SUIT
Sustainable development of Urban historical areas through an active Integration within Towns

Task 4.2 – Internal report on the application of EIA to cultural heritage & Guillemins extended case study analysis

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Summary

This task consisted of carrying out an extended case study analysis (the Guillemins station project in Liège, Belgium), through extensive monitoring and post-evaluation of the decision-making process, which was compared to the EIA directive and to the draft SUIT EA procedure, as well as to the different stakeholders’ wishes and regrets. This task was mainly intended at providing transferable key lessons in order to fine-tune the draft SUIT integrated EA procedure.

The task has been achieved by collecting both official documents related to the story of the Calatrava’s project for the Guillemins TGV station, and empirical data through qualitative field research (interviews of stakeholders). The report briefly presents the official “story” of the case, and then presents the successes and failures of the decision-making process, seen by the different stakeholders, or with regards to the ideal processes promoted by the EIA directive and SUIT methodology, and tries to identify the possible improvements in terms of procedures.

The main observations were that some strategic choices (not based on SEA) are recurrently questioned by the following; that the expectations with regards to the EIA were quite different between the decision-makers and developer on one side, and the public concerned on the other side; that some experts are opposed to public involvement at strategic stages (problem of visualisation); that the possible evolution of the project through the EIA process was very limited because the screening stage occurs very late in the project definition process (some decisions are already “irreversible”); that the public’s level of information about the decision-making process is very low, with as consequence, difficulties in taking part to the process; that the EIA report was used as an “a posteriori negotiation tool” to mitigate some impacts but without any questioning of the proposed project, with the consequence that the social acceptance of the project remains “borderline”; that the different stakeholders’ definition and identification of the quarter’s cultural heritage values likely to be threatened by the station project are quite different but much larger than the ones made in the EIA report (the consideration of the designated heritage is not sufficient); and that some decision-makers and experts consider that the Calatrava’s station value justifies environmental impacts on the quarter, when most of the interviewees consider that Calatrava just failed to integrate its station within the quarter.
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13. CONCLUSIONS
1. Objectives

This report aims at providing fine-tunings of the draft integrated EA procedure developed by the SUIT consortium in the framework of task 3.1. It consists of an extended case study analysis used to refine the SUIT procedure, as well as the particular tools attached to this procedure and developed by the different SUIT research teams (post-monitoring and evaluation procedures of task 3.5, morphological indicators system of task 2.3, screening-scoping procedures of task 3.2, etc).

It must be mentioned that the aim of this report is not to intervene or influence in any way the course of the Guillemins project, but only to observe a particularly rich process in order to highlight possible lessons and build experience likely to improve future practice. This analysis has been based upon in-depth interviews with the main stakeholders of the project, details of which can be found in Annex I and which have been extensively quoted in the main part of the text. For this reason the circulation of this report is restricted to the members of the SUIT project.

This extended and very rich case study first allowed us to audit a practical application of EIA to cultural heritage issues (in their broadest form), by assessing the efficiency of the decision-making process in meeting the theoretical objectives of both the EIA Directive and the SUIT project. This allowed us to sound the likely benefits of the developed SUIT draft EA procedure – would it lead to better practice and achievement of the theoretical objectives? - and to identify the remaining problems that this procedure does not address at the moment and for which solutions should still be developed.

This extended case study then allowed us to carry out a live test and tuning of some of the individual tools under development in the SUIT consortium – in relation to the integrated EA procedure. Firstly, post-monitoring and evaluation of the Guillemins decision-making process has been carried out, following the principles under development in task 3.5. Secondly, the tools developed in task 2.3 for morphological analyses have been tested in order to highlight the potential benefits of this particular impact assessment method in cultural heritage issues.

2. Selection of the case

The selection of the Guillemins case has been carried out by the SUIT consortium on the basis of three proposals suggested by the RW-DGATLP (SUIT meeting in Aberystwyth, on 18 & 19th of June 2001). The case relates to the construction of a major railway station in the centre of the city of Liege and the associated urban developments in its immediate surroundings: such as, creation of a large open space just in front of the station, demolition of two blocks of houses, transformation of the mobility patterns, and rehabilitation of the public spaces located in the neighbourhood. An EIA of the railway station project was undertaken by external consultants. It started in October 1998 and ended in April 1999.

The Guillemins case was chosen in preference to the other ones for several reasons. Firstly, it was considered that testing all the aspects of the EIA procedure would not be feasible within the time frame of this project. As the Guillemins project had already been submitted to an EIA, the
decision-making process could be retrospectively analysed step by step, with a view to gaining a better understanding of the many constraints characterising this kind of assessment: such as, socio-political stakes, time constraints, technical difficulties, and the available methodological resources. Such a semi-empirical approach would allow the entire EIA life span to be addressed as well as its overall decision-making context. It would also facilitate the collection of information as the proposed analysis would not interfere with the final decisions.

It was also considered that the project in question and the local plan that frames the project are typical candidates for the kind of methodologies developed in the SUIT project. Given the scale of the development, they may imply strong effects upon the urban heritage and should thereby fall under the scope both EIA\(^1\) and SEA\(^2\) Directives. Even though no formal SEA has been carried out in this case\(^3\), the project has a genuine strategic character, since it implies a transformation of the whole neighbourhood. The situation therefore appears as a good illustration of the required interaction between EIA and SEA in the context of large urban development projects.

The cultural heritage dimension of the case is also very rich, as there were competing cultural heritage values and the future railway station, designed by the Spanish architect Calatrava, is already considered by some people as a monument. Most of the surrounding buildings are dating from the XIX\(^{th}\) century. Even if it is not designated as an “heritage site” by the authorities, the existing urban fabric could thus be considered as a resource given its great homogeneity and its character. Quite interestingly, the neighbourhood was rather treated as a “context”, to be adapted to the station, within the EIA study. It was thus assumed that the context has to be fitted to the project instead of the opposite. Only the few listed monuments were considered by the EIA as heritage values to be protected.

The EIA conclusion was that the development should enhance public spaces located just around the station, but that it may imply a rapid dereliction of the less visible parts of the urban pattern like the Guillemins street (commercial obsolescence, housing issues etc). No alternative site or alternative project was considered by the EIA. The scale of the project has never been discussed. The open space that will be created by the local authorities in front of the railway station was deliberately left outside the scope of the EIA. Ideally a number of these issues should have been considered at the very beginning of the decision-making process, and further assessed by the EIA. The reasons for these limitations will constitute another subject of interest.

Accordingly, the report has been structured along four main sections. The next chapter will present the methodology adopted to analyse the case. As already said, it is a semi-empirical approach, inspired by post-evaluation practice developed in political sciences and EIA practice. It has been based on interviews structured along a grid of questions. Then the historical

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3 Normally the local plan set up to accompany the railway construction should also have been subject to an SEA, according to the SEA Directive. It has not been the case since the Wallonian Region has not yet transposed the SEA Directive.
development of the urban fragment since the XIXth century will be outlined briefly. This will aid better understanding of the structure of the neighbourhood surrounding the project, and the importance of some of the decisions adopted by the developer and the local authorities. Chapter 6 will briefly retrace the official decision-making process surrounding the case, and the distinction between the project and the plan decision-making. Decision making related to the railway station project was under the control of the developer, the SNCB (national railway company) in this case, whilst the plan was the responsibility of local authorities, and aimed at establishing a new urban framework to accompany the construction of the station and accommodate it to its neighbourhood. The most salient features of the social monitoring and post-evaluation will then be presented and discussed. The discussion will revolve around the place of the EIA performed within the decision-making process.

3. Methodology adopted for the post-monitoring

The first step was to better understand the whole decision-making process. Then, we tried to highlight the sub-processes that provided satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the end-users (Local Authority, stakeholders, experts, etc).

As a consequence, the monitored information mainly concerns the decision-making process (for each stage of the process, who were the actors involved, the decision-makers, the inputs-outputs) and the urban environment (baseline conditions, possible environmental and socio-economic effects, etc).

The sources of information were both the official documents (see the overview of the decision-making process in chapter 6) and the discussions with the various actors involved in the decision-making process (see the chapters 7 to 12) as well as the comprehensive interviews in annex I). This kind of social monitoring is particularly important in case of cultural heritage issues, because of their subjectivity. In such contexts, the perceived effects are as important as the actual possible effects of a development. In addition, it is always recommended not to focus on one source of information: this must be collected both quantitatively and qualitatively4.

3.1. Official documents

Prior to any enquiry, the official and available documents related to the project of the Guillemins project and local plan were collected. These enabled better understanding of the case, and allowed better focus in the discussions with the stakeholders interviewed in later stages. The elements gathered were the following ones:

- the “preliminary impact assessment notice” from SNCB, July 1998;
- the screening decision letter and the content of the EIA report as required by the RW-DGATLP, September 1998;
- the minutes of the preliminary public consultation meeting, November 1998;
- the minutes of a meeting of the Guillemins EIA steering committee, June 1999);

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- the Impact Assessment report (technical and non-technical) from S.A. Pissart-Van der Stricht, April 1999;
- the advice from the CCAT about the EIA, May 1999;
- the advice from the CWEDD about the quality of the EIA report and the opportunity of the project, May 1999;
- the “impacts report” from the RW-DGATLP, Augustus 1999;
- the comments letter from the independent organism reviewing the quality of the Impact Assessment report;
- the “schema directeur” plan (feasibility study from April 2000, synthetic report from June 2000);
- the development consent letter from RW-DGATLP, April 2000;
- the PCA local plan projected by the Local Authority, October 2001.

Access to the feasibility study that was undertaken, by the SNCB, at the very beginning of the decision-making process (October 1995) was not obtained. This feasibility study justified and recommended the displacement of the station, with its consequent disturbance of the neighbourhood. The decision to displace the station was not under question during the EIA or the rest of the decision-making process.

3.2. Interviews of stakeholders

In-depth interviews of the most significant actors in the decision-making process were undertaken. It has to be stressed that the evaluation performed basically addresses the perception of the role of the EIA within the decision-making process. It does not claim to address the social perception of the project. This hypothesis will obviously have implications for the scope of the work. Consequently only those who had played an active role in the decision-making process have been interviewed. Passive actors, for example, people living nearby but not participating in any association, train travellers or passers-by, were not interviewed.

The persons interviewed were:

- M. Julien Pissart, the consultant who carried out the Impact Assessment;
- M. Michel Servais, president of the inhabitants committee from Guillemins-Bronquart quarter;
- M. Paul Masson, president of the inhabitants committee from Fragnée-Blonden quarter;
- M. Braives, president of the shopkeepers’ association in Guillemins quarter;
- M. Philippe Hanocq, urban planner, member of the CRAU (urban planning office), of the CCAT of Liége (advisory committee consulted on major urban planning decisions), and the GRACQ (association of cyclists);
- M. René-Marc Grayet, president of the CCAT of Liége;
- M. Jean-Paul Gomez, public officer, responsible of the Urban Planning department at the city of Liége;
- M. William Ancion, deputy mayor of Liége, in charge of Urban Planning affairs;
- M. André Delecour, public officer, representing the Wallonian Region at the local level, in charge of delivering the development consent for the Guillemins projects;
- M. Claude Strebelle, architect, author of a proposal for the place located in front of the station;
- M. Theunissen, architect, member of the ARALg (association of architects of the province of Liege).

Ms. Martine Doutreleau from Euro-Liège TGV-developer of the new Guillemins station - declined the interview because of a lack of time and because we previously had a meeting together, which she considered sufficient for our information.

Mrs Elisabeth Gérard, from the Urban Planning administration of Liège, and responsible for the setting-up of the PCA local plan (stating legal requirements for the future place of the station) made us a presentation of the plan and of the role of the Local Authority in steering the Guillemins station project.

All the interviews have been carried out on the basis of an open questionnaire (see Annex I). This questionnaire has been structured to follow the classical stages of an EIA. It starts with some questions about the overall context of the Guillemins project and an outline of the historical development of the project. It then addresses the preparation of the project and the actors involved in this stage. A series of questions then addresses the screening, the scoping, the environmental assessment, the quality review, the public consultation and the development consent decision. For each of these aspects, the interviewee is basically asked about what has been done, about what should have been done, about the way the public and stakeholders may have participated, and finally about the place of the cultural heritage at each stage.

All interviews have been recorded and completely transcribed so as to facilitate the exchange of information between SUIT research partners (see Annex I). The questionnaire design proved to be well adapted to the survey. It checked that all the aspects of the EIA were covered, whilst leaving some flexibility during the interview.

4. References for the post-evaluation

The step following the data collection stage is the analysis of this data, or its audit, through comparison with some reference(s), allowing characterisation of the data. In this task, post-evaluation is only intended to learn from experience, and not for practical environmental management purposes (additional mitigation of impacts, etc) like it is also developed in task 3.5 - monitoring and post-evaluation.

The first and most immediate way of evaluating the decision-making process consists of comparing the application of the EIA procedure within the Guillemins case, with the ideal and theoretical objectives of two references: the EIA procedure as intended by the EIA Directive (see in annex II), and the SUIT draft EA procedure (see in annex III or in deliverable 3.1 for more details) elaborated by the SUIT partners. This comparison will reveal gaps and failures with respect to ideal situations, and thereby helps highlighting possible negative deviations from the EIA process. Such practical knowledge is expected to allow improvements in guidance documents, and in particular in SUIT guidance documents, addressing the particular cultural heritage issues.
It has still to be considered that decision-making instruments (or part of them) like EIA are often used by the local actors in a way that does not correspond with the idealist and prime objectives. The fact that an instrument does not behave as it is expected or intended to behave does not necessarily mean that it is helpless or irrelevant. Secondary or unexpected outcomes may come ahead of the official rationale. This means that the relevance of an instrument like EIA can not be assessed outside its larger decision-making context: social and political forces involved, translation of the EIA conclusions within other instruments, integration of formal and informal processes.

Another kind of evaluation consists of a comparison between official and perceived stories. This extension of the scope of the evaluation provides information about the degree of information of the different actors, about the particular events they experienced as important, with an overview of their personal points of interest and their respective (limited) roles in the procedure. It also highlights “underground” mechanisms and networks between actors which do not appear in “remaining” official versions of the “story”.

Finally, the recording of the way stakeholders perceive the decision-making process, its outputs and possible effects on the environment, also provides in itself a kind of evaluation. The urban regulation system, as well as the urban environment, are in interaction with the social environment, whether they like it or not. The quality of the urban environment and of the decision-making processes related to this environment are continuously evaluated by everyday end-users (local planners, amenity groups, lay people), through intuitive comparisons based on their own reference views of values such as quality of life, design quality, aesthetic value, heritage preservation, etc. In other words, they make personalised audits of a situation. These reference values are highly subjective and likely to raise controversies or at least methodological difficulties. In such a context, “opinions” about the effects (or other parameters such as emissions, outputs of the regulation system, etc) may be also important than effects. Glasson (1999) had already underlined the importance of opinions: “individual and group ‘social constructions of reality’ are often sidelined as ‘mere perceptions, or emotions’, not to be weighted as heavily as facts. But such opinions can be very influential in determining the response to a project. To ignore or undervalue them may not be methodologically defensible and is likely to raise hostility”.

5. Brief overview of the urban fragment

Prior to any further consideration, this section provides an overview of the urban environment in which the Guillemins station project is situated, and an overview of the evolution of this urban environment throughout time.

5.1. The Guillemins station

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5 “Social following-up of urban projects and plans”, by C.Ruelle, preliminary state-of-the-art report in relation to SUIT task 3.5 – monitoring and post-evaluation procedures, LEMA, February 2002.
The railway has passed through the Guillemins quarter since 1842. At this time, provisional wood buildings were used as a station. These were located on a part of what was called the “Clos des Guillemins”. The Local Authority did not intend to give so much importance to the Guillemins station and would have preferred to develop a more internal and central station for the city of Liège (on the “Commerce island”).

The National Authority however decided that a definitive station had to be built on the Guillemins site. In 1863, following this decision, the provisional buildings were pulled down and replaced, a little bit farther, by a “true” station, more spacious, and more appropriate. The station buildings were further developed and transformed by the following.

In 1954, the first electrified railway lines appeared. They required several transformations to the railway infrastructures, and inter alias, the demolition of the station built in 1863. In 1958, the existing station was built on the same place as the previous one. It was designed by the EGAU group: it is a simple structure on four levels, the façade of which is from “mur-rideau” type, almost entirely glassed, divided by aluminium profiles, and framed by a thin cordon made of limestone and concrete, largely exceeding the volume; the same stone covers the lateral facades. The station has been partly transformed up until today, the main change being the creation, in the front façade, of individual windows for the shops. This station is the only example of modern architecture in the quarter.

Today, the arrival of the TGV is at the origin of new major changes to the infrastructure, and of the decision of shifting and replacing the existing station by a new one, designed by Calatrava.

5.2. The central role of the station in the development of the Guillemins neighbourhood

The whole neighbourhood developed following the arrival of the railway in the XIXth century, and is organised around the station.

The existing station is located on the limit between two quarters, which developed following the railway station’s arrival in the XIXth century. They are the Fragnée quarter, around the Franchises place, and the Broncqart neighbourhood, around the Bronckart place. These two quarters developed around two distinguished properties: the Fragnée quarter was dependent upon the Fragnée Lord, whilst the Boncqart quarter was the property of the “Clos des Guillemins”, divided as a consequence of the Liegoise revolution. Before the XIXth century, these two quarters were mainly covered in fields, woods, orchards and meadows, with a few manor houses.

The arrival of the station defined the main circulation axis. The creation of the Guillemins Street for instance, results from the building of the station. It goes from the station to the Avroy Boulevard, and aimed at connecting the station with the city centre. It was the first street created on the property of the Guillemins and was inaugurated on 17th July 1842. The National Authority decided to give it spacious dimensions and so fixed its width to twenty metres. The Guillemins Street became the commercial arterial street of the quarter, which is still the case today. It delineates the two quarters of Broncqart and Fragnée, and gives to the station a privileged position in the townscape, when coming from the city centre: in the central perspective of the street.
At the same time (1842) as the Guillemins Street inauguration, the route of the “Plan Incliné” street was fixed, which is parallel to the railway and which connects the motorway and Hemricourt site to the station.

The Paradis Street, linking the Blonden Boulevard to the station place, developed around the XVIIth century, with the wood industry. In 1842, the Local Authority adopted a plan to enlarge it, bit by bit, as houses were built.

The Jonckeu Street, which originally connected the Val-Benoît site to the centre of the city (St-Gilles street), progressively lost importance to the benefit of the streets radiating from the station. In the XIXth century the local authority decided to modify its route, and to suppress the part between St-Gilles Street and Ste-Véronique church. It was in 1863 that the last changes to the route were decided on the section along the railway, with Marets Street becoming the existing Varin Street, which connects the General Leman place and the station.

The Bonckaert place developed around 1863. This place is delineated by identical buildings from the same period. It is a unique architectural set in Liège, because of its proportions and style, which is why the entire place is legally protected.

The Franchise place and surrounding streets were created at the same time, around 1877. There is no “manor house” on the Franchise place, but there is however a remarkable building: the Ste-Marie of Angels Church, dating from 1874.

5.3. The role of the exhibitions in the neighbourhood’s development

The station built in 1863 was enlarged for the universal exhibition of 1905. It was transformed further for the Centenaire exhibition in 1930 and for the Water exhibition in 1939.

The 1905 universal exhibition was also a major catalyst for the development of the Fragnée quarter. The main part of the remaining cultural heritage of the quarter is a consequence of both the location of the station, and the universal exhibition of 1905.

5.4. Progressive dereliction since the second world war

The Fragnée quarter suffered from unfortunate development projects, like the construction of the Administrative city of the state, the creation of car parks for this set of buildings, and other circulation projects (planned passage of the motorway through the quarter) for which houses have been expropriated and pulled down, prior to the projects being abandoned. It created important derelict land (mainly in Paradis Street). A lot of houses have been transformed into small flats for students, and the rest of the houses are occupied by lower middle class families. In Varin street, bordering the railway, and also in Paradis Street, several brothels developed facing the derelict land. The building stock of the quarter has an interesting value as a whole, but the facades are often dirty and sometimes suffer from a lack of maintenance. The quarter also lacks green and pedestrian spaces. The Franchises place for, instance, is crossed by the main circulation street, where cars are driving very fast.
6. Decision-making process: the two parallel processes

This section aims at retracing the chronology of the two parallel decision-making processes, on the basis of an analysis of the official documents.

