

Press conference

Brussels, 26 October 2009

Fresh Ambition for Brussels



neo

Development and Regeneration of the Heysel Plateau
Competition : 8 architecture companies chosen



NEO: An International Future for the Heysel Plateau

On 22 October 2009, the Mayor and City Council named the 8 architecture companies chosen to submit a specific redevelopment plan for the Heysel Plateau.

Out of the 28 companies that put themselves forward in response to the invitation to tender issued in June, 8 were chosen based on objective criteria and according to the transparent procedure initiated by the Council's three-person project steering committee – Mr Thielemans, Mr Ceux and Mr Close.

This means that the NEO project is now getting to the heart of the matter: the chosen architects are now going to work on specific redevelopment ideas to make Heysel into a major international centre in Brussels.





I. NEO or the Redevelopment of the Heysel Plateau

The Mayor of the City of Brussels, Freddy Thielemans, has always advertised his clear intention to develop and redevelop the northern strategic centre on the Heysel Plateau.

The redevelopment involves the creation of new infrastructure on the site, and probably relocation and repurposing of some of the pre-existing facilities.

The key elements that the redevelopment should incorporate include an international convention centre, a major shopping centre, a 15,000-seat concert hall and a leisure centre to reinforce the appeal of the site.

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Brussels expressly wanted to make this redevelopment project a model of transparency and good governance.

The involvement of the local residents is therefore actively sought and the politicians are keeping in the background in an unprecedented way, leaving the last word to the experts.

The project, presented to the municipal councillors, the press and the local residents in May 2009, was named the NEO project, and a charter was adopted, setting out the key principles that will govern the entire process.

At the March 2009 press conference, Freddy Thielemans, Christian Ceux, Councillor for Town Planning, and Philippe Close, Councillor for Tourism, announced their working method and ethical commitment in this ambitious project.

Now that the selection phase for candidates participating in the town planning competition is here, respect for these commitments is shown once again with the publication of the competition rules.

These rules set out in black and white the conditions for respecting the local residents, the collective interest and sustainable development that underlie the NEO project.



II. NEO or a Shared Ambition for Brussels

1. The City and the Region Speaking with One Voice

Brussels City Council sees major potential in the Heysel site in terms of urban renewal, job creation, international development, tourist accommodation and the creation of infrastructure to benefit the city as a whole.

This ambition is certainly bold, but it is also reasonable since it is shared by the Brussels-Capital Region.

The Region's International Development Plan, adopted by the Brussels government on 21 December 2007, earmarks the site to be home to part of the infrastructure intended to reinforce the international standing of Brussels.

The new regional government coalition agreement also supports the approach taken by Brussels City Council. The following two passages exemplify this, in one case concerning the commercial aspect of Brussels, and the other its international side.

Page 18: "In the context of the International Development Plan, the government will encourage the establishment of a shopping centre on the Heysel Plateau, paying special attention to the project's impact on the commercial fabric of Brussels and the liveability of the quarter, including in terms of mobility. The government will link this development to other projects on a regional scale, particularly the creation of a conference centre, taking into account the recreation activities currently present on the site."

Page 19: "Particular attention will be paid to tourist accommodation, the creation and organisation of big events on a national or international scale, and the construction of new major world-renowned infrastructure, focusing on harmonious urban integration: the Heysel Plateau will be home to a 5,000-seat Conference Centre. Both the construction and the operation of the infrastructure will multiply the learning experiences available for the residents of Brussels. The establishment of public-private partnerships should ensure control of the projects by the public authorities. The Brussels-Capital Region will ensure growth in the MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Congress, Exhibition) tourism sectors by developing the region's infrastructure, in view of the potential for local unskilled job creation it affords."

The City and the Region aim to make the site play a key role in energising the international standing of Brussels.

This is why the project requirements include the construction of an international conference centre near the Parc des Expositions.

In terms of the shopping centre sought by the authorities, the Commercial Development Plan ordered by Regional Prime Minister Picqué in 2005 showed that the north of Brussels was the ideal place to build this kind of infrastructure.

The presence of a shopping centre perfectly complements the establishment of a conference centre and the construction of accommodation, and fits in perfectly with the desire to reinforce the economic and international focus of the Heysel Plateau, which is already characterised by the presence of the most important exhibition centre in Belgium.



