BRUSSELS' RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS AND LIFE PERSPECTIVES

A multidisciplinary inquiry into housing aspirations and perceptions of living conditions in the Brussels Capital Region

Schillebeeckx, E. & De Decker, P. (P.PUL, KU Leuven)

Verhoest, P. & Bauwens, J. (CEMESO, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Sansen, J. & Ryckewaert, M. (Cosmopolis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

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KU LEUVEN VUB VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

Abstract.

This report presents the results of the B-REL research project. Starting from the observation that the negative internal migration balance for the middle- and higher income groups remains one of the main policy concerns of the Brussels Capital Region, the aim of the B-REL project was to analyse the housing aspirations and perceptions of living conditions of these social groups in Brussels. By using different research methods (such as perception and content analysis, in-depth interviews and a comparative study of urban housing projects in Brussels and abroad) this report unravels the complex interaction between (1) profiles of relocating households, (2) the residential environment, and (3) perceptions. Our findings suggest first of all that beliefs about Brussels are both mediated by people's affinity with the city and resonate with ingrained urban and anti-urban ideologies. Secondly, people's housing aspirations are the result of a complex interplay between the individual housing pathway, factors related to work and family, and socio-cultural and ideological values. From this, 10 ideal-typical profiles of relocating households were constructed. Thirdly, there is a mismatch between prevailing housing preferences and the dominant mode of housing production in Brussels, contributing to the emigration of certain groups of households. Newly built housing should therefore reflect the diversity on the demand side. The report concludes with recommendations for policy and place marketing purposes.

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About the authors.

| ***Elise Schillebeeckx*** and ***Pascal De Decker*** are affiliated with the research group P.PUL (Planning for People, Urbanity and Landscape), Faculty of Architecture, KU Leuven, Belgium.

| ***Joren Sansen*** and ***Michael Ryckewaert*** are affiliated with the research group Cosmopolis, Department of Geography, VUB

| ***Pascal Verhoest*** and ***Joke Bauwens*** are affiliated with the research group CEMESO (Culture, Emancipation, Media and Society), VUB

| Corresponding author: Elise Schillebeeckx (elise.schillebeeckx@kuleuven.be)

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1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | PROJECT RATIONALE

The continuing negative internal migration balance for the middle- and higher income groups remains one of the main policy concerns of the Brussels Capital Region (De Maesschalck et al., 2015; Pelfrene, 2015; Surkyn & Willaert, 2019), although some comments can be made here (see Box 1 below).* Literature on the migration dynamics between Brussels** and its wider region is quite extensive (De Maesschalck et al., 2014, 2015; Dessouroux et al., 2016; De Laet, 2018). However, the underlying causes, motives, and push- and pull factors behind these residential dynamics in the wider Brussels region remain underexplored. The overall aim of the B-REL research project was to map out the conditions that explain why people decide to move to or away from Brussels, or why they decide to stay. The project departed from three research questions:

1 | What are the perceptions of Brussels as a residential area, both amongst the public and in the press?

2 | What are the socio-economic and cultural profiles of entrants, stayers, and leavers?

3 | What are the characteristics of the built environment, housing stock and potentially available dwelling environments in the Brussels Capital Region?

Based on an interdisciplinary approach, the findings presented in this report provide insight in the following matters: What are the housing needs and future housing plans of people living in Brussels? Does their current housing situation correspond to their housing needs? Which demands do they make on their living environment? Did they have to make sacrifices or compromises? What is the influence of work, family, and past housing experiences on their housing aspirations? Where do people place Brussels on their individual housing trajectory? How is Brussels perceived as a living environment? What role do news media play in this? What housing is produced in Brussels and does it correspond to the needs?

1.2 | FIVE ELEMENTS OF RESIDENTIAL CHOICE

Every day multiple housing decisions are taken. This includes choices concerning housing tenure (building; buying; renting), housing type (single family house; apartment; studio) or location (city; countryside; suburb). These apparently simple decisions hide a wide range of options. Income, household type, career, school quality and location, all play an import role. Fact is that the overall implication of this multiplicity of choices is not geographically neutral. The housing market is not only a social, but also a spatial distribution mechanism (Pahl, 1975), since different housing submarkets are unequally distributed across the territory (see for Brussels: Sansen & Ryckewaert, 2017).

Given that housing patterns are geographically persistent, it is vital to examine the interaction of factors that lie at the core of people's decisions to relocate. What motivates people to move to Brussels? Is it a mainly rational, work-related decision? Or is it the urban, liberal atmosphere and the international allure that attracts? And, conversely, what drives people out of the city? Is it mainly the rising housing costs, the lack of single-family houses with a private garden and the traffic congestions? What motivates the largest group of movers, those that exchange one Brussels' neighbourhood for another? Is the perception and image of Brussels as a living environment really that bad?

While the literature on push- and pull factors is quite extensive (Cadwallader, 1992; Van der Gaag et al., 2000; De Decker et al., 2019), the focus is predominantly on characteristics of the arrival and departure areas (such as work opportunities and living environment). With this project we address five important elements that remain underexplored and disconnected in the academic literature on residential dynamics.

** While this urban exodus and the associated erosion of the region's fiscal basis was the main starting point of the B-REL project, the research projects Bruxodus and Résibru, that are also part of the Anticipate program of Innoviris 2017-2020, have clearly demonstrated that this starting point is more complex than initially anticipated.*

*** In this report, 'Brussels' is used to describe the entire Brussels Capital Region. When we talk about the municipality of Brussels, we always refer to 'Brussels city'.*

1.2.1 | The expressive dimension of housing

As mentioned by De Wijs-Mulckens (1999), a first element that needs more research is the link between the living environment and the socio-economic characteristics and life perspectives of relocating households. Overall, there is too little attention for the expressive dimension of housing. Housing is a statement (Montijn, 1999) that "sends strong social messages" (Rowlands & Gurney, 2000: 126). The same can be said about the location of housing. The neighbourhood and its reputation can also be seen as an expression of social status, or lack thereof. Housing, neighbourhoods, and municipalities are bearers of an expressive repertoire that people use to distinguish themselves. The famous sociologist Bourdieu (1979) argued that people with a lot of 'cultural capital' (highly educated, active in artistic or creative professions) systematically show their cognitive and artistic

Box 1 | A note on the importance of social mix for Brussels

This project is born out of a call by Innoviris voicing the concern of policy makers over the outward migration of middle class inhabitants and its negative effects on the city's tax revenues. The assumption seems to be supported by research (see e.g. De Maesschalck et. al., 2015) which convincingly shows that Brussels is becoming poorer in terms of income per capita in comparison to its periphery. This can be explained by a combination of outbound migration of high-income groups and inbound migration of low-income groups. The problem with this kind of research is that it is relative. It does not demonstrate a net decline of income per capita, nor does it allow to conclusively determine that the observed relative decline can be attributed to the middle classes. The research projects Bruxodus and Résibru suggest more complicated patterns of inbound, outbound, and local urban migration.

In addition, the exact fiscal implications of the migratory movements of the last decades for Brussels remain unclear. For lack of precise data, the official welfare index of Belgium may be used as an indication. According to this index, the Brussels Capital Region is at 78.4 in comparison of 107.1 for the Flemish Region and 94.3 for the Walloon Region. Only 4 out of the 19 Brussels municipalities have a score above 100, which is the Belgian median (BISA, 2020). In addition, recent international comparisons of Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, and Oslo show that Brussels not only has the highest proportion of low-income and high-income groups of all four cities, but also has (on average) the lowest level of social mix per neighbourhood (Haandrikman et.al., 2019). In Brussels, high-income and low-income groups tend to be concentrated in distinct municipalities, indicating an increasingly dual and polarized city. It may thus be concluded that Brussels has a relative middle class problem, both in terms of revenue as in terms of social mix, when compared to both neighbouring municipalities and other European metropoles.

This also means that, while we agree with the underlying research aim, as formulated by the funding organisation Innoviris (i.e. the attraction of more affluent households to counterbalance the fiscal erosion of the Brussels' tax base), we also deem it necessary to provide sufficient affordable housing for the lower and middle-income groups and to address the increasing inequality within the Brussels Capital Region. This belief is motivated by different arguments, of which we will name three.

First of all, different authors argue in favour of more equal societies and this not only due to moral or ethical reasons but also due to its beneficial effects on many societal and health outcomes (see e.g. Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). While some of these studies have been criticized on methodological grounds (Rambotti, 2015), it is hard to argue against a more equal and cohesive community.

