University College London - Sintropher Project

Supporting Growth through Regional Connectivity

How better transport links can promote regional development

Ingenuity at the service of sustainable regional development: four cases in point

Brussels, 26 February 2014

Pierre **LACONTE**

President Foundation for the Urban Environment,

Hon. Sec. Gen. International Association for Public Transport - UITP

Summary

1. Financing smart regional connectivity: the case of Zürich 1985-

2. Financing urban regeneration through public-public partnerships: the case of Bilbao 1989-2012

3. Supporting growth through a new university town: the case of Louvain-la-Neuve (Brussels) 1972-

4. Financing new regional tram systems – a tale of two cities : Manchester and Sheffield 1989-

I. ZÜRICH

Financing smart regional connectivity:
the case of Zürich 1985-

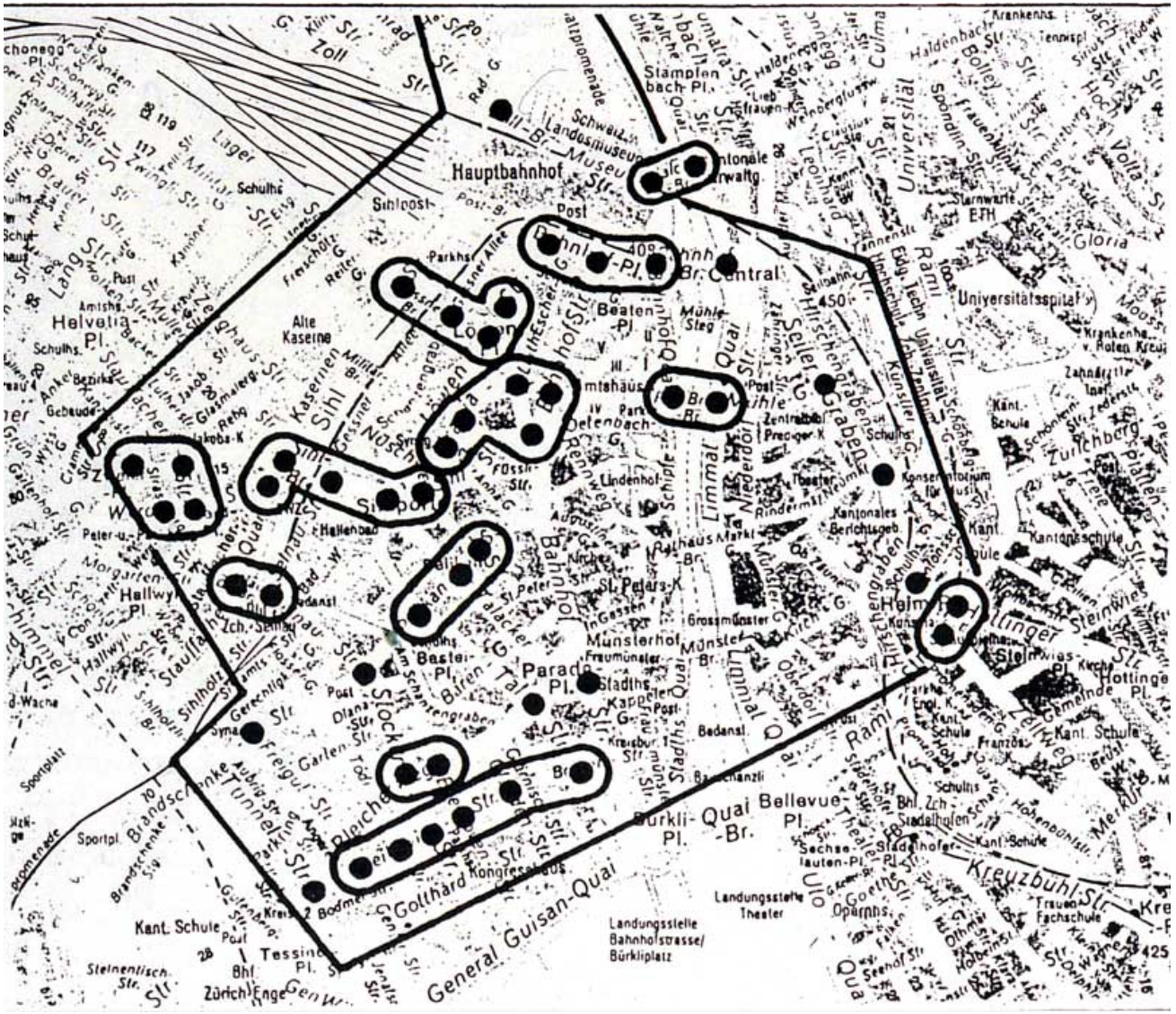
Zurich's traffic management.

In Zurich, trams and buses enjoy absolute priority on-street. When approaching a traffic light the sensor (seen on the lower left) ensures they have a green light at any time of the day. The reliability of timetables makes public transport the city's fastest mode of transport. Modal split is around 80% in favour of public transport.

Zurich's motor traffic calming.