2. The Voice of the Local Residents – a Key Element

The City cannot and does not want to leave out the local residents in such an important debate. The political leaders therefore promised to inform and listen to the local residents right from the beginning of the project.

And they kept their word!

When the first step started last May, an information and discussion meeting with the local residents was held at the Parc des Expositions.

A second meeting of the same type will be held on Monday 26 October at 8.00 pm.

The rules for the concept competition also explicitly provide for a summary of these meetings to be drawn up by Brussels City Council and provided to the chosen candidates.

The candidates should then ensure, as far as possible, that the conclusions of the meetings are integrated into the approach taken in their plan.

At the end of the competition, as part of the negotiated procedure for the award of the service contract, the two successful companies will be invited to participate in an additional session of meetings with the local residents to allow an exchange of views to take place on the proposals drawn up and the solutions to be put in place.

A special section of the NEO site will be dedicated to the local residents.
(www.neobrussels.com)



III. NEO or a New Vision of Town Planning

Taken as a whole, our region unfortunately has a very poor image in international architecture and town planning circles. The perception is that the procedures involved are overly politicised and lead to overly timid decision-making compared to the ambitious architectural visions.

NEO is intended to do away with this image. But how?

1. Politics Kept Deliberately in the Minority

The panel's main purpose is to choose the two winners of the competition after examining and assessing the plans of the selected candidates.

Brussels City Council wanted the experts to play a determining role in the panel, while maintaining careful monitoring of the proper performance of the operations.

A subtle mixture of the two worlds within one panel, where politics has the courage to be numerically inferior – that was the challenge of good governance that the Mayor and City Council of Brussels set themselves.

The panel will be made up as follows:

K. Borret	Bouwmeester of Antwerp (President)
Fr. Thielemans	Mayor of the City of Brussels
Chr. Ceux	Councillor for Town Planning
Ph. Close	Councillor for Tourism
B. Mampaka	Councillor for Green Spaces
A. Goffart	Official delegated by the Brussels Region
D. Van Asbroeck	Local Government Official
Y. Rouyet	Geograph and urbanist
Ch. Pourtois	CIVA Director
Y. Tailhardat	Expert – COMMENT
A. Masboungi	Governmental head town planning architect, responsible for the Urban Project for the Director-General of Town Planning, Habitat and Construction
M. de Sola Morales	Architect
H. Dineur	Responsible for the NEO project (Consultant)
P. Delesenne	Responsible for the NEO project (Consultant)

The panel operates confidentially, based on a simple majority where the president has the casting vote if there is a tie.

2. Politics Listens to the Experts

Although the Brussels City Council authorities have real ambitions for the development of the Heysel Plateau, they also have the humility needed to avoid imposing their vision on the architects, leaving it up to the experts.

This is why, although the competition provides for a series of required items of infrastructure, it leaves the candidates with plenty of room to manoeuvre in terms of defining the functions that will benefit the development of the site, their location and how they are connected.

"We want to show that a different approach is possible, that Brussels wants to and can have urban architecture worthy of its status as a national and regional capital, and that politics can have the humility required to leave the experts to do their job," explains Freddy Thielemans.

Matching what has been said since the beginning of the whole process, the ambition is to design a real miniature city, bringing together all the urban functions that are vital for the well-being of the residents and for reinforcing the international focus of Brussels.

The competition requires:

- an international conference centre (a minimum of 3,500 seats in the main hall);
- a shopping centre on a national scale (up to 100,000 m²);
- a recreation and leisure centre with provision for both tourism and sports (collectively or publicly owned fittings);
- a 15,000-seat indoor concert hall (collectively or publicly owned fittings);
- green/public spaces;
- a 60,000-seat multi-purpose stadium.

The following are requested on an optional basis:

- accommodation;
- administrative areas;
- a hotel complex;
- parking spaces.



3. Assessment Criteria that Respect Sustainable Development

The Brussels City Council authorities wanted to be innovative and encouraging in the presentation of the project.

This notably included: sustainable development integrated throughout the site concept, the preservation of green spaces, reduction of disruption to local residents, and financial realism in the choice of plans.

These ideals are now put into concrete form in the assessment criteria chosen for the competition.

These are the primary focuses:

1. Optimising and installation of allocations and functions

- consistency of the geographical distribution on the site;
- complementary functions;
- valuing and creation of public spaces and green spaces;
- quality of the proposal in terms of accommodation.