6.1. The station project

6.1.1 The developer

In 1993, the SNCB created Euro-Liège TGV, a subsidiary charged with studying and ensuring the undertaking of the future station project. Its operational area extends from the bottom of the hill to the Meuse River, or a railway area about 2.5 km long.

On SNCB’s side, local and regional public actors, and a bank were also involved. These partners, gathered within the Society of Liège-Guillemins development, were in particularly concerned by the second mission of Euro-Liège TGV: to follow-up the dynamics generated by the railway and architectural project, as well as the outcomes for the quarter.

6.1.2 Feasibility study

In 1995, a feasibility study from the SNCB underlined that the railway project of Liège-Guillemins intended at creating a modern, integrated, multifunctional travel centre, which means accessible to all railway types of traffic. The feasibility study concludes that a shifting of the station towards the Meuse River was necessary and that works must be done to allow the crossing of the line Brussels-Germany and the line coming from the centre of Liège (these two options allow to save 3’30 on the TGV journey, because they allow the TGV trains enter the station faster). The feasibility study also concluded that it was necessary to locate the Brussels-Liège-Germany high speed line in front of the station, for “image” reasons.

6.1.3 Call for an architect

On the 25th May 1996, the advert for the selection of an architect (negotiated procedure market), who would be responsible of the structure and aesthetic of the future Liège-Guillemins station was published in the Official Journal of European Commission. The selection of the applicants, on the basis of economic and technical criteria, was organised in two stages according to pre-established modalities. Two different independent advice commissions were set up by the adjudicator (Euro-Liège TGV). The first commission proposed, to the Administrative Council of Euro-Liège TGV, a preliminary selection on the basis of an initial series of criteria that were
stated in the official market offer. The council made a selection on this basis. During the second stage, on the basis of additional criteria previously stated, the second commission provided a proposal for the classification of the applicants selected during the first stage. The final selection decision was taken by Euro-Liège TGV which, taking into consideration the proposal of the second commission, selected three laureates in order to negotiate the market conditions. At the end of these negotiations, M. Santiago Calatrava was selected on the 24th October 1996 as the architect responsible of the aesthetic appearance and structure of the new Liège-Guillemins station.

6.1.4 First presentation of the project

On the 11th June 1997, Euro-Liège TGV presented with M. Calatrava, a model of a draft project to the political and economic authorities of Liège, as well as to the press.

6.1.5 Beginning of the works

On the 2nd June 1998, the SNCB began the work on Hemricourt site to allow the crossing of the Brussels-Germany line and the line coming from the centre of Liège.

On the 23rd June 1998, the SNCB obtained the approval from the competent regional ministry for the expropriation of 23 houses in Mandeville Street (beyond the station) and 23 houses in Varin Street, for “public utility reasons”.

6.1.6 Request for development consent

The request of SNCB for the development consent was introduced to the Wallonian Region, with the mandatory “preliminary notice on environmental effects”, on the 10th July 1998. Additional information having been asked by the Wallonian Region and provided by SNCB on the 17th September 1998, the final file was recorded on the 21st September 1998.

6.1.7 EIA screening-scoping stages

The Regional Authority asked for an EIA (in application of article n°10 of 11/09/85 Decree, even though it is not so clear that an EIA was mandatory for the project), set up the content of the EIA report, and notified the SNCB on the 22nd September 1998. The project area to be studied by the EIA consultant (defined by the Regional Authority) is limited to the strict area of the future station building, because the redevelopment of the surrounding spaces are not decided yet. So the EIA had to consider the future station in the existing environment or in a still unknown environment.

As required by 31/10/91 enforcement decree, Euro-Liège TGV informed the Regional Authority of its choice for the author of the EIA: s.a. Pissart – Van Der Stricht.

6.1.8 Public participation in the scoping stage
The EIA started in October 1998 with, as required by article n°12 from 11/09/85 decree for projects initiated by a public organism, a preliminary public consultation stage, to be organised by the Local Authority, following the requirements of article n°27 and followings of 31/10/91 enforcement decree. This stage started the 29th October 1998 and ended on the 29th November 1998. During this stage, the Local Authority organised a preliminary public consultation meeting, as required by the article n°33 of the same enforcement decree, in order to allow the public to highlight possible alternatives to the project. During this meeting, the station project was presented by Calatrava himself. No real alternative appeared, but rather fears concerning acoustic nuisances, negative impacts on local commerce, accessibility for cyclists, and management of the surrounding public spaces. At the end of the consultation stage, seven written comment letters had been sent to the Local Authority by the Handicapped Local Consultation Commission, some inhabitants’ committees, and some individual neighbours. The reactions were mainly concerning the management of the public spaces surrounding the station, and not the project in itself.

6.1.9 Environmental report

The EIA report was sent to the Regional Authority on the 12th April 1999. Issues highlighted included the monumental character of the station face in relation to the quarter common typology, the problem of the quarter’s dereliction which contrasts with the station, the problem of removing the station from the axis of the Guillemins Street, the good architectural quality of the project, which is an opportunity for Liège, and the historic rupture generated by the shifting of the station although the structure of the quarter developed around the actual station. The conclusion of the EIA report was that the project was a great opportunity for Liège, especially because it is designed by a great architect like Calatrava, but that it would probably produce important environmental effects, and mainly, on the inhabitants’ quality of life during the works stages, and on townscape and on local socio-economy after the works.

6.1.10 Public review of the EIA report

The SNCB sent to the local authorities the EIA report and other relevant documents in order to allow them organise the public enquiry, as required in article n°37 of 31/10/91 enforcement decree. The Local Authority organised the public enquiry and ensured the publicity of the enquiry as required in chapter VIII Section II of the 31/10/91 enforcement decree: urban advertising and twice, notices in two local newspapers. The public enquiry stage extended from the 26th April 1999 to the 26th May 1999. Seven reactions were sent to the Local Authority within time (individual letters or petitions), from inhabitants’ committees, shopkeepers’ association, GRACQ cyclists’ local association, and ARALg architects’ association. The reactions were mainly about the size of the station, its removing from the axis of Guillemins Street, the negative effect of the station on the view of the Inter-alliés monument and the Sacré-Coeur church (monuments located on the Cointe hill and seen from a lot of places in the city), the necessity of an appropriate place in front of the station, the necessity of controlling the possible negative socio-economic impacts, the possible impacts of changes in the circulation plan on the local commerce, the necessity of preserving the use of the station by cyclists, the transversal links of the station, and the necessity to take measures to avoid any landslide in the hill.
Although the minimum legal number of claimants to organise a public consultation meeting was not achieved after the public enquiry stage, an informal information meeting gathering all the claimants and the members of the steering committee for the Schéma Directeur plan (see next chapter), was however organised by the Local Authority and Euro-Liège TGV, on the 24th June 1999. The delegate from the Regional Authority also attended this meeting. During this informal meeting, the author of the EIA report summarised the results of the EIA. The shopkeepers’ association president (M. Braives) argued for a reduction of the height of the station and mentioned the problems generated by the shifting of the station. But the architecture and position of the building have not been questioned.

6.1.11 Independent review of the EIA report

On the 10th May 1999, the independent organism in charge of the EIA report’s quality review (the CWEDD – Conseil Wallon pour l’Environnement et le Développement Durable) sent its advice about the EIA report and the project to the Regional Authority, as required by the law. It is generally positive, although it however deplores the limitation of the area subject to EIA. Legally, if the number of reactions during this public enquiry is more than twenty-five, the Local Authority must organise a public consultation stage. Here it was not the case.

6.1.12 Consultation of various concerned authorities and organisms

On the 11th May 1999, the local consultative organism of Liège (the CCAT – Commission Consultative en Aménagement du Territoire) gives its advice about the EIA and the project, which is mainly positive. It however, considered that the suggestions made in the EIA report were timid and limited.

On the 21st May 1999, the Society of Public Transports (the TEC – Transports En Commun) gave its agreement to the project. On the 25th May 1999, the local division of the Roads Ministry (the MET – Ministère de l’Equipement et des Tranports) gave its agreement to the project.

6.1.13 Environmental Impact Statement

On the 20th August 1999, the Regional Authority completed the production of an “Impact Report”, as required by the 31/10/91 enforcement decree, which has been publicised through urban advertising. This report is an overview of the whole procedure: description of the project, existing legal situation, development consent procedure, content of the EIA report, author of the EIA report, consultation and information stages, Impact Assessments themselves, public enquiry, public consultation meeting and review of the EIA report by the CWEDD and the CCAT.

6.1.14 Consultation of Local Authority

On the basis of the EIS document, the Regional Authority, before granting development consent, asked the Local Authority for its advice on the project, as required by the legislation. The Local Authority gave its agreement to the project on the 18th November 1999, but with some conditions: it stated that the SNCB had to fund and develop a project for the public spaces related to the station; it also stated that the shops had to be reduced to 1000 m² as recommended in the
EIA report; and it asked for a project to replace the actual station in the axis of Guillemins Street.
It also mentioned that the PCA local plan (see next chapter) would be quickly revised in order to
steer the quarter development around the station.

6.1.15 Updated version of the project

On the 16th March 2000, Euro-Liège TGV sent to the Regional Authority updated plans,
mentioning the cyclists’ spaces, the planned projects (places, etc), and details about the
commercial surfaces.

6.1.16 Development consent

On the 7th April 2000, the Regional Authority gave its development consent to the SNCB project,
with some conditions: to limit of the shops inside the station to 1000 m²; to take care not to
threaten the shops of Guillemins quarter; to maintain a continuity between Guillemins Street and
the future station thanks to the redevelopment of shops instead of the actual station; to facilitate
the use of the station by the cyclists; to facilitate the access to the station by handicapped people;
etc. The Regional Authority’s decision was justified by the following reasons: the quarter tends to
be derelicted, and the architecture of the project is very good and likely to give a new positive
image of the city of Liège; the Local Authority started to think deeply about the quarter (funded
by the Regional Authority, see next chapter); the public spaces and green spaces are missing in
the quarter; the general interest study (see next chapter) tends to recommend a large space in
front of the station, requiring further expropriations; a finer study (by C.Strebelle, see next
chapter) confirmed the necessity of an appropriate place for the station; the station, through its
architectural quality, is dominating its context; etc.

6.2. The strategic plans around the station

At first, the Local Authority, with the help of AGUA (a consultant from Louvain-La-Neuve), had
taken part and won a competition organised by the Fondation roi Baudouin. The aim of the
competition was to improve the management of the surroundings of railway stations.

When the TGV station project was been announced, the Local Authority asked the Regional
Authority to revise the existing PCA local plan around the station (dating from 1955). The Regional Authority approved this decision on 5th November 1992.

6.2.1 The Schema Directeur plan

On the 17th May 1993, the Local Authority decided to set up first a Schéma Directeur local plan
to steer the project of the station, because this tool is more flexible and more appropriate when a
context is not well defined. The Local Authority logically chose AGUA to set up this local plan
for the Guillemins quarter.

In 1995, a first operational definition of the Schéma directeur plan was completed by AGUA.
On the 4th March 1996, the Local Authority created two committees intended for following-up the development of the Schéma Directeur plan:
- a “steering committee”, gathering representatives from the MET (Ministère de l’Equipement et des Transports), the TEC (Transports En Commun society), SRWT (Société Régionale Wallonne des Transports), the WR-DGATLP (Wallonian Region – Direction Générale de l’Aménagement du Territoire, du Logement et du Patrimoine), the Local Authority, Euro-Liège TGV and AGUA;
- a “monitoring committee”, gathering representatives from nine inhabitants’ committees and from the Local Authority.

In May 1997, a second operational definition of the Schéma Directeur plan was completed. In January 1999, a third operational definition of the Schéma Directeur plan was completed, with an extended operational area. In February 1999, a further version of the plan presented the new blocks to be developed in front of the station, and basic projects for the management of public spaces. On the 27th April 2000, the operational area of the Schéma Directeur plan goes from the top of the Cointe hill to the Meuse River, and from the Val-Benoît site to the Ste-Marie street. The Schéma Directeur plan provided very general objectives such as: to maintain functional mix, to create an appropriate place in front of the station, and to integrate the financial administration buildings within the quarter, and the steering committee for the plan gave its agreement to this final definition. The Local Authority also adopted the AGUA’s Schéma Directeur plan.

The Schéma Directeur plan will be used as a basis for the definition of a PCA local plan (more restrictive, with a legal character). The Schéma Directeur tool is no longer recognised by the CWATUP as legally constraining, which is why a PCA local plan must be rapidly defined by the urban planning department of the Local Authority. This definition will be followed-up by a committee gathering representatives of the Local Authority, of the inhabitants’ committees, and of the shopkeepers’ association, as well as by the steering committee gathering the representatives from the administrations involved in the project (MET, DGATLP, Euro-Liège-TGV, SRWT, TEC).

In June 2000, AGUA produced a combined document summarising the Schéma Directeur plan, and integrating the triangular place recommended by the architect Claude Strebelle, author of a feasibility study for the management of the public spaces, ordered by the SRWT (Société Regionale Wallonne des Transports), a possible financer for this management.

6.2.2 The PCA local plan

The Local Authority council adopted, on the 26th June 2000, a list of urban regulation options inspired from the Schéma Directeur plan set up with AGUA. The adopted options will be used as a basis for the PCA local plan, which will provide with detailed regulation constraints to be respected by future developers.

On the 23rd Augustus 2001, the draft PCA local plan was adopted by the Local Authority college, and on the 3rd September 2001, the PCA was provisionally approved by the Local Authority Council. From the 24th September 2001 to the 8th November 2001, a public enquiry was organised on this PCA local plan. The main reactions concerned the expropriations but not the general principles and requirements of the PCA local plan.
The modification of the PCA local plan did not require an SEA, because SEA is not mandatory in Wallonian Region, when a local plan does not modify a plan of a higher level. So on the 17th December 2001, the PCA plan was adopted by the Local Authority Council.

The PCA local plan is based on the outcomes of the *Schéma Directeur*, the EIA report conclusions, and on the study carried out by Claude Strebelle for the SRWT. It covers a triangular place, symmetric to the station, the point of which is at the crossroad between Selessin Street, Serbie Street and Paradis Street.
7. The paradoxical status of the EIA

The next section covers the analysis and evaluation of the data monitored.

According to the European Directive, the EIA procedure is intended to “ensure that, before consent is given, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to an assessment with regard to their effects.” For generic the Directive stays, the idea it tends to promote is very clear. It basically assesses the effects of a project upon the environment before it is granted development consent, in order to provide the decision-makers and the different stakeholders sufficient information about the likely negative impacts of the project. The developer is further encouraged to compare the effects of different alternatives and to propose measures in order to mitigate or alleviate the most significant impacts of his project.

As regard with this general framework, the status of the EIA performed in the framework of the Guillemins station project is characterised by a paradoxical status and numerous departures from what would be assumed as an “orthodox” approach. For example, no real alternatives of the project were studied and the assessments performed never claimed to question the relevance of the project with regard to its local environment. It was almost assumed from the beginning of the EIA process that it was the environment that would have to be adapted to the project and not the opposite.

Several elements of the socio-political and legal context contributed to this situation. As usual, some factors are strictly contingent to the project and others are more “structural” in their nature. This section will try to explore these different factors, starting with the most structural ones, the legal status of the Guillemins EIA, so as to progressively enlarge its scope to the specific contextual conditions that hindered an “orthodox approach” of the EIA.

7.1. The legal status of the Guillemins EIA

The application of the EIA Directive in the Guillemins case raised three main legal difficulties: it was not a mandatory requirement to perform an EIA of the project, the conclusions of the EIA are not legally constraining, the consultant in charge of the assessment is financially dependent upon the developer, and the EIA starts only once a request for development consent has been introduced by the developer.

These difficulties are quite structural in scope. They will have been observed in many European Member States and they are recurrent in many urban development projects affecting the urban cultural heritage. It is thus very important to measure their practical consequences on the development of the evaluation procedure.

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7.1.1 The EIA as a non-mandatory requirement

An EIA of urban development projects is not a mandatory requirement of the Directive, which considers that it falls under the scope of projects that should be examined case by case, according to criteria defined in its Annex III. For the competent authority (the Wallonian Region), the legal requirements were not clear at all, although the administration finally found elements in the law to justify the decision of carrying out an EIA. This decision was particularly motivated by the “height” and “surface” of the building, by the fact that its location may imply deep disturbance in the “built stock” surrounding the building and in the “circulations” and by the fact that the Schéma Directeur plan aimed at steering the project was not completed and was far from providing appropriate solutions to the problematic issues at the time when the SNCB requested development consent. This decision has been taken in accordance with the Local Authority (Liege city council).

M. Delecour - To decide whether an EIA had to be carried out, we analysed the 11/09/85 decree and its 31/10/91 enforcement decree (in particular the annex 2), and the fact is that there was some legal vagueness. But there were however some elements which convinced us of the necessity of an EIA... The height and the surface of the station were important criteria to decide that an EIA was necessary, but the most important was the shifting of the station and its likely effects of the circulations and the accessibility of the station (from the back, from the front, etc) ... Unfortunately, the Schéma Directeur was giving us too few practical tracks or orientations about how we had to manage the quarter (how expropriate, etc.). ... we knew that an EIA could help us to identify the problems in terms of circulation, functions, built stock, importance of the station, so all the parameters of an urban project, and perhaps could help us to find solutions...

M. Gomez - In the strict sense of the law, there was no criteria justifying an EIA. But for a building of this height (40 meters high), and of this scale, it was inconceivable not to carry out an EIA...

This decision was backed by most local actors and the concerned public. For the majority of the interviewees, it was a bit surprising that such a project would not systematically be submitted to further assessment. Their feeling was that it was obvious, that it goes without saying that an EIA was necessary, notwithstanding the legal requirements, given the nature of the project and its context. The criteria mentioned to “screen-in” the project are the “height” and “extent” of the project, as well as its likely impacts on “urban layout”, “townscape”, “urban setting”, “urban planning”, and “circulations”.

M. Pissart - It is logical to carry out an EIA even if it was not legally mandatory, because of the impacts on circulations, on urban layout and on townscape...

M. Masson - When a project is likely to change a whole quarter and its urban setting, it seems to me that an EIA is logical, and it seems that it is the case here. The ground surface did not produce reactions among neighbours, it is more the planned height of the station which frightened most of the people. There is a general feeling of “oppression” generated by this huge height...

M. Theunissen - When it was announced that paradoxically, such a project was not legally submitted to an EIA, we were a bit surprised since as architects, we are faced with an EIA for
any project of transformation of a little building! Here, the extent of the project regarding its impact at the urban planning level, totally justifies the EIA...

The decision to submit the project to an EIA was also welcomed by the developer. Arguably, by accepting to “loose” some months in performing an EIA, the railway authorities (referred as the SNCB by the interviewees) gained the positive image of a developer who shows willingness and accepts “more than the law”.

M. Delecour - The SNCB accepted the decision of carrying out an EIA very easily...

Nevertheless the gap between the public, developer and authorities’ views of the necessity to perform an EIA contributed to the generation of some suspicion with regards to the real objectives of the EIA. By the developer, it was somehow considered as a formality, when the public concerned was expecting a detailed questioning of the project.

Given the absence of strict screening conditions, the status of the EIA thereby appears to be somehow ambiguous from the beginning: as it is an optional procedure, it is designed as a way of backing up further administrative decisions and to block possible judicial proceedings introduced by third parties. In these conditions, the public often considers that the assessment is unlikely to provide elements that could possibly feed the debate and controversy around the project.

To enforce the public trust in the EIA, the screening decision would obviously benefit from being more transparent, and open to debate, which would confer the competent authority with a solid backing for requiring an EIA from the developer. The screening decision would then no longer be conceived as an act of “good will” from the developer or a way to contend with any possible public controversy around the project. It would rather be formulated as a clear demand for precaution by the Competent Authority and the concerned public.

7.1.2 The EIA conclusions not legally constraining

Once the EIA report was completed, the public authorities are free to follow or not the report’s recommendations - as well as the advices of the other stakeholders regarding its content. Furthermore, the development consent is not granted on the sole basis on the EIA report. The presence of the report is a mandatory element, but it is usually accompanied by other elements, as the legal destination of the place where the project is being built, the reports issued by different administrative bodies as regard with the EIA report or the planning application etc.