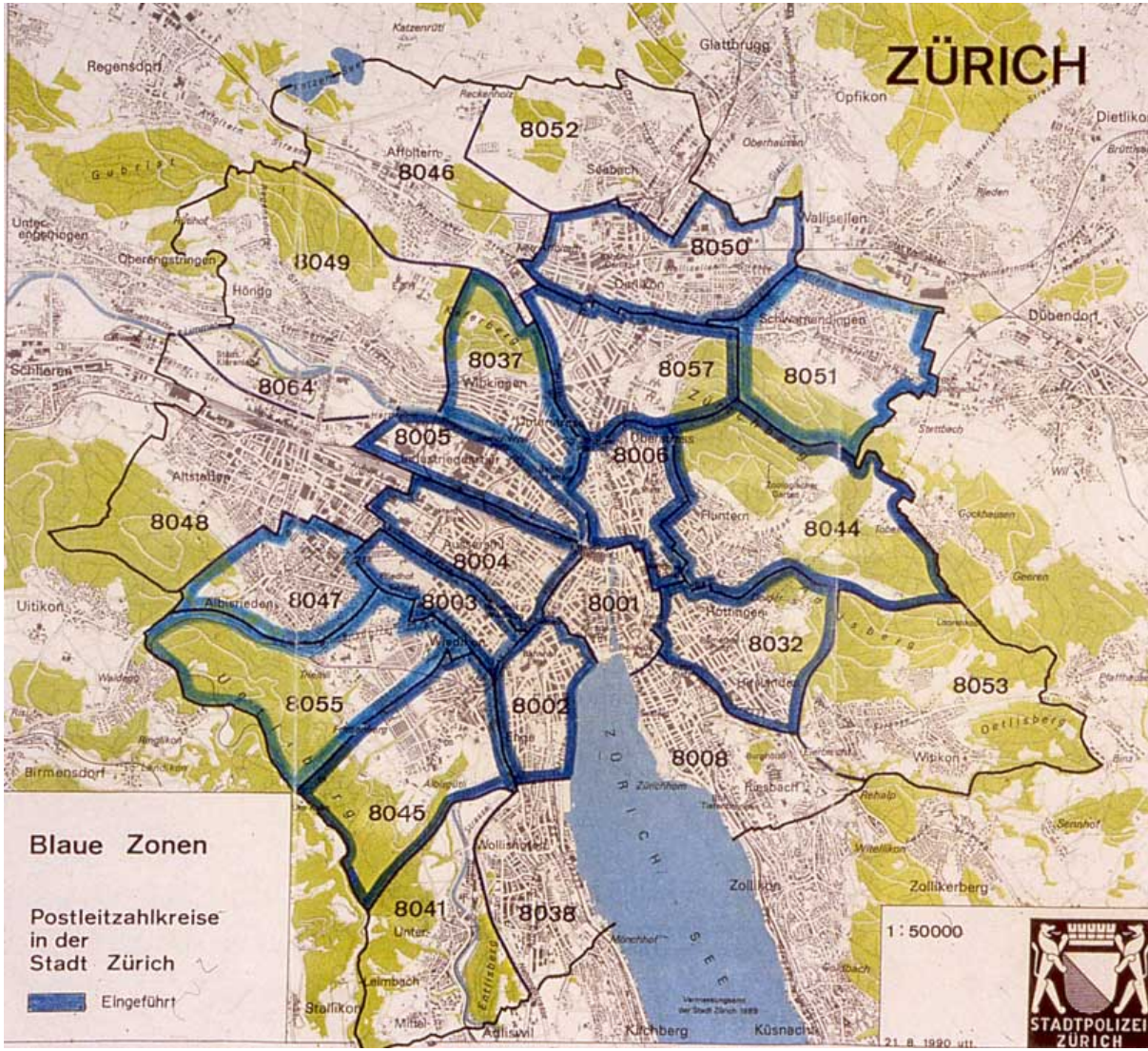
Traffic calming is ensured by adapting the traffic light system (a much shorter cycle favours pedestrians, cyclists and public transport – no "green waves"). *Source: City Police Department.*

The political ingenuity however lies in the parking policy favouring local voters.



Zurich's parking management.

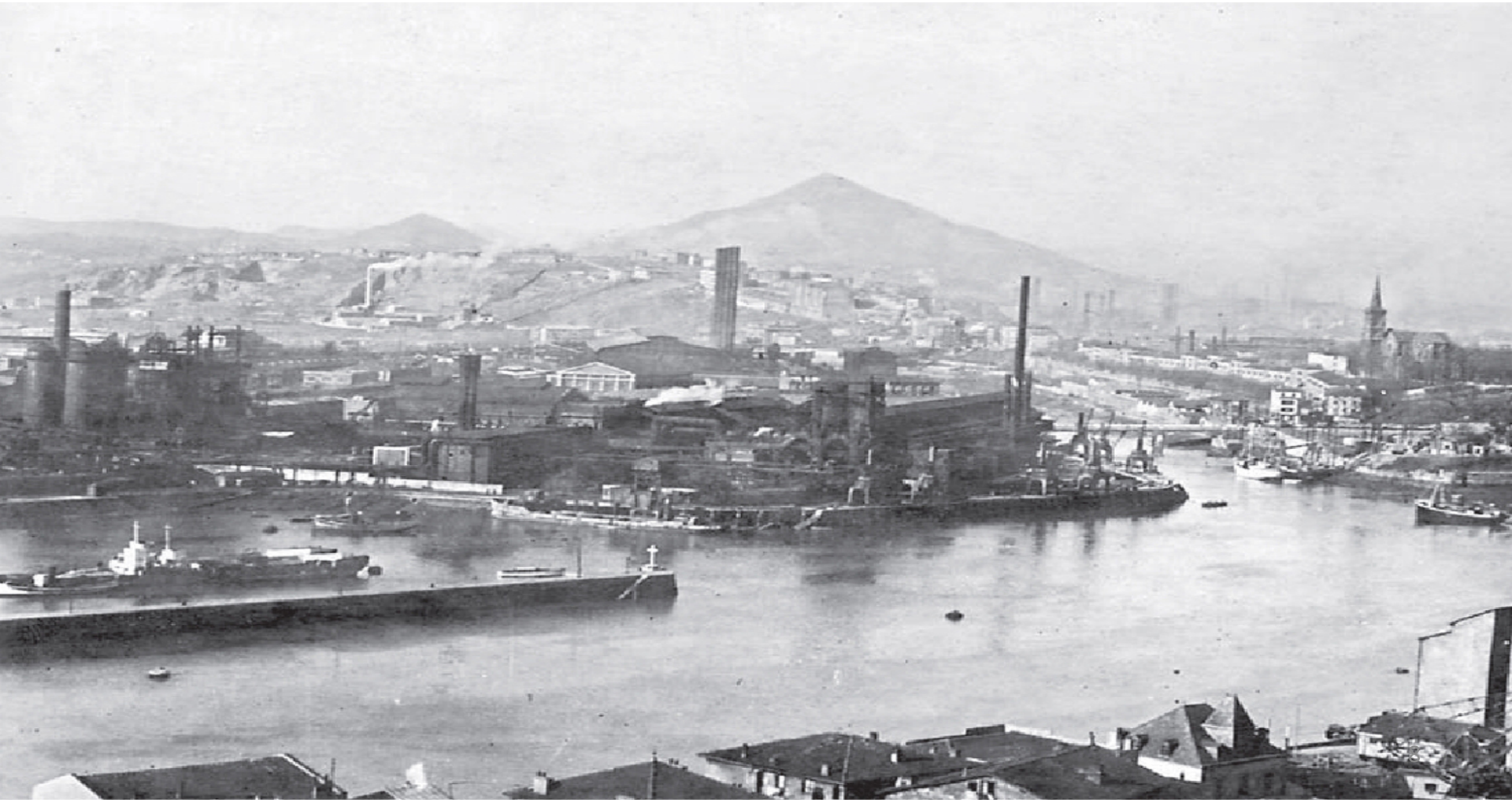
Unrestricted on-street parking is exclusively reserved for Zurich-registered residents (the voters), while cars entering the city from other municipalities have a max. 90' parking time. This measure triggered a large-scale return of inhabitants to the city, benefited the public car parks and has been politically very rewarding for the city fathers, while suburban rail travel has been improved. This system could be applied in any city where commuters come from other electoral districts.