2. Town planning and aesthetic quality of the project and creativity

- town planning aspect – originality of the concept;
- landscaping.

3. Sustainable development and mobility

- transport policy to and within the site;
- encouraging green methods of transport within the site;
- rationalising parking locations on the site;
- proposals to allow energy saving.

4. Financial realism of the project in the construction phase and the operation phase

- the extent to which the various allocations are complementary in economic terms;
- financial balance projection for the completed project.

5. Quality of phasing proposed for the project

- minimising the development risk;
- minimising disruption to the neighbouring area.

As expressly stipulated in the NEO charter, and according to the clear desire of Brussels City Council, these criteria clearly show that the emphasis is on all the aspects that make the project an undeniable part of the era of sustainable development.

This applies to both the architectural, technological and urban aspects, and the aspects related to mobility and transport policy.



4. NEO or a Project on an International Scale

The rigour advocated throughout this process has one clearly defined aim: ensuring the project's transparency.

This objective, even if it lengthens the procedures somewhat, is obviously essential to the good governance required by Brussels City Council.

It also makes it possible to encourage and convince the biggest international companies of the value of the project and the need for them to be part of it. It also provides all the guarantees desirable for a public project on this scale.

The objective has been achieved as, among the 28 candidates who put themselves forward last June, the majority are companies of international standing who have already completed high-quality architectural and/or town planning works.

"The quality of the candidates augurs well and allows us to hope for projects of international standing," says Freddy Thielemans. "Brussels needs bold architecture that matches its status as a major capital."

Out of the 28 candidates who submitted their files by the deadline, 8 stood out and fully satisfied the various criteria imposed, namely providing:

- administrative information;
- evidence of financial and economic capacity;
- evidence of technical capacity.

These were the following, in alphabetical order:

- **AS. ARCHITECTURE-STUDIO**
- **DPA-Dominique Perrault Architecture**
- **De Architecten Cie.-Royal Haskoning consortium**
- **GREGOTTI ASSOCIATI INTERNATIONAL and RAMBOLL UK Ltd. consortium**
- **Sum Project – ARUP & Partners International Ltd – BDO Atrio nv consortium**
- **Ingeneria IDOM Internacional S.A.**
- **KCAP Architects & Planners**
- **OMA Office for Metropolitan Architecture**



Competition for plans to redevelop the northern strategic centre (Heyssel) of the City of Brussels

Selection decision
List of selected candidates

The 8 companies selected meet the requirements set in the competition notice
in terms of economic and financial capacity.

I. Gregotti Associati International et Ramboll IK Ltd

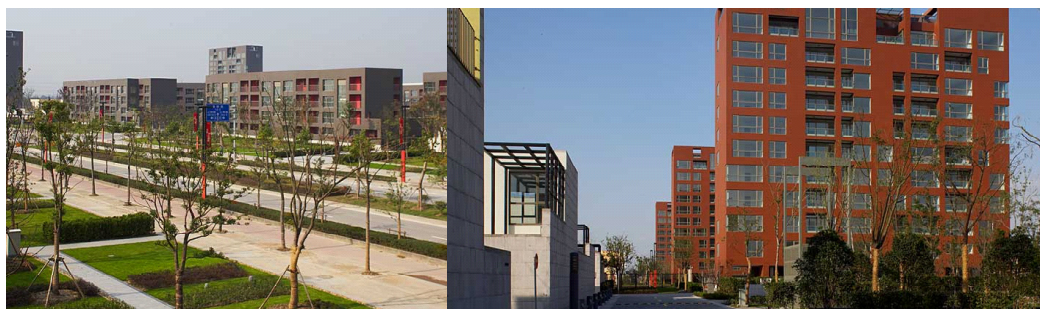
The Italian architect **Vittorio Gregotti** founded his company in 1974, based on a philosophy of adapting his plans to the history of the site, refusing to design abstract, standard buildings that could be reproduced in any place. He also specialises in sustainable architectural design and development, aiming to ensure respect for the environment.

The British company Ramboll is known for installing sports and leisure facilities, developing their immediate access ways and integrating them into the surrounding urban environment.