Secondly, in order to avoid an urban housing market that becomes inaccessible for key workers such as teachers or health care professions (as is the case in London or Cambridge, see Morrison, 2003; Raco, 2008) it is important that the Brussels housing market also provides sufficient affordable housing for the lower and middle-income groups.

Thirdly, while urban segregation and the concentration of poverty in so-called ghettos is widely problematized, the segregation of the wealthy and rich is rarely looked upon as being dysfunctional (Howell, 2019). This analytical bias unintentionally minimizes "the role that advantaged neighbourhoods play in producing and perpetuating regional inequality" (Goetz et al., 2020: 1). Brussels should thus not only avoid the emergence of "islands of decay" (Wyly & Hammel, 1999: 715), but also of entire neighbourhoods that are only accessible for the happy few.

skills and assets through the consumption of 'alternative', unconventional goods. This also encompasses 'housing' in the broadest sense of the word (Bourdieu, 1999), e.g. renting a loft or starting a co-housing project. Bourdieu also found that people with a lot of 'economic capital' show their wealth through the consumption and display of luxury goods. They are more inclined to show off wealth through conspicuous consumption, for example by building or purchasing a large villa on a large plot of land in a well-known wealthy neighbourhood (Wagenaar, 2006 - after Veblen, 1899).

1.2.2 | Household differentiation

A second element that is still largely overlooked in the literature is the diversity amongst middle class households. Although socio-economic conditions exert a strong influence on residential mobility, research often underestimates the internal differentiation within the group of relocating households (Metaal, 2007). There is no such a thing as a 'standard middle class family' with a 'standardized residential pattern' (Meeus & De Decker, 2013). Within homogeneous socio-economic groups, housing needs and aspirations may differ according to the current life cycle of households, their lifestyle, cultural preferences, or past housing experiences.

1.2.3 | Perceptions

A third element that is often ignored in the study of residential dynamics is the impact of existing images, stereotypes, and perceptions. The non-linear correlation between cultural preferences, socio-economic conditions, life cycle and living environments, on the one hand, and spatial patterns on the other hand*, urges for a more complex view on people's housing and moving aspirations that includes cultural biases and perceptions. Inspiration for this line of research can be found, for example, in the strand of literature inspired by Lynch's canonical work 'The Image of the City' (1960), that investigates how residents and non-residents perceive cities and urban life. Research shows that perception is an important mediating variable that helps to understand and explain why people decide to leave, to stay in or move to residential areas (Tsfati & Cohen, 2003; Cantrill et al., 2007).

1.2.4 | Spatial differentiation of housing environments

Residential dynamics are also constrained by the spatial characteristics and differentiation of the available housing environments. Staying in or moving to cities is determined by the housing offer available and the extent to which this offer corresponds to housing preferences. Very often, this dimension is reduced to ideal-typical environments and typologies ('the suburban villa' versus 'the urban apartment') leading to ill-advised policies, such as creating an offer of urban individual housing or large apartments adapted to household sizes of families with children. In reality, the typological and morphological variation is much greater than the basic distinctions between the (semi-)detached, terraced single-family house, apartment, studio, or loft.

1.2.5 | Development mode of housing projects

This spatial differentiation of housing environments goes hand in hand with the modes of housing production. This can vary widely in terms of housing policy and zoning regulations as well as resident involvement in the production process of housing. The latter determines to what extent (future) residents are able to shape their own dwelling environment in accordance with their social status and their perception of quality living environments

1.3 | INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Taking these five missing elements into account, the B-REL research project has drawn on various disciplines to look at the interaction between household characteristics (such as socio-economic status, household composition, life cycle stage), the reality of the available housing stock and the impact of existing stereotypes and perceptions. Insights from communication studies, urban sociology, geography, architecture, and urban planning were brought together. Different methods such as perception analysis, content analysis, cluster analysis, in-depth interviews, and case studies were combined. For a more detailed discussion of the literature, theory, data, and methods, we refer to the individual reports.**

** See also the reports of the research projects Bruxodus and Résibru, both of which are also financed by Innoviris under the Anticipate 2017-2020 programme.*

*** For the literature review and quantitative analysis, see Sansen & Ryckewaert (2017). For the report on characteristics of dwelling environments, we refer to Sansen & Ryckewaert (2020). For the report on the perception analysis, see Verhoest, Bauwens & te Braak (2020). For the content analysis of press narratives, we refer to Bauwens, Verhoest & te Braak (2020). For the methodological paper on the in-depth interviews see Schillebeeckx & De Decker (2018). For the report on the results of the in-depth interviews we refer to Schillebeeckx & De Decker (2020).*

This final summary report is structured as follows. We first present the synthesis of the main research results and discuss the relationships between the three building blocks of our project: (1) perceptions, (2) housing aspirations, and (3) available and prospective residential environments. The next part is concerned with the policy recommendations. The report concludes with suggestions for further research. Two tension fields emerged out of the data and are the common thread in this report, i.e.: the tension between 'fearism' and 'cosmopolitanism' on the one hand and between 'metropolitanism' and 'arcadianism' on the other (see Box 2 in § 2.1.4. for the definition of these terms).

2 | MAIN FINDINGS

In this section, we summarize consecutively the main results of the three levels of analysis used in the B-REL project.

1 | People's perceptions on Brussels as a place to live. Brussels as a place to live has been suffering from a negative image. Media imagery and deeply ingrained public perceptions play an important part in this. Against this backdrop, we seek to answer two complementary research questions: How is Brussels represented in the press and how do these perceptions resonate with the audience?

2 | People's lived experiences and housing aspirations. When studying households' residential choices, factors at the micro-level such as the expressive dimension of housing or a person's ideology, attitudes and lifestyle are often overlooked. In this context, we look for different ideal-typical profiles of households moving to, within or away from Brussels, thereby paying attention to the question how housing aspirations and motivations of households relate to the life cycle and lifestyle or taste.

3 | The use and experience of the built environment related to the available housing models and formats. Here, answers are sought to the following questions: What are the characteristics of the recently developed housing projects in Brussels? Do they match prevailing housing preferences? And what lessons can be learned from successful foreign urban housing solutions?

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2.1 | PERCEPTIONS AND MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

2.1.1 | Research set-up

The implicit assumption of content analysis generally is that newspaper content will be perceived by recipients as intended by journalists. Content analysis, in that sense, ignores that audiences may decode media messages in very different ways, depending on their own life experience and social backgrounds. In this content analysis, we therefore inverted the research question, by first asking the question: What can recipients read into the press? This was done by making up a coding system that was composed of concepts drawn from a perception analysis of 180 'Belgo-Belgians' (Belgians with Belgian ancestors; see Jacobs & Rea, 2007) about Brussels as a place to live. The results of this analysis are discussed in the first main section.

Next, we conducted a content analysis of 400 newspaper articles in the French-speaking press and an equal amount in the Dutch-speaking press. Within each language community, two leading highbrow newspapers were examined (De Morgen, De Standaard, La Libre Belgique and Le Soir). In the low-brow segment a Dutch-speaking and French-speaking regionally oriented newspaper (Het Nieuwsblad and L'Avenir) were chosen, along with the most popular Dutch-speaking and French-speaking newspapers (Het Laatste Nieuws and La Dernière Heure). Given our interest in larger trends, newspapers published in four different years were selected, spread over seven years in total (2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017). The results of the content analysis are discussed in the second section.

2.1.2 | Perception analysis

Through an elicitation test (Cacioppo et al., 1997) we collected among three groups of people the spontaneous concepts (i.e. thoughts, associations, feelings, etc.) that the idea of 'living in Brussels' triggered. We decided to select respondents from the target group of so-called Belgo-Belgians, being aware that the sample does not reflect the cultural diversity of the Belgian population. The sample comprised 60 residents of Brussels, 60 commuters and 60 non-residents who both live and work outside Brussels. A two-step clustering method was applied to these concepts. The clusters that were found hint at the existence of different perceptions.

The perception of non-residents. The clustering exercise divided the sample into two approximately equal groups: one with a negative perception of Brussels as a living environment and the other with a positive perception (see Figure 1). The positive cluster views Brussels as a lively, eventful city with many leisure opportunities, nice cafés and restaurants, and a rich artistic and cultural life. The negative cluster finds Brussels to be an overly busy, even chaotic city, largely overcrowded and with a lack of green space.

The findings show a clear-cut demarcation line between those who prefer the city as a metropolitan locus of opportunities and excitement, a place where everything is happening (i.e., leisure, pubs and restaurants, arts, and culture, lively, animations), on the one hand, and those with an Arcadian preference for quiet, orderly, and 'bucolic' living environments, on the other hand. This tension field between metropolitanism and arcadianism expresses people's inclination for a more urban or rural living environment and lifestyle (see further, Box 2).

