

## **Subtheme 7: Conservation and development**

### **Biodiversity protection versus economic exploitation: landscape value as base of the recovery process of the ancient mine site of Martinet.**

From coal extraction mines to steel industries the Wallonia landscape reveals how the industrial production has marked the transformation of this territory. The deindustrialisation phenomenon has left a huge number of derelict lands, waiting for a new identity. The debate on territorial reuse generates conflicts between citizens, public government and the industrial companies, defending different values in the recovery process.

The case of Martinet represents a virtuous example of bottom-up reclaim strategy based on the recognition of landscape value as an evolving factor of the industrial site.

Since the cessation of the coal extraction activity in 1969, the site of Martinet (Charleroi, Belgium) has been transformed by a spontaneous recolonisation process who turned its two *terrils* into wooden hills. By walking on the *terrils* people rediscovered new qualities of the site as it became progressively a space of biodiversity, a landmark in their territory, a green reserve in town, perceiving it as a "common good". During the '80s, as an industrial company tried to acquire the site in order to exploit the residual coal, the inhabitants of Martinet strongly opposed to face the risk of the disappearance of their "little Amazonia". They defended the environmental and landscape values of the site against the mere economic opportunity. The regional protection act, in 1995, marked the beginning of a new phase in the life of the site of Martinet. The integration within a pedestrian path network, the restoration of industrial structures to host cultural and new productive activities, the experimental phytoremediation plantation are expressions of a new vision of the site, based on the reconciliation of the memory of a cultural landscape and its reuse potential.

The paper explores how informal practices and co-productive design provided a landscape based renewal of the industrial site where conservation (of nature) has been the first step towards a development process oriented to give a new identity to the site.