

FOUNDATION FOR THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

President's Progress report 12 December 2016

1. OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE

The Foundation for the Urban Environment (FFUE) is a permanent “charitable institution of public interest” authorized by Royal Decree of August 8th 1999 (Belgian Official Journal October 1st 1999)
http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/FFUE_StatutsComplets-2013.pdf

Its objective is to promote the urban environment through conferences and debates, publications and newsletters, occasional briefings and « think tank » activities (as opposed to commercial consultancy) .

The FFUE focuses in particular on the interface and synergy between:

1. Land use and planning, including cultural heritage conservation and improvement.
2. Transport and mobility
3. Environment, at global and local level (global climate/energy/resources policies, local clean soil, water & air, recycling etc.).

Its board is composed of the President P. Laconte and members C. Lasserre, C. van den Hove, E. Gessler and B. Laconte. Its founding scientific advisors have been Nobel Prize Prof. Ilya Prigogine (who passed away in 2003), Prof. H. Bourdeau (ULB) and A. Berger (ULB).

2. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Since 1999 the FFUE sponsors regular lunch debates around its three objectives focusing on “City and Society” at the Brussels Cercle Royal Gaulois artistique et littéraire (some 150 lunch debates and 250 guest speakers in total). Minutes are available on www.ffue.org.

In 2000, in line with its objective of linking land use to urban heritage, it co-organised the Bologna International Exhibition “The Other Modern – The Traditional City and its Architecture in the 20th Century – Between past, present and future” and the International Conference on the same subject in the context of Bologna 2000 European Cultural Capital. This exhibition travelled to Berlin and to Strasbourg in 2001. See <http://www.ffue.org/?s=skira>.

In 2001, in line with its objective of linking Land use with mobility and environment, it organised in New York, in collaboration with the World Bank, the Conference “Cities on the Move: Towards Sustainable Urban Development” and, in Brussels, the Conference “Pôles de développement ferrés et urbains” (Rail induced urban development).

In 2002, the FFUE was a partner in Proyecto Cities, an exploration of best practices in urban planning by Fundacion Metropoli, which culminated in the Saragossa “Cities and Regions Summit: smart land, smart cities”. It produced a “Charter of Environmentally Sustainable Development”.

From 2003, it organised yearly conferences and events related to the application of its objectives to Belgian issues in Urban development, mobility and environment. These activities are reflected in the majority of its publications (see below). Two publications cover global/local environmental issues: *Climate Change, Energy Shortage, Biodiversity Loss* (Vienna: Club of Rome-EU 2011) and *Sustainable Cities: Assessing the performance and of Urban Environments* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

3. BOOKS 2003-2016

1. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *Le train, la gare et la ville*, Bruxelles : Aliter 2003 - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/la-gare-et-la-ville-grands-axes-et-reseau-express-regional-enjeux-et-perspectives-2/>

2. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *L'aéroport et la ville /De luchthaven en de stad*, Bruxelles : Aliter 2005 - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/laeroport-le-train-et-la-ville-le-cas-de-bruxelles-est-il-unique-de-luchthaven-de-trein-en-de-stad-is-brussel-enig-2/>
3. Laconte, P. & Hein, Carola (Eds.), *Brussels : Perspectives on a European Capital*, Brussels : Aliter, 2007 – <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/brussels-perspectives-on-a-european-capital-2/>
4. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *Bruxelles, la Belgique et l'Europe : un urbanisme cosmopolite*, Lyon : Certu, 2007 - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/bruxelles-la-belgique-et-leurope-2/>
5. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *La recherche de la qualité environnementale et urbaine : le cas de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique*, Lyon : Certu, 2009 - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/la-recherche-de-la-qualite-environnementale-et-urbaine-le-cas-de-louvain-la-neuve-2/>
6. Laconte, P., *Climate Change, Energy Shortage, Biodiversity Loss – Overview of Global, European and Local Policies and Practices*, Vienna : Club of Rome EU Chapter and Club of Rome European Support Center, 2011. - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/06/climate-change-energy-shortage-biodiversity-loss-overview-of-global-european-and-local-policies-and-practices/>
7. Lasserre, C, Laconte, P, Boehlke, A. & Dooreman, B., *Bureaux d'hier, logements de demain*, Bruxelles : Ministère de la Région bruxelloise, 2013 - <http://www.ffue.org/2013/06/bureaux-du-passe-habitants-du-present-la-conversion-dimmeubles-de-bureaux-en-logements-et-en-equipements-en-region-de-bruxelles-capitale/>
8. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *Accéder à Bruxelles : travaux en cours, programmés et en projet*, Bruxelles : Aliter, 2015 - <http://www.ffue.org/2014/04/acceder-a-bruxelles/>
9. Laconte, P. (Ed.), *Bereikbaar Brussel : werken, programma's en projecten*, Brussel : Aliter, 2015
10. Laconte, P. & Gossop, C. (Eds.), *Sustainable Cities: Assessing the performance and of Urban Environments*, London/New York : I.B. Tauris, 2016 - <http://www.ffue.org/2015/12/sustainable-urban-environments-in-europe-evaluation-criteria-and-practices/>

This book - presented at the University College London Bartlett School of Planning on 26 June 2016 - is disseminated through the publisher's website (www.ibtauris.com), at a discount price of £ 52.50 until 31/12/2016 – code AN 2), and through Amazon. A presentation workshop of the book at the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen is in preparation (spring 2017).