Importantly, in both clusters there is a fear for the multicultural character of Brussels and for the lack of safety and high crime rates in the city. This is significantly different in the two other subsamples.

The perception of commuters. In this group the polarization between a negative, arcadian cluster, and a positive metropolitan perception of Brussels reappears (see Figure 2), but there are three noteworthy differences.

First of all, the perceptions of the commuters appear to be much more shaped by the day-to-day experience of the city than that of people who neither live nor work in the city. Commuters are indeed much more likely to be confronted with the most hectic zones of the daily flux of city life, given the location of many businesses and administrations in Brussels and their specific and actual commuting trajectories. Their selective experience of the city seems to reinforce the anti-urban, arcadian cultural schemes on city life. The negative cluster is indeed much larger among commuters than among non-residents. Compared to non-residents, its size increases from half of the sample up to two-thirds of it.

Secondly, participants from the negative cluster do not mention proximity as an advantage of living in Brussels. This is somehow surprising since these participants may be assumed to spend substantial amounts of time in traffic jams

Figure 1 | Perception of non-residents

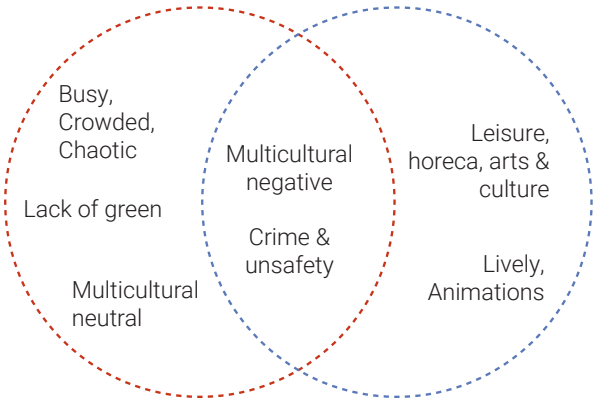


Figure 2 | Perception of commuters

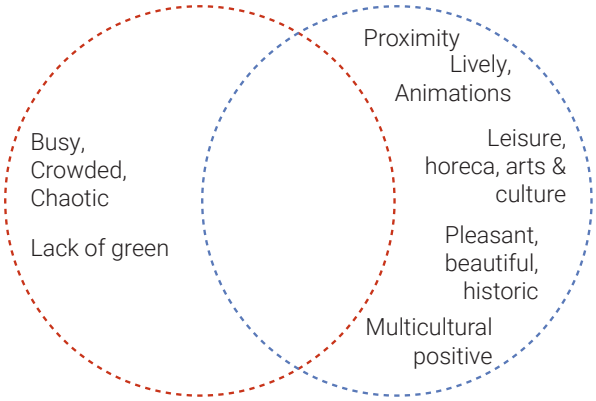
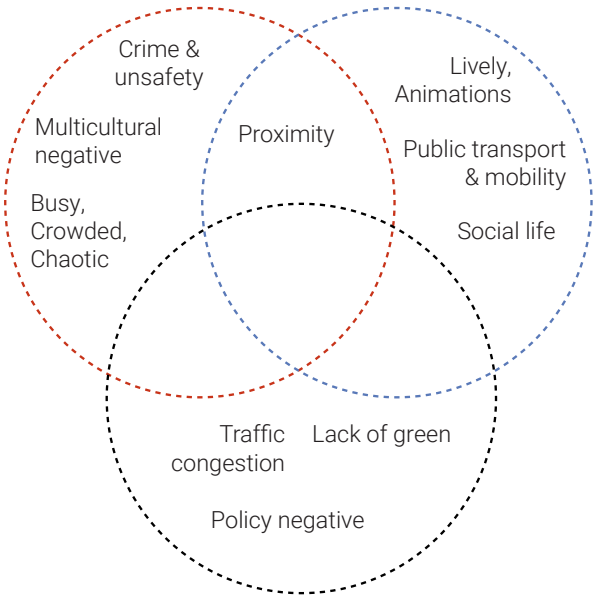


Figure 3 | Perception of Brussels residents



or on delayed trains. In the positive cluster, however, the argument of proximity is the single most appreciated element.

Thirdly, in the positive cluster multiculturality appears as a positive trait of the city. In the analysis of the non-residents fear of crime and xenophobia are common traits of both the arcadian and metropolitan clusters. This is indicative of a new tension field that also transpires in the analysis of the Brussels residents, along with the influences of lived realities.

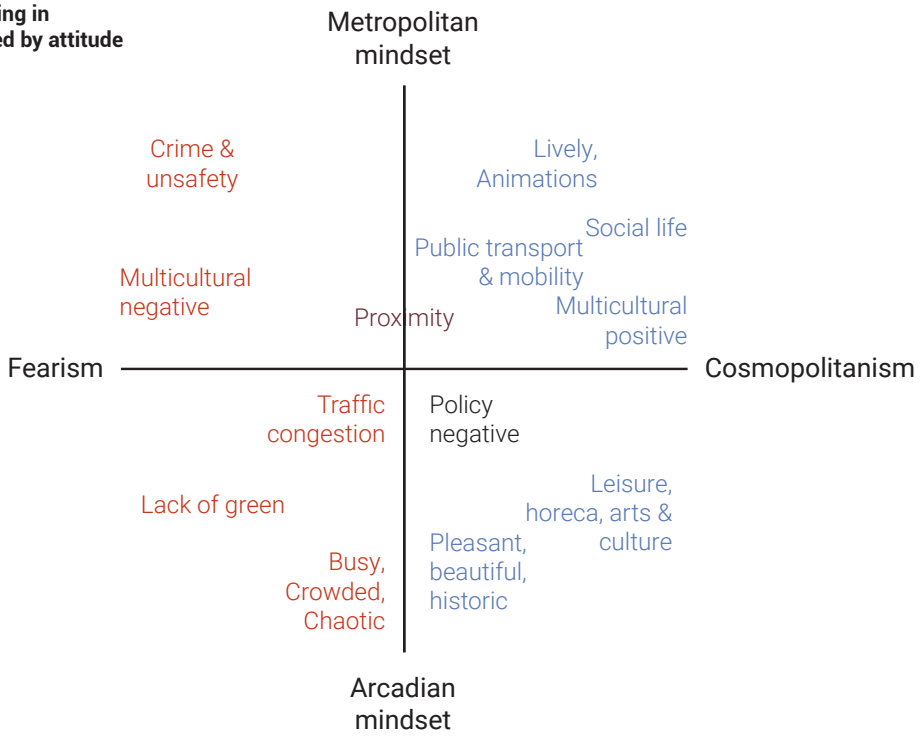
The perception of residents. In this group three clusters are found (see Figure 3). The first cluster are residents who show appreciation for Brussels as a pleasant city, with a valuable historical heritage. They see Brussels as a city of amenities but also resent the chaos and the crowdedness of the metropolis. In that respect, this cluster is not so different from the prevalently negative clusters in the two other subsamples. A substantial number of people in this cluster also dislikes the multicultural character of the city and expresses explicit concerns with regard to crime and safety.

The second cluster also shows a moderately negative perception. It differs from the first, more outspoken negative one in that it is less concerned with multiculturality, crime and safety, and hints more toward the quality of city life by expressing concerns pertaining to traffic congestion and lack of green space. A new concept emerges from this cluster that does not appear in any other subsample; namely, a negative evaluation of policy. Along with the other concepts in this cluster, the emergence of policy as a negative characteristic of the city suggests that this sample is much more influenced by lived experience than by persistent anti-urban and pro-urban narratives.

The third cluster is a very positive one. People with these perceptions consider the proximity of various amenities and the availability of public transport as a major asset of living in the city. They mostly appreciate the lively character of the city, in conjunction with its pleasant and historic decorum. Although this cluster is not so different from the positive clusters in the other two subsamples, a new significant concept appears, which is unique for this cluster: an outspoken appreciation of the social life of the city.

Thus, alongside the appearance of a third, more moderate, experience-based cluster, an ideological polarization of attitudes on multiculturality and social life comes to the surface in the positive and negative cluster. This points at a second tension field, namely: fearism as opposed to cosmopolitanism (see Figure 4 and see also further Box 2), articulating different dispositions towards the global risk society.