Pirelli site at Bicocca (700 000 m²)

Bicocca was an industrial area. The Milanese authorities decided to rehabilitate the area and fully integrate it into the city. This therefore involved constructing a new urban setting. Pirelli's industrial area was therefore transformed into a living quarter with the creation of numerous functions including a technological, research, university and service centre. A large green area adjoins the functional modern buildings and the system of internal communication and communication with the city is a success. The whole project is based on sustainable development.



New town of Pujiang, Shanghai, China (15 km²)

This impressive challenge, looking to accommodate 100,000 inhabitants, is currently being realised. The project began in 2001 with the idea of bringing together the main private and public collective urban functions alongside industry and accommodation, green spaces and leisure. The ambition here is no more and no less than to create a new town in an agricultural area. In terms of communication channels, the originality of the scheme lies in uniting a dense network of canals with the development of a road network, which has a geometric trace echoed by a secondary network of cycle and pedestrian routes.



The Grand Théâtre de Provence

II. DPA

Dominique Perrault, 56, is one of the most famous French architects and town planners. At the young age of barely 36, he won the Bibliothèque de France competition in Paris. His international reputation allows him to complete projects throughout the world. One example is the women's university of Seoul which has just been opened.

Dominique Perrault's priority is to construct buildings that blend into the environment. He prefers to produce simple, minimalist structures, open spaces, buried sections and irregular towers. His work also explores non-monumental projects on differing scales.



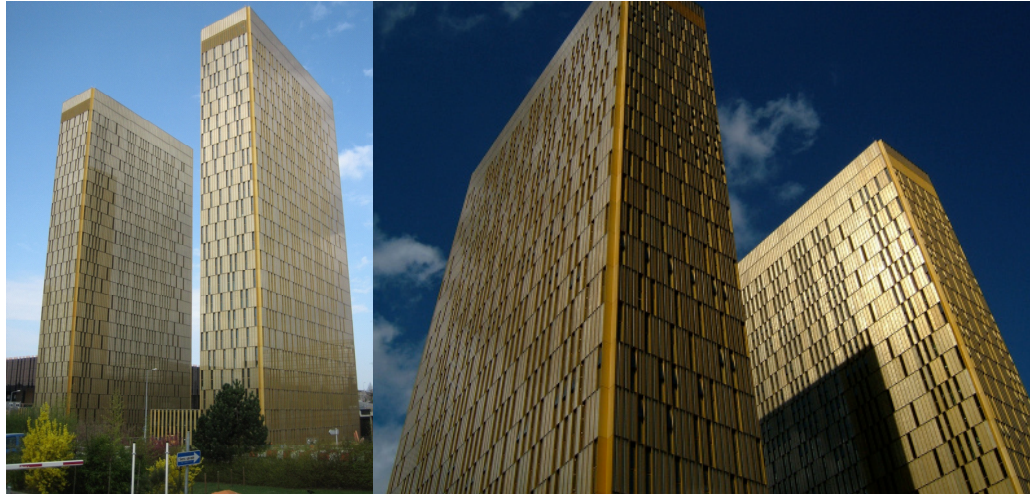
Bibliothèque Nationale de France (National Library of France)

This is Dominique Perrault's greatest aesthetic work, no contest, the one that built his reputation. In addition to the prestige of the building, it perfectly illustrates the integration of a bold, strong architectural concept with the existing urban fabric.



Olympic swimming pool and cycle stadium in Berlin

These structures embody DPA's aesthetic vision and multi-functional capability.