The way these different elements will be weighted in the final decision is discretionary, although it has to be justified by the Competent Authority.

M.Pissart - The success of an EIA depends on how is used the EIA report: the Wallonian Region and the Local Authority, which will deliver the development consent, have the power to impose or not what is recommended in the report...

M.Strebelle - One must make the difference between the EIA report and the manner that will be used. I am often struck by the absence or the weakness of use of the EIA reports. I am
struck by the cultural continuity that makes that people set up a project together, make an EIA, and then never use it ...

In practice, the EIA report was used to convince the Local Authority of the necessity of creating an “appropriate” place in front of the station, a place at the same scale as the station, and not the little place limited by the Jonckeu Street that the Local Authority intended to manage. The Competent Authority waited for the results of a new feasibility study for this place, carried out by Claude Strebelle at the request of the SRWT (one of the main possible financers for the management of the “appropriate” place), before delivering the development consent. The Competent Authority explicitly mentioned this study as an element supporting his decision in the planning consent.

M. Delecour - The SRWT was volunteer to fund the place of the station (including expropriation and demolition of the houses in Jonckeu Street), so they charged l’ “Atelier du Sart-Tilman” (Claude Strebelle) to see what was possible to do as a place. He worked with Calatrava and finally achieved a report which was recommending the triangular place. I waited this report before granting development consent, and in the official development consent, it is mentioned as an objective to reach...

The use of the EIA appears quite paradoxical as it has partly been used as a tool to constrain the local authorities instead of the developer. Actually, the final solution for the place is the one that Calatrava had proposed in his first sketch (before the SNCB reduced his operational area).

7.1.3 The mandate of the author of the study

One of the most common criticisms addressed to the EIA concerns the lack of independence of the author of the EIA. In the Wallonian Region, as in many other European Member States, the author of the EIA is directly paid by the developer. In these conditions, it is usually perceived that the consultant is not really free to deeply question the project, as it would be detrimental to his relations with his client (the developer), and impede him future contracts.

M. Ancion - According to my experience, an EIA is always favourable to the project... and how could it be different since it is to the developer to pay for the study! ...

M. Theunissen - It is well done. Of course, as any study ordered by a developer, one may not say all the things one would like to say, but there are however objective things that have been mentioned. Their reflection somehow met ours, so it is a good study...

However, it must be observed that the mandate of the author of the EIA is larger than his contract with the developer. The author of the EIA report must be chosen from a list of consultants officially recognised by the Competent Authority and his work is reviewed by an independent organisation.

The Guillemins case hence reveals that the EIA is placed under the scrutiny of both the developer and the Competent Authority. Such a double-dependency basically transforms the mandate of the author of the EIA into a mediating role: the EIA report is a sort of compromise between the positions held by the authorities and the ones of the developer. The ability of the author of the EIA not only consists in performing robust and detailed evaluations, but also in
phrasing his conclusion in a way with which both parties agree. Even though negotiation is now deeply anchored in most current practices of urban governance⁸, this mediating role is once again quite paradoxical in the light of the EIA Directive.

7.1.4 Irreversibility of the decision-making process

The European Directive does not state explicitly at which time the EIA process has to be started. It only states that, when it is required by the Competent Authority, the EIA should be concluded prior to development consent being granted. According to the 11/09/85 decree and the 31/10/91 enforcement decree, implementing the European Directive in the Wallonian Region, the EIA process legally starts once a development consent has been introduced by a developer. When the Competent Authority considers that the project has to be submitted to an EIA (screening), it officially notifies the developer of its decision and the assessment can proceed its course. This aspect is especially important for those projects that are submitted to a case-by-case screening, as with urban development projects for instance. In those cases, the developer is not “legally certain” that the project will have to be submitted to an EIA prior to introducing development consent.

This procedure implies strong limitations with regard to the real margin left within the EIA process with regard to a possible evolution of the project. In theory, the entire project may still be reconsidered, since no development consent has been granted at that time. Practically, it appears that, at the time when one applies for development consent, the project can no longer be modified or rejected without enormous social and economical consequences. Actually, the project is entirely defined. It means that it is already balancing a number of studies, opinions, agreements, decisions, investments etc. It is no longer an hypothesis nor a theoretical proposal. It has already been “validated” by whole series of efforts and engagements.

It has to be stressed that these are not solely economical and financial matters. The political and social relevance of the project is also part of the previous validation of the project. Furthermore the project has already raised expectations amongst the local population when it is submitted for development consent. Reconsidering all these decisions one by one may destabilise the whole project, with important consequences for both the developer and the entire community.

M. Pissart - As author of the EIA, we always intervene very late in the process: when the development consent has already been asked to the competent authority... which is a pity because it is therefore difficult for us, without knowing the story of the project, to understand the choices which have already been done, which have already been subject to a consensus between developer and Local Authority ... so when we carried out an EIA, the objective is not to destroy the project but to highlight the environmental impacts and to propose solutions to reduce or avoid them, and when it is not possible, to find mitigation measures...... The problem with this procedure is that it is not possible to find comparable alternatives, because

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it is not acceptable to compare a well-developed project (as the one for which Euro-Liège TGV was asking for a development consent) with a less nurtured alternative. On the other hand, to systematically look for alternatives even if a decision is already the result of a broad consensus is not necessary and may be destructive ...

As appears in the previous quote, the consideration of alternatives is also hindered by the efforts already engaged in the validation of the project. It is not possible nor realistic to compare a project submitted to a development consent decision with hypothetical assumptions, lacking any maturity, deepness and backing. The EIA is thus operating as if the project was virtually existing. In these conditions, it may only seek to transform it and suggest possible changes or mitigation/accompanying measures. This is also probably the reason why the EIA was perceived by some interviewees from the public associations as a façade, since many “important options” were no longer reversible.

M.Masson - There was no Impact Assessment considering whether to build a new station of not: the population, as well as the Local Authority of Liège, have been put in front of the “fait accompli” by the SNCB ... the chips were down since the exposition of Calatrava’s model, so since the beginning ... “they” had charged Calatrava of the design of the station, “they” would not going back from their decision to have Calatrava.

M.Grayet - The EIA does not allow to radically change the decision already taken or almost taken ...

To sum up, the EIA starts very late in the decision-making process, when the project has already been validated by a series of actors, studies and involvements, pertaining to the private and public spheres. Practically the aim of the assessment is not so much to decide whether the project should proceed. At this stage, and for projects of this importance, a rejection of the project would have severe consequences given the social and economical efforts already engaged in its maturation. Accordingly, negative conclusions would only occur in extreme conditions, and testify a serious failure. This is quite paradoxical when one refers to the text of the European Directive, which quite favours a comprehensive and dispassionate review of the project.

It has still to be stressed that the meaning of the EIA is not empty for this reason. In fact, as the EIA comes so late in the chain of decision-making, it represents one of the last chances to somehow amend the project (monitoring will not be constraining if it is not part of the EIA report). Accordingly the challenge is not solely to measure the impacts of the project upon its environment, but to identify those options that are still open and reversible at the moment when the assessment is performed. The EIA will then be able to assess, transform and define constraints on an object that is virtually existing and functioning. The consideration of alternatives and mitigation measures should be understood in this narrow, yet strategic perspective. This transformation process would largely gain in effectiveness and credibility if it was somehow prepared by Strategic Environmental Assessments achieved at a moment when the alternatives are still open and the decisions reversible.

7.2. De facto limits of the assessment

Besides these legal considerations, that would apply to most EIA in Wallonian Region and the EU, there appears to be, in the case of Guillemins, a number of specific factors that contributed to
confer a somehow paradoxical status to the EIA. Not all these factors are reproducible from one case to another. Still many of them find their roots in social and political conditions of the EIA whose scope is much larger than the case at hand.

7.2.1 Location of the station

An important limit to the assessment of the station project lay in the fact that the EIA author was not asked by the Competent Authority (in the EIA content it set up, as legally required), to engage in a discussion about the mere location of the project, despite the fact it was probably one of the most critical factors when considering the impact of the project on the urban fragment. The decision to shift the station from its existing position was based on a technical feasibility study achieved by the SNCB. Quite interestingly, the technical arguments advanced by the SNCB were not accepted by all the actors, especially the local authorities and the population.

M.Ancion - When the siting decision has been taken (Liège-Guillemins), came the location of the actual station shifted of about 100 meters, with the double argument from the SNCB according which straight railways were necessary along about 420 meters, and a long distance was required to allow the passage of the line coming from Liège-Palais (centre of the city) beyond the TGV line. By the way, it also required important works at Hemricourt crossroads. Here, some of us were reacting saying that all this was only to allow the train to enter the station at a speed of 100 km/h and to save 45 seconds or 1 minute on the whole journey! They were then wondering about the necessity of such works, and noting that one will catch the TGV at Midi station in Brussels where the railways are curved, so why must they be straight in Liège? But finally we decided to pass though, since the SNCB was justifying the shifting of the station like this and that they were funding the project... and also because we were afraid that the SNCB decides to cancel the line between Liège-Palais and Liège-Guillemins, because according to us, this line between the centre and the TGV station was fundamental ...

M.Braives - The platforms must be 450 meters long, and they must be straight! That is why the station must be shifted! Do you imagine that in Liège one needs straight railways when in North Station in Paris they are curved? They really take the piss out of people! ... I think that this shifting will produce negative effects on the shops of Guillemins Street. But I am not sure, it depends on the reorganisation of the circulation in the surroundings of the station ...

Technical actors were much more prone to accept this argumentation. It clearly appears through this quote, somehow paternalistic, of the urban designer in charge of the place to be created before the station.

M.Strebelle - The location of the future station was dictated by a technical requirement, which has been explained to the public ... the station will be 400 meters long, which is enormous but necessary to received the TGV trains. In fact, the existing station can only receive trains half as long. It explains why the station has been shifted lower, only location allowing the reception of such long trains ...

We will not enter in a discussion about the quality and soundness of the SNCB feasibility study. It falls outside the scope of the present report. More fundamentally, one may still argue that
questioning the decision of the SNCB implies to open the so-called “black box” of the expertise\(^9\): what are the hypotheses of the assessment? how is it performed? what is the legitimacy of the technical expert for taking decisions with such heavy socio-political consequences? etc. The author of the EIA lacks the technical capabilities and the political legitimacy to enter such a complicated debate, if he is not mandated to do so.

Accordingly, if these questions were not deliberately raised by the public authority, they risked being considered as mere “constraints” in the EIA report. This is especially the case when the decision-making appears almost irreversible (see above). Such an hypothesis can be detrimental to the comprehensiveness of the assessment, given that such decisions, presented as purely technical, are sometimes associated with high environmental consequences.

### 7.2.2 Definition of the project assessed

The EIA terms of references, set up by the Regional Authority (as required by the Wallonian decrees), limited the project submitted to an assessment to the sole project of the future station, and its operational area. Of course, this decision goes against the theoretical exploratory role of the EIA as expected by the European directive\(^10\). It is probably a consequence of the late start of the EIA process within the whole decision-making procedure in Wallonian region.

This limitation of the EIA was perceived by some of the interviewees as a way of supporting the project. But it was justified by the Regional Authority by saying that at this time, nobody knew what would be done in the surroundings of the station, and so there was still nothing to assess. Actually, the SNCB asked for the station project development consent before the Schéma Directeur strategic plan aimed at “steering” the project was achieved, which in itself, also contributed to provide the EIA, a paradoxical status. It must however be noticed that Calatrava, in his first sketch, had already designed the triangular place that was later adopted as the optimal solution... but it is also true that at this time, the Local Authority, in its Schéma Directeur, wanted to reduce as much as possible the number of expropriations, and so was limiting the station place to Jonckeu Street.

M.Hanocq - *The limitation of the area of the EIA to the strict operational area of the station is partly strategic. It is a classical strategy: one limits the perimeter of action at the beginning, so the EIA considers a very restricted area and any reaction about the surroundings or which is not strictly related to the project as evaluated in the EIA is “irrelevant”! When the public authorities decide to support a project, all the available legal instruments are used to optimise its chances of success! Already, the operational area given to Calatrava had been reduced: the first project of Calatrava was already planning interventions on the environment of the station!...*


M.Rouxhet - One of the main critics the CWEDD formulated about the EIA report, was that despite the size and importance of the project, the EIA had been strictly limited to the consideration of the future station without further thinking about its integration within the Guillemins quarter. The assessment could have been much larger, but this limitation is probably coming from the content of study which has been set up by the Competent Authority (the Regional one), because when one is satisfying the minimum legal requirements, the study is limited to a description of the project, of the possible effects on the environment, and of the possible measures to limit the negative effects...

7.2.3 The general interest takes precedence over the minimisation of impacts

When the SNCB announced its decision of siting a new TGV station in the Liegoise Region, the Local Authority of Liège and influential citizens lobbied in favour of the Guillemins quarter as site for the TGV station.

This gave the SNCB a major advantage for the rest of the negotiation process: it avoided the Local Authority contesting too much of the project presented by the SNCB, because of the threat that the SNCB changes its mind and renounces the siting of the TGV station in Liège.

M.Delecour - We were feeling the threat from the National Authority, we were feeling that as a big city, we had not to contest their investments ... of course we never clearly heard: “if you do not accompany the project, we go away!”, but there was a risk, and so we were forced to accompany the project without blocking it!

As a consequence, the competent authority, in the EIA content it set up, did not question some fundamental decisions of the SNCB, although it was not agreeing with them. But it considered it was better for the city of Liège to have a TGV station, even not perfectly integrated, than no TGV station at all.

7.3. The EIA as a way of legitimising the station project?

In addition to the reasons already exposed by the competent authority for deciding that an EIA was necessary, it mentioned the need to legally legitimise the project and avoid possible recourses by third parties.

M. Delecour - It was necessary to legally legitimise the development consent which had to be granted, so we decided not take risks. It would probably take some supplementary months, but it would also bring more relevant solutions.

M.Grayet - I know that the Local Authority asked for an EIA although it was not legally mandatory: it becomes cautious with regards to the judicial recourses which are often introduced in Liège.

8. The EIA process within the whole decision-making context
This section aims at placing the EIA carried out for the Guillemins station project in its larger decision-making context, to provide an idea of the status that the EIA had in this context, and the way the results have been integrated (translated) in the following decision. As already mentioned, the project and its EIA came before the completion of the strategic plan intended to steer the project. If one comes back in more detail to the beginnings of the story, one may observe how the development of events contributed to create the paradoxical status of the EIA.

8.1. The plan and the project: a paradoxical articulation

8.1.1 The reflexion around the station issue

The Local Authority was working on the Guillemins quarter for quite a long time. It had studied the quarter in the framework of a feasibility study for a new public transportation system (TAU – *Transport Automatisé Urbain*) and had participated (and won) a competition organised by the *Fondation Roi Baudouin*, entitled “*Les chemins de la gare*”, which was aimed at promoting a better management of the public spaces surrounding the stations. The Local Authority had been helped by AGUA (a town planning consultant from Louvain-La-Neuve) to design its project.

When the debate came up about the location of a new TGV station in the region, the Local Authority began to think about a strategy for the whole Guillemins quarter, since it was foreseen as the most probable siting for the station, and since it was also the wish of the Local Authority. But when the SNCB finally confirmed its decision to locate the TGV station in the Guillemins quarter – after several debates and lobbying from the Liegoise politicians –, the strategy for the quarter, aimed at steering the station project and its possible impacts, was not ready at all. In addition, when the SNCB presented the first options of the project - the shifting of the station, its architectural idea of six “bars” crossing the railway, and the huge commercial area planned inside the station in order to improve the project’s cost-effectiveness - it appeared that some of them had not been planned or addressed in the Local Authority strategic reflection. The shifting of the station for instance was not at all expected by the Local Authority.

M.Ancion - The Local Authority of Liège won the competition “*Les chemins de la gare*” and it corresponds to the beginning of a deep analysis of the quarter -with the help of AGUA-, on its components, its weaknesses, etc. but always in the perspective that the actual station would be pulled down and simply replaced by the new one. So the study we had undertaken was totally irrelevant to the event that would happen. Then the decision felt, with the shifting of the station, etc.

The Local Authority then reacted and alerted the Regional Authority about the important environmental impacts that the options of the SNCB were likely to produce on the quarter (their comments were supported by the knowledge they had gained on the quarter from the previous study carried out with AGUA), and they asked for an official strategic study at the quarter level.

M.Ancion - When the project of the SNCB came up, we were happy of all the knowledge and information we had built during the study of AGUA. They wanted an ultra-functional project and they had the ambition of building a little “town” on the station as they are currently doing in Namur, an idea against which we strongly fought! Confronting our reservations,
and because we knew thanks to our study, that the shops of the Guillemins Street were fragile, and that the station had not to capture inside its structure all the activities of the quarter.

But to carry out a “kind” of strategic study around the TGV station issue, the Local Authority had the only possibility to use the available legal instruments. SEA being not yet mandatory in Wallonian Region, they decided to set up a so-called Schéma Directeur local plan (with the help of AGUA) for the whole quarter. They chose this instrument because it is the most flexible one, allowed to evolve throughout time, which is quite interesting when the framework is not well established and stable.

M.Gomez - Legally, we had the choice between setting up a “Schéma Directeur” or setting up a PCA local plan. It was decided to proceed as for the St-Lambert place: to explore and identify, within the framework of a Schéma Directeur, all the operations that could be positive for the quarter with regards to the impacts of the considered project, and then, to make more concrete proposals to private developers, with clear rules required in a PCA local plan. The aim of the Schéma Directeur was to examine the likely impacts of the station on the quarter. That is why the area of this Schéma Directeur was very broad, from Ste-Marie Street to Général Leman place, in order to include all the likely effects...

8.1.2 “The project comes ahead of the plan”

The basic aim of the Schéma Directeur local plan was to examine the likely impacts of the station on the quarter in a way to reduce them as much as possible. So since the beginning, it had an a posteriori role with regards to the station project, and not a strategic role intending to define legal requirements for the station project, as it had been more often understood by the public (which is comprehensible since it is the usual theoretical role of a plan). It must be moreover noticed that the Schéma Directeur tool had no legally constraining value recognised by the Wallonian Region.

So the aim of the Schéma Directeur plan was logically limited to only steer the evolution of the quarter, which had to somehow adapt itself to the station’s project instead of the contrary.

The Local Authority was however trying to informally steer the station project in parallel (within some limits), as the SNCB kept developing its project, and had already made some choices. It managed to convince the SNCB to charge a famous architect with the design of the plan, but not to question its decision of shifting the station about 150 meters towards the Meuse River (justified by technical arguments), nor to question its decision of making the project more cost-effective thanks to important commercial areas inside the station.

M.Ancion - This is probably and partly due to our knowledge of the quarter that the file turned upside down and that it has been decided to charge a famous architect with the project, but also due to the fact that Euro-Liège TGV also wanted to promote an interesting architectural project...

In such a context, it is not surprising that confusion appeared, people having the negative feeling that the SNCB project progressed more quickly than the Local Authority’s strategic plan. Some
of the interviewees stressed on this negative issue in the decision-making process, considering it as a failure.

M.Pissart - A consultant has been charged of setting up a local plan on an area which extended throughout time, and finally the project was put to bed before the local plan, so something did not work: the plan had to adapt itself to the project when it was intended to be the contrary! ...

M.Hanocq - The LA tried to anticipate by setting up a schema directeur to steer the station project. It was a good idea but its success depended on the financial resources that are invested and on whether a prospective vision is really possible ...

The procedure for steering the TGV station project may seem a bit inappropriate, because it does not correspond to the classical and theoretical scheme along which a strategic plan is first set up, possibly subject to strategic assessments, and then only a project is undertaken, respecting the requirements of the plan. But one may wonder how a strategic plan, initiated because of the arrival of a new station project, would be able to anticipate all the possible events (technical constraints, developer’s requirements, socio-economic constraints, etc that are likely to require changes in the plan) and so to be achieved in time to steer this project.

It must be observed that the Schéma Directeur had the same objectives as the EIA

8.2. The EIA as piece and parcel of a larger decision-making process

It is in this particular context of a project that was already well developed and a plan trying to mitigate and find solutions to the impacts produced by the station project that the EIA took place. The Regional Authority explicitly mentioned that the decision of carrying out an EIA was partly due to the fact that the Schéma Directeur plan was not ready to provide strong arguments with which to confront the station project, nor with acceptable solutions, when the SNCB was already asking for the development consent. The EIA has thus been used as a way to save time and as a way to provide with detailed and scientific assessments to be used as a basis for negotiation. The Schéma Directeur plan had been launched for the same reason but had not provided with such information enough quickly...