Figure 4 | Perception of 'living in Brussels' tentatively ordered by attitude



2.1.3 | Content analysis of press narratives

The content analysis was based on a list of concepts gathered through an elicitation test of people's perception of Brussels as a place to live. The concepts that were used by more than 10% of the respondents are shown in Figure 4. A two-step cluster analysis was subsequently performed to find out which concepts were part of the same press narrative. Given the different affinity of the Dutch- and French-speaking community with Brussels, two separate cluster analyses were performed, one for the Dutch-speaking and one for the French-speaking press. Clustering allowed to uncover relationships between the distinct themes found in the press articles. The cluster analysis showed that there are five larger narratives that Belgian newspapers articulate on life in Brussels (see Figure 5 and Figure 6). The first three are found both in the Dutch- and French-speaking press. The last two only in the French-speaking press.

Brussels as a locus of unsafety, risk, and danger. This cluster obviously represents the most negative narrative about Brussels. By focusing on themes such as crime, terrorism, poverty and by discussing multiculturalism in terms of disadvantage and risk, these news narratives on Brussels may be said to contribute to anti-urban ideology. This narrative constructs an image of Brussels as a disordered place that needs to be purified and controlled.

Brussels as locus of urban hedonism. This is the main counter-narrative. It shows Brussels as a source of pleasure and goes against the classic clichés of urban doom. However, it does not really add to a conception of Brussels as a community of citizens, neighbours and urbanites that show commitment to their dwelling place. Rather, it reduces Brussels to a place of enjoyment and distraction. In that way, Dutch-speaking newspapers in particular, paint Brussels as a place that is both attracting and threatening.

Brussels' heterogeneity and how to govern it. In comparison with the previous clusters, this narrative offers a more nuanced account. It is an account that problematizes the city's growing heterogeneity and the tensions and conflicts that come with it, but also pays attention to governance, both in terms of threats and opportunities.

Figure 5 | Dutch-speaking press narratives on living in Brussels

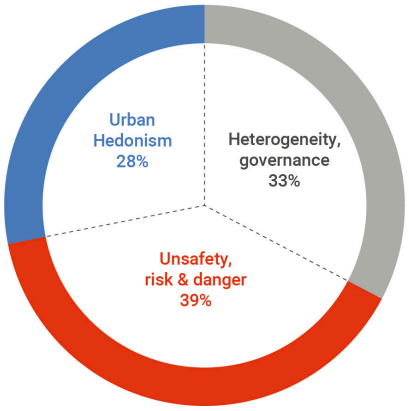
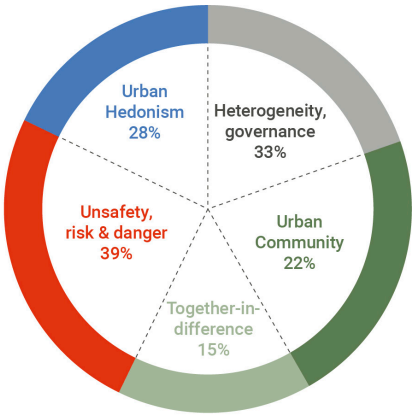


Figure 6 | French-speaking press narratives on living in Brussels



Brussels as an urban community. This news narrative stresses the close-knit social fabric and feel of everyday life in Brussels. With descriptions of Brussels as a pleasant dwelling environment with a nice atmosphere, a warm social character, supported by local citizen and neighbourhood initiatives, Brussels emerges from this narrative as a social community.

Brussels as togetherness-in-difference. This cluster shows a news narrative that is concerned about the challenges that Brussels is facing in terms of poverty and cultural diversity, but unlike the third narrative, policy initiatives are here mainly discussed in positive terms. This press narrative projects a more hopeful image of urban diversity, in terms of social fabric and community.

Both the positive and negative press narratives can be traced in popular perceptions. The comparison of narratives and perceptions shows that the positive and negative narratives of the press largely coincide with the positive and negative perceptions of the public. It theoretically follows that the press, in particular the Dutch-speaking, reinforces the polarization of opinions that already exist in the public. The reverse mechanism may also hold. Since the press is generally sensitive to their audiences, they may be tempted to produce these positive and negative narratives, knowing that they will resonate with their audience. In any event, one main effect is likely to be the (mutual) consolidation or even the reinforcement of the existing polarization.

When it comes to the differences in the diversity of press narratives, the French-speaking press is more diverse than the Dutch-speaking. The French-speaking press pays considerably more attention to the social fabric of city life. This transpires both in the fourth and fifth narrative, which are clusters that are significant in the French-speaking press, but marginal in the Dutch-speaking. Compared with what we found in the perception analysis, the French-speaking press thus resonates relatively better with the perceptions of Brussels inhabitants ('policy negative' and 'social life') than with the perception of commuters and non-residents. The French-speaking press is physically and culturally more in touch with Brussels and it may have greater commercial incentives to please its audience than the Dutch-speaking press.

2.1.4 | Perceptions as policy pointers

The perception analysis revealed the concepts that most strongly resonate with people's underlying cognitive schemata about living in the city. These first-order associations do not relate to detailed objective and factual information, such as housing quality, rental price or living cost, but rather tap into different cultural schemes that shape the perception of Brussels as a place to live. If urban policy makers and place marketers want people to take Brussels into consideration as a living environment, this is the level of communication they should engage in. The positive concepts (or combination of concepts) in particular may serve as a mental entry point for more effective content of place marketing communication. The differences between perceptions, as expressed by different (combinations of) concepts, may thus be used by place marketers to frame their messages more effectively towards different target groups.

As follows from the cluster analysis, tension between metropolitanism vs. arcadianism and fearism vs. cosmopolitanism is mediated by people's experiences with Brussels. The perception of the non-residents neatly falls into the arcadian and metropolitan categories, but cannot be distinguished on the basis of fearism. The commuters equally split into an Arcadian and metropolitan category but while the arcadian cluster remains dubious about multiculturality, a significant part of the metropolitan one is outspokenly positive about it. For the residents, the ideological polarization of perceptions is most outspoken: arcadianism and fearism fall together in one perception, as well as metropolitanism and cosmopolitanism. Between these two poles, a middle cluster emerges, containing more nuanced, experience-based perceptions.

The bottom left quadrant in Figure 7 represents people who combine an arcadian disposition with a fear-motivated attitude towards living in Brussels and who may be regarded as the most difficult target group to reach. The first, persistent press narrative on Brussels as a locus of unsafety, risk and danger strongly resonates with the perceptions of this group of people. It is unlikely that any place marketing cam-

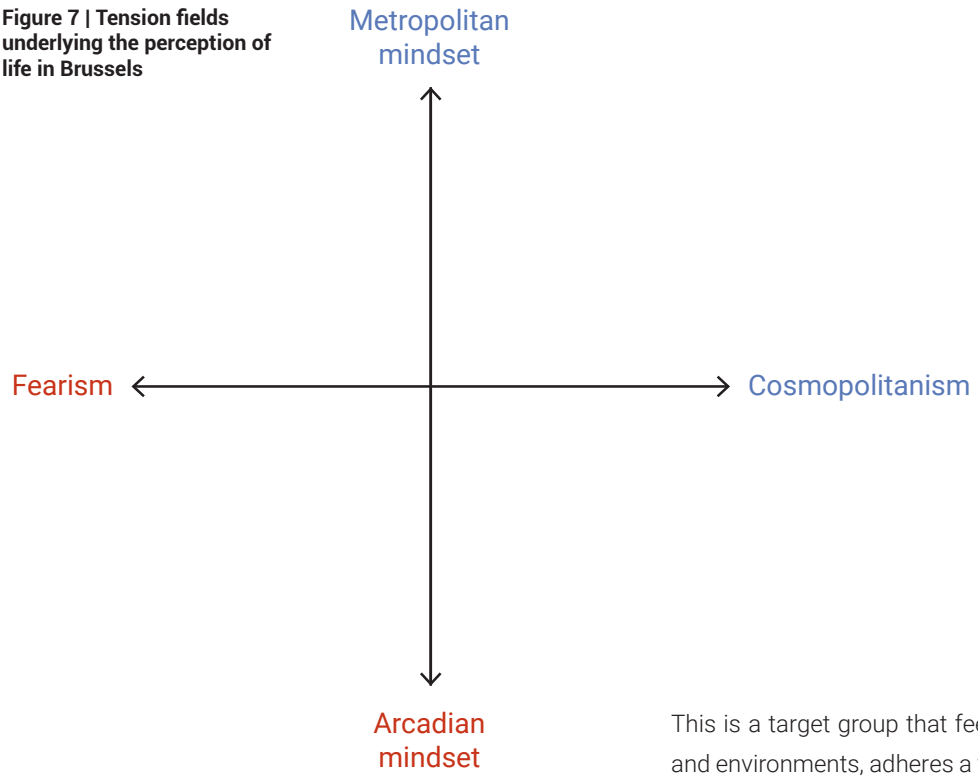
Box 2 | Tension fields

In order to differentiate these target groups and for policy purposes two major tension fields can be identified. The juxtaposition of both tension fields makes up a matrix of which each quadrant suggests different conclusions with regard to place marketing (see Figure 7).

