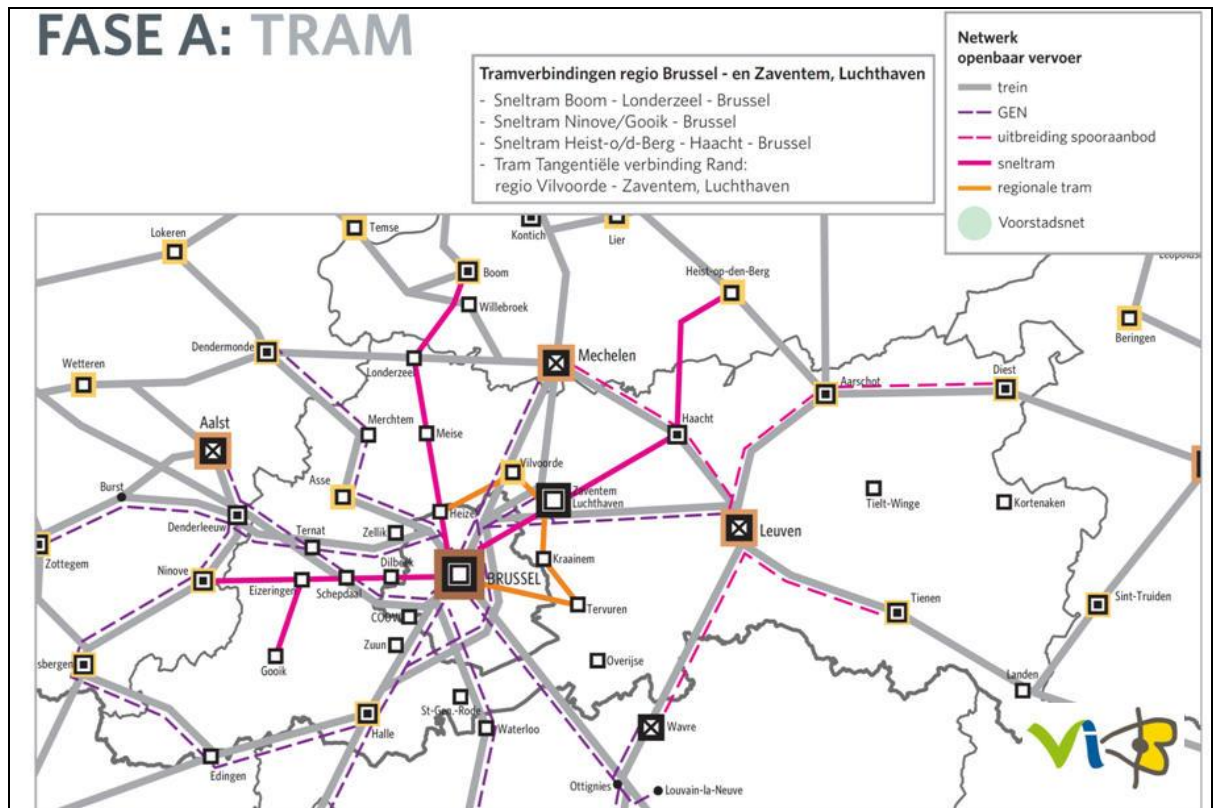
week-ends. It compelled the transport operators to increase their level of service (red had to become green), but only to existing settlements. New settlements were authorised only if the public transport service met the target. The indirect effect has been that no new estates unconnected to public transport have been built and that the empty spaces have gradually been filled.



ILL. 8 a & b. Maps included in the Decree (weekdays and Sundays). The Decree was based on a set of maps covering the entire territory of the Flemish Region which classified the existing settlements (cities, villages and hamlets) into green, yellow and red categories according to the quality of access to public transport services, on workdays and at week-ends (STEVAERT 2003).



ILL. 9. Station improvements (renovated station of Louvain/Leuven, architect Philippe Samyn). The public transport modes covered by the Decree ranged from railway stations to collective vans (STEVAERT 2003).



ILL. 10. Four new tramlines are included in the 2012 programme of De Lijn for the area around Brussels (JACOBS 2013).

The system created by the Decree worked well at first, but changes in the political coalition from centre left to centre right have given rise to exceptions, most recently (April 2013) in the village of Keerbergen, where the municipality has authorised an estate on land to be crossed by one of the four new tramlines in the programme.

CONCLUSION.

This paper sought briefly to present two case studies of legal measures that resulted in the linking of public transportation and land use: the 1869 Law allowing cheap commuter rail travel for workers all over Belgium and the 2001 Decree fixing minimum level of access by public transport throughout Flanders. Both had a lasting impact on land use and the general improvement of public transport access both to urban and to rural areas. It could be usefully compared with legal measures that had similar effects in other countries, such as the French “Versement transport” (1973), which allowed municipalities to levy a contribution by employers to finance public transport and led to a remarkable development of light rail all over the country.

BIO

Pierre Laconte has Doctorates in Law and in Economics from Louvain University and is Dr h.c. of Edinburgh's Napier University. He was one of the three planners in charge of the Louvain University "Groupe Urbanisme Architecture". This team was entrusted in 1969 with the planning and architectural coordination of the new university town of Louvain-la-Neuve near Brussels, on the model of the historic town of Louvain. It is now a major urban growth pole south of Brussels. It has many green features and its centre is entirely pedestrian. It received the Abercrombie Award of the International Union of Architects UIC. For details of his publications see www.ffue.org.

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*SINTROPHER – "Sustainable transport for North-West Europe's periphery". The focus of Sintropher, a partnership project led by Prof. Sir Peter Hall, University College London, as part of the INTERREG IV EU Programme, is to assess and promote new or improved tram services, linked to national rail systems or regional airports as one way to improve access into and out of regions geographically peripheral within the context of North-West Europe.