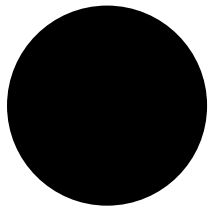


"EKO-HUBS, SPACES FOR ECO-INNOVATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY", THE NORDIC EXPERIENCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PARKS

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The Circular Economy is the current icon of the ecological and energy transition of the business and industrial fabric. The adoption of the Circular Economy happens because the productive and consumer fabric as a whole move towards a circular model. It is not just a matter of that companies, individually, adopt business practices and models in isolation. Greater opportunities arise by working collaboratively in companies of the same business park and also extending this process cooperative to the relationship between nearby business parks geographically.

An effective and innovative tool in itself itself is to provide each business park with a platform of services and management capable of extending processes of industrial symbiosis and other circular economy practices in their functional environment and also articulate practices at a regional level through networking with other nodes equivalent in as many business and industrial estates. These platforms we call them *"Eko-Hubs, Spaces for Eco-Innovation and Development of the Circular Economy"*.

Let's see what these platforms are up to.

For this we are inspired by successful experiences implemented in environments reference. It is nothing new to see the countries of northern Europe leading the ecological transition and being able to unite the promotion economically caring for the environment in an almost idyllic way. It's been years managing their business parks in a sustainable key. On this topic of Circular Economy and its support tools are back on the scene. Is the case, for example, of the technology park [Kemin Digipolis](#) in Finland where a type of [platforms have been launched of innovation in industrial circular economy](#) in this line and seem to have given with an adequate model to manage industrial parks from the Sustainability and the circular economy. The goal of the initiative goes beyond of a single industrial park, and it is sought that the project scales throughout throughout the territory to achieve a connected national network of EcoParques Industriales that promotes a truly circular economy.

These eco-innovation platforms are materialize in the form of multipurpose spaces for business development and incubation of circular projects in the different industrial parks. The The idea is that there is a platform for each business park (or each district business or group of parks) but interconnected with each other, maintaining their autonomy while taking advantage of synergies and avoiding duplication.

But... what exactly do these eko-hubs do?

The **eko-hubs serve as catalysts for collaborative practices between agents in the environment.** They bring together scientific-technological entities, vocational or university training centers in the area, companies from the business park and the public agents involved. Its main activities cover issues such as:

BUSINESS TRAINING AND TRAINING: hubs can train and train companies in the estates in Circular Economy (ecodesign, servitization, etc.)

INCUBATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: The hubs can house 3-4 startups that work on the development of innovative technologies on the most representative materials and processes of each park (improvements in designs, remanufacturing techniques, upcycling etc).

COLLABORATIVE EQUIPMENT: Identify necessary machinery for a group of companies and encourage its collaborative use. In addition, having a shared laboratory where to carry out R&D projects, test technologies and even expand production to scale.

REUSE/RECYCLING: they can generate common databases on the production processes of the different companies located in the industrial estates and try to find synergies between the outputs and the inputs used, to recycle and/or reuse as much waste as possible. These practices can be scalable to sets of polygons within the same territory, always seeking to minimize environmental impact.

USE OF DISUSED SPACES: Once the initiative has sufficient content and depth, these dynamics can be used to put industrial spaces into disuse from which to boost these projects.

This whole process can sound very ambitious and even overwhelm the agents responsible for setting it up in our environment. The truth is that it must be carried out in stages. Start with a germ that evolves. That germ goes through starting to manage business parks as an intervention unit with a strategic vision beyond the purely urban sphere, land management or licensing procedures. In the same way that residential districts, the old quarters of our cities or natural spaces are endowed with governance, planning, a vision, equipment and management mechanisms, industrial and business parks also need to be articulated strategically.

A key aspect is public-private governance.

Have a management body made up of the most representative agents of the corresponding zones (scientific-technological ecosystem, universities, large companies, clusters, etc.) that allows it to be articulated both operationally as financially it is a good starting point. These management bodies should start by mobilizing existing capacities and infrastructure and From there, define the specific strategic path of the business park or industrial Estate.

Ultimately, the eko-hubs will be the responsible for conceiving industrial estates as living agents that need equipment, services and solutions designed through lenses multifocal aspects of the environment, competitiveness and innovation.

But... why do northern European countries

Are they capable of leading these types of initiatives?

One of the key factors in this entire process is having a robust innovation and sustainability ecosystem and a multilevel governance model that supports and drives the different ecosystems necessary to carry out these transformations. The Basque Country, due to its characteristics, bears certain similarities with the industrial distribution of these countries: small industrial parks that are relatively close to each other and with great potential to take advantage of synergies; a well-articulated scientific-technological system; a network of competitive educational centers distributed in oil stains throughout the country; and a public administration concerned with providing value solutions to its business fabric. It may be worth giving these collaborative platforms a thought and promoting the circular economy process in our environment with the implementation of these collaborative spaces for eco-innovation or Eko-Hubs.

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