The first tension field is that of metropolitanism versus arcadianism. Metropolitanism refers to a positive disposition to city life with its density, vitality, and diversity, whereas arcadianism refers to the rural and suburban promise of a peaceful, quiet, spacious, and simple family life as opposed to the accelerating, crowded, and hence, insecure world.

The second tension field is that of fearism as opposed to cosmopolitanism. The former relates to xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and fear of crime. The latter refers to the city as a potential space for tolerance, cultural exchange, liberality, and a source of civilizing stimulation.

Figure 7 | Tension fields underlying the perception of life in Brussels



paign may convince these people to settle in the city unless it is embedded in a radically re-structuring of the city's migration, economic, tax and social policies. Any place marketing campaign that aims to reach this group of people will also meet the huge task of defying the most persistent press narrative on Brussels.

In the top left quadrant, we encounter people who combine a fear-induced disposition towards Brussels with a metropolitan mindset. From a place marketing point of view, this target group seems easier to reach as it represents people who are open to the advantages of living in a metropolis. However, these people might be more sensitive to urban governance strategies that reduce crime, diminish social inequalities, and enhance the assets of living in Brussels in terms of amenities and services. The second most dominant press narrative on Brussels' heterogeneity and how to govern it clearly resonates with the perceptions of this group of people. For policy makers this might mean bringing the positive results of their decisions and actions more under the attention of the press.

The top right quadrant represents people with a metropolitan and cosmopolitan attitude. In the press, this group of people sees its perception of Brussels especially coming back in the narrative on Brussels as a locus of hedonism. This is a target group that feels attracted to urban lifestyles and environments, adheres a favourable ideology and imagery of cities and sees the density and diversity of the city as a transient source for personal development in terms of social life, career, creativity, etc. It may be assumed that Brussels and particularly the gentrifying, affordable areas of Brussels are likely to be an attractive dwelling place for many people in this quadrant. Policy makers and marketers can respond to the present but also the future expectations and aspirations of this group by stressing opportunities for personal and career development as well as social life.

The bottom right quadrant represents people who combine cosmopolitan attitudes with an arcadian mindset. These are people who may be considered ideologically attracted by the cultural diversity and openness of city environments, but (would) prefer to live in a more spacious, quiet, green, and clean environment, without the hectic of the city. For Brussels, this is likely an interesting target group, as it pertains to people who appreciate the city for its urban way of life on a human scale. Given the identity of Brussels as an international city composed of villages ('small world city'; see also Corijn & Vloeberghs, 2013), communicating messages that respond to this image should be a priority for Brussels place marketing as part of a larger urban governance strategy that is committed to substantially improve the eco-social quality of urban living. In the press, the narratives in the French-speaking press on urban community and togetherness-in-difference seem to resonate the most with the perceptions of this group of people.

2.2 | HOUSING PREFERENCES AND ASPIRATIONS

2.2.1 | Research set-up

In order to uncover and understand the motives of relocating households moving from, to or within Brussels and their opinions on Brussels as a residential area, we rely on data gathered through 153 in-depth interviews between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2019. The interviews were supplemented with the mapping of individual housing pathways, observations in the respondents' homes and visual material. This methodology allowed us to include the role of values, cultural preferences, and lifestyle. We focused on people that moved to, from or within the Brussels Capital Region in the past 10 years and also included households that are planning to relocate to Brussels in the near future. Table 1 gives an overview of our respondents according to relocation pattern and age; Table 2 summarizes some of the main characteristics of our respondents and their current housing situation. The geographical focus of the B-REL project was on a case study area which extends from the centre of Brussels in a radial north-western direction. This area includes Jette, Koekelberg, Brussels Centre, Ganshoren and Wemmel. In addition, we also conducted interviews in many other municipalities within and outside Brussels.*

Finally, to translate the findings from the interviews into concrete policy recommendations, a workshop with different societal stakeholders in Brussels was organized in February 2020, to discuss and review the results.

** For a geographical overview, see the more elaborated report on the B-REL interviews (Schillebeeckx & De Decker, 2020).*

Table 1 | Overview of respondents according to age group and relocation pattern

Age group	Moved to Brussels	Moved within Brussels	Moved from Brussels	Future residents Brussels	Total
Young Adulthood (18-35)	17	19	9	4	49
Middle adulthood (36-59)	15	43	12	3	73
Late adulthood (60-…)	9	7	13	2	31
Total	**41**	**69**	**34**	**9**	**153**

Table 2 | Socio-demographic and housing statistics of respondents

Gender	Male	42%
	Female	58%
Country of birth	Belgium	88%
	EU	7%
	non-EU	5%
Language interview*	Dutch	81%
	French	16%
	English	3%
Residence status	Owner	68%**
	Tenant	29%
	Other	3%
Number of residents	1	27%
	2	37%
	3	12%
	4	17%
	5+	7%
Housing typology	**Single-family housing**	**34%**
	Single-family house (detached)	7%
	Single-family house (semi-detached)	7%
	Single-family house (terraced)	20%
	Multi-family housing	**61%**
	Studio	2%
	Apartment (in building)	35%
	Apartment (in subdivided family house)	6%
	Apartment (unspecified)	7%
	Loft	11%
	Co-housing (shared flat or house)	**5%**
Education	Primary education	2%
	Secondary education	13%
	Higher vocational education	2%
	Bachelor	16%
	Master	61%
	PhD	2%
	Unknown	3%

** In most cases, respondents were interviewed in their mother tongue. When their native language was not Dutch or French, respondents could choose one of the two, or could express themselves in English.*

*** When compared to the Brussels' average of 40% in 2017 (see Kahane et.al. 2019) the share of home-owners amongst our respondents is very high (68%). However, this can be explained by (1) the target group of our research project (i.e. middle class); (2) the fact that 2 in 3 of our respondents is older than 35 (Kahane et. al., 2019); (3) the spatial focus of our research project on the north-western part of Brussels, where the share of home-owners has increased between 2016 and 2018 (Kahane et. al., 2019); and (4) the fact that we have also interviewed people that either left Brussels (and hence are not living in Brussels anymore) or plan to move to Brussels in the near future.*

2.2.2 | Profiles of relocating households

Brussels is a city that evokes mixed feelings and incites various narratives amongst its past, current, and future residents. While for some, the move towards Brussels symbolizes a deliberate rupture with the village of their youth, for others Brussels simply fits within their pursuit of a successful career. Some continued living in Brussels after finishing their studies, while others moved to Brussels for love or were on the lookout for a new adventure. Amongst the leavers we can identify households that had enough of Brussels' bad air quality, the chaotic and busy living environment, the complex policy structure, or the increasing diversity. But we also spoke with households that almost accidently left Brussels, simply because the house that fitted all their requirements was located in an adjacent municipality (in casu mostly in Wemmel). Behind all these seemingly straightforward reasons for relocating to, from or within the Brussels Capital Region hides a broad, intrinsically interwoven amalgam of motifs, housing aspirations, opinions, stages of life, etc. While this complexity can never be fully grasped, the analysis clearly reveals recurrent narratives emerging out of the rich interview data.

In total, 10 ideal-typical profiles can be tentatively distinguished upon the basis of the households' life course position, lifestyle, taste, and perceptions of urbanity in general and of the living conditions in Brussels in particular.* Table 3 presents a synthesis of the characteristics of these 10 profiles. It is important to note that in reality, many households will relate to more than one profile. Many individuals also shift from one profile to another during their life course.

The interviews gave us more insight into the different factors that explain why people switch profiles. While some of these factors are strongly linked to changes in lifestyle, socio-economic status or family composition, others are more related to characteristics of the housing market and living environment and to local policy making.

Finally, it should be noted that these 10 profiles only cover a small, particular segment of all potential households that live or have lived in Brussels. Low-income households or upper-income households were not included in our research project and the small share of non-EU citizens amongst our respondents does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the Brussels' society.

In what follows, the 10 different profiles will be briefly introduced.