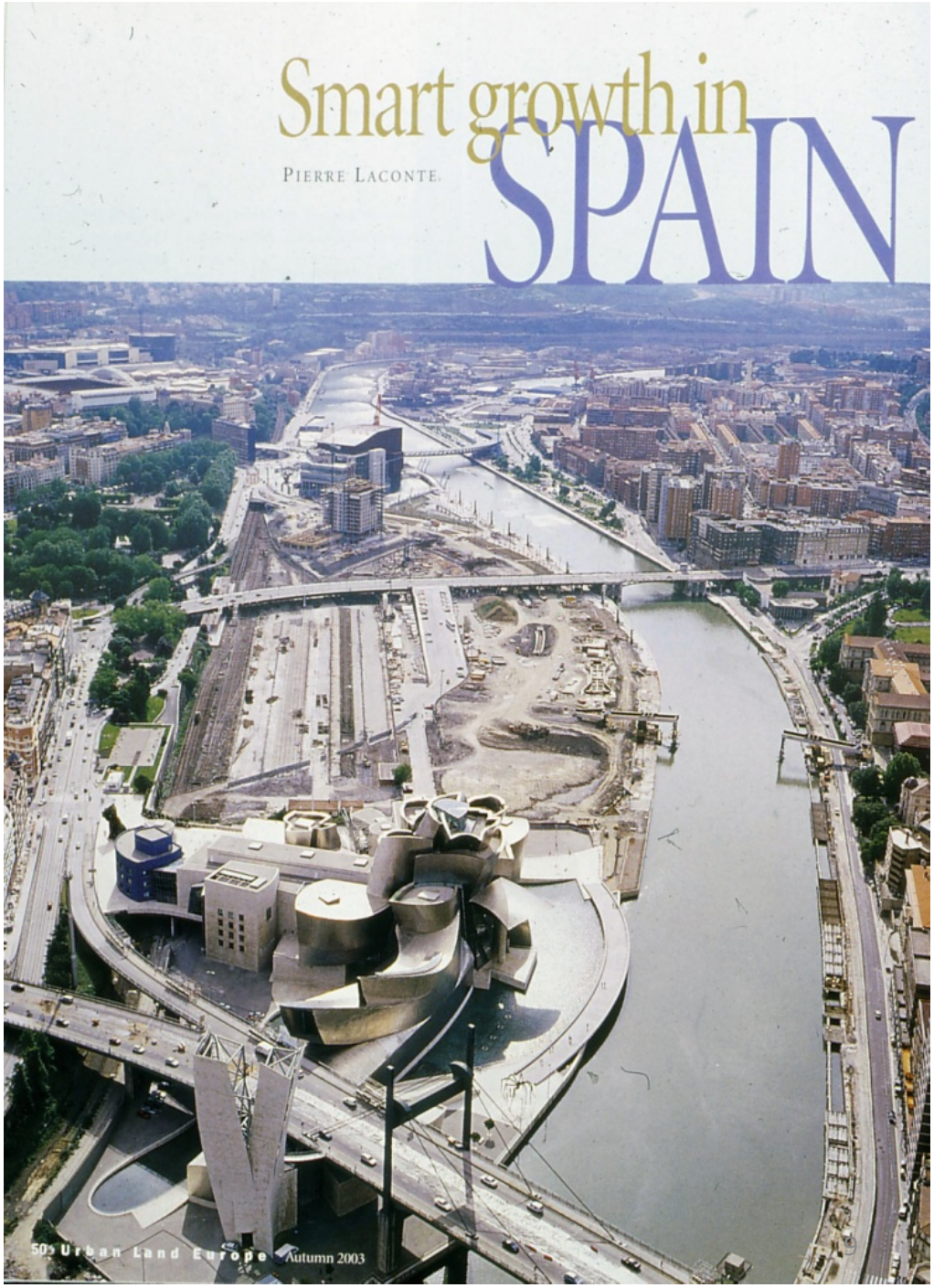
II. BILBAO

Financing urban regeneration through public-public partnerships: the case of Bilbao 1989-2012

The long time prosperous steel industry was wiped out by the 1989 crisis. Industrial land was re-used for new activities, based on services and culture, while preserving architectural heritage.