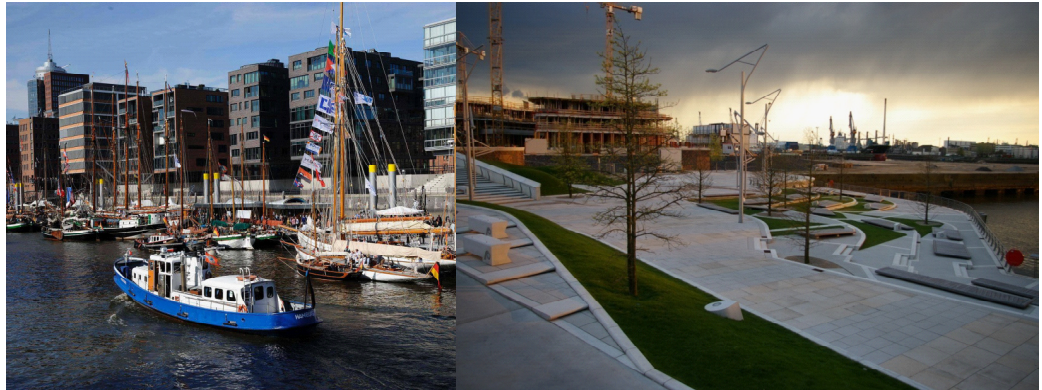
European Court of Justice, Luxembourg



Ewha women's university, Seoul, South Korea

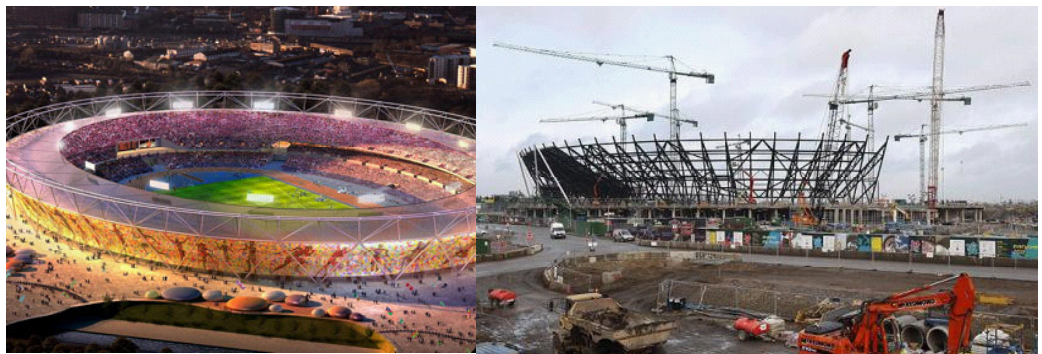
III. KCAP

KCAP was founded in Amsterdam 20 years ago. It is notable in two ways. First, it integrates all skills and disciplines in its projects simultaneously. Second, KCAP devises original, unique projects with an integrated vision of the space, architecture and town planning. The concepts in its town planning vision are of a particularly high standard, as mobility and sustainable development, for example, are considered as key points for the success of a project.



Hafencity Hamburg (153 ha)

This project encompasses a wide variety of functions and usages, combined well and strategically placed. It takes into account the aspects of integration into the existing (port and urban) environment, mobility, consideration of the socio-economic context, sustainable development, phasing and profitability of the project.



Olympic Legacy London (300 ha - 2014)

The concept consists of converting the space currently intended for use for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. After the Olympic Games, the site will be converted back to the existing environment and the infrastructure preserved from demolition will be put to use. The plan also involves ensuring financial feasibility through the use of consultancy, audits, seeking subsidies, etc. Finally, it emphasises mobility and sustainable development (reducing CO2 emissions from the buildings and infrastructure that will be constructed).



Stadionpark, Rotterdam (160 ha – 2009-2028)

Stadionpark is an international-scale sports campus. It includes several connected functions that are integrated into the socio-economic context and the existing environment. The water and green spaces give the project a particularly airy appearance and the consideration for mobility and sustainable development is highly developed. KCAP has also implemented consistent phasing to ensure the technical and financial feasibility of the project.

IV. Groupement De Architecten Cie – Royal Haskoning

This Dutch consortium stands out for the production of bold, futuristic town planning projects. All its projects are multidisciplinary: architects, town planners, project management, mobility management, financial consultants, landscape architects and a network of engineers specialising in construction techniques and environmental management.



Arena Boulevard, Amsterdam (508 000 m²)

The objective was to develop cultural and leisure functions around the stadium, along with small and large-scale retail outlets, hotels, stadium facilities, accommodation, station, educational facilities, health, green spaces and water features, offices and public facilities. Its originality lay in the way the project was integrated into the existing built structure.



Zuidas, Amsterdam (2 400 000 m²)

This is the Dutch government's most significant town planning programme. It corresponds to the NEO project in numerous respects, including the mobility aspect, as it also involved devising the first planning phase for a section of the city, including all functions and usages. Zuidas is also comparable to La Défense in Paris and Docklands in London.