M.Delecour - When the SNCB and Calatrava achieved an almost finalised project, we had still little information from the Schéma Directeur about the possibilities of integrating the station in the quarter, about how to manage the circulations, about the necessary expropriations, etc. ... Unfortunately, the study of AGUA did not enough develop some of the issues, did not provide sufficiently detailed and deep analyses to steer the station project. Some proposals were done for the management of the public spaces, but they were a bit aesthetical and superficial (it is of course my personal view), they were not justified enough to bring together the different partners, so we did not reach to find a consensus on the appropriate orientations. There were some outbursts of temper at this time because some of us were feeling that things were not progressing at all...

The EIA tool has thus been used, as others, to save time and provide with deep enough assessments and solution proposals, in order to provide the competent authorities with arguments to face the developer.
8.3. The EIA report used as a negotiation tool

Despite criticism about the paradoxical status of the EIA within the decision-making process (“all was decided!”), almost all the interviewees mention that the EIA has been very useful because it allowed fine-tuning of the project and avoided the feared negative effects wherever it was possible. So the interviewees, in their responses, deplore that on one side, the “important” decisions (producing the main impacts) had already been – informally - taken by the developer and agreed by the politicians, and on the other side, they recognise the utility of the EIA, as a catalyst favouring the evolution of the project, leading to deeper analyses and finer solutions, more acceptable to all the stakeholders. It actually appears that the EIA report has been used by the various stakeholders as a source of arguments, to negotiate what could still be negotiated (other options than the ones already subject to an informal consensus between the SNCB and the public authorities). The EIA thus acted as a exhibit in a much larger and ongoing negotiation process (see next section).

In practice, the different stakeholders and the general public used particular parts of the impact assessment of the EIA report to support their opinions (as a way to reduce the impacts they were fearing or to enhance the impacts they were hoping for, either on socio-economic life, on cultural heritage, on the image of the city, etc).

8.3.1 On the developer side

The public authorities used the EIA report as a way to finally force the SNCB to reduce the commercial areas inside the station. They were supported by the shopkeepers’ association.

M.Braives - It is thanks to the EIA that there will not be commercial area in the back of the station: we had already claimed for a reduction of the shops inside the station but the EIA report wrote in black and white that it was a necessity, since the commercial activity in Liège is already saturated. The SNCB wanted to play to the property developer and use the locations of the commercial areas to maintain the station. But the Local Authority was reticent like us ...

M.Pissart - The EIA report allowed for reduction of the commercial areas inside the station and the types of shopping have been adapted not to compete with the shops existing in the Guillemins Street. It also gave support to access by car from the city side of the station: at the beginning the access by car was only allowed beyond the station. We explained that it was somehow utopian to work like this and that there will always be people who will not respect this idea ...

As a consequence, the commercial areas inside the station have been reduced from 3000 to 1000 square meters. One must however notice that the main fear of the shopkeepers was not the important commercial areas inside the station, but rather the change of the Guillemins Street status produced by the shifting of the station: the Guillemins Street could lose its status of main route towards the station, and so the number of possible clients passing through the Guillemins Street could be considerably reduced.

M.Braives – Personally, I am doubtful about the interest of a new station for the shopkeepers: when you go to Paris for example, when you arrive at the station, you take a
taxi, or a bus, or still a metro, but anyway, you don’t visit the surrounding streets! ... but the
shifting of the station will deeply modify the uses within the quarter since the Guillemins
Street will lose its status of main access to the station, and this is likely to produce negative
impacts for the shopkeepers...

Supplementary adjustments have been imposed to the developer. First concerning the access to
the station: the SNCB wanted only one access to the station for the cars, on the hill side, and the
EIA report has been used to convince them to create an access from the city side. Second, at the
request of a cyclists’ association, a park for cycles has been planned. The local authorities were
supporting these two requests.

M.Gomez - The consultation was permanent and the reactions of the public have been
integrated within the final project. Concerning the access to the station for instance, the
SNCB wanted only one access from the hill, but after several consultations and the EIA study,
it was demonstrated that an access under the railways was necessary for the people coming
from the city. Besides, the central tunnel of the actual station will become a park for cycles
from which it will be possible to reach the platforms, at the request of some citizens...

8.3.2 Appeal to the public authorities

The Fragnée-Blonden inhabitants’ committee used the EIA report and the TGV station project as
an opportunity to claim that a plan and other rehabilitation operations should be set up in their
quarter, which had already suffered from unfortunate urban development projects.

M.Masson - I only saw parts of the EIA report but it was saying that something had to be set
up for the quarter... If anything is done, the project is likely to produce huge impacts on the
quarter. The EIA did not allow for change to the project but it did allow for thought about
the necessity of a deep rehabilitation of the quarter...

It seems that the requirements of the committee will be exhausted since a revitalisation project is
planned in a part of the quarter, and since their remarks have been integrated into the PCA local
plan which followed the Schéma Directeur plan.

8.3.3 Adjustment made by the local authorities

One of the main conclusions of the EIA report was that either the size of the station should be
reduced, or the place should be adapted to the station (p98 of the non-technical EIA report11).
Actually, the EIA report states that the major impacts on the urban network are due to the shifting
of the station and to its size (p98 of the non-technical EIA report10).

Since the size and the shifting of the station were not anymore contestable (agreed during
previous informal negotiation stages), the SNCB used the conclusion of the EIA report to impose
to the public authorities the necessity of creating an appropriate place in front of the station, at the

technique”, by S.A. Pissart-Van der Stricht, avril 1999.
same scale of the future station, therefore, far bigger than the small place proposed by AGUA in its Schéma Directeur.

As a consequence, AGUA changed the design of the Schéma Directeur to adopt the triangular place first designed by Calatrava and later represented by Strebelle. The Local and Regional Authorities, although they were initially not supporting the choices of the SNCB regarding the shifting and the size of the station, chose not to question these choices, although it was suggested as one of the solutions in the EIA report conclusions. Some of the committees tried to contest the shifting and the size of the station (using the EIA report to support their opinion), but they have never been followed.

M.Pissart - During the EIA, we were progressively receiving the Schéma Directeur documents, but they were not really appropriate to the project. Actually one of the main impacts was due to the shifting of the station, because until now, the quarter had always been organised around the existing station and so it was really disturbing for the urban layout. So it was necessary to reorganise the surroundings of the station, and the place which was planned by AGUA was too small for such a station! ... One of the main conclusions of the EIA report was: whether one reduces the scale of the station, whether one will have to adapt the quarter to the new station...

M.Strebelle - The Local Authority of Liège followed the advice of its good architect from Louvain-La-Neuve, but finally it does not remain a lot of things from the proposals of this architect: he changed his place (limited by the Jonckeu Street) and took mine (the triangular one) in his plan! ...

8.3.4 The low consensus solution

To sum up, the EIA report fed the negotiation debate, and contributed to reach a consensus on a more acceptable solution for everyone. Even if the shopkeeper’s association would have preferred a smaller station, in the perspective of the Guillemins Street, one of their fears - which was related to the commercial areas inside the station - has been appeased. The Local Authority thinks that the final solution is positive when compared to the SNCB initial idea of six “bars” across the railway. The Fragnée-Blonden inhabitants’ committee is finally satisfied because of the planned projects for the public spaces of its quarter.

However, one may notice that the social acceptance of the project is “borderline”, because the project under construction is far to be considered as “the right think to do” by the local actors.

8.4. Level of information and perception of the general decision-making process by the various actors

The first question addressed to the interviewees was asking them to tell us the story of the project, and the way they perceived the whole decision-making process (see interviews reports in Annex 1). It appeared that very few actors have a comprehensive view of the whole decision-making process.

8.4.1 Public authorities and administrations, developer, and experts
Only the people from the public authorities and experts seem to have such a comprehensive view: William Ancion (urban planning deputy mayor in Liège), Jean-Paul Gomez (director of urban planning administration in Liège), André Delecour (Fonctionnaire délégué from the Wallonian Region for the Province of Liège 1), and Philippe Hanocq (member of the CCAT, which is the local consultative organism, member of the GRACQ which is a cyclists’ association, and urban planner working at the CRAU which is an urban planning consultant). However, M. Servais, who is representative of the Guillemins-Bronqart committee, seems to have a very comprehensive view too, since he begins the story with the organisation of a competition by the Roi Baudouin Foundation, as with the other interviewees, and ends the story with the PCA local plan for the place of the station.

It is probable that the developer, Euro-Liège TGV, has a similar comprehensive view of the decision-making process since it also took part in all the discussions. But we did not manage to interview a representative from the subsidiary so we may not be sure. However, the presentation made by M.Doutreleau from Euro-Liège TGV when she came into LEMA tends to support this thesis.

Concerning their perception of the whole decision-making process, the actors of the Local Authority and administrations consider it as a success. They do not seem to consider their “course” to steer the project as a negative issue, but rather as the “usual practice” in the urban developments regulation, because it is not possible to foresee exactly what will the developers will do and to anticipate all their actions when setting-up or updating the legal regulation instruments. So they use all the available legal instruments, when possible, in order to save time and to find justifications for mitigations measures or sometimes changes of the project.

M. Delecour - Things are a bit unpredictable: we are suddenly faced with an applicant for a development consent, and we must react as possible, find optimal solutions, set up minimal strategies, which means to have an objective to reach and try to reach it. But it is not as in a kitchen where you know and you have all the ingredients and the recipe! It does not work like this! ...

M. Gomez - We decided to use a Schéma Directeur that would be later followed by a PCA (Plan Communal d’Aménagement) to steer the evolution of the quarter and reduce the impacts of the station. Then the EIA confirmed, detailed, reinforced the options of the Schéma Directeur: it convinced us of the necessity of a bigger place (at the beginning, we wanted a place as little as possible), it confirmed that the commercial areas had to be reduced, it allowed us to better understand the importance of the station-city interface. Then, came the PCA, once the development consent was granted. We consider that the steering of the project was a success, especially when on thinks to the first idea of the SNCB which was to place six “bars” across the railway! I consider that we influenced favourably the evolution of the project...

M. Ancion - This procedure is heavy and constraining! But it is appropriate because of the numerous (and powerful) actors. This long, systematic and step-by step framework probably helped to build an agreement between the various actors. But it is an obstacle course! And concerning the evolution of the Schéma Directeur, Strebelle and Calatrava intervened, and one sees that sometimes, an original architectural idea makes the things better progress than
all these formalist mechanisms that one uses. In a file like this one, one must both legally legitimate the project and having a minimum of enthusiasm and futurist vision...

One may however notice that one of the interviewees evaluates the decision-making processes degree of success with regards to the worst situation that could have occurred under his eyes (the six “bars” project first proposed by the SNCB), and does not say how far is the final project from his ideal view of it. Another considers the decision-making process and the role of the public authorities as an *a posteriori* intervention mainly aimed at limiting the negative impacts, by using the available legal instruments (react as well as possible).

It must be already noticed that the SEA procedure, which tends to reverse the burden of the proof and favour more exploratory approaches for the more strategic decision-making processes, is expected to improve the efficiency of the public authorities and other stakeholders’ involvement. It would transform their role from an ex-post one to an ex-ante one.

### 8.4.2 Environmental consultants and organisations

On the contrary, the environmental consultants who intervened in the process have one of the more partial views of it. For instance, the interview of the author of the EIA report, Julien Pissart shows that he knows almost nothing about the project before the beginning of the EIA, and not more about the evolution of the decision-making process after the achievement of the EIA report. A similarly limited timetable appears through the interview of Frédéric Rouxhet, from the CWEDD (*Conseil wallon pour l’Environnement et le Développement Durable*, independent organism reviewing the quality of the EIA reports), who knows almost nothing about the project except the limited view he had through the EIA report.

M.Pissart - *It is true that we not only intervene very late in the process (with the consequence that we are not informed of the previous developments of the project), but also we have very little return from our work after the achievement of the EIA report (with the consequence that we absolutely don’t know how it is used). Concerning the place of the station for instance, I don’t even know what has been decided, or whether the Schéma Directeur is progressing well...

F.Rouxhet - *We have little information about the project development process before the EIA, and little return about the following of events once we sent our advice on the quality of the EIA report to the competent authority. I assume that you are more informed than me since you met the competent authority which granted the development consent...*

### 8.4.3 The public concerned

The public concerned is generally very confused about the whole development of the decision-making process, and sometimes even does not manage to tell anything about it. The people interviewed confuse between the different procedures, related to the project, to the different plans, to the EIA, or still informal procedures, etc. They also often relate hearsay and rumours, tending to show that there is a real lack of information about the decision-making process itself.

M.Theunissen - *It is a bit difficult for me to relate you the story of the project, because I intervened only at the moment of the public consultation stage, and so I do not know very...*
well the chronology of the project. Of course I am Liegoise so I heard about it like everybody, because the press was regularly relating the events. But our reflection and work date from the public enquiry...

But this issue will be further developed in section 12, which specifically address the public involvement within the decision-making process.

9. Strategic assessments: possible benefits and main challenges

With regards to the analysis of the whole decision-making process carried out in the previous section, it appears that the SEA process, as required by the recent European SEA directive, could be of great help. This section explores the feeling of the local actors with regards to such a tool, in order to underline the possible benefits and main challenges.

9.1. General support in favour of more strategic assessments

As already mentioned, and to summarise the previous sections, the SNCB took the advantage in the whole negotiation process since its decision of siting the TGV station in the Guillemins quarter, and moreover when it decided to charge a famous architect with the design of the project. The Local Authority stood in a strange position during the whole process, supporting the TGV passage in Liège (and so the TGV station project) and thus forced to undergo most of the SNCB requirements. It explains the limitation of the project’s steering towards particular aspects, that is, the ones that the SNCB agreed to discuss.

Regarding this context, it is not astonishing that the interviewees generally support the idea of more strategic studies, to be carried out well before a development consent is requested by the developer, as a way to accompany the progressive definition of a project, as a way to consider true alternatives, as a way of improving the quality of the decisions, and as a more democratic and participative way to conduct the decision-making process.

9.1.1 Legal arguments

Some interviewees mention the legal problem raised by the fact that SEA is not yet mandatory for all plans in Wallonian Region: decisions taken at strategic levels are still not the results of sound and scientific assessments, appropriate consultations and discussions, and so are sometimes not of great quality. As a consequence, when a project respecting these strategic decisions is planned, they may not be questioned, even in the EIA related to the project.

M.Rouxhet - As independent reviewer, we are first informed of a project when the author of the EIA is designated by the developer, which is very late! But before the EIA, we are not involved in the process ... Furthermore, when an area has been reserved for the project at a more strategic level (plans), one may not anymore question the destination of this area, or still the location of the project within this area. And the decision, at the strategic level, has more often been taken without any SEA since the SEA is not yet mandatory for all the plans in the Wallonian Region. When there is an area planned to receive the TGV infrastructures (including the station) in the “plan the secteur” to take the example we are interested in, we
may say nothing about the relevance of the station project if it is located in this area! All is already decided at a more strategic level, all we can do is recommend some adaptations ...

However, things are likely to rapidly evolve, with the arrival of the SEA Directive and its progressive implementation within member states’ legislation.

M.Rouxhet - One of the ideas of the CWEDD was to assess the environmental impacts at the level of the “plans de secteur” (strategic plans) when they are revised. And it is now required by the Wallonian legislation. And I think that the impact assessment of other strategic plans is currently under discussion at the parliament ...

9.1.2 Reconsideration of the fundamentals of the project

The first decision of setting up the TGV station in the Guillemins quarter, which is typically a strategic decision, has never been subject to a formal, official, and exploratory procedure of identification, assessment and comparison of alternatives. It has been informally taken by the developer and the politics, well before the EIA, and so has never been questioned in this study.

Among the siting possibilities spontaneously evoked – but never been subject to deeper scientific assessments – were the Bierset plateau, the Guillemins quarter, the Val-Benoît site, or still the town of Visé (between Liège and Maastricht). The siting alternatives mentioned by the different interviewees are quite different - except for the two major ones: Guillemins and Bierset – showing that the debate was not accurately and officially stated.

The final choice of the Guillemins quarter seems to be partly due to the lobbying activities from the Liegoise politicians, but it still remains unclear and has never been officially justified or argued. Some of the interviewees are still convinced that the Guillemins site is not the most appropriate one, but they are in the minority, probably due to the social pressure exercised in favour of the TGV passage in Liège, with the consequence that a Liegoise citizen who is against the passage of the TGV in Liège is considered as a bad Liegoise!

M.Pissart - We did not talk about the siting decision in the EIA report, and I don’t know how the decision has been taken ...

M.Ancion - The thesis and anti-thesis among the alternative sites were Liège-Guillemins and Bierset. There was also the idea of putting the station on Val-Benoît site, but I don’t know if this idea has been considered further. One of the main advantages of the Guillemins site is the direct link between the station and the motorway, which would not be possible if the TGV station was sited in Bierset. It is an advantage from which no other TGV station benefits ...

M.Masson - One of the first possible sites for the TGV station (about 10 years ago) was in the Avenue des Tilleuls (in front of the Val-Benoît): since one was considering that the avenue would be disfigured by the projected passage of the motorway, one thought that it was a good site to install the TGV station complex. Then came the hypothesis of siting the station in Bierset-Loncin, but is has been quickly abandoned. It was a long time ago. It was stupid because it is very far from the centre ...

M.Hanocq - Between 1985 and 1990, the debate was to decide whether the TGV station should be in Bierset or in Liège-Guillemins. But when came the idea of the shifting of the...
station, in the beginning of the 90’ies, we (with J-P. Collette) proposed to further shift the station nearer from the Meuse River and the Val-Benoît site, which could therefore be reused...

M. Gomez - There was a third siting alternative in addition to Bierset and the Guillemins, but I don’t remember very well. But in Liège, we (inter alias, the “Grand Liège” in which I was taking part) made lobbying in order that the Guillemins site is chosen. We thought that it would also allow improving the railway links with other cities (Brussels, Namur, Maestricht, Aachen), which means that even the “normal” trains will be able to drive faster. It will be a huge service for the Liegoise people working in Brussels for instance! ...

The fact that the decision of siting the station in the Guillemins quarter is reconsidered by some interviewees tends to show that it has not been clearly justified by the decision-makers. Clear strategic assessments were lacking. Some interviewees emphasise the need of environmental assessments at this strategic level, in a way to draw the attention of the decision-makers on the key issues to be considered.

M. Hanocq - Impact Assessments would have more interest if the problem considered was to know whether or not a project should be planned, where it should be planned, what are the most appropriate conditions to develop this project, etc.

M. Pissart - For these strategic assessments, it would be useful to providing with a steering by some expertise consultants, in order to identify the constraints to be taken into consideration (attention to the pedestrian link at this point, accesses should also be authorised by the other side, etc). It depends also on the extent of the project, it is probably not always necessary, but in such a complex project, it seems necessary to avoid to question the decisions when it is too late...

This seems to go in the same direction as that adopted by the SUIT consortium to define appropriate and socially well accepted active conservation scenarios for the consideration of urban fragments: to promote an exploratory, steered and integrated approach, from the strategic level to the project level, involving all stakeholders and the general public.

9.1.3 Assessment of local alternatives (amendments of the project)

Assessments at a more strategic level could have allowed the consideration of different morphological alternatives for the project and the quarter: alternatives about the exact location of the station, its extent, its height, etc. These kinds of parameters appear to be partly at the origin of the decision of the Competent Authority to carry out an EIA.

M. Delecour - The height and the surface of the station were important criteria to decide that an EIA was necessary, but the most important was the shifting of the station and its likely effects on the circulations and the accessibility of the station (from the back, from the front, etc) ...

But unfortunately these parameters, already fixed by the SNCB and Calatrava have not been subject to alternatives in the EIA.
Lots of the interviewees think that the effects of this kind of parameters should have been subject to more strategic assessments and debate, at the early beginnings of the project.