11. Laconte, P. & van den Hove, C., Foreword by De Keuleneer, E.) *Le rail, element central de la mobilité*, Bruxelles : Aliter - www.ffue.org/2014/11/le-rail-cle-de-la-mobilite-a-bruxelles/) .

This book was launched in Oct. 2016 and partly accessible in e-version can be ordered in paper version through FFUE website. Dissemination of specific conclusions are disseminated at intervals through the media.

4. OTHER PUBLICATIONS (ARTICLES IN PEER-REVIEW JOURNALS & CONTRIBUTIONS)

Other publications include articles to peer-review journals, e.g. <http://www.ffue.org/2016/02/european-industrial-and-engineering-heritage-as-an-illustration-of-current-challenges-in-defining-heritage-and-its-uses-2>.

The contribution to the 17th International Planning History Society Conference (Delft, July 2016) “The Founding and Development of Louvain-la-Neuve, the only new town in Belgium” has been published in the peer-reviewed proceedings of the Conference, Vol. 5 pp. 213-221 (http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/IPHS_160718-Book-Historical-perspectives-article-Laconte.pdf). These proceedings

are disseminated free of charge through the BK Books website (<http://books.bk.tudelft.nl/>). Paper copies are available on a Print on Demand system through Amazon.

The contribution to the ICOMOS Italia Conference CIVVIH Florence "Communication for a qualified cultural tourism in historical cities" - 2-4 March 2016, Teresa Colletta & Olimpia Niglio, Eds has been published in September 2016 <http://www.ffue.org/2016/09/communicating-industrial-heritage-networks-and-individual-cases-milano-2016/>.

5. PRESENT ORIENTATIONS (2015-2016)

From 2015 the Foundation has extended its activities towards European and International issues, including participation into European and international activities in line with its objectives (see 1):

- Milesecure Project (on energy) see <http://www.ffue.org/2015/03/the-human-factor-in-energy-transition-security-towards-2050-brussels-15122015/>.

- Sintropher project (on mobility and land use) see <http://www.ffue.org/2014/02/supporting-growth-through-regional-connectivity>. The results of the project are being published in six volumes by the UCL Bartlett School .

- Heritage issues in urban development through Europa Nostra, "the Voice of European heritage", among others as its representative at the March 2016 UN Habitat Prague Conference (see http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/EN_160328_ENews_HabitatIII_Prague-160404_c.pdf).

- Specific issues related to the reconversion of industrial heritage, through the activities of the Industrial and Engineering Heritage Committee (see <http://www.europanostra.org/search/> search items IEHC & "industrial").

From 2015 the FFUE sponsors a new lunch debates programme "World of Cities" in association with the Brussels UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION (6 lunch debates in 2015, 6 lunch debates and a full day colloquium in 2016). Minutes are available on www.ffue.org. See <http://www.ffue.org/2015/04/a-world-of-cities-brussels-02102015/> and <http://www.ffue.org/2016/04/a-world-of-cities-2016i-bilan-de-quatre-debats>.

Following the lunch debate of December 2015 with Paul Dujardin, CEO of Bozar http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FU_Dujardin_122015-fr.pdf regular contacts are taking place with this institution in view of future synergies in the field of urban planning and society.

From 2016, The FFUE President has been associated with the St-Louis University Executive Master Immobilier – EMI - programme (land use and mobility).

A clear FFUE priority in 2016 has been the focus on the "interface and synergy" between land use and transport. This is one of the central themes of Peter Hall's chapter in *Sustainable Cities: Assessing the performance and of Urban Environments* http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Sustainable_cities_Table-of-content-2016.pdf.

In Belgium as in most neighbouring countries this is not reflected in the political structures. The planning and transport ministries are generally separate. The economic and environmental impact of transport projects is thus rarely taken into account.

Bridging this gap is one of the main recommendations from the book *Le rail, element central de la mobilité*. Unlike in London, there are no effective policy tools in Belgium that operate at the micro level to encourage a higher concentration of development around transport nodes, i.e. a contribution of the developer to the transport investment. At national/metropolitan level there are no strategies which minimise the need for travel.

While new employment is directed at a restricted number of growth "zones-levier/hefboomzones" (supposedly to capture the economies of agglomeration) new residential development is very widely dispersed instead of concentrated. The consequence is to generate a requirement for long-distance commuting, much of it along non-radial routes which do not lend themselves to public transport. The notable exception has been the short-lived Stevaert Flemish Region Decree of 2001, which has been published in French by the FFUE (<http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/la-gare-et-la-ville-grands-axes-et-reseau-express-regional-enjeux-et-perspectives-2/>).