The derelict industrial area along the Ría, owned by several public bodies, from local to national, was unified by a public-public partnership embodied in a common public redevelopment corporation - Ría 2000. The two anchors for new development, at each end of the site, were the new Guggenheim museum and the congress and concert centre.



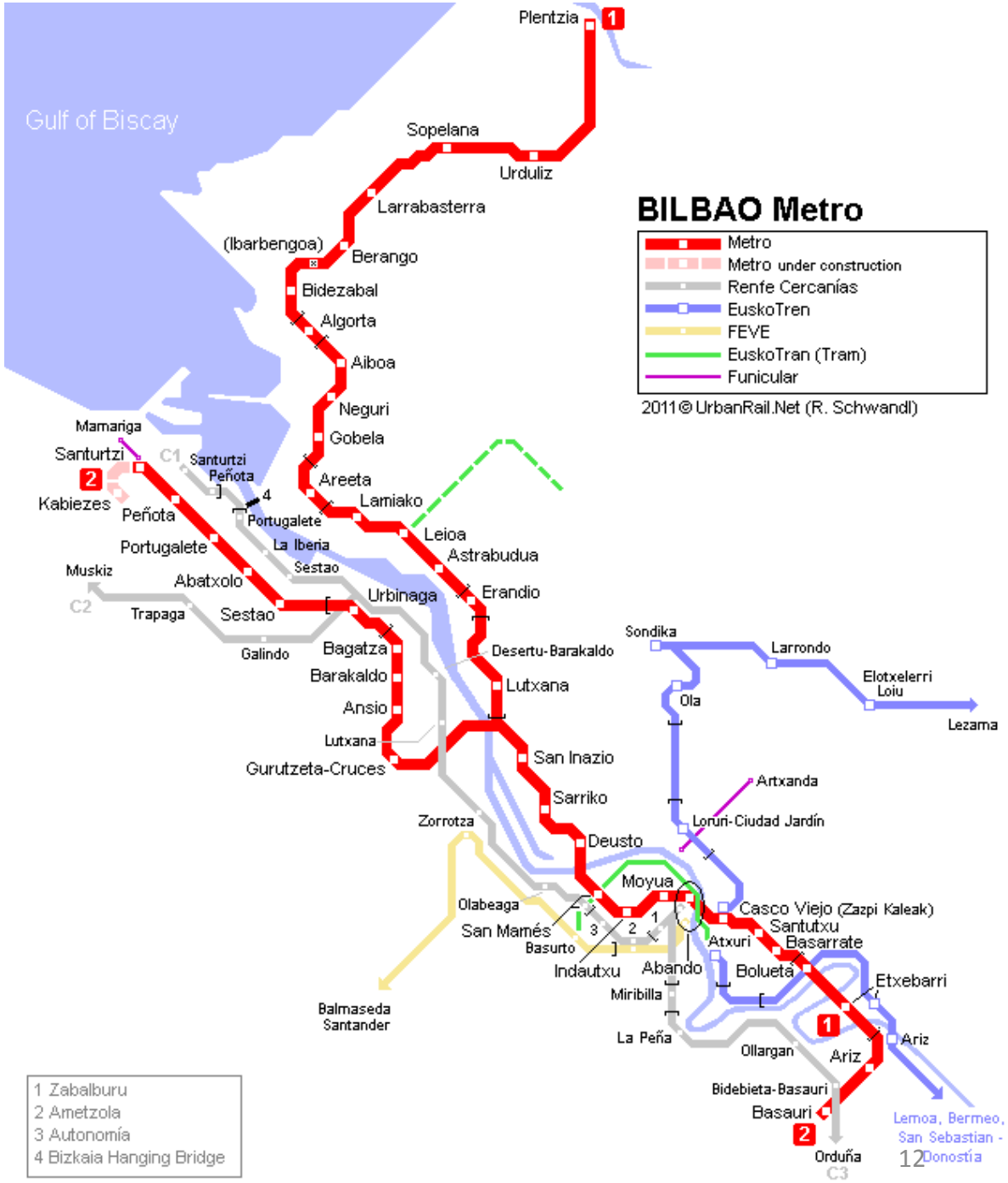
The regeneration was achieved by selling the land available between the two anchors for offices, housing and commerce.
The huge surplus was used exclusively to enhance connectivity and further urban regeneration.
The plan's implementation was completed in 2011.

A new tram line serves the canalside in the urban centre, saving traffic and parking space and adding to the citizens' quality of life.