M. Theunissen - The assessments of the impacts on urban heritage should have been carried out at the very beginning, well before launching the project or organising an architectural competition. The question of the shifting of the station should have been addressed at this stage. Apparently, it was important for the SNCB because it allowed no disturbance to the traffic during the works, but one should have question about the impact of this shifting on the urban setting... was it really THE idea to maintain? Were not there other ideas to consider, like to restore the actual building by stages for instance, I don’t know but there were certainly other possible options that allowed no to disturbance to the traffic...

M. Hanoq - In the case of the EIA related to the station, the report concludes by saying that the building is a bit too high and too big, but were not these parameters fixed long before? So must we question these choices a posteriori? The Impact assessment should be carried out on an object which still does not exist, and to determine the optimal location, to fix margins for the scale and envelope, to determine the necessity of an integration in the quarter or not. It is the most interesting approach, during which people may still react, before costly back spaces become impossible ...

M. Pissart - A more strategic assessment would have been interesting. That is what has been done for the E25-E40 motorway link. It allowed to choose among different alternatives for the path (aerial, underground, or mixed), and it is finally the mixed solution which has been chosen. Here, we never questioned the location of the station since we were told it was due to technical constraints. But it would have been interesting to carry out such a strategic study...it would allow to identify preliminary constraints for the project. ...

M. Servais - We had the only choice to accept that the TGV station was sited here and so we tried to be as constructive as possible. Anyway, there would have been no chance to be heard! Of course we would have preferred a true debate, already at the earliest beginnings of the project, but whatever, even the Local Authority had nothing to say against this preliminary decision of shifting the station! ...

A consequence of the fact that the choices that have been made for these parameters have never been subject to debate or at least explained and justified to the public, is that they are not always socially well accepted and that a part of the public concerned recurrently question them.

M. Braives - The height of the future station is equivalent to the height of a 13 floor building! 38 meters if I remember well! It is so high that it will be “crushing”, it will be too close for a proper view of the station... it is an inhuman project. It would have been better to do it halfsize, and in the perspective of the Guillemins Street and Rogier Avenue! ...

M. Theunissen - What is shocking me is that the Calatrava’s model, which is however a beautiful object, when you see it, you think: it is not possible, he probably did not think where to locate it in the environment! It looks like a sculpture, very beautiful, but one never thinks to look at it at a more human scale and within its environment, it is really a pity! I studied architecture at La Cambre in Brussels, and we had to make a lot of perspective sketches and far less models, and I think it allowed us to better think to the integration of a project in its environment...
More strategic assessments of the effects on the environment of various local alternatives (morphological alternatives, at the higher level than the architectural project) could have allowed clarification of the issues, and fed the debate in a way to find a consensus solution. It would have allowed to tackle the architectural design of the project on sound basis.

In this context, the morphological assessment methods developed in the framework of the SUIT task 2.3, as well as the case-base of historical area references developed in the framework of the SUIT task 2.4, would be of great help in the assessment of the effects of various local alternatives.

9.2. Resistance of some decision-makers and experts with regards to strategic assessments

9.2.1 Defence of the politicians power

Some decision-makers consider that in the early stages of a project, the decisions are and must remain “political” choices.

_M.Ancion – The siting of the station, I think that it is more a political choice. Either one promotes the speed, and so the TGV should not have pass through Liège, or one promotes the services for the travellers and so we had to do what has been done ...

The negative feeling of the politicians with regards to procedures further involving the public is not new. They are afraid of losing their “powerfulness”. With regards to their fears, a special attention should be paid to clearly state new “rules of the game” involving the general public, but also redefining and enhancing the new role of the experts and politicians in the decision-making process. Actually the “loss of powerfulness” they perceive with regards to public involvement is likely to create negative approaches and reactions from their part. One must therefore take care to clearly define the specific and clearly different roles and competences of each actor in the decision-making process.

9.2.2 Defence of the existing legal framework

Some of them defend the existing legal framework, considering it as quite sufficient, and arguing that any addition of further procedures would be a source of costs, delays, etc. and not really of benefits. They also argue that strategic assessments does not allow to work in a very way.

_M.Delecour - According to me, the legal framework to steer the project was quite sufficient and appropriate. There was no problem with that. I would be moderate with regards to more strategic assessments, it depends from one project to another, and there are also elements such as costs, delays, etc which enter in the balance. It is moreover not possible to make very fine things in a more strategic study ...

It must however be noticed that even if strategic assessments do not allow a very fine work, it could allow to proceed along a step-by-step approach, passing to the following step only when a strong agreement is reached between stakeholders, therefore allowing to tackle the following step on sound basis, reducing the risk of later judicial recourses, which may be very costly, both in terms of money and in terms of time.
9.2.3 Participation at strategic stages: problem of visualisation

Some interviewees, mainly the “experts”, also mention the difficulty for the general public of visualising the possible concrete effects of abstract decisions, that may be a problem in case of Strategic Environmental Assessments. They think that architects and urban planners have a certain expertise in such visualisation due to their experience and practice, but that the general public needs visual and concrete projects to react to, otherwise they do not manage to imagine by themselves. So they wonder what could be done to help the general public in participating to such strategic decisions.

M. Strebelle - One must emphasise the information to the public, while taking into consideration that anyway some people will not understand...

M. Hanocq - I am in favour of more strategic Impact Assessments but it would not promote public participation, since if you do not show something tangible to a citizen, he is not able to imagine the numerous implications, etc. It is perhaps pretentious to say that but I think it is because such issues are simply not everyday preoccupations of “simple” citizens. Myself, if a doctor was asking me to compare sophisticated medical machines and to say which one should be manufactured, I would tell him that I absolutely don’t know! Yet strategic stages would be the best moment to ask the public opinions! Personally I would tell: let’s trust in the people participating in the project developments, there are already full of different actors! But I know that is what usually irritates citizens’ associations, because they intervene only when the project is already well defined and supported by a “league” of people!...

M. Delecour - The problem of strategic assessments is also that something must be presented to the public. Consult the people on the basis of nothing is not possible. ...

One should however notice that even if architects, urban planners, and other experts probably gained a great competence in visualising the physical result (and other effects) of simple strategic decisions, one may wonder whether they are able, when the problematic becomes far more complex and multi-sectoral, to visualise so easily the numerous possible combinations of effects without deeper and multi-disciplinary analyses and assessments?

9.3. Involvement of citizens at the strategic level

With regards to the experts’ fears about public consultation at strategic levels, it must to mentioned that on the contrary to what is usually said (lay people are not interested in strategic debates, but only in projects taking place in their backyard), a lot of reactions from the public (inhabitants’ committees, shopkeepers’ association, architects’ association, cyclists’ association) had a strategic dimension (reflection on siting, proposals of strategic thresholds for the project, like the extent of the operational area or the height, constraints on location, constraints on functions, etc). It appears from the interviews that the citizens recognize themselves as concerned and competent to provide advice on such strategic parameters, because these parameters are considered as possible sources of negative impacts for the urban environment to which they are attached. It is clearly not the case concerning the architectural parameters of the project for instance (colour, style, etc), which are considered as “inoffensive” for the environment, or as a matter of taste. For these parameters, the citizens easily recognize Calatrava’s expertise, and do not propose alternatives (neither architectural detail alternatives, nor practical solution).
M.Grayet - The hesitations expressed within the CCAT were related to the size of the future station, and not to its architecture in itself, because Calatrava is a star and is extremely competent in this domain. The negative comments were mainly on the size of the building which was judged inappropriate with regards to the morphology of the built environment, dating from the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th, and which is mainly “groundfloor+2”. Other hesitations were related to the location of the station, which would be not anymore in the perspective of Guillemins Street: they asked for something in this perspective, in the same style as Calatrava’s station...

M.Braives - From the architectural point of view, it will probably be the most beautiful building of the XXth century in Liège, or at least of the second part of the XXth century... because when one sees the buildings of this century in general, “they” did not make a lot of efforts! All the administrative buildings from the Local Authority for instance are really not great! Nevertheless, the Calatrava’s project remains “megalo”: it should be translated at the scale 1/2 ...

Their proposals were translating their personal opinions about how to promote “values” such as socio-economic welfare, integration to the urban environment, conservation of urban historic heritage, etc. and about how to avoid negative effects on these “values”. As such, they should be better taken into consideration, since the threats perceived by the public are probably also important than the reality of these threats for the acceptance and success of a project. The importance of these perceived threats may probably be reduced when it is possible to proof that they are not realistic (when they aren’t), but for issues such as cultural heritage, the impact assessment techniques used are not enough reliable to do so, and will probably never be, because of the subjectivity attached to the issue.

In addition, it must be remembered that the local actors have at least the competency of their local environment’s knowledge and of their attachment to this local environment. It is justified that they should have a role in the definition of what are acceptable and non-acceptable effects on this environment, as they claim.

The visualisation techniques developed by the SUIT consortium could therefore help to facilitate the public participation in strategic stages, at least concerning physical visualisations (see task 2.2).

10. The place of Calatrava in the decision-making process

At the early beginning of the TGV station project, the SNCB intended to ask to its own architects to design the station. The idea was “six bar buildings” crossing the railway. But the Local Authority of Liège insisted on charging a famous architect with the design of the station, in order to maximise its chances in becoming a symbol for the city.

M.Gomez - We were conscious of the opportunity (and risk) for the city, in terms of image, that was raised by the TGV station, so we asked for a famous architect to be charged with the project instead of SNCB architects.
The choice of a famous architect was considered by the Local Authority as a (or THE) main issue for the success of the project. And the fact that the SNCB accepted to do so has been considered as a major victory (after that, the rest of the decisions relating to the project were somehow accessory…).

10.1. Calatrava or the providential man

10.1.1 The selection of Calatrava

The SNCB agreed to call for a famous architect at the request of the Local Authority, probably because M.Bourlard, the director of its subsidiary in charge of the following-up of the station project (Euro-Liège TGV) was sensitive to the architectural issue. Therefore a European call was organised by Euro-Liège TGV. The selection of the architect was organised in two stage: the first one was a selection on the basis of candidates’ files, by the Local Authority; the second selection was made by a jury (the three finalist architects were Thomas Grimshaw, Santiago Calatrava, and Aldo Rossi) who chose Calatrava because of his greater experience with the stations …

M.Delecour - The SNCB was submitted to the law on public markets and so was forced to make a European call for the choice of the author of the project (it was not a competition). The candidate had to be experienced in station projects (previous station projects in other European towns). A jury was set up (in which I took part). Different architects have been selected and the SNCB chose to follow the advice of the jury (which was not mine) in favour of Calatrava …

The procedure has never been officially explained, and remains largely mysterious for the major part of the people interviewed.

M.Pissart - I think that a competition has been organised and that Calatrava has been chosen among others. I think I saw other projects than the one from Calatrava…

M.Grayet - Five years ago, there was a European competition. I don’t know how was organised the selection, but I know that Calatrava had already a sketch at this time… was it chosen because of this sketch or because of its experience with the stations an the bridges, I don’t know …

M.Braives - I think that a competition was organised and that Calatrava won… but I didn’t see the other projects, and I don’t know who chose Calatrava… the SNCB probably …

The fact that the SNCB had agreed to choose a famous architect like Calatrava, under the pressure of the Local Authority, influenced the rest of the negotiation process by providing the SNCB with a providential advantage.

10.1.2 The choice of a star as a way to short-cut the debate

The constraints to which Calatrava was submitted appear as very vague and limited. According to most of the interviewees, Calatrava worked as an artist, without any constraints, and in a total independence, even with regards to the environmental context… And it seems that Calatrava
himself played a very important role in imposing his project, playing on his aesthetical and technical expertise to force his opinions on public authorities and the public. The perception that some actors had from Calatrava was that he would never have accepted to be submitted to preliminary constraints.

M.Pissart - I do not know if Calatrava was submitted to some constraints at the beginning, coming from the Schéma Directeur, even if they were not still legal. One probably gave him constraints but probably not strong enough! ... Anyway I wonder if Calatrava would have accepted some constraints resulting from more strategic assessments! I am not sure at all that he would have accepted to be submitted to constraints from a pre-study! A famous architect like him! ...

To the question “Had morphological requirements been imposed to Calatrava?” M.Gomez - On the basis of the explanations and demands from the Local Authority, Calatrava made us an sketch of the station. But we wanted something in the perspective of the Guillemins Street, and he never accepted to follow us in this way! But we do not despair of managing the perspective by putting there something symbolic! ...

M.Masson - When we discovered Calatrava’s model, we thought that its project was visibly an “artist vision”, without any further calculation! ...

M.Strebelle - Calatrava worked like a poet, in a total autonomy, and did not accept any concession (“one does not change a single nail!”) ... The author of the EIA worked independently from Calatrava, and Calatrava worked outside the EIA framework, as a poet (what he does very well): he came in front of the hill, screwed up his eyes, and imagined the curve of the future station following the curve of the hill... and after came up the problem of the integration of his work within the urban context...

The competency of the other actors seemed to be neglected whilst Calatrava’s competency was considered as absolute. Actually, an underlying discourse was present along which the “work” (and not the “project”) of such an artist must not be questioned, and was largely used by Euro-Liège TGV to impose its project.

The SNCB’s decision of shifting the station has for instance never been (strongly) contested by the public authorities. Yet, the Local Authority was not in favour of the shifting of the station (they generally do not believe to the technical “constraint” mentioned by the SNCB), but the SNCB, and later Calatrava, never accepted to question their previous decision. The public authorities passed over this decision because the SNCB had agreed to charge a famous architect with the project: if they wanted the famous Calatrava, they had to let the famous Calatrava express himself! In addition, it seems that the Local Authority was afraid that the SNCB would decide to suppress the line between Liège-Palais (centre of the city) and Liège-Guillemins...
They were then wondering about the necessity of such works, and noting that one will catch the TGV at Midi station in Brussels where the railways are curved, so why must they be straight in Liège? But finally we decided to pass though, since the SNCB was justifying the shifting of the station like this and that they were funding the project... The fact that it was Calatrava who was charged with designing a monumental station, helped to digest a lot of pills, such as the shifting of the station. To make a « classical » station, the shifting would have never been accepted, either by the Local Authority which was considering it as a lot of complications for limited advantages, or by the quarter committees, which would have considered that it was not acceptable to shift the station only to make straight railways when they are curved elsewhere ... in addition, we were afraid that the SNCB would decide to cancel the line between Liège-Palais and Liège-Guillemins, because according to us, this line between the centre and the TGV station was fundamental ...

On the contrary, the public concerned was far more mixed regarding the SNCB and Calatrava’s decisions, and was sometimes strongly opposed to the shifting and the proposed scale for the station, as already mentioned in section 9.1.2. But their comments or requirements were not been taken into consideration.

10.2. Calatrava in the EIA

Then came the EIA, which did not consider alternatives, and was limited to the operational area of the project, as already mentioned. The scale and morphology of the station have been chosen by Calatrava, probably at the time of his first sketch, so before his selection. Alternatives have never been considered, not even during the EIA. In the time since Calatrava was designated as author of the project, his sketch did not strongly evolve.

Calatrava’s status and charismatic character probably contributed considerably to the non-consideration of alternatives within the EIA. It actually appeared as very convincing when he presented his project during the first public “consultation” meeting required by the Wallonian EIA procedure, and aimed at generating alternatives among the public. The local Authority, which was organising this meeting, invited Calatrava to present his project, after which the public could propose alternatives. Calatrava demonstrated the talents of an orator, and, the public did not express any alternative during this meeting. As a consequence, no alternative would be considered in the EIA.

M.Pissart - During the famous first public consultation meeting, the documents which were presented by Calatrava did not enable seeing the project within its context: on the model, there were just a few houses around the station (in white, like the rest of the model), so it was not very realistic and I believe that people did not realise how big is the station. And during the EIA, when we began to make photomontages aimed at highlighting the integration of the project within the urban environment, we came into conflict with the architect (or rather with M.Bourra, who is Calatrava’s right hand), who did not want that these montages appear in the EIA report! They were arguing that the project would never appear like this, that the surroundings of the station would be managed... but we were forced to present the project as it was proposed in the development consent file! And we considered it was a service we were carrying out for them because it would highlight the necessity of managing an appropriate place in front of the station! ...
As previously mentioned, when the EIA report was completed, a negotiation stage based on the EIA report lead to some minor functional changes of the project (cyclists’ park, reduction of commercial areas) on one hand, and on the other hand, the public authorities were recognising the necessity of enhancing the “work” of Calatrava by an appropriate place. So the approach along which a quarter had to adapt itself to such a monument, instead of the contrary, was finally legitimised thanks to the EIA!

11. The urban heritage issue

The case of the Guillemins station was chosen, inter alias, for the complexity and richness of its cultural heritage issues. This section aims at providing an overview of the different « facets » of the problem, possible sources of controversy.

11.1. Competing definitions of “cultural heritage”

In response to the question about the cultural heritage value of the Guillemins quarter, the different interviewees mentioned quite different elements: sometimes the monuments, sometimes the public spaces, or the whole coherence of the quarter, the vegetation, and still the socio-economic life of the quarter. The interviewees also often mention the state of dereliction or obsolescence (physical but also functional and cultural) of some areas when talking about the cultural heritage value of the quarter, and one interviewee considered that the quarter is not really interesting from the point of view of cultural heritage.

One must notice that the public in general and the actors of the decision-making process also, have a much larger definition of the “cultural heritage” of a quarter than the one used to address this issue in the EIA report, which is almost limited to the officially recognised, designated and legally protected cultural heritage.

11.1.1 The existing station

An element, which probably increased the enthusiasm for Calatrava’s project and contributed to confer it the status of cultural heritage well before its construction, is that the actual Guillemins station seems not to be very much appreciated by the Liegoise public in general. Many seemed very happy to see this building disappear and be replaced by the work of Calatrava.

M.Rouxhet - I would partly explain the acceptance of the project by the fact that one may not say that the actual station was an architectural “work”? ...

M.Masson - The actual station dates from 1958. It is really ugly but it is not old. On the contrary, the previous one (before 1958) had a certain style...

Yet, some interviewees reminded that the actual station has a true cultural heritage value. It is actually the sole representative of the modernist period in the quarter – as mentioned in the EIA report – and is listed in the Monuments Inventory from the Wallonian Region!
Ms. Gérard - During the various exhibitions of the model (still during the last “Habitat” show), everybody was rushing to the Calatrava’s model saying it was so beautiful, and nobody wanted to conserve the actual station, which is considered as awful (that is totally false)...

M. Pissart - The actual station represents a certain period...

11.1.2 The lack of monuments

The interviewees emphasise the almost absence of real “monuments” of cultural heritage, except the Rosen Tower in Bovy Street, the Sacré-Coeur church and the Inter-Alliés monument which are located on the Cointe hill, and which are very visible landmarks in the city’s townscape.

M. Masson - There is of course the “Tour Rosen”, some beautiful houses in Fragnée Street, Vieux Mayeur Street, and Sclessin Street, and some beautiful buildings on the Roma Quay. The church on the Franchises place is more banal.

M. Theunissen - In the close environment of the station, there is not very important elements to conserve, but in the parallel streets (Fabry, De Broncqart, etc), there very interesting things. There are also the Sacré-Coeur church and the Inter-Alliés monument, which are really important and present monuments in the Liége townscape and image...

Some rare interviewees mention a “little” cultural heritage, which is almost unknown from the public and even the quarter’s inhabitants.

M. Servais - The Guillemins-Broncqart quarter owns a lot of “little” cultural heritage which is almost unknown from the public and from the owners of the quarter themselves. That is the reason why we organise “discovery” walks, with the help of the Roi Baudouin Foundation (the project was aimed at looking how to identify, preserve and list this “little” cultural heritage). The station will produce less impacts on the built heritage of our quarter than on the Fragnée quarter, but there will be indirect effects coming from direct economic effects...

11.1.3 The urban fragment as a morphological unit

Most of the experts mentioned the true heritage value of the quarter as a whole, for the coherence of its urban pattern and its homogeneity. The elements structuring the fragment which are recurrently mentioned are: the Guillemins Street, separating the two sub-fragments (Fragnée and Broncqart quarters), the Franchises place around which is organised the Fragnée quarter, and the Boncqart place, around which is organised the Broncqart quarter. Another valuable characteristic repeatedly mentioned is the presence of beautiful sets of buildings which have an accompanying value.