Table 3 | Ideal-typical profiles of relocating households from, to or within Brussels and an indication of their characteristics

Profiles	Cultural capital	Economic capital	Value a diverse population	Value a green, quiet environment	Value a strong local community	Value proximity to work	Active citizenship	Residential mobility	Prefer single-family housing	Prefer multi-family housing
Cosmopolitans	++		++		+	++	+	++		
Urban elite	++	+			-	+		+		+
Born city dwellers			+		+	++		++		++
Converted					+	++	+		+	
Urban villagers	+	+		++	++		+	-	+	+
Disappointed	+				+		++			
Reluctant leavers	+	-/+			+			+	+	
Transients				+	-	++		+	+	
Classic suburbanites		+		++	+			-	++	
Anti-urbanists		+	--	++	++			-	++	

'++'= high score; '+' = medium score; '-' = low score: '--'= very low score; '-/+'= both high and low scores occur

** For a more detailed description of the profiles and the supporting literature, we refer to the full report on the interviews (see Schillebeeckx & De Decker, 2020).*

Cosmopolitans. This is a group that very deliberately chose to live in Brussels. Most of the households within this group have studied or worked abroad and felt that upon their return to Belgium they had no choice but to live in Brussels. For them, Brussel is the only Belgian city with a metropolitan and international character. They see the city as a source of diversity and this not only in terms of its inhabitants but also in terms of neighbourhoods and socio-cultural activities. Respondents within this group who have spent their childhood in a small rural or suburban town often indicate that they love the idea of building a new social network in Brussels, away from friends and family in their hometown.

They are often highly educated and portray significant levels of cultural capital. This not only manifests itself through their generally high share of cultural consumption and participation, but also through their attention for the architectural design of their rental home (in case of tenants) or the expressed wish to respect and preserve the original architectural elements in their home (in case of home-owners).

Cosmopolitans are proud urbanites and fiercely defend their choice for Brussels towards others, meanwhile often doubting the existence of a true, authentic Brussels identity. Respondents within this profile have an active social life and participate in many of the different activities that are organized in Brussels (or organise activities themselves).

Cosmopolitans with children are often strong advocates of raising children in an urban environment. They praise the diversity within the schools representing a genuine reflection of society. They also love the fact that children in the city can travel on their own to school or other activities from a relatively young age, thereby opposing themselves to more rural and suburban settings where parents are constantly playing taxi. Meanwhile, once children enter the equation, we see that many cosmopolitans tend to retreat more to the own neighbourhood, thereby moving more towards the profile of the 'urban villagers' (see further). This is especially true for the respondents living in Jette.

Concerning mobility, cosmopolitans generally use public transport or car sharing systems. They argue that Brussels has a lot of green places, which nonetheless often remain underexplored. Finally, within this group there is a strong awareness of the many difficulties Brussels is facing (such as high poverty rates, mobility issues and feelings of unsafety amongst women) and the difficult alignment of targeted policies due to a complex policy structure.

Urban elite. This is a group that stands out for its high level of cultural capital, often combined with important shares of economical capital. Respondents belonging to this group are often involved in arts, liberal professions or manage a business of their own. In this group as well, respondents participate to a large extent in the cultural life of the city and value the architectural qualities of their own housing unit. However, while cosmopolitans also consider the functionality and affordability of their interior design, the urban elite pays a lot of attention to aesthetics and design and is prepared to pay a higher price for this. When looking for a house, the determining factors are characteristics of the house, rather than characteristics of the neighbourhood.

Respondents belonging to the urban elite are very mobile within the city. Their focus is not on the neighbourhood itself, but more on the city as a whole. This being said, it is striking that most of the respondents belonging to this profile, live in, or close to, the city centre. Furthermore, this profile is very open to the diversity of Brussels in all its facets. They enjoy Brussels' multilingualism, its great diversity in cultural activities and associations, its international cuisine, and its many small entrepreneurs from all over the world.

Finally, one specific group within the profile of the urban elite are the so-called 'young elderly'. These are households that have recently retired (or are approaching retirement) and have exchanged their (often oversized) house in the countryside for a well-equipped apartment or loft with a large terrace in the city centre of Brussels. They are still very active and love Brussels for its rich cultural life and proximity to all services and amenities. This move towards the city is a very informed decision made in anticipation of future needs when turning older.

Born city dwellers. Households belonging to this group were born and raised in Brussels and have (in most cases) never lived anywhere else. They breathe the city and do not question its qualities as a living environment. The city is their natural habitat and they could not imagine living in a place where work, school, shops, and leisure possibilities are not all within reach. They almost always use public transport and are used to live in more dense, urban housing typologies (apartments, studios, …).

While some of them do cherish the dream of becoming a home-owner, others resolutely opt to rent stating that they do not want all the responsibilities and burdens associated with ownership. Linked to this, the average residential mobility within this profile is relatively high. Culturally, they often grew up with urban culture and art forms with a lot of international influences. The mix of cultures and languages in Brussels is taken for granted and they are often fluently bi- or multilingual themselves.

Converted. Converted households initially showed a much clearer match with other profiles. They either planned to stay only temporarily in Brussels for studies or work (so-called transients, see further) or planned to move to a smaller town or city when they would start a family (so-called classic suburbanites, see further). What respondents belonging to this profile all have in common is the fact that their lived experiences gradually convince them of the benefits of living in Brussels. They often mention the specific liberal atmosphere in Brussels and are positively surprised by the rich diversity of neighbourhoods in the city.

In most cases, converted households, rent a house or apartment at the start of their Brussels' housing career in the proximity of their work in the city. While they initially plan to return to their hometown and buy their first home when children arrive or when their careers have taken-off, they slowly start to see the benefits of the city and all of its facilities.

Other households belonging to this profile came to live in Brussels due to changes in family composition such as a divorce or break-up. For them, Brussels is initially seen as a city where they can find the anonymity and liberty to start a new life or reinvent themselves.

Furthermore, converted respondents mention how the high real estate prices in Brussels were another factor why the city was never seen as a realistic option in the long run. They believed they could never afford to buy a house in Brussels fitting all their requirements. Often, tips from other local residents to broaden their housing search (both in terms of radius and housing typology) changed the respondents' perspective. One respondent, for example, mentioned how she and her family did eventually find the house of their dreams by broadening their search from traditional one-single family houses to ground-floor apartments with an outdoor space.

Finally, also converted households see clear aspects for improvement in Brussels. Frequently mentioned issues are road safety and infrastructure and the organisation of administrative services (limited opening hours, limited degree of digitalisation and limited services in Dutch).

Urban villagers. Within this profile are households that love Brussels but at the same time value a peaceful, green, and quiet living environment. They often work in the city, or close to the city, in stressful jobs and want to come home after work to an oasis of peace, without the ordeals of a long commute.

Many of the respondents belonging to this profile live in the south-eastern municipalities of Brussels such as Watermaal-Bosvoorde and Oudergem. Situated close to the Sonian Forest with all its recreational and sport facilities and well-accessible by car and public transport, these peaceful and residential municipalities fit many of the urban villagers' needs. Of course, not all urban villagers are able (or willing) to pay the (much) higher (rental/purchase) prices in these neighbourhoods. Urban villagers can also be found in other, much denser Brussels' municipalities such as Jette, Schaarbeek, Koekelberg, Laken or Sint-Jans-Molenbeek.

What they all have in common is that they are very community-centred. While they often enjoy cultural and other activities in the city centre, they value good connections with their close neighbours in their own neighbourhood and often stress the importance of neighbourliness, helping each other out or volunteering in the neighbourhood and in local organisations. Households belonging to this profile often also share a need for more serenity and more green spaces in the city where spontaneous social encounters are facilitated. This often translates itself into households participating in collective vegetable gardens, organizing a small bar (such as in park Elisabeth) or joining citizen initiatives.

Disappointed. In many ways, the disappointed show strong similarities with cosmopolitans and in some cases also with the urban elite. These are households with a high share of cultural capital, often working in arts and the cultural sector. Many of them are also freelancers or business owners.

They attach great importance to public meeting spaces in the city, to the vicinity of local shops, bars and cultural facilities and also value the possibility of spontaneous encoun-

ter within multi-dwelling housing (i.e. large hallways). They value Brussels' international character and often consider themselves as global citizens. They have often lived abroad or travel a lot for work.

This does not mean that they are not locally involved, on the contrary. Many of the households belonging to this profile, are very active citizens, who have either initiated local citizen initiatives or are (or have been) politically active in Brussels. This active citizenship was mostly led out of a desire to change things in Brussels. However, after years of active involvement, most of these respondents felt very disappointed and thwarted by the (mis)management of the Brussels region and this mostly concerning air quality, road safety, infrastructure, and urban planning choices. Some of our disappointed respondents also had bad experiences with criminality (mostly thefts and burglaries) or with men calling out to female respondents on the street, resulting in the avoidance of certain neighbourhoods or not going out alone after dark. Often, the jumble of different competences and policy structures in combination with a lack of vision and a lack of law enforcement was pinpointed as the main culprit. For some, this accumulation of disappointments led to bitterness (and sometimes even xenophobia), resulting in a definite move away from Brussels. Other disappointed households are still living in Brussels, but are seriously considering to leave the city as well.