Image 02. Tram stop

Bilbao Metro

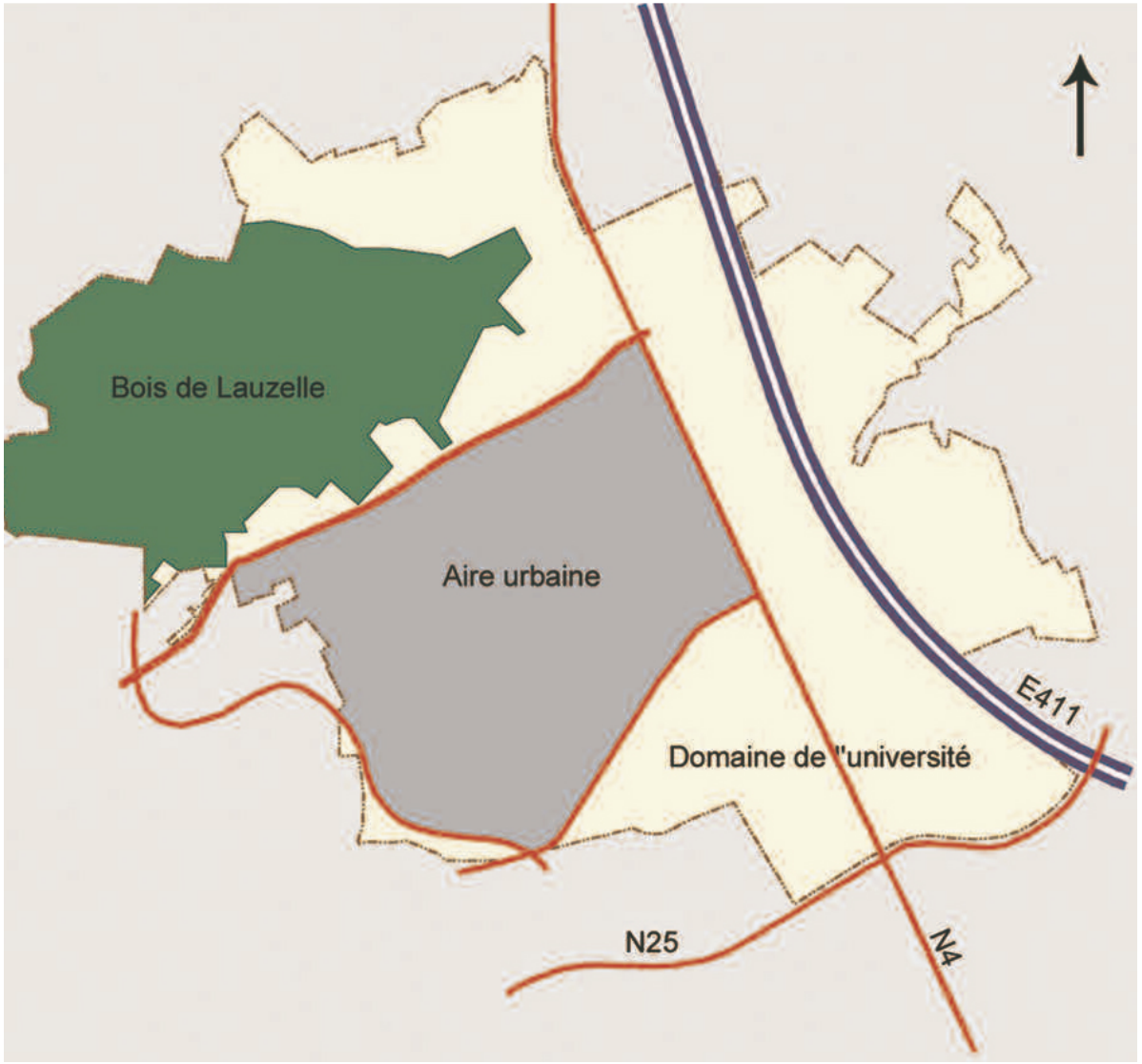
Partly new (stations designed by Norman Foster) and partly reusing old industrial railways, it enhanced connectivity throughout the city and its region.