M. Pissart - The Guillemins quarter is divided in two distinctive parts. On one side, you have the Fragnée quarter, around the Franchises place: the area around the financial administration building is derelicted and not really agreeable, but beyond that, you find an interesting quarter with a great unity, and beautiful sets of buildings and large houses, so it has a true value. On the other side, is the quarter around the Broncqart place: it is a quarter where you also find very interesting built sets, and it is a quarter which still has a lot of
gardens and so could recover a more important housing function than actually. They are pleasant quarters to live...

M. Gomez - I think that the quarter has a great cultural heritage value because it is very homogenous, although it is also rich of various different architectural styles, from different periods. All this is integrated within an urban pattern inherited from the history. The Financial Administration buildings produced a first disruption, that is why with the PCA local plan we are trying to restore this historic pattern. It is also a quarter which has a great cultural value if one means the way of people are living, and it is also to be protected...

M. Delecour - It is a quarter with buildings which have an “accompanying” value, but without really remarkable elements. But it is the “essence” of the urban pattern, its unity, its coherence, which make its remarkable value: the Franchises place for example, which structures the pattern. There is also the Rosen tower, which is listed, but the location of which is anachronic. And finally, the Guillemins Street, the perspective of which is still not solved...

But not only experts mention these characteristics...

M. Servais - The typology of some of the streets, places, and their whole coherence and homogeneity are also parts of our cultural heritage that should be absolutely preserved. And the shifting of the station from the perspective of the Guillemins Street will produce very negative impacts on this coherence of the quarter. The gardens inside the plots and their quietness are also cultural heritage)...

M. Grayet - Pfff... I don’t know what you mean by cultural heritage. As remarkable monument, there is only the Rosen Tower in Bovy Street (which is included in the perimeter of the PCA local plan), but which is actually not well enhanced. But what is remarkable is the two quarters on the both parts of the Guillemins Street: the quarter around the Bronckart Place and the quarter around the Franchises Place. They are interesting because of their homogeneity. They are quarters which developed very quickly - during the industrial development of Liège – and so in a very homogeneous way... with less urbanistic rules than today! But one must accept higher buildings in these quarters, if they are integrated and harmonious...

11.1.4 The socio-cultural perspective

Some interviewees also mention the socio-economic life of the quarter as a heritage to preserve and enhance. Some of them are afraid that the future station project could hurt this life: by modifying the structure of the quarter (the station shifted from the front of Guillemins Street), one will modify the “uses” within the quarter.

M. Strebelle - The Guillemins quarter has a strength in its layout and an intensity of life that must be absolutely conserved. The built heritage is constantly changing, is adapted, it is normal... but the Guillemins street will stay an important element in the quarter’s life: it must be absolutely integrated in the environment of the future Calatrava station...

M. Braives - The quarter is divided in two parts: the Ste-Veronique part with its “high middle class” character and the Fragnée part which is more “low middle class”. The Bronckart place, within the first part, is remarkable and is listed. There are plenty of beautiful buildings
in this quarter. There is a remarkable house in the Bovy Street, I don’t know if it is listed. There are also “modern style” houses since the quarter developed during the XIXth century. And there are also entities, but which have been strongly damaged, like the E.Digneffe Avenue, which was the entrance of the 1905 Expo in Liège. And the shifting of the future station will deeply modify the centre of the quarter: the Guillemins Street will not be anymore the “Royal Lane” to the station. It will modify the uses of the quarter! And I am afraid of the consequences for the shops in the first part of Guillemins Street! ...

For some interviewees, a public space which is not convivial, which does not promote socio-cultural activities does not deserve to be considered as cultural heritage. They stress on the possible improvements in the public spaces’ management, before discussing on their possible heritage value.

M.Masson - The Franchises place in itself? Perhaps, but it should be managed to reduce the car traffic and thus the danger for pedestrians. A place of historical value? Bof, it exists since around 1870, since the creation of the quarter, it is the centre of the quarter. For these reasons, it would deserve to be enhanced and better managed, to make it more convivial and cultural! ...

11.1.5 The lack of expertise acknowledged by some experts

Some experts seemed embarrassed with the question of the heritage values within the quarter. They seemed not to be able to personally engage themselves about the valuable elements or characteristics of the quarter.

M.Ancion - It has a great homogeneity. I remember that Calatrava walked within the quarter and told me his amazement face to the great coherence of the built heritage, despite the diversity of buildings’ types. He told me that we should not destroy all this but protect it. The two quarters, around the Bronckart place and around the Franchises place, are mainly residential, like villages within the town, and we would like to conserve this character ...

M.Hanocq - I have a lot of memories in the quarter because I lived there during my studies, but there are not plenty of interesting elements... moreover since demolitions have been carried out in Paradis Street, and in Sclessin Street. ...

The fact that the public concerned seems to be often more aware of the heritage value of their quarter than some experts tends to show that the definition and identification of cultural heritage should not only be an experts’ affair as often considered.

11.2. The station considered as cultural heritage

The complexity of the cultural heritage issue in the particular case of the Guillemins station also comes from the fact that almost all the interviewees consider the future station as a piece of the cultural heritage of Liège, even if not yet built!

11.2.1 The future station as heritage
To the question “Do you think that the future station will be part of our cultural heritage?”, the majority of the interviewees answered yes. Nevertheless, it seems that the cultural heritage identification from the general public is also linked to the level of maintenance of a building, as some interviewees, when answering about their own perception of the cultural heritage value of the future station, mention the possible problems of maintenance.

M. Delecour – *I think that the station will have a strong symbolic value...*

M. Pissart - *I think that the station will rapidly become a part of our cultural heritage, like some other recent works which have already been designated. For instance the Palais des Congrès is a part of the cultural heritage because it represents a certain period...*

M. Servais - *How to define cultural heritage? The future station will constitute a piece of cultural heritage...*

M. Masson - *I think the station will be a part of our cultural heritage... but I don’t know who will clean the glasses! Because if it is not done, it will become opaque and not really beautiful. But the architecture of the building is beautiful, it is true!...*

M. Grayet - *It is a great chance for Liège to have such a monument! I am sure that one will come to visit it. The students in architecture will come to photograph it like one photographs the Hors-Chateau Street...*

M. Braives - *It will be the most beautiful building of the second part of the XXth century in Liège...*

Only one interviewee seemed more doubtful about the cultural heritage value of the future station: M. Hanocq, an urban planner, who thinks that it is possible, because of its scale, cost, and the fact that it will be an achievement to bring such a project to a successful conclusion, but he is not sure at all.

M. Hanocq - *I don’t know if the station will become a cultural heritage piece! I assume that because of its scale, its cost, and the fact that it is a real achievement to reach a positive issue for such a project, it will be part of some heritage! It is a project that I appreciate, because it is not the simple and functional building, it produces reactions, so it is possible that it will be considered as cultural heritage...*

11.2.2 *The question of fashion*

M. Theunissen, architect from the ARALg association (*Association Royale des Architectes de Liège*), appeared on the contrary, really doubtful about the capacity of this kind of architecture to persist over the forthcoming decades. He considers that this architecture is not enough strong to keep being appreciated, that it could rapidly go out of fashion, because it is a spectacular architecture, but when one observes more in details, one sees that there is nothing else: no interesting management of internal spaces, etc. He also mentions the possible problems of maintenance.

M. Theunissen - *The future station, a piece of cultural heritage? Heuuuu... at least it will be a strong image in the townscape, but to say that it will be a part of our cultural heritage... one
will see how this kind of architecture evolves and whether it conserves an “actuality”... because some architectures rapidly go out of fashion... and I am really sceptical, I do not believe that this architecture is sufficiently strong to be still admired in 10 or 20 years... but it is also true that I am not really sensitive to this type of architecture, which is more an architecture by engineers than by architects: it is a beautiful structure (like a bridge), but there is no conscious management of the internal spaces beyond... Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain (I went to see Euralille and it is not very beautiful) and since the SNCB has not a real experience nor expertise in maintenance, one may wonder how it will turn...

11.2.3 The station as part of a larger strategy

A lot of interviewees, mainly the decision-makers and experts, strongly hope that the Calatrava station will take a major place in our cultural heritage, that it will become a symbol for the city of Liège, a way to promote it at the international level. It was actually one of the main objectives of charging a famous architect of the station’s design.

M.Ancion - It is our hope that the monumental character of the station and its architecture will attract and give a strong image to Liège: the image of a town with a beautiful cultural heritage but turned towards the future, like the one already given in some way by the new Val-Benoît bridge...

M.Gomez - I think that in about ten years, half of the postal cards sent from Liège will represent the Calatrava’s station; as the Liège bridge rapidly became symbolic of Liège, because it is perhaps the only image of the city that a transit traveller will keep...

M.Strebelle - I am convinced that the station will be a piece of our cultural heritage. The manner that the building is leaning against the hill is remarkable... and the little bridge has a joviality which is agreeable to see... The integration of the station within the quarter would have required a very simple architecture. But the future station will look like a cathedral, a true European event. Imagine the travellers who will arrive in Liège by walking through this vault which is 200 meters long! Imagine their first impression of Liège ...

11.3. Public sensitivity to the impacts on cultural heritage

The public appeared as highly sensitive to the cultural heritage thematic, and highly mixed concerning the integration of the station in the urban setting. Even if they generally consider the station as a future piece of cultural heritage, they seem to consider that it should have been better integrated in the quarter, which should not have been forced to adapt itself to the new station.

M.Masson - Calatrava saw the hill and it gave him the idea of the building we know, not at all the quarter! It is the hill which inspired the idea of the vault...

M.Braives - Here, one proceeded in the wrong way: one decided to adapt the quarter to the station! To integrate it within the quarter, the station should have been reduced to the half, and located on its existing siting... In the quarter, the whole urbanization was organised around the station. That is why this project is shocking me: it is breaking down the history of Liège for a megalomaniac project...

The Local Authority was agreeing with this idea, as it has already been previously mentioned.
M.Ancion - According to me, the station is not at all integrated within the quarter. I think that it has not been thought through with regards to the quarter. And so it is the quarter which will need to be progressively adapted, with careful controls...

They consider that Calatrava imagined his project only regarding the hill and never considered the quarter. They also seem sensitive to the general eagerness of the developer and public authorities to raze what is “on the way” and then only wonder what should be done. The irreversibility of such decisions, and the losses it generates in the urban built heritage seem to truly affect them, in particular when they consider that there were other possible alternatives.

M.Theunissen - Of course the station should have been integrated, it was on of our first reproaches. However important the station is, it must integrate in its urban context (a mixture of social, economical, environmental concerns which make the life in the quarter...). One of our most important reproaches was about the shifting the station with regard to the ancient place of the station, which is an important social and economical seat, which has also been there, and which will lose a lot from this shifting... But what is the most shocking according to me is that the Sacré-Coeur church and the Inter-Alliés monument, which are really important and present monument in the Liège townscape and image, will be completely “masked” by the future station... as well as the greenery of the hill which is accompanying them...

M.Servais - Calatrava worked as he is used to! One may however blame him for having essentially considered the hill and not at all the quarter! He justified his project in a very intelligent and subtle manner, with regards to the hill. It was difficult for him to justify his project with regards to the quarter which is somehow derelicted, but it results in a negative impact for the quarters cultural heritage. If Calatrava had to adapt to the actual station place, it would have not been possible to make something genial! What should have be done is to raze the actual station place (which has no cultural heritage value) and replace it by something larger and more coherent, instead of razing the beginning of Paradis Street! In fact, one hurries up to raze and then only one wonder what to do! ...

M.Masson - I am afraid of the further demolitions which are planned in the Sclessin Street, some of the houses are listed and others are simply “remarkable”. Besides the cost of such an operation, it would be a great lost! Why not conserving them and integrating them within the new block which will limit the place of the station? ...

It thus seems that people have thing to say about the cultural heritage issue, and deplore that their advice is not asked in the early beginnings of a project.

11.4. The adaptation of the urban fragment

Actually, a controversy appears around the possible adaptation of the quarter to the station (justified by the role of the station within the region), as well as alternatives to the proposed solution for the management of the public spaces (already exposed in a previous section). The station being now considered as an established fact, one assists to a spontaneous « problematisation » about the necessary level of adaptation of the urban fragment.

11.4.1 The price to pay for a city level symbol
Some of the interviewees consider since the beginning that the station must be a symbol at the city level, and that this requirement authorises any “hurt” to the Guillemins quarter. It is the price to pay for creating a city level symbol. The developer is one of them, and even proposes, besides the triangular place, to replace the Paradis Street by a canal linking the place of the station and the Meuse River, to prolong the perspective! They are supported by some experts, which think it is a good idea to link the two major “actors” in the Liége history: the Railway and the Meuse River.

M.Hanocq - The station should not integrate in the quarter I think. It is the principal station of Liége, and not a quarter station. If it was a station quarter, a better integration should have been done. But in the present case, one need a strong building, emblematic of the whole city. And even more than the city: all the agglomeration and the region! It is a great chance... We (J-P Collette and myself) evoked the idea of a canal between the station and the Meuse River at the CCAT a long time ago. We consider that the Schéma Directeur of the Local Authority is too cautious. We said why not link two main cultural and historic elements of the city: the Railway and the River. It would have been better that the local plan does not avoid such a long-term project. There is no element in the quarter which is strong enough to organise the rest, except now the station...

M.Doutreleau - Even AGUA wanted to conserve its idea of the curved place limited by Jonckeu Street. But it was really narrow, and more corresponding to the characteristics of “little quarters” than to the extent of the station! ... The canal is an idea jointly imagined by M.Bourlard (director of Euro-Liége TGV) and Calatrava. We are afraid that the hesitancy of the Local Authority leads to missing the management of the station environment, so we are especially looking for generating reactions, in order to avoid that the PCA completely blocks the evolution of the urban environment. Actually, even if we have no funding opportunity for this proposal at the moment, it could be later found and it would be a pity if this canal imagined by Calatrava himself were not allowed because of a hesitant local plan...

One may however wonder if the recourse to the argument of the “price to pay” to create a city level symbol is so much relevant. Respect of the quarter and city level symbol, are these two objectives really incompatible? A recent proposal from students in architecture of St-Luc school in Brussels tends to testify the contrary. It consists in a “tangential” place, oriented towards the Louvrrex Street, linking the Guillemins quarter to the centre of the city. Coming from the centre, the station only appears at the last minute, when running into the place. It is the same principle than the white Museum of Modern Arts in Barcelone, by the architect Richard Meyer, which sharply appears at the turn of the little streets of the historic city centre. Although the place where the museum is sited was not “adapted” to its scale and style, it appears as perfectly well integrated, creating an interesting effect of surprise. The St-Luc students’ proposal has been published in the A+ (a famous architectural revue) of April-May 2002, when the PCA local plan had already been approved by the Local Authority and was under examination by the Regional Authority for the final approval. It seems that this proposal passed almost unnoticed since none of the interviewees had heard about it.

11.4.2 Inevitable adaptation of the quarter

Other interviewees recognise, since the Calatrava station is considered as an established fact, that the quarter must be adapted to better fit with the new station. So they finally accept the triangular
place proposed by Strebelle and Calatrava. Some of them accept it if links are created between the place and the Fragnée quarter and if the station project is also used as an opportunity to revitalise the whole Fragnée quarter.

M. Delecour - The future station is perhaps too strong for the quarter, but creating elements with which people can identify, at the level of the city, is necessary. It is perhaps a pity that its expression supplants other values at the level of the quarter. But I have no answer to this problem. We hope that the station will attract developers and promote new offices, housing, etc which will help to revitalise the quarter. We hope that the station will enhance the quarter...

J-P. Gomez - The way the station should integrate or should have been integrated within the quarter is a permanent question for me. I wonder if the symbolic role of the station at the level of the city was not incompatible with the Guillemins quarter. Now one may only try to reconcile the station and the quarter. But we would have never accepted such a huge station in other quarters such as St-Léonard or Les Vennes, or still St-lambert. What convinced us to accept was the presence of the hill which allowed to diminish the impact on the quarter...

M. Grayet - The station should try to integrate within the quarter, nobody would say the contrary, but I think it is really difficult to do so. That is why the PCA local plan should provide the private developers with general rules to apply to integrate the station within the surroundings. And perhaps that this tower which is planned at the point of the triangular place will help to make the link between the station and the quarter, forming like a “door” to enter the quarter...

M. Masson - Since the scale of the station is established and one may change nothing, it is necessary to think about what should be built around, on the way the surroundings of the station will be managed... One must make that inhabitants come back to the quarter. Maybe that the new station and the adaptation of the surroundings will produce such a coming back. I hope so. One must profit from this event to recreate new housing areas likely to attract and “fix” families. The station will lead the putting in order of the quarter which had already been severely damaged. It is the occasion to recreate more coherence in it. Yes, there would have been less expropriations if the station had not been shifted but then one would have not planned something good for the Fragnée quarter... The Fragnée-Blonden committee sent to the Urban Planning administration of Liège a proposal for the management of one particular block within which is located the “Tour Rosen”, a listed building well-known in the quarter. Our proposal was first to “cut” the block that the Local Authority intended to build to limit the future place of the station, in order to allow the view of the Tour from the exit of the station. It was then to manage the interior of the block by creating there car parks, housing and horeca functions. The committed also proposed to plan new housing buildings in a street to be recreated in the extension of Bovy Street, in order to rehouse the expropriated inhabitants. Etc ...

11.4.3 Rejection of the situation

Some interviewees however keep deploring and refusing the situation and the proposed triangular place, which they consider as a consequence of past errors (bad integration of the project with regards to the quarter). They restate that any building must integrate into its particular urban context (socially, economically, architecturally, culturally), and that this is not incompatible with a symbolic role at the city level. As a consequence, they think that the adaptation of the quarter
should be limited and reduced as much as possible, considering that the station has already produced enough damage to the quarter. Some of them also requested an element to replace the actual station in the perspective of the Guillemins Street, to somehow recover the previous situation.

M. Theunissen - *We think that ok, the thing is done, but one must limit as much as possible the extent of the demolitions. But however I am a bit doubtful because it is also true that the entrance of this station requires an important management of the place, and that the expropriations done up until today are probably insufficient: one must probably go a little further to allow an homogenisation. But it is a bit painful to be forced to adapt much more than what was wanted at the beginning because of a badly managed thought ... We discussed with other urban planning experts, who had a much stronger opinion than ours and who think that now that the station is there, we should adapt all the quarter to this station...*

M. Braives - *The Bronckart committee (M. Servais) and us, we are still claiming for something in the Guillemins Street perspective! Because it is historic: even so the street was created to go to the station! It is the Railway society which created the Guillemins Street (and it is still the owner of the street) to link the station and the Boulevard d’Avroy (when it was still water). ... I think that the place that will be managed in front of the station will still be too small! The project of the station is too “megalo” with regards to the surroundings!*

So the interviewees do not agree about the necessary level of adaptation of the quarter, and some of them appear as highly mitigated about the thing that should be done or should have been done (integration of the station within the quarter or not). It clearly appears that the low social acceptance of the choices made at the level of the station project, compromise the success and acceptance of the following management of the surroundings.

12. The public participation in the decision-making process

The previous section showed how much the cultural heritage issue may be subjective and a source of controversy. In itself, it justifies the use of appropriate participative methods in order to ensure a sound and constructive public involvement in the debates. This section explores the way the public participation was organised, in order to highlight the main problems and future challenges with regards to this issue.

12.1. The question of the few public opposition

Lots of interviewees expressed astonishment about the few negative reactions from the general public with regards to the extent of the project.

M. Pissart - *It really surprised us not to see more opposition to the project, with regards to its extent. Moreover when we see very strong oppositions appearing for small housing developments...*

12.1.1 The population’s passive disinterest
Some interviewees think that the poor level of reactions is due to the composition of the quarter’s population. Some interviewees think that the population of the quarter is mainly from the middle-class, which seems to be assimilated as very passive and disinterested people. Others think it is due to the high number of little flats which are rented by students or poor people who do not intend to stay a long time in the quarter and so do not feel concerned by the project and its impacts on the urban environment.

C. Strebelle - In the Guillemins quarter, is a more middle-class population, less used to organise demonstrations. There is a part of intellectuals, and another part of finite middle-class which accepts things and sees in them an opportunity of change... 