Reluctant leavers. Households belonging to this group would have liked to stay in Brussels. They love the city and are often proud ambassadors of Brussels. They ended up in adjacent municipalities because they did not find a dwelling in Brussels that was affordable or met all their requirements. Within this profile, two groups can be distinguished.

A first group has very clear housing aspirations in terms of architectural design, dwelling type, and dwelling size. For many households this consisted of a large townhouse with high ceilings, wooden floors, lots of light and a south-facing garden. Often, this was exactly the type of house where these respondents grew up. While this type of housing is very characteristic for Brussels, it has become increasingly unaffordable for many middle class families. For others, the ideal housing situation consisted of housing with large gardens. Households that do not want to compromise on these kinds of housing aspirations, but are willing to compromise on location, therefore often end up in places just outside Brussels, such as Wemmel, Vilvoorde or Dilbeek.

A second group consists of lower middle class people. Due to the rising housing prices and their limited financial means, these households are displaced (often due to gentrification) to more affordable neighbourhoods outside the Brussels region, such as parts of Wemmel close to the Brussels ring road.

What all reluctant leavers have in common is the fact that they maintain a very close relationship with the city. Their social life, work, leisure, sports, and cultural activities are still taking place in Brussels. An important condition for signing the contract for their new home was therefore a good connectivity by car and public transport with Brussels.

Transients. For this group of households, Brussels is seen as an intermediate phase in their housing career. The city represents a transient source for personal development in terms of education or career. Their jobs or studies are often very demanding which makes a place in the city necessary to launch their career. They often retain a strong connection with their hometown and restrict their social network in Brussels to colleagues. Since they only plan on staying in Brussels for a definite period, they do not consider it worthwhile to invest in local ties or to explore other neighbourhoods in the city than their own.

They are often strongly receptive to media coverage on Brussels and prevailing stereotypes, thereby avoiding certain neighbourhoods with a bad reputation (such as Matongé or Cureghem). Many of the respondents belonging to this profile, place themselves on the right half of the political spectrum and prefer homogeneous neighbourhoods in terms of residents. Finally, transients would not consider raising children in Brussels, stating that it is not a child-friendly environment.

Classic suburbanites. Amongst this profile are households that exchange Brussels for a house in the suburbs or on the countryside. In most cases, this relocation often coincides with (the planning of) the arrival of children. The city is simply not seen as a child-friendly environment. They value a more green, calm, and stress-free environment where children can venture outside without direct parental supervision. Additionally, the limited school capacity in the Dutch-speaking education system in Brussels is an issue. Even though Dutch-speaking schools have increased their capacity in the last years (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, 2018), espe-

cially in the western municipalities of Brussels the demand still exceeds the supply. This was for many of the households we spoke to an extra reason to leave Brussels.

Most suburbanites also do not like the anonymity of the city. They do like to live in Brussels for all its facilities but lack a certain degree of neighbourliness and feel that the different ethnic communities in Brussels completely live apart from each other.

Finally, parallel to the urban elite, a specific group of 'young elderly' emerges here. However, instead of spending their regained freedom in the city, the young elderly who can be seen as classic suburbanites left Brussels to end up living in the countryside. They state that they do not longer need Brussels for work or other facilities and long for a more peaceful and safer environment. Indeed, crime, feelings of unsafety and too lax enforcement of the law is often mentioned as major disadvantages of Brussels amongst classic suburbanites.

Anti-urbanists. This ideal-typical profile consists of households that simply do not like cities. Often born and raised on the countryside, but working in Brussels, they moved at one point in their life to the city (often convinced by colleagues or friends). However, they almost immediately regretted their decision and never felt at home or at ease in Brussels.

For anti-urbanists, Brussels represents everything they do not like about a living environment. According to them, it is dirty, noisy, unsafe, and chaotic and there are too many foreigners. Anti-urbanists value a peaceful, green, and clean living environment and prefer a rather homogeneous population.

Their ideal housing typology is a single, freestanding, family house with a large garden. Most respondents belonging to this group, have recently moved back to a more rural municipality with no facilities at walking-distance and no public transport. While this means they are now forced to take their car for everything and faced with daily traffic jams to work, they all state they would never return to the city.

2.2.3 | Profiles to target

What the 10 profiles clearly show, is that there will always be people that simply do not like cities in general, and Brussels in particular, while there will always be people that would defend Brussels, in spite of its shortcomings. The profiles in between those two extremes are the most rewarding for policy makers since these are the most susceptible for changes resulting out of concrete policy actions. Returning to the two identified tensions fields that emerged out of the perception analysis as discussed earlier in this report (see Box 2 in § 2.1.4), we can visualize the 10 profiles and their meaning for policy makers more clearly. In Figure 8, all profiles are further diversified by colour.

Profiles in brown represent households that will be very hard to convince of the many virtues of Brussels as a residential environment, since these people combine an arcadian disposition with a fear-motivated attitude towards living in Brussels.

Profiles in dark blue are believed to be the most receptive for policy measures that target different aspects of the Brussels' living environment. The disappointed are (or have been) active citizens with a clear view on needs and shortcoming in the different Brussels' neighbourhoods. When addressing these concerns, these households might stay in (or might return to) Brussels. Urban villagers love the cultural diversity and facilities inherent to an urban life, but need a calm, green and tightly-knitted local community. As mentioned earlier (see § 2.2.2) Brussels run the risk of losing this group since these kinds of green village-like neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly unaffordable for many households. An urban governance strategy that is committed to substantially improve the eco-social quality of urban living (see also § 2.1.4) through affordable housing might avoid this risk.

Profiles in light blue can obviously benefit from policy measures as well, but are already strongly convinced of the benefits of urban living in general, and of Brussels in particular. Here, it is key for urban policy makers to guarantee a diverse, affordable, and flexible housing stock in order to be able to adjust to the changing needs of households in all stages of life. Obviously, also for these profiles, continued investments in road infrastructure and safety, air quality, qualitative public space and good education with sufficient capacity is needed.

Finally, profiles in red represent two groups of respondents that are generally less susceptible to policy measures and this for different reasons. Reluctant leavers are still active citizens of Brussels, making use of its different facilities (schools, employment, commercial and cultural activities, sports, and recreation…), but happened to find a house just outside the city borders. Of course, also here, housing poli-

Figure 8: Ideal-typical profiles on the matrix of identified tension fields

cies that focus on affordability and variety, might keep these kinds of households in the future more often within the city limits. However, since administrative city limits are not always mentally perceived as borders, these kinds of relocations will always occur. The last group of transients are believed to be difficult to retain in the city due to the combination of (1) their limited involvement in and blindness for the other parts and neighbourhoods of Brussels, and (2) an anti-urban attitude.