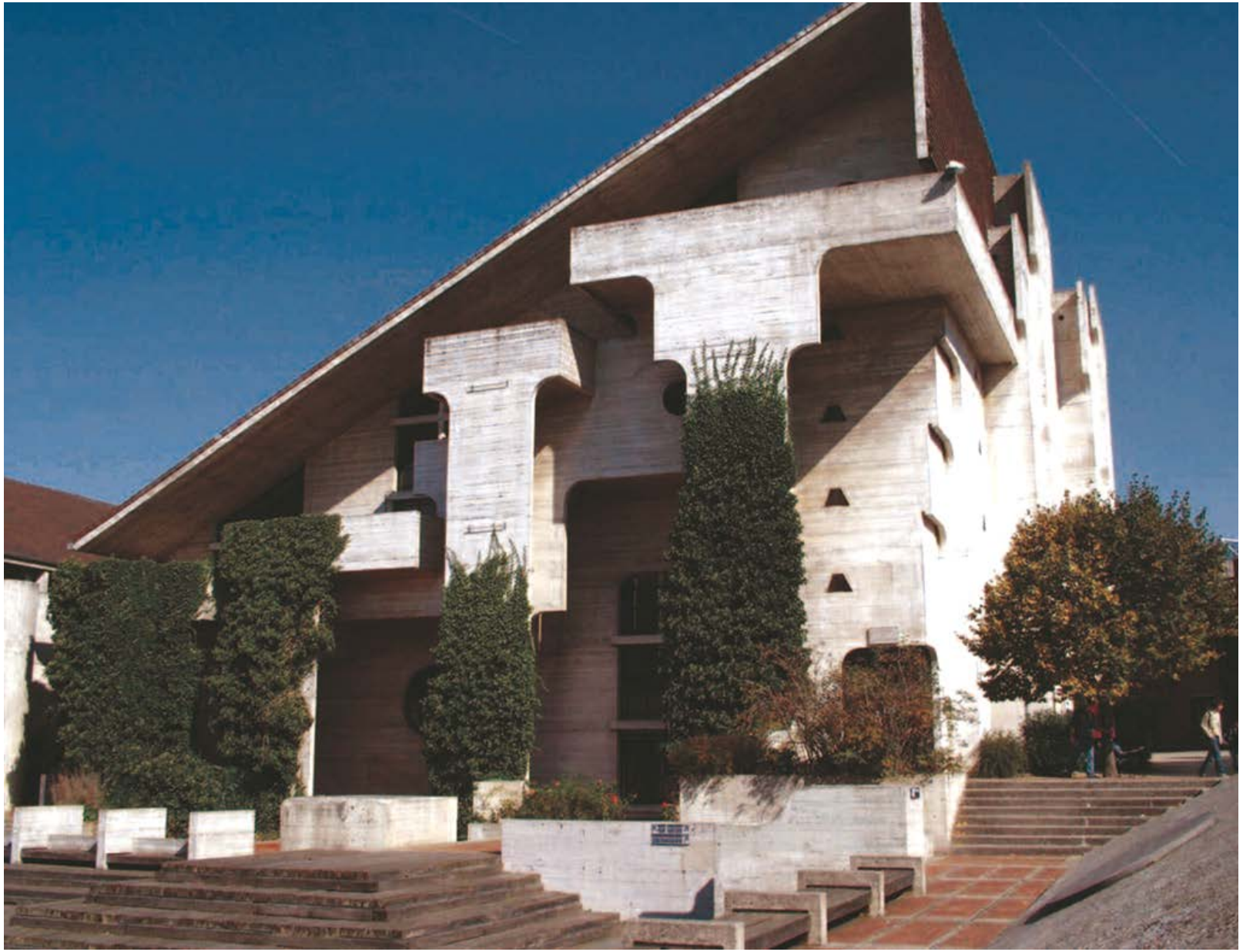


III. LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE

Supporting growth through a new university town: the case of Louvain-la-Neuve (Brussels) 1972-

Louvain University bought ca 1000 ha of agricultural and forest land in a rural area close to the Brussels-Namur road (N4). The central part was set aside for urban development; forest land in the north was preserved. The overall master plan and architectural coordination of the new university town was entrusted to the Groupe Urbanisme-architecture (R Lemaire, J-P Blondel and P Laconte). Political uncertainty required a stop-and-go approach.

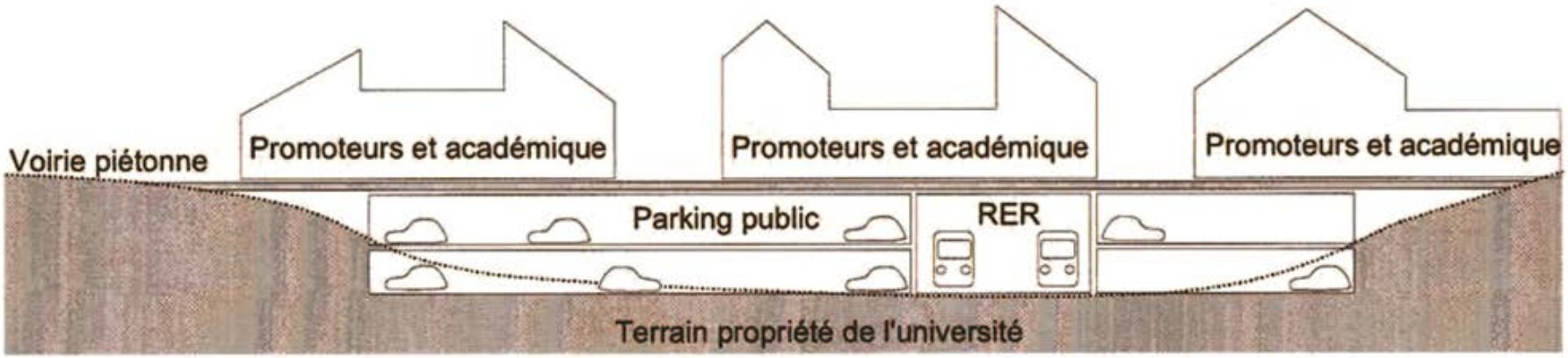




The first phase (1972), close to the exiting road, was built around the Science Library, an iconic building seen as the cathedral of a university town, with its plaza (parvis), university buildings, housing for students and non-students, shops and restaurants (architect A Jacqmain).

From 1976 the new railway station became the centre of the development. The tracks are to be covered by a shopping centre extension. This link ensures a maximal regional connectivity.

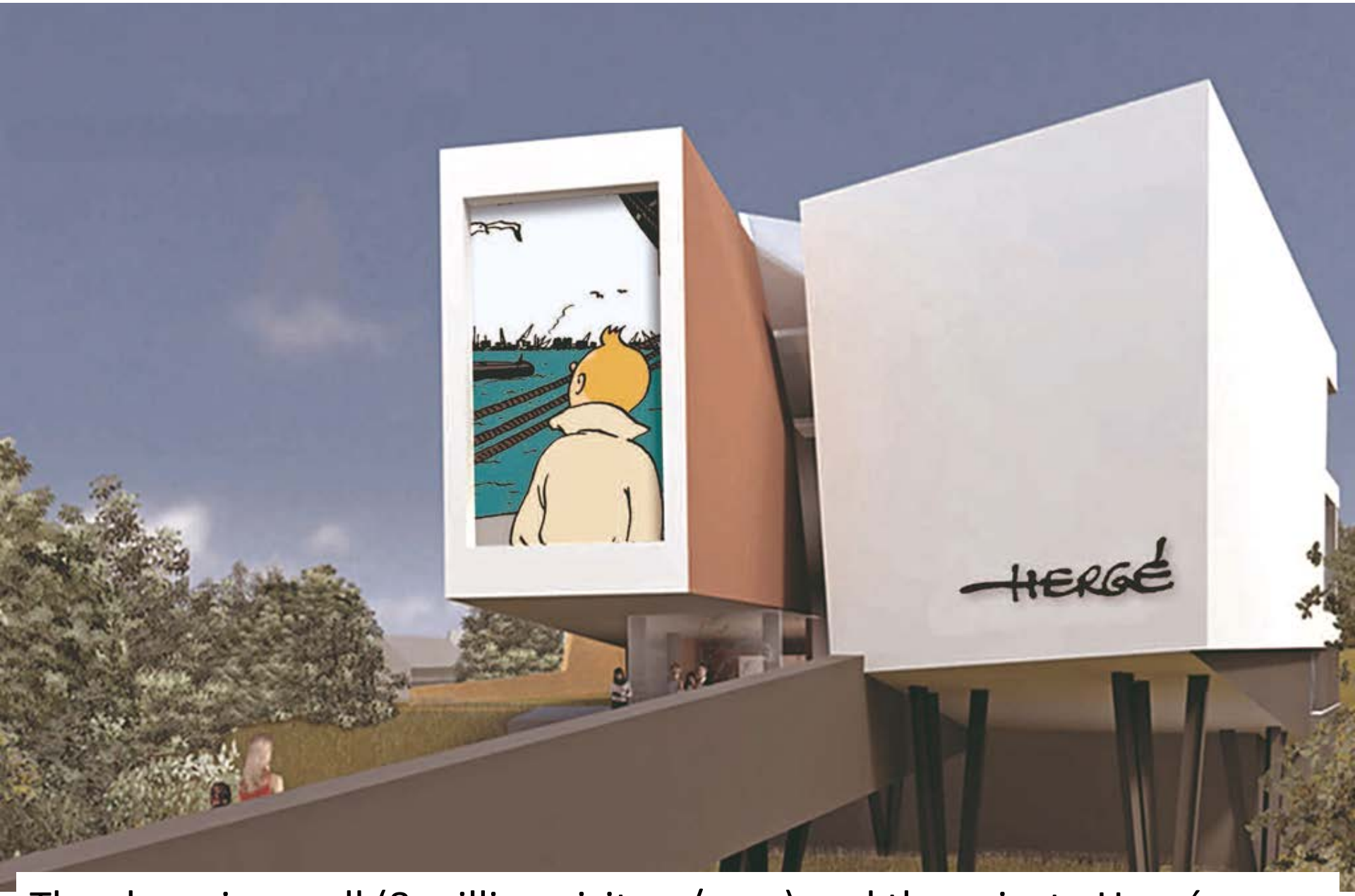
Street entrance to the railway station. All streets are pedestrian and combine university buildings, housing, retail and cultural services. Land remains the property of the University and is leased to investors. All motorised transport is located underground.