M. Masson - The project did not produce a lot of interest among the general public and public concerned! As an example, at the occasion of the annual feast of the quarter, in last September, the inhabitants’ committee had a stand where the Schéma Directeur plan was presented. There was not a crowd: only ten or fifteen people came to see the plan! Is it fatalism, or paresse, or the feeling that things are decided in advance? I don’t know. During the public enquiry, there were not more reactions, even from the expropriated people! Only one angry guy reacted, but still it is for personal interest, not to promote any collective interest! ... People seem indifferent! I don’t know what to do to interest them to their environment and its evolution. Yet there are a lot of people who like their quarter, and who want to stay there, notably in the expropriated people!...

M. Grayet - The individual citizens’ reactions – I don’t mean when they are organised inside a group as the CCAT – are often disappointing: not numerous and generally influenced by one or another people who strongly shouts and who leads the others even if he does not express exactly what they think. Yet the CWATUP is based on the idea that people have interesting things to say. But they do not say them. It is a pity...

12.1.2 The general interest as a form of social pressure

To explain the few negative reactions among the public, some interviewees mention the very curious pressure that seemed to weigh on the possible opponents to the project. Actually, it has been mentioned by more than one interviewee, that the passage of the TGV through Liége has been such a struggle for local politicians and influential citizens, that now anybody who dares to say something negative about the future TGV station is immediately considered as a bad citizen, who is against the passage of the TGV in Liége.

M. Pissart - It was the first time that I saw people applaud to such a project presentation! It is surprising because we are used to seeing people in opposition to projects, and there it was the contrary! Finally, I wonder if people dared to formulate any objection, seeing that the majority of the population was welcoming the project with so much enthusiasm)... 

M. Rouxhet - I would explain the low level of reactions by assuming that the passage of the TGV in Liége is something important for its inhabitants. And it is a strong image for Liége with regards to the rest of Wallonia. So the project, independently from any architectural consideration, found adepts...
M. Ancion - One may realise that the TGV is something mythical for Liège, it is a long struggle, and so, the one who questions the station, he is considered as against the TGV and as a “bad Liegoise”. It also enters in the balance and people take care...

M. Hanocq - The reactions were not strong! But some people had lobbyied in order to obtain the TGV passage in Liège and not Bierset, and so it was felt as a very positive thing. As a consequence, the station project has been generally welcomed...

12.1.3 The enthusiasm towards Calatrava

Some interviewees prefer thinking that there were not really negative reactions among the public, due to the fact that the Calatrava project produced a high and general enthusiasm...

M. Delecour - I was really surprised to see the enthusiasm of the public with regards to the Calatrava project. It is rare, and it shows that a person with full of convictions and ability to express them, with a strong project, may gather people ...

M. Ancion – Sometimes, an original architectural idea make advance a project better than all the formal procedures! Of course on must respect the legal requirements, but one also needs some enthusiasm and futurist vision! I say that it is the astounding character of the station which ensured its social acceptance...

12.2. The local authority’s communication strategy

The Local Authority seems to partly explain the few negative reactions by the information activities it organised with Euro-Liège TGV.

M. Ancion - The project is a real success in terms of public acceptance: even concerning the expropriations, there was no revolt, but only a few negative comments. When one thinks that here in Liège, any little project always produces reactions, recourses, etc. And it seems to be due to the information efforts of Euro-Liège TGV and the Local Authority of Liège... I think that the public reactions in general have been taken into consideration, but of course we certainly did not consider all the reactions... there are always people who do not want moving or changing...but I think the way we proceeded for the public consultation truly decreased the likely reasons of opposition...

One must notice that the way the interviewee measures the social acceptance of a project is related to the presence or not of revolts and judicial recourses. When one reads the public concerned comments about the project, one may however wonder if another way of evaluating social acceptance should not been developed to provide the decision-makers with a better feedback of their decisions...

If one looks closer at the information and communication activities organised by the Local Authority, one may actually observe that it probably had a crucial role in avoiding negative reactions from the public. In addition, it probably helped too in creating a collective idolatry of Calatrava, making some people think that the project “gathered” people.

12.2.1 The Local Authority’s promotion of the project
Since the early beginnings of the project, the Local Authority, with Euro-Liège TGV and Calatrava himself, through the various promotion activities they undertook (press dissemination, exhibitions, etc), probably participated to the fact that Calatrava has rapidly been perceived as a real “star” by most of the people.

M.Theunissen - During years and years, the presentation of the project has been lugged around everywhere the Local Authority was organising an exhibition more or less related to urban planning. The Calatrava’s model was systematically presented! It has also been regularly showed in the press... and used to be welcomed and applauded by everybody, because it is a beautiful object and that people found it beautiful! On the contrary, the impact of the project on the environment has never been really shown...

M.Masson - People were “subjugated” by the fact that a prestige station would be built...

One may wonder if the role of a Local Authority is to promote a project in this way well before any further analysis or assessment. Is it well corresponding to its theoretical role of representing the local community? When Julien Pissart, author of the EIA, says that the public consultation meetings should always be organised by a neutral actor, like the public authorities, one must notice that here the public authorities have not been neutral at all.

M.Pissart - The public consultation meetings must be organised by somebody neutral (not the developer), like the Local Authority or another public authority, in order to present and balance the different participants. If the developer goes and present his project, the people will not have the same reactions and the meeting will not develop in the same way. So it would be interesting to provide with sensible people to animate this kind of debates! ... This raises the problem of who must organise the debates around an urban development project, since the public authorities are often involved in the developer role, either because they are partly funding the project, either because they ideologically support the project.

12.2.2 Overall satisfaction of the public towards the information provided

Concerning the public information and consultation in general, most people from the public concerned consider that the Local Authority kept them well informed throughout the duration of the project. But it clearly appears that this judgement is made by comparison with particularly bad situations during previous project developments.

M.Servais - We have been pretty well informed of the project progresses. It is the first time that I see such a procedure in Liège! The Pierreuse inhabitants have been less well treated...

M.Masson - I may not blame the way that information and consultation were organised. There were more than one Steering Committee meeting every year, during which we could express our ideas and arguments...we were not always followed but at least there was a dialogue ... With regards to what happened for the Financial administration buildings, it was far better! ...

M.Braives - The deputy mayor Ancion contacted lots of committees and organised lots of information meetings so one may not criticise the information carried out by the Local Authority and by the SNCB...
Actually, since the beginnings of Schéma Directeur development, the Local Authority organised a lot of meetings with the quarters’ committees. But it appears that these interviewees express satisfaction towards the numerous informal information activities organised by the Local Authority rather than towards the legal and formal information and consultation stages related to the station project, during which the authorities are legally required to take the public’s comments into consideration. They express satisfaction about the relations they maintained with the actors from the Local Authority.

12.2.3 Resignation of the public towards consultation

The public concerned is generally not very happy with the way their comments have been integrated into the decision-making process, but they generally seem to be resigned, considering that even the Local Authority had nothing to say in opposition to the SNCB, and considering that the Local Authority made lots of efforts to keep them informed.

M.Masson - The SNCB was the main actor of the project, the people from the Local Urban Planning administration have been faced to established facts, like us! The SNCB dictacted everybody… M.Ancion often told us: “What can we do! It is the Railway which insists on that!”… but attention, he was not agreeing with them! …

M.Servais - When we learned through the press that the SNCB had the intention of shifting the station, we contacted the Local Authority which told us that it had been presented with an unilateral decision from the SNCB…

Only the president of the shopkeepers’ association considered that the consultation of the public was not effective at all, as it has the feeling that the public reactions were generally not taken into consideration by the decision-makers. He considers that he has been listened to only to find a mitigation solution to try to keep Guillemins Street its status of main access to the station, which was the main fear of shopkeepers, but he considers they have never been listened during the decision-making process itself.

M.Braives - Anyway, one does not listen the public! I told them – in the early beginnings of the project - about the fact that this building is too high, badly located, etc., but they don’t give a damn about what I think! The politicians are not urban planners, they are not technicians, their only preoccupation is to know which people they will please or annoy! … Concerning the “left turn” that we required to keep Guillemins Street as the most important access to the station, we have been listened to: it has been approved by the Local Authority… But in general I consider that the public reactions are not taken into consideration in the decision-making process…

12.2.4 Confusion between formal/informal, plan/project related procedures

One may however be surprised to hear the public concerned say that the information has been perfectly organised by the local authorities, when one compares this discourse with the poor level of answers to finer questions about the decision-making process. It seems that the information provided was limited to the station project in itself, but at all about the decision-making progresses and organisation.
As a consequence, the public concerned often confuse between the procedures related to the station project and EIA, and the procedures related to the Schéma Directeur or to the PCA local plan. They are also very much confused about the different legal procedures’ requirements, and about their aims.

M. Servais - For lack of having been involved in the fundamental decision-making stages, the Local Authority demonstrated early its will of steering the project and gathering around the table all the actors concerned by the project. So it created a steering committee (six years ago) gathering representatives of the Local Authorities, of the developer, and of the various committees. I always felt the will both from Euro-Liège TGV and the Local Authority to associate everybody to the project. Public meetings have been organised by the Local Authority, at which two representatives of each committee could attend ... so there were no real conflict between the committees and the project...

M. Masson - Since the beginning of the project, we had regular contacts with the urban planning administration of Liège. And I maintained excellent relations with the deputy mayor, W. Ancion, and the director of the administration, J.-P. Gomez... Concerning the Schéma Directeur, numerous information meetings were organised by the Urban Planning administration: two or three in the HEC buildings in Sohet Street, another in the ICADI building in November 2001) ... (P. Masson confuses between the Schéma Directeur, the Station project and the PCA local plan procedures)

12.2.5 The Local Authority double discourse strategy

The public authorities, through their attitude and the way they organised the relations with the public, did not promote public participation. They avoided informing the public about the legal requirements and about its rights in terms of participation. On the contrary, it maintained the confusion.

The several informal public meetings organised with the concerned inhabitants’ committees, well before the official and formal consultation stages related to the station project -when the Local Authority was setting-up its Schéma Directeur-, during which some decisions of the developer were already presented as irreversible, certainly produced a deep confusion among the public. It also contributed to the low level of negative reactions during the following formal and official consultation stages related to the station project procedure.

During these informal meetings, it has to be noticed that the Local Authority used a double discourse strategy. As already mentioned, the Local Authority consciously made a lot of concessions, because it was in favour of the project and because the SNCB had already accepted to locate the station in the Guillemins quarter and to engage a well-known architect. But when comparing with the inhabitants’ committees interviews, it seems that they provided them with another discourse, according which they were not allowed to say anything in the decisions, that the SNCB was imposing them all its views.

This kind of activity should rather be called disinformation instead of information since it is likely to make the citizens believe that all the decisions taken by the SNCB are irreversible, and that it is useless to question them. It was of course not the case, it was only the choice made by the Local Authority.
One may actually wonder why the Local Authority of Liège organised so much informal consultations meetings when in other projects, it used to avoid public participation. Perhaps was it to ensure the social legitimacy of the project they were supporting. Although it probably helped to ensure the minimum social acceptance of the project to avoid judicial recourses, it does not appear as a very sound procedure.

But perhaps it was also to foster their arguments (by gaining the public support) in the rest of the steering of the project, to face the powerful developer. Actually, even if the Local Authority had accepted some decision of the developer, it intended to obtain some improvements of the project likely to reduce its impacts on the quarter.

Talking about the public and Local Authority reaction against the decision of the SNCB to close the passage of the cars beyond the Hemricourt viaduct,

M.Servais - A Local Authority generally act better and stronger when people are also supporting them... the Local Authority feel stronger in defending its point of view when the inhabitants’ committees agree...

Anyway, in such a context, the public’s reactions have been perfectly manipulated and used by the local authority, and one may say that the public participation in the project decision-making process has not been effective at all.

12.3. Towards a more efficient participation of the public at each stage of the EIA process

The previous chapter highlighted some general problems related to the public participation. The following one will review the different steps of the EIA process to see how the effectiveness of the public participation could be improved.

12.3.1 Identification of the public concerned

About the “public concerned” identification, which should take place in the screening stage, as recommended by numerous EIA guidance documents and by the draft EA procedure set up by the SUIT consortium (see deliverable 3.1), the questionnaire asked if it had been subject to an appropriate identification by the public authorities.

The decision-makers explained that they had early contact with all the existing quarters’ committees, and the experts explained that it is only possible to contact the people already organised in committees and associations.

M.Delecour - There was a public enquiry, within a range of x meters, with billsticking, etc. as it is required by the Law. The only original approach was that the Local Authority contacted individually the different quarters’ committees and organised with them one or two information meetings to explain the project to them...

M.Hanocq - Is it possible to identify the “public concerned”? Because a station is a public project. More public than that, it is difficult! The neighbours organised themselves in committees which have been individually consulted, but the other end-users, it appears
But it appears that the public has a different definition of the “public concerned” than the experts and decision-makers, including the future users of the station.

M. Theunissen - No, I don’t think that such an identification has been organised. The decisions have been taken by technicians and experts! I know that the CCAT took part to the discussion the time, but a full list of concerned people have not been consulted: cyclists association, handicapped association, and also the users of the station! There was no consultation of the future users of the tool! It would have allowed assessing the necessity of such investments for the end-users: were they in favour of such a prestigious station and all the expenses it produces? Is it really useful for them? Are not the annex works undertaken to allow the TGV to stand on the foreground, face to the future place of the station, a bit derisory? ...

M. Masson - According to me, the “public concerned” is on one hand the travellers, the users of the station, and on the other hand, the inhabitants of the quarter. But few of the last reacted. We tried to inform them, organise meetings, but one person in ten attended the meeting. People do not react in advance, they only grumble when the nuisances are there! ...

It has to be recalled that the Aarhus convention states that any citizen may consider himself as “concerned” by a project, and so has to be included in the definition of the “public concerned”. One should thus wonder if another methodology for identifying the public concerned should not be developed.

Some interviewees actually deplore that full of individual citizens often does not react although some of them would have for sure interesting things to say. The author of the EIA stressed the necessity of “contact” with the public concerned even when there are no pre-existing quarter committees, because if it is not done, people are likely to associate into committees at the occasion of a project, to react to this project, with as consequence, a destructive approach rather than a constructive one.

M. Grayet - I think that the CWATUP, through its legal requirements about the delays, meetings, etc., well promotes the public information and participation... Quantitatively, the public consultation was organised as it had to be. Qualitatively, this kind of exercise makes me perplexed! I may not avoid thinking that in these quarters, there must be people who could express more interesting reactions than the ones we received. But it does not come! ...

M. Pissart - I would be in favour of a more systematic procedure for meeting the public. Here I think there was pre-existing committees but it is not always the case and may raise difficulties to contact the “public”. And then, often, committees are formed at the occasion of a particular project, after the EIA report and the project are achieved, and then it is too late: these committees are forming against the project and it is not possible anymore to find a constructive approach of the problem...

It seems that the will of M. Pissart was partly heard since a new proposal of decree related to the public communication and participation, completing the implementation of the EIA directive in Wallonian Region was recently presented by the Regional Authority (on the 3th May 2002). This
decree enlarges the scope of application of the legal requirement of organising a first public consultation meeting (in order to generate alternatives) to all the types of project subject to EIA. It also provides for the intervention of a new actor in the decision-making process and in particular in the public participation: an “enquiry guide”, designated by the Regional Authority but working in a “total” independence, who will be charged with receiving the public reactions, and to inform the public (answer to the questions of the public about the legal procedures, etc). It will thus act at the interface between the public authorities and the public. Unfortunately one may however notice that this consultation procedure is still based on passive consultation, which means that the public has to take by itself the necessary steps to approach the project, to inform itself, and to react but still a posteriori, when some solution has been proposed by the developer and/or public authority.

Yet, about the probable reasons of the few level of reactions obtained from the public, some interviewees also mentioned the fact that people had unfortunately to take the step to inform themselves and to participate, and that in addition, they have the feeling that the decisions were already made. They added that if a consultant team were charged with going to meet the public in order to gather their comments before proposing a solution, much more interesting results and ideas would ensue. M. Pissart also seemed in favour of a more active procedure of consultation, since he considered that in the absence of well-established inhabitants’ committees, it is really difficult to “meet” the public.

M.Grayet - Maybe that it could help to charge an independent organism to conduct a public survey in parallel with the EIA. It would be good, but it is a question of financial resources! But it would allow to go and fetch the information instead of simply telling people that they may react if they want... it is an effort that they do not do, perhaps they think that it won’t be much use...

In such a context, the procedures developed within the framework of SUIT task 3.2, for screening and in particular to identify the public concerned will certainly be of great help for the competent authorities and the publics concerned.

12.3.2 Steering committees: raising the issue of double-bind

From all the identifiable quarters’ committees and associations, the Local Authority constituted a “steering committee”. But the mandate of this steering committee was not very clear: was it linked to the station project as seem to say some decision-makers, or was it only linked with the Schéma Directeur plan development, as official documents tend to show? And what was the legitimacy of this steering committee? Was it mandated to take decisions? If yes, how were they taken inside the committee?

W.Ancion - From the beginning, we constituted a steering committee, because we wanted the six or seven quarter committees to be associated to the project. It is an innovation, and a real success...

M.Gomez - The consultation and cooperation was permanent with the eight concerned quarter committees and shopkeepers’ associations. I only regret the lack of contacts we had with the house owners of the quarter, but it was difficult because there was no owners’
The “rules of the game” appear very vague, which did not help to optimise the public participation, as already said. In addition, this steering committee seemed to be considered as one uniform entity, able to provide a coherent advice on a project. But it was without thinking that it is constituted of very different people, with different concerns, which makes very difficult to reach a coherent position on a proposed project.

The CCAT (*Commission Consultative en Aménagement du Territoire*), which is a permanent local consultative organisation, is constituted of various actors interested in the local urban developments, and raised the same problem. It is regularly asked to give an *a posteriori* opinion on proposed projects, but its effectiveness as a means for public consultation, as planned by the Wallonian legislation, may be questioned. As various points of view are represented inside the CCAT, contradictory positions usually appear and so it is often not possible to define ONE advice from the CCAT, or this advice is eventually a too “bad” or “weak” internal consensus to be really relevant and so considered in the following of the decision-making process.

An example is provided by the CCAT examination of the draft PCA local plan set up by the Local Authority to manage the surroundings of the station.

M. Grayet - *At the CCAT, the advice on the PCA was moderate. About the limits of the area subject to the PCA, some would have preferred a much broader area, and on the contrary, others would have preferred to see the bottom of Paradis Street outside the PCA area. So globally, the area defined by the Local Authority was acceptable. The shape of the place – triangular - did not raise reactions. But the tower planned by M.Strebel at the bottom of the triangle, and which is aimed, according to him, at hiding the backs of the high buildings located along the River, did not convince a lot of CCAT members!*

Therefore, one may wonder whether a better involvement of PEOPLE from the public concerned (instead of theses consultative organisms and other committees), since the early beginnings, in the reflection around an urban development project and in its operational definition, could not help to improve the effectiveness of the public participation. The participative methods developed within the framework of the SUIT project are likely to promote such a public participation throughout its whole definition process.

12.3.3 Announcement of the screening decision

The decision of the competent authority to carry out an EIA was announced during the first mandatory public meeting aiming at generating alternatives for the EIA.

M. Delecour - *Yes. The project was public and so must follow a particular procedure: when an EIA is decided, the public must be preliminary informed of the project during a meeting, and may react during the meeting or after the meeting during 30 days. They may react on principle elements such as the location of the station, etc.*
At the question about the public announcement of the intention of carrying out an EIA, which is a mandatory requirement of the EIA directive, the answers of the public concerned are sometimes quite vague...

M. Servais - *We were informed of the intention of carrying out an EIA at the first mandatory public meeting. Representatives of the author of the EIA were attending the meeting...*

M. Masson - *A public enquiry was organised! Earlier, some information meetings had been organised by the LA to present the project, but not so much...*

M. Braives - *There were the mandatory billstickings, but it is true that the number of bills was insufficient with regards to the extent of the project: bills of 50cm x 70cm stuck on the station are not very visible! But it was the minimum legally required, so one may say nothing against this! And the plans were available at the City Hall during the public enquiry! *

In this case, the screening decision did not raise problems, since the decision was to carry out an EIA. But when a decision is no EIA, one should take care to the way it is announced to the public: it must be clearly justified.

### 12.3.4 The scoping stage

As already mentioned, the EIA content has been set up by the Regional Authority and notified to the developer.