IJburg, Amsterdam (263 500 m² – 7,000 residences)

V. AS. Architecture-Studio

Architecture-Studio (Paris), a quarter-century old, emphasises creative potential scaled by group-based logic: architects, town planners, designers, interior architects. The agency's team includes no less than 25 different nationalities focusing on determined openness, a "group philosophy for group architecture" in order to share knowledge, debate and compare notes. AS defines architecture as an art working in society, the construction of an environment for human living. It has references in the construction of conference centres.



Malepère, Toulouse (90 ha – 2009-2017)

The Malepère quarter was completely redeveloped in separate phases and integrated into the existing features. The project encourages the mixed nature of the activities in the quarter, inter-connected by road and pedestrian routes. It involved planning a new section of city, involving consistent location of usages and functions, integrating the existing socio-economic context, adapting to the surrounding urban fabric, sustainable development and green mobility.



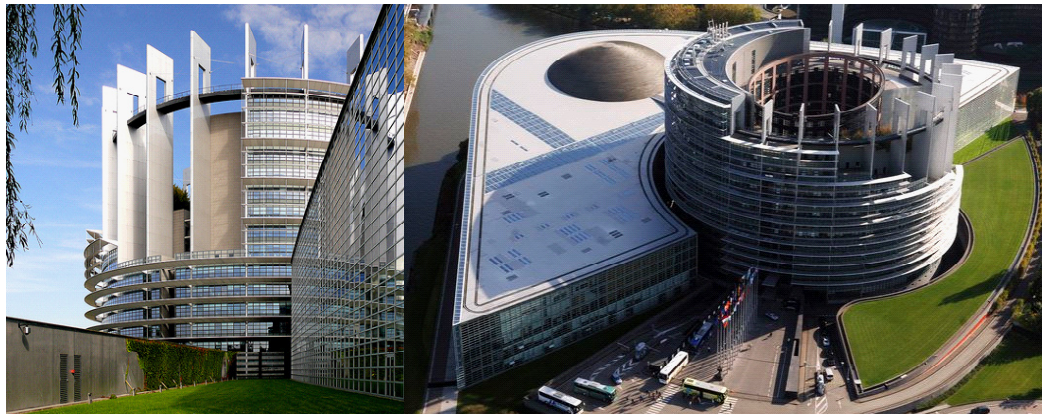
Zac Port Marianne – Parc Marianne, Montpellier (6,9 ha)

Competition winner in 2003. This project, involving the creation of a town centre area, stands out for the harmony of the quarter, focused on ecology and greenery, and the development of accommodation.



Caspian Pearl, Aktau-Kazakhstan (2007-2012)

The know-how of AS is illustrated in this unprecedented challenge, developing an island in the Caspian Sea. It entailed a design in which accommodation, a marina, golf course, shops, restaurants, public spaces, hotels, exhibition premises and offices had to co-exist. Integration into the landscape and mobility were also priorities.



European Parliament in Strasbourg

VI. Sum Project – ARUP&Partners Intern. Ltd – BDO Atrio

Sum, which has been active for 40 years, is based in Brussels and Ghent. The company sees itself as a laboratory divided into two centres.

First,
there is SumProject: architecture and engineering, focusing on human beings and their lived experience, developing attractive, functional public spaces, and producing innovative, bold, sustainable responses to technical challenges.

Secondly,
there is SumResearch: land development and town planning with a focus on nature, the environment, mobility, social planning and quality of life. Sum offers a multidisciplinary team of architects, town planners, engineers, and specialists in mobility, environment, sustainable development, finance, acoustics, construction physics, lighting, sustainability and urban/landscape interaction.



Stratford City & London 2012 Olympic Park (73 ha)

The Olympic Park by itself is not sufficient and the London authorities wanted to produce a master plan. The objective is to integrate the site into the city and its socio-economic context. This involves, on one hand, consistent location of usages and functions: shops, hotels and leisure areas, offices, and accommodation, and on the other hand, a major challenge in terms of mobility (road traffic, connection to the public transport infrastructure and green transport methods). Environmental management and sustainable development are considered fundamental to the success of the plan.



East Manchester Regeneration & Sportcity



Evaluatiestudie bijkomende Scheldenkruising – Anvers

This was an interesting study carried out by the three partners on the Oosterweel project to assess the various outlines proposed, based on six indicators: mobility and traffic safety, technical feasibility, financial feasibility, environment (noise and air quality), integration into the living environment, timing and conditions of implementation.