6. FROM THINKING TO COMMUNICATING.

The FFUE presently publishes regular newsletters (ca 2.000 addresses) & also uses social media (limited list of addresses), however mostly for the programme “World of Cities”. This communication activity could be increased, e.g. through newsletters by subject (information about FFUE activities, recommendation of publications & lectures by others, possibly through regular agreements).

The book publications of 2016 are opening the way to an increase of the FFUE “think-tank” activity. This presents the challenge of communicating the results of its activities to a targeted public, both international and Belgian contexts perhaps, under a specific name (such as FFUE “URMOB”?), with targeted public subsidies.

The FFUE has only once put on its site a specific briefing <http://www.ffue.org/2013/05/concilier-densite-et-equite-le-cas-de-bruxelles/>, with recommendations to target groups (as opposed to consultant reports to the clients who commissioned a study), but with limited audience.

Communication could also take the form of briefings/releases, on the model of the European Environment Agency’s international press release "Suspend 10 percent biofuels target, says EEA's scientific advisory body"



The EURACTIV News Agency has occasionally disseminated messages related to FFUE positions (EEA_VE_EURACTIV_Cities_ghg_measurements).

7. MEMBERSHIP & COLLABORATIONS.

The FFUE restricts its MEMBERSHIP to its 5 board fixed by its statutes. Its activities are limited to those in line with its three initial objectives. This is reflected in its events and publications programme. It relies on the members of its board and its scientific advisers and on outside contributors. In 2016 Prof. E. De Keuleneer, Managing Director of the University Foundation, and Spatial Planner and Arch/Town-planner B. Clerbaux (Former SG of the European Council of Spatial Planners) have joined the FFUE group of scientific advisers, following a long term collaboration. M. van der Stichele has joined them. Other advisers include C. du Monceau, 1st Alderman of Ottignies-LLN, Prof. P. Lombaerde (UA), Prof. M. Hubert (U. St-Louis), A. Camu (Flora) and H. Demets (Computer software consultancy Bvba). This informal advisory group could be expanded in line with the FFUE orientations. Inviting international personalities active in its field is to be considered.

Individuals or firms interested in the FFUE objectives and their implementation could also be considered and approached to help setting up new projects in line with its objectives.

8. FINANCING.

The initial Foundation’s capital has been a grant by its founder, put in a blocked bank account in line with the requirements for the obtaining of permanent “charitable institution of public interest” status, confirmed by the authorization Royal Decree of August 8th 1999 (Belgian Official Journal October 1st 1999).

Neither the President nor the board members get any remuneration. All amounts resulting from contracts with Brussels public authorities for its publications and from other activities are added to his initial grant. Development related expenses are exclusively covered by the founder in addition to the initial grant.

Outside support could be used for setting up new projects in line with its objectives.

9. PERSPECTIVES 2016 AND BEYOND.

Over a period of 16 years the FFUE activities have been in line with its objectives. The lunch-debates it sponsored at the Cercle Gaulois and at the University Foundation and its 10 books have however reached a limited audience.

2016 has been the year concluding the series of books about Brussels (2003, 2005, two in 2007, 2011, 2015 & 2016). The 2016 book <http://www.ffue.org/2014/11/le-rail-cle-de-la-mobilite-a-bruxelles/> came out at a time when the new metro projects are due to be presented to the public. The FFUE may hopefully participate in the debate about them. An anniversary box of the 2003, 2005, 2015 and 2016 about Mobility is considered.

2016 has seen the beginning of a new publication activity focusing on international challenges. The book published in London/NY in June 2016 <http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/SustainableCities-A5-Flyer-vdef-16072016.pdf> is generating new international activities :

- In 2016: Urban cultural heritage guest lectures took place in Ceski Krumlov (Czech Rep.), in Ji'nan and Wuhan (China) and in Seoul (Korea), within the framework of ICOMOS and guest lecture at the Federal Ministry of Environment on "New layers of cultural Heritage" .

- Collaboration has started with EURAC Research, Bolzano for a conference on Smart and Sustainable Cities (22-24 March 2017), of which P. Laconte will be keynote speaker See <http://www.ffue.org/2016/12/smart-and-sustainable-planning-for-cities-and-regions-sspcr-2017/> .

- In 2017: FFUE has been put in charge of a seminar at the European Environment Agency ("EEAcademy"), on assessing urban sustainability, and the organisation of the stream of "Healthy Cities" of the 2017 AESOP (Association of European Schools of Planning) Congress hosted by the University of Lisbon.

To sum up the main challenge of FFUE is its own sustainability, by introducing new scientific advisers, the appointment of E. de Keuleneer, M. van der Stichele and B. Clerbaux being a first step and developing new projects.

P. LACONTE 12/12/2016