The functioning of the slab. The diagram shows how the ground below – essential for long-term connectivity - remains the property of the university while the infrastructure and buildings are leased (for up to 99 years) to public and private investors.

view of one the numerous small piazzas on the pedestrian street network. Trees are growing on the slab. Cars are parked underneath.

Louvain-la-Neuve university town : all storm water is led to a reservoir which appears to be a lake, which saves infrastructure costs and attracts housing investment.



The shopping mall (8 million visitors/year) and the private Hergé museum (arch. de Portzamparc) contribute to regional development .

IV. MANCHESTER-SHEFFIELD

Financing new regional tram systems – a tale of two cities 1989-

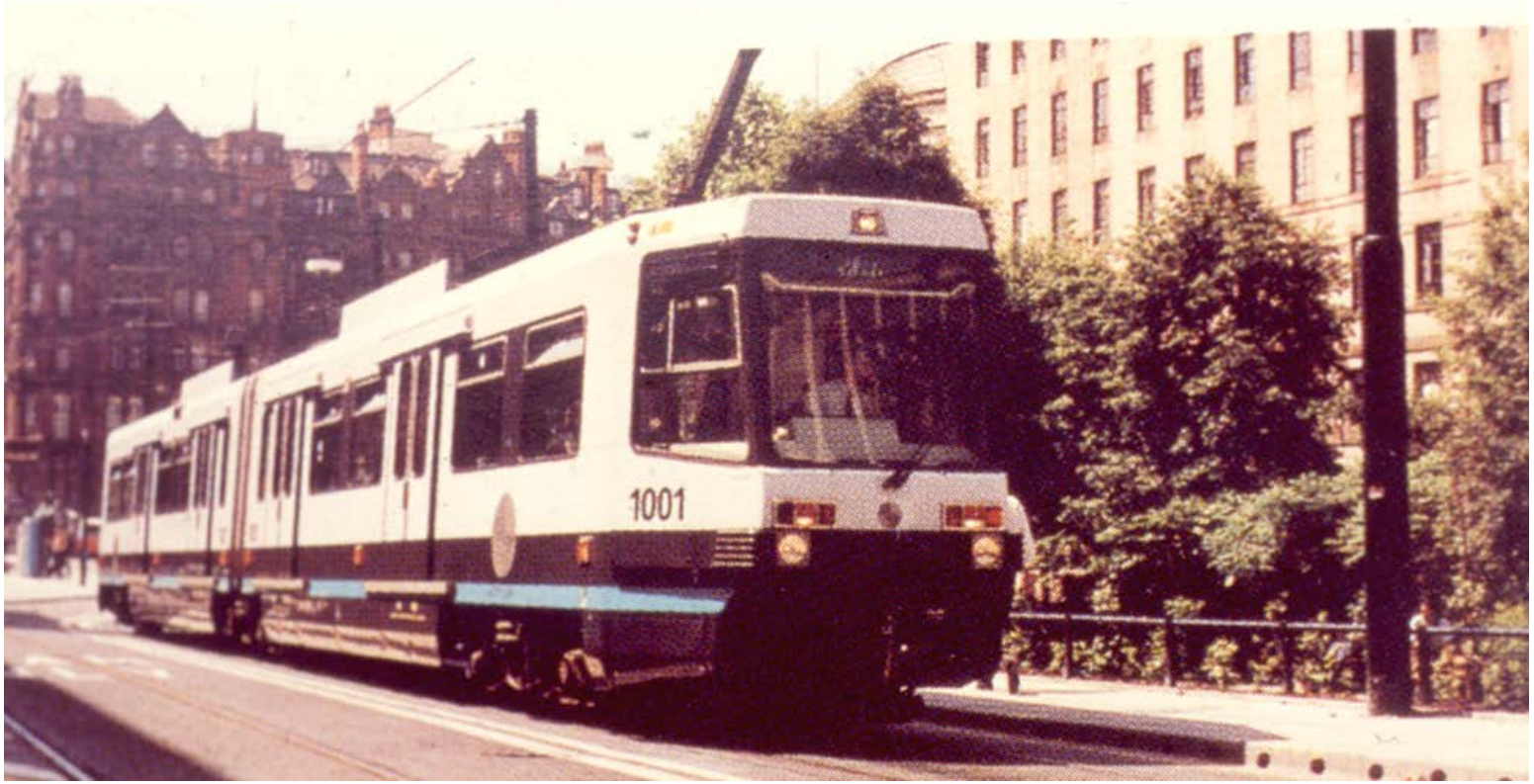
1. Manchester Metrolink

Concept (1989)

The Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) conceived a new tram network ("Metrolink") and invited bids for consortia to:

- design and build
  (transfer of design and building risk)
- operate and maintain
  (transfer of commercial risk)

The new network was a 20 mile tram system linking two city centre stations on-street and taking over two former British Rail commuter rail lines (total cost US$ 200 million).



1990

The winning consortium agreed to provide US$ 10 million (5% of capital costs) and to operate the system for a period of 15 years, with an escape clause after 4 years.

1992-1996

Operating results:

- fare box recovery ratio well above 100%
- US$ 5 million operating profit in 1995 (no subsidies except for concessions).

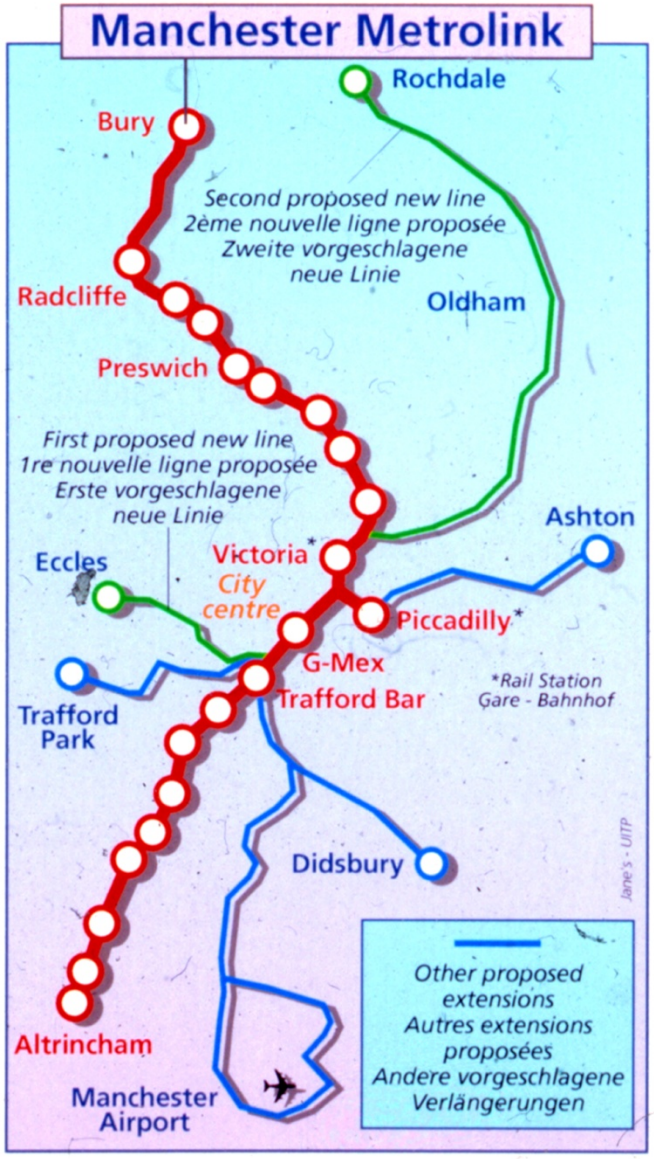
1996

The authority used the 4 year escape clause (paying the contractual compensation) and invited new bids for:

- •extension of the network (25 additional miles) and
- •operation/maintenance (of the expanded network) for a new 17 year period

1997

A new consortium took over the additional investment (60% contribution by the private sector!) and the full operation and maintenance for 17 years.



Evaluation

1. The scheme runs almost 100% at surface level and only uses proven technology (accessible to wheelchairs but avoiding the more costly low floor).
2. The fare structure, fixed by the winning consortium, not the authority, is simple and customer friendly (4 zones, 50% discount at off-peak times for all zones).
3. Human resources stress flexibility and service to the public and a workforce with multiple skills (conductor and driver).
4. Private bus operators gained from the overall rise in passengers through the multi-operator “travelcard”, valid on all modes of public transport.
5. As a whole it was an ingenious public sector strategy for getting the best input from the private sector.

2. Sheffield Supertram

Concept

South Yorkshire Public Transport Executive (SYPTE) decided to create a new tram system,
to be run by South Yorkshire Supertram Limited (SYSL), a public sector company formed and owned by SYPTE.

Tendering process took place according to detailed specifications including low floor accessibility.

1991-1994

Construction and opening in 1994, two years after Manchester.

While the private bus companies in Manchester were indirectly involved through the common travelcard, the Sheffield Supertram was entirely a public sector project.

Not unexpectedly, Stagecoach, the major private bus and rail operator, immediately launched a competing high frequency – low fare bus service largely on of the same route, which made the Supertram desperately price un-competitive.

1997

After three years of heavy losses, SYSL operation was taken over by... Stagecoach, for a mere $1.5 million (27 year concession), a small fraction of what the public investment had cost.

Following takeover of SYSL by Stagecoach, the high frequency - low-fare bus service naturally disappeared.

Increased passenger loadings and improved reliability made what is now called “Stagecoach Supertram” a commercial success.

Evaluation

1. The scheme was broadly similar to Manchester's but construction and operating responsibility remained within the public sector, including fares.
2. The authority wanted to keep control of the system, but was ultimately defeated by cost overruns.