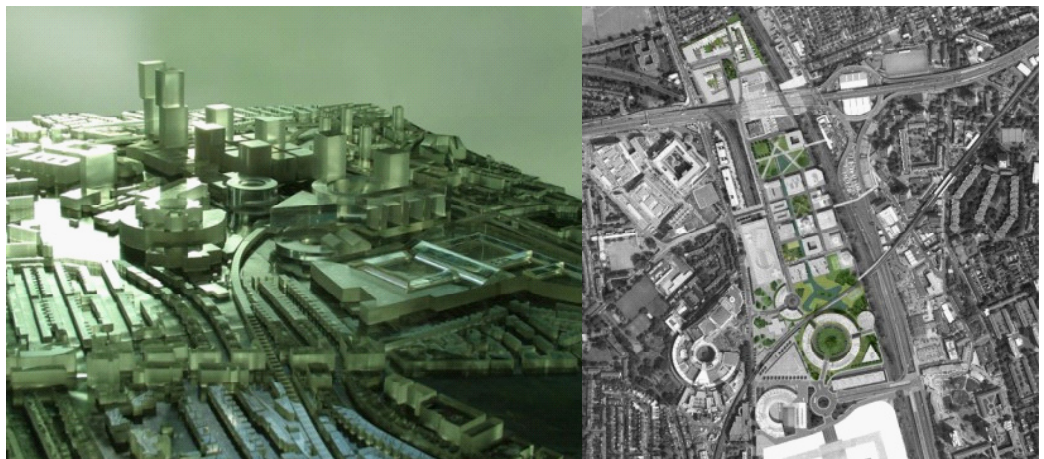
VII. OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture)

The Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) was founded in 1975 in Rotterdam and is now a world leader in contemporary architecture, town planning and cultural analysis. In addition to Rotterdam, OMA has opened offices in New York and Beijing. The group employs 220 people of 35 different nationalities and is highly specialised in design. It devises its architectural and town planning projects in parallel with the technological and artistic challenges.



Waterfront City Dubai (7 millions m²)

Waterfront City is the design of an integrated city centre for mixed use with a viable business plan of a high standard. The project includes synergies between the multiple functions and usages established. Objectives: constant activity 24 hours a day on the site for the different publics who use it (workers, tourists, inhabitants, students, walkers and people looking for leisure facilities). The project was implemented using precise phasing that takes into account sustainable development and mobility, managing traffic flows, and applicable urban regulations.



White City, Londres (1 378 938 m²)

At White City, the site has been reintegrated into its environment with a view to opening it up and returning pedestrians to the area. The objectives for White City include creating an urban life and interaction with the neighbouring quarters, seeking to complement the existing functions and usages. The media/BBC village will be housed in White City.



La Défense, Paris

The initial objective at La Défense, the prestigious new quarter in the French capital, was to redeploy the business quarter with high-level mobility connections (reinforcing access ways and public transport provision) and functions to make the quarter more attractive on an ongoing basis.

VIII. Ingeniería IDOM International

IDOM was founded in Madrid in 1975. It offers a particularly large, high-quality range of architecture and town planning services. IDOM focuses on its experience and know-how, its range of technological knowledge, its environmental engineering skills (amongst other types), its sustainable development skills and its expertise in terms of land development and landscape architecture. IDOM also offers the services of a civil engineer, an economist, a bio-climatic architecture specialist, a biologist, a civil engineer specialising in mobility, an acoustics specialist, etc.



Central area, Valladolid

The plan particularly looks to integrate a new section of city into the surrounding urban context, to establish the various usages and functions intelligently, and to ensure the sustainable development, mobility and adaptation of the project to its socio-economic backdrop. The project includes a model for cashflow and planning of the jobs generated and the income to ensure the economic viability of the project.



Parc Litoral, Barcelone

The project is significant for its originality and its functions. It involved producing two very unusual buildings, park and incinerator at the Ecoparc, Eco-museum.



San Juan Waterfront-Masterplan (49 ha – 2014)

San Juan opted to transform its old port with the idea of developing roads, a new tram line, water taxis, 12.5 hectares of public park, 21 old and new islands for various uses, adapted to the different income categories. The authorities also created a lively town centre for pedestrians. Its originality lies in the work to protect against sun exposure (widening pavements unprotected by buildings to give them shade elements).



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