M. Delecour - *I personally notified the content of the EIA report to the developer, who gave it to the author of the EIA. The impacts to assess were inter alias concerning the circulations, the functions (inside an outside the station), and of course the volume...*

M. Pissart - *One sends us a content for the EIA report. We take it as a reference but we generally go further because some impacts are not always mentioned in the content set up by the competent authority, and that it is our responsibility to identify all the significant impacts even if they are not mentioned in the content. Moreover, there is always a risk that the CWEDD (independent reviewer of the quality of the EIA report) makes us comment. They actually consider that it is not acceptable to hide beyond the content set up by the authority...*

After that, a preliminary public meeting is organised to generate alternatives and suggestions for the EIA among the public.

A question asked of the interviewees, was whether the public had been involved in the setting-up of the EIA content (which was officially the aim of the first preliminary public meeting). It appears that most of the people (experts, politics, lay people, etc.) were not informed of the existence of such a preliminary possibility for the public to be involved in the setting-up of a terms of reference, they mention the public enquiry following the EIA as the only opportunity for the public to be involved: by *a posteriori* reaction.

M. Strebelle - *I don’t believe that the public took part to the setting-up of the EIA content. The EIA has been asked to Pissart who knows his work very well. The ones who would have set
up a content for the EIA would have been less well up in this domain! Who would be able to set up such a content? It is almost impossible! ...

M.Ancion - I don’t remember... I don’t think that the author of the EIA had contacts with the public to know its requirements... We, listened the public’s reactions, but it was not in the framework of the EIA, but in the framework of our own enquiry about the wishes of the quarter’s inhabitants...

M.Theunissen - I don’t think that the public has been consulted on such issues...

M.Masson - The public didn’t take part to the setting-up of the EIA content. The only opportunity to react was the public enquiry, but I didn’t see the public reactions. One told me it was confidential... but are not they forced to publish that? ...

M.Grayet - In the framework of an EIA, there is a public enquiry. The public thus had the opportunity to react...

In particular, the way the public authorities organised the first public consultation meeting, seemed to be a bit inappropriate. The legal aim of this meeting was (and is still) totally unknown to the public. It seems that the Local Authority didn’t clearly state this aim during the meeting. Instead, the Local Authority invited the charismatic Calatrava to present his “work” and model. It is thus not so surprising that no reaction appeared in the public, nor alternatives, and that everybody finally applauded! If one thinks to the numerous informal meetings that had been organised before this crucial meeting, and during which the shifting and the scale of the station were presented as irreversible, it is even more astonishing!

Yet, as already said, alternatives (concerning the general siting, the architect, the exact location, the scale, or still the functions) have been spontaneously evoked by some people from the public concerned (inhabitants’ committees, Liegoise architects’ association - ARALg, or still Guillemins shopkeepers’ association). But it seems that these alternatives have been evoked too late, or too early, but never at THE “right” moment to be taken into consideration (the official preliminary public meeting).

Yet, a posteriori, the representative of the Regional Authority seems to consider that the public did not react during the informal meetings earlier organised by the Local Authority:

M.Delecour - The local authority had already organised a consultation of the public well before the first time that Euro-Liège TGV asked for a development consent, when the Local Authority was working on its Schéma Directeur. At this time, the Schéma Directeur was evolving by following the progresses of the station project, until its actual definition. So the committees could have already reacted at this time. And personally, I have not been informed of any opposition...

The author of the EIA (J.Pissart) deplores the lack of contacts and communication he had with the public.

M.Pissart - It could be interesting to have further contacts with the public at the early beginning of the EIA. Here, a public consultation meeting has been organised, but the public reaction was mainly positive so we did not learn so much. The basic aim of this meeting is to
allow people propose alternatives to the project, but no proposal has been made. In other cases, when there is opposition, it allows us to identify the most important issues to be addressed in the EIA, since they are the most sensitive... We try to favour the contacts with the public not to make the study “at home”, otherwise you propose solutions which are not at all relevant and have a few chances to be implemented because the public authorities and the general public do not agree with them....

However, one interviewee mentions informal contacts he had with people working for the EIA author, which allowed him to express some opinions about the impacts to assess. One officer from the Local Authority also mentions the further impact assessments required to the author of the EIA at the request of the public concerned. Another experts wonders if the various meetings organised with the quarters’ committees were not intended to define the necessary content of the EIA with them. The president of the shopkeepers’ association tends to support this hypothesis.

M. Servais - The first public consultation meeting was followed by an informal mail exchange with Pissart representatives, which allowed us to take part in the setting up of the content of the EIA. Our comments were related to: the height of the building (suggestions which have not been addressed in the EIA report because considered as an established fact), the commercial areas planned inside the station, the risk of pressure estate in the quarter and the possible increasing of the number of students flats, the shifting of the station (which has not been addressed in the EIA because considered as an established fact)...

M. Gomez – Julien Pissart, author of the EIA report, reassessed some impacts because of queries expressed by some people during a meeting. For example, committees asked for more “realistic” representations of the station within its context, with regards to a model which is observed from the sky and so is not representative of the perception we will have of the station. So perspective sketches have been asked to the architect Gérard Michel in order to better visualise the impact of the station on its environment...

M. Hanocq - I think that the various meetings with the inhabitants’ committees were intended at obtaining such information from them...

M. Braives - Meetings have been organised, so they respected the procedure. Among the suggestions about impacts to assess, there was for example the impacts of the shifting of the station...

The answers from the public and other actors to the question of the public participation in the setting-up of the EIA content are so disparate that it questions its effectiveness. Yet, several EIA guidance documents recommend a true involvement of the public and experts at the scoping stage! In such a context, it may be expected that the procedures and methods developed in the framework of SUIT task 3.2 will help to improve this effectiveness by providing with clear and sound participative methods.

12.3.5 Quality review of the EIA report

About the independent quality review, which is mandatory in some Member States (and in particular, in Wallonian Region), few of the interviewees knew that it was carried out in the case of the Guillemins station and that it was a mandatory requirement. Once more, they were limited
to the actors directly concerned: the competent authority, the EIA author and the review organisation.

M. Delecour - The EIA report was reviewed by the CWEDD. I don’t remember their comments except that they stressed on the necessity of a park for the cycles inside the station...

M. Pissart - The CWEDD review the EIA report but I don’t remember very well their comments, so I suppose that there was no important remark...

M. Rouxhet - We reviewed the EIA report, the quality of which was generally good, but we however made a remark on the limitation of the area subject to EIA. But our intervention has only a value of advice: the competent authority is free to take our comments into consideration or not...

The effectiveness of such an independent review may also be questioned, since most of the interviewees did not know anything about its existence!

M. Strebbelle - Certainly not, one relies on Pissart. You think it is necessary? Who would be able to review the EIA report and ensure its quality? ...

M. Theunissen - I do not understand very well the question... (after further explanations:) I don’t know if the EIA report was reviewed...

M. Masson - I don’t know if the EIA report was reviewed. I didn’t hear any criticism about the way the EIA was carried out...

M. Braives - I don’t know if the EIA report was reviewed. But all the quarter committees went to see it. And in all of them there is somebody with some competence in architecture or urban planning...

M. Ancion - I don’t know if the EIA report was reviewed ...

Yet, informing the public of this kind of review could improve its confidence in the EIA, and reduce its suspicion with regards to the fact that the EIA is paid by the developer, and so that it cannot be objective in their eyes.

Regarding the public quality review of the EIA report before the consent decision (has a public consultation been organised on the basis of EIA report?), which is a mandatory requirement of the EIA Directive, few of the actors were able to describe exactly the legal requirements that have been implemented.

M. Pissart - The EIA report is available at the Local administration for the people who would like to read it but I don’t think that it has been systematically disseminated. An informal public consultation meeting was also organised by the Local Authority but it was not a real public consultation meeting, since the Authority was not legally required to do so because the number of reactions obtained during the public enquiry stage was less than 25! ...
On the contrary, the public, which although directly concerned, and even experts, seem poorly informed. Their answers were very vague or do not really concern the way the procedure has been organised, or are incorrect.

M. Strebelle - According to me, the EIA has been exclusively analysed by technicians. I don’t think that a public debate has been organised on this basis ... But it took to myself 15 days to read and understand it! It can only be understood by some technicians ... there is a big work of communication to be done to allow the EIA report to be understood by people without particular competence but concerned by the project...

M. Servais - As representative of an inhabitants’ committee, I received a copy of the EIA report...

M. Braives - The EIA report was available during the public enquiry, but it has not been shown during the meetings. But it is legal. Yet, information meetings have been organised for the population after the EIA...

M. Theunissen – No review of the EIA report by the public was organised, because the EIA report is a technical document... there were yet really eloquent images which were showing the “integration” of the station building in its environmental context. But there was no echo in the press for example, and I think it is a pity with regards to the quality of the document: it would have been widely circulated. But I think that it is not the will nor interest of the people who launched the EIA to too widely disseminate this document ... However, I know that during the public enquiry following the EIA, some inhabitants reacted, but I don’t know of some committees intervened for instance...

About their own view of the quality of the EIA report, the interviewees generally think that it is a good document, but that it is highly difficult to understand and thus not really appropriate for a broad dissemination. However, some interviewees reiterate once more that according to them, the EIA report didn’t address the possible negative impacts enough that could be produced by the previous unilateral decisions on recurrently mentioned parameters (location, extent, and height of the station).

M. Grayet - It was very comprehensive and seriously carried out...

M. Braives - As member of the steering committee, I received a copy of the EIA report. The impacts were assessed in an appropriate way I think because the commercial impacts were looking realistic. On the other hand, I think that the EIA report didn’t enough stress on the fact that it will be not possible for pedestrians to well visualise the station, due to its size. Furthermore, the EIA didn’t enough highlight the rupture that the station will introduce within the historic urban pattern...

M. Servais - According to us, the height of the station has not been sufficiently addressed: from the side, the station will look like a glass wall (more than 40 meters high). We are not sure that this building is not oversized...

12.3.6 Development consent
The interviewees among the public concerned generally even don’t know which was the competent authority. Some of their answers are very confused and totally wrong. As a reminder, the competent authority was the Wallonian Region, which had the obligation to ask the advice of the Local Authority prior to taking its decision.

M. Theunissen - *I think that in such a case, it must be the Ministry of Communications... so I think that there is no competent authority: they have power and they do what they want, I think that the Wallonian Region has no much to say...*

M. Masson - *The Local Authority and the Province...*

M. Braives - *I suppose that it was the Urban Planning administration of Liège... I don’t know exactly...*

12.3.7 Mitigation measures

The idea of mitigations measures or conditions attached to the development consent seems to be surprising and not necessary by the competent authority, which didn’t received any complaints (when one considers that lots of people didn’t know who the competent authority was, this is not surprising!).

M. Delecour – *There are not mitigation measures because there was no complaint... But some problems, like the accesses (the Guillemins Street or the Paradis Street?) are still not solved. But the Local Authority pays particularly attention to favour the access to the station through the Guillemins Street...*

The public concerned and other actors seem to consider the idea of mitigation measures as totally improbable. They only mention the expropriation compensations.

M. Theunissen - *I don’t think that mitigation measures are planned...*

M. Masson - *A part from the expropriations compensations, I don’t see what else could be done, since the station will attract people and improve the using of the shops!*

M. Braives - *There are the expropriation compensations, which are greater than the strict minimum... Concerning the shopkeepers, there are no mitigations, and some shops will go bankrupt, that is sure...*

The experts mention the conditions attached to the development consent and the strategies for the enhancement of some parts of the quarters that will be set up, which they consider as mitigation measures.

M. Hanoq - *There was the reduction of commercial areas inside the station but I don’t know if it may be considered as a mitigation measure, the fact that that the Guillemins Street will remain the principal access to the station, as the shopkeepers were claiming for. I know that they also claim for fiscal reductions, but it has been refused. But even if the commercial centre of the quarter is shifted, nothing prevents shopkeepers from shifting as well...*
M. Pissart – I don’t think that there are individual mitigation measures, but I think that there are rather some managements of the quarters which are planned, we made some proposals for them in the EIA report, but I don’t really know if they have been considered...

M. Rouxhet - I don’t know if there are mitigation measures. I know that in housing developments, the CWEDD often recommends collective mitigation measures such as the management of convivial public spaces...

One decision-maker of the Local Authority mention that compensation had been received from the government for the TGV passage in Liège, and that they judge that it had to be invested in the quarter which will suffer the most according to them.

M. Ancion - The government gives compensations related to the TGV passage (30 millions of Belgian francs for Liège). And we consider that the quarter which suffers the most from the TGV passage is the quarter of Chênée-Angleur, and so we will use this budget to build a passerelle there...

12.3.8 Post-decision stages

About the likely measures taken for monitoring the impacts during and after the project implementation, most of the interviewees seem surprised by the idea. Some interviewees mention that a part of the public concerned spontaneously monitors the project implementation.

M. Delecour - There is no monitoring planned. Except concerning the stability of the hill, which is spontaneously monitored by the inhabitants of the Observatoire Avenue, who check that supplementary technical studies are well carried out as it had been agreed...

M. Grayet - As a follow-up of the EIA, no monitoring of the impacts is planned. But it does not mean that it will not be carried out! ...

M. Rouxhet - Concerning the works stage, one of our remarks was that nothing was planned to follow-up the project implementation... concerning the post-implementation stages, I think that conditions have probably been attached to the development consent (although I am not sure that such conditions exist for architectural permits like it exists for environmental permits), but the risk is that once the station will be built, they are rapidly forgotten...

The Local officials however mention their intention of informally monitor some impacts, an mainly the socio-economic ones.

M. Gomez - We are informally monitoring the evolution of the real-estate prices. There is a clear increase in them. But there is not a formalised monitoring of this development and I don’t think it would be opportune: the city is changing and evolving and one may not control everything...

M. Ancion - There are still meetings with the various quarter committees, during which we evaluate the inconveniences of the work, we try to anticipate some nuisances, they express their points of view, etc. The works do not seem to produce too many problems, but it is after implementation that we will need to be attentive, inter alias with regards to the socio-economic effects on the quarter. So we will pursue these meetings with the committees after the end of the works...
M.Hanocq - There are discourses at the Local Authority saying that they will carefully follow impacts (mainly socio-economic), but between what is said and what is done, there is always a margin ...

In conclusion, it clearly appears that the general public has far less information resources than the politicians and the developer. In these conditions, when they want to actively take part in a particular decision-making process, the simple citizens are well disadvantaged with regards to politics and developers. Better information systems should thus help the citizens’ participation in the ex-ante decision stages of the decision-making processes in which they are particularly interested, even if they do not generally use to do so. The author of the EIA report also promotes the setting-up of an appropriate consultative procedure to avoid “at home” studies.

M.Pissart - We try to generate informal consultation stages to discuss with the public, but it would be good that a more official procedure is set-up. The first consultation meeting should be a legal requirement for all the projects and not only for public developers. It should be the occasion of establishing a first contact with the public and saying them that we are listening to them. The constitution of a steering committee, or another consultative organ would also be welcomed. We actually consider that when very different impacts are compared and balanced (socio-economic, cultural heritage, biologic, etc), it is not our responsibility to make choices, but rather to the decision-makers. We can present the advantages and inconveniences, but not take the final decision...

It thus appears that huge increases in information are necessary about the organisation of the decision-making process itself, and not only limited to the evolution of the operational definition of the project. This was not clearly defined in the draft EA procedure set up by the SUIT consortium (see deliverable 3.1), but with regards to the results of this survey, it is clearly necessary to set up further methods of information (notably by using electronic communication means), promoting and helping the competent authorities to regularly inform the general public of the whole procedure, of the particular stages under progress, of their possible involvement and rules of the game for this involvement, the aims and consequences of each stage of the procedure, etc.

13. Conclusions

The Guillemins station extended case study analysis appeared as very rich in transferable lessons, which will be integrated in the final SUIT guideline (task 3.6).

The main observations were the following.

Some strategic choices are recurrently questioned by some stakeholders (mainly the representatives of the public concerned): the siting of the station in Guillemins quarter, the decision of shifting the station of 150 meters towards the River, and the choices made concerning the height and extent of the station are questioned because they are considered as likely to produce the more significant environmental impacts. These choices are “strategic” because they “set a framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and
private projects on the environment…” as stated by the SEA directive\textsuperscript{12}. These strategic choices have been made by the decision-makers and the developer, and have never been subject to SEA. Therefore, these choices were considered as established facts in the EIA report related to the development consent for the final Guillemins station project. The public concerned didn’t understand why these choices were not anymore questioned in the framework of the EIA, reducing their confidence in the EIA procedure.

In the case of the TGV Guillemins station, the EIA was not legally mandatory, which gave to Competent Authority and developer the feeling that they were showing willingness because doing “more than the law”, and therefore minimising the role of the EIA, considered as a formality. On the contrary, the public concerned generally considers that it was obvious that an EIA was necessary, and that the EIA had to question some major decisions. So there was a gap, from the beginning, between expectations of the public concerned, and the point of view of the Competent Authority and developer, announcing the future deception of the public concerned with regards to the EIA report.

Some experts are strongly opposed to more public involvement at strategic stages (lay people are considered as unable to imagine and visualise a complex project proposal and its possible impacts). However, the first observation is yet that the public concerned’ main reactions concerns choices made on strategic parameters!

The project was almost entirely completed when presented to screening, with as consequence, that there was a low margin of manoeuvre for its later evolution (some decisions were already “irreversible” because they had required a lot of work, time, money, and consensus between involved actors), and that no alternatives was considered in the EIA report, because it became irrelevant to compare a well developed and coherent project with alternatives which would only be at the level of sketch.

No alternatives to the project was proposed by the public, due to its low level of information about the decision-making process (people failed to react at right moments), and due to the Local Authority’s promotion of the project and double discourse (giving the feeling that “the chips were down”).

The public concerned’ level of confidence in the decision-making process is very low, because it was felt that Competent Authority and Local Authority were supporting the project, and because the EIA study was funded by the developer.

The EIA report was used as an “a posteriori negotiation tool”: it allowed to mitigate as much impacts as possible (the ones that could still be mitigated without questioning the proposed project) and to find a solution more acceptable for everyone. But as a consequence, the social acceptance of the project remains “borderline”.

The different stakeholders’ definition and identification of the quarter’s cultural heritage values likely to be threatened by the station project are quite different, and much larger than the ones

made in the EIA report: the value of the urban fragment as a whole (coherence, homogeneity, structure…) is the more frequently mentioned both by experts and the public, the socio-cultural life is also often mentioned as a heritage to preserve, the actual station is rarely appreciated by the public but only by experts (mentioned in the Monuments inventory of Wallonian Region), the future station of Calatrava is broadly recognised as future cultural heritage (only some experts are more doubtful: question of fashion), experts mention that there are not a lot of monumental designated elements in the quarter, some experts are embarrassed with the quarter’s heritage values.

Some decision-makers and experts consider that the Calatrava’s station value justifies environmental impacts on the quarter, when most of the interviewees consider that Calatrava just failed to integrate its station within the quarter. Now that the station is under construction, the necessary level of adaptation of the quarter still raises controversy: limiting impacts as much as possible, or intensively expropriate to create an “appropriate” place in front of the station. The second solution has been chosen, but the controversy is latent.

From these observations, thirteen recommendations have been highlighted, which are to be integrated in the SUIT final guideline (task 3.6):

1) To adopt a steered approach, from the most strategic decisions to the finest project level of decision;
2) To further involve the public at strategic stages;
3) To use visualisation techniques, particularly for strategic stages;
4) To reach a broad consensus (based on SEA when necessary) before going to the lower level of decision;
5) To make a deeper risk analysis at screening stage (including the risk of public controversy) and a more consistent justification of the screening decision;
6) To improve the public information about the decision-making procedure in itself, and not only about the project;
7) To promote a collaborative definition of the alternatives (involving decision-makers, environmental experts, developer, stakeholders, and the public concerned);
8) To promote the organisation of the EA process by an independent body;
9) To carry out the screening at an earlier stage of the plan/project definition;
10) To consider that the proposed plan/project is one alternatives amongst others;
11) To make the different alternatives evolve in parallel (alternatives assessed must be equally developed);
12) To integrate the needs and requirements of all the parties since the early beginnings of the plan/project definition process (EA process to be used as a definition tool and not as an a posteriori rapid examination);
13) To involve all types of actors in the definition/identification of the heritage values (screening and scoping stages), experts and lay people’s points of view being complementary (the only consideration of the heritage by designation is not sufficient).