2.3 | HOUSING PROJECTS

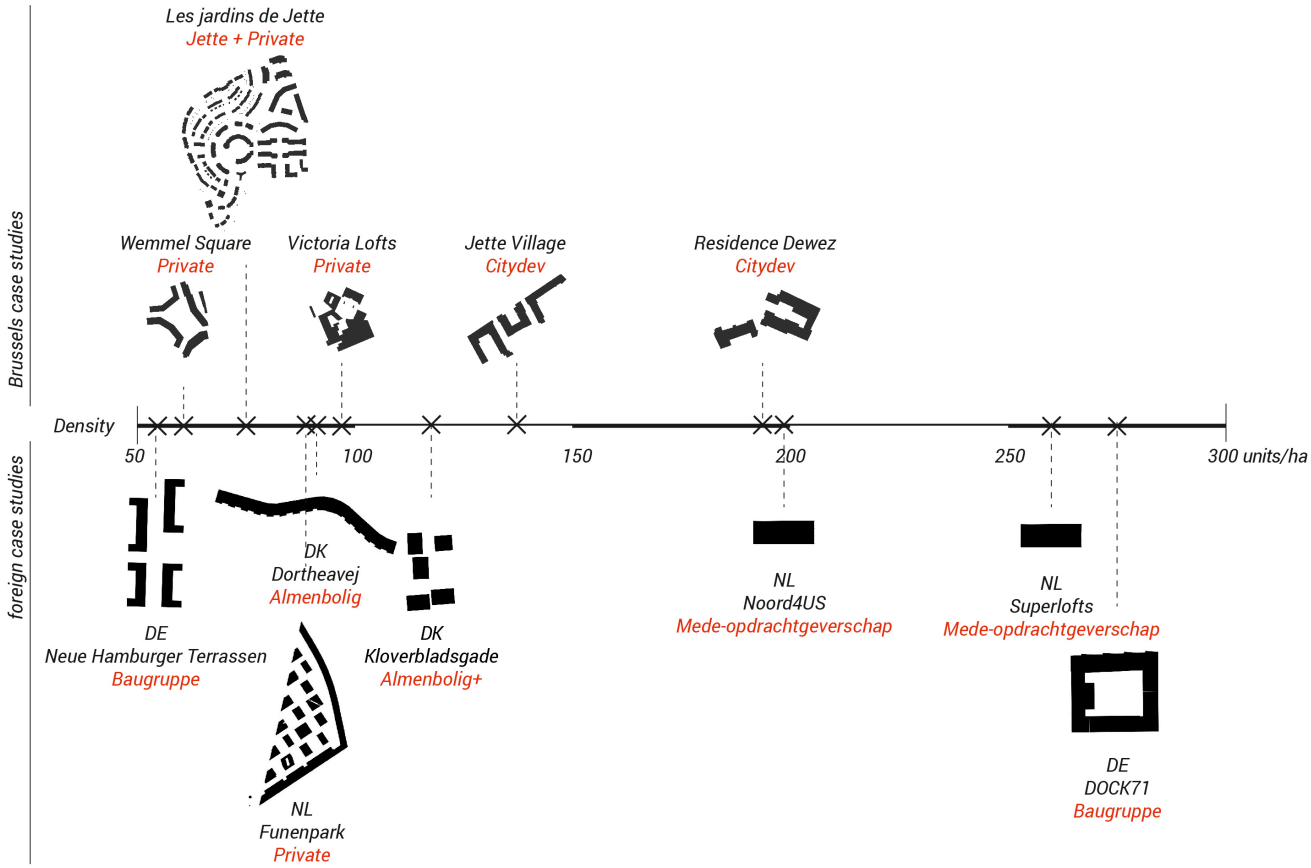
2.3.1 | Research set-up

The third part of the B-REL project has analysed the characteristics of recently built dwelling environments in order to learn for future developments. The interview study (see § 2.2) points out that individual housing preferences and choices are the result of a complex decision process. Besides financial factors and household composition, taste, lifestyle, values, and past experiences shape housing decisions (location, type, and aesthetics). On the individual level, this results in a large diversity of housing preferences. Despite this diversity, research has shown that in recent decades the Brussels region witnessed an overproduction of certain housing types (e.g. 2-bedroom apartments) (perspective.brussels, 2012). Hence, the dominant mode of housing production in Brussels does not respond adequately to diversified needs and tends to produce an ongoing 'mismatch' with prevailing housing preferences. This may contribute to the observed outmigration of certain household types.

The aim of this research part builds on this mismatch: To what extent does the current housing production correspond with actual housing needs and preferences? Which organisational or design related factors are responsible for this mismatch? How can we reduce this mismatch or, in other words, how can we produce a more diversified and qualitative housing patrimony?

For our research, 5 recently built multi-dwelling housing projects in the north-western part of Brussels were selected. They are all located in neighbourhoods with varying housing densities, radiating from the city centre to the periphery. All selected projects concern middle-income housing, including projects of private project developers, as well as projects initiated by public agencies (municipalities and Citydev.brussels). In order to broaden our view, we also analysed 7 'best practice examples' in the cities of Amsterdam, Hamburg and Copenhagen. These projects are the result of housing policies aimed at attracting and retaining middle-income households and therefore provide inspiration on alternative housing models and design practices.

Figure 9 | Overview of case studies, sorted by housing density



For all these housing projects, we analysed the organisational structure and development process as well as the design and built form. Concerning the organisational structure, we analysed (1) which actors are involved; (2) which partnerships are formed; and (3) who takes decisions on typology and design. Regarding the design, we related the built form with the opinions of residents and the actual use of private, collective, and public spaces.

With the intention to grasp the relation between (1) people's aspirations and motives to move or stay and (2) the actual use of spaces in and around the house as well as (3) the appreciation of the material qualities of the home and the neighbourhood, we applied several qualitative methods. Next to secondary documentation analysis and morpho-typological mappings, a total of 41 residents* and 9 experts were interviewed. (see Table 4 for an overview of the 41 Brussels residents). All projects were visited, documented, and photographed. Based on the resident interviews, the reading and analysis of floor plans and our own observations, we identified a number of 'spatial mismatches'. These are instances where the design and spatial characteristics of the housing environment are not in line with the preferences and aspirations of residents; where the physical lay-out of the environment results in spaces that cannot be used as they were intended to; or where in a more general way spatial quality is low. We identify spatial mismatches at three levels.

1 | The first level is the level of the individual home and the private space of residents. Here, the mismatch is expressed in housing types that are not adapted to household composition. The dominance of 2-bedroom apartments is responsible for this. Such types are very often too large (and expensive) for small (1 and 2 person) households but too small for families, also in terms of available private outdoor space.

** These 41 interviews are part of the 153 interviews conducted during the interview study (see § 2.2) and hence do not only provide insights on the selected Brussels housing projects, but also on the housing aspirations of the respondents.*

Table 4 | Overview of respondents in selected Brussels housing projects

Category	Subcategory	VL	JV	RD	JJ	WS	Total
Tenure	owner	10	5	7	6	4	**33**
	tenant	1	2	2	1	2	**8**
Housing unit type	apartment	1	5	9	5	0	**20**
	loft	10	0	0	0	0	**10**
	maisonnette	0	0	0	0	6	**6**
	single-family house (closed)	0	2	0	2	0	**5**
Total respondents		**11**	**7**	**9**	**7**	**6**	**41**

2 | The second level is the level of the housing project. This includes the organisation of the collective and public spaces in and around the home and the organisation of the access to the home. Many projects display privacy conflicts between public and private spaces. Poor quality of collective spaces compromises their usability for play and encounter.

3 | The third level is the level of the neighbourhood and the metropolitan area. Here, mismatches occur between the desired characteristics of the neighbourhood and those that are available.

These mismatches are briefly summarized in § 2.3.3 .* All together, these spatial mismatches contribute to the overall mismatch between housing preferences and available housing environments. They provide clues to improve the design of housing projects and public space to better adapt them to diverse housing preferences. In § 2.3.4 we link them tentatively to the mindsets and profiles developed in § 2.1 and § 2.2 (see Figures 7 and 8).

2.3.2 | The organisation of urban housing development

All 12 housing projects analysed fit within public policies that aim to maintain middle-income households in the city.** Public housing policy in Brussels is marked by a large number of housing institutions that each take it as their role to focus on particular submarkets in the production of public housing. Citydev.brussels is the main actor responsible for middle-income housing for ownership, whereas the SLRB (Société du Logement de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale - Housing Association for the Brussels Capital Region), the municipal social housing associations and the social rental agencies focus on low- income rental housing. The Housing Fund and Community Land Trust Brussels are concerned with low-income housing for ownership. This results in housing projects that are often catering to specific target groups, even if in recent years mixed projects and collaborations between the various actors are increasing.

In all 12 cases public authorities are involved in the development process of middle-income housing. Nonetheless, the comparative analysis indicates that there exist large differences between the cases in Brussels and those selected abroad regarding the organisational structure and development process. In the next sections, we highlight the limitations of the Brussels approach and list some merits of alternative development modes from Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Copenhagen.

Urban housing projects in Brussels. In the Brussels region, housing production for middle-income households depends largely on private actors. In particular, 90% of projects over 10 units are carried out by real estate professionals. Furthermore, we found that the construction of public housing also depends on the participation of private partners. Since its conception, Citydev.brussels, the main public operator providing middle-income housing, uses public-private partnerships (PPP's) to develop its housing projects, and outsources to a large extent the design and construction towards private actors. Increasingly, Citydev turns to a 'new' PPP-model: buying housing units 'turn-key', directly from the private sector, only minimally interfering with the programme and design, up to a total of 355 units or 39% of all projects in progress as of the first quarter of 2020.

Each of the PPP-models used, differ in terms of efficiency and public control (see Figure 10). Our analyses point out that with the increased adoption of PPP's that favour efficiency over public control (such as the Turn-Key model), the

** For a complete discussion we refer to Sansen & Ryckewaert (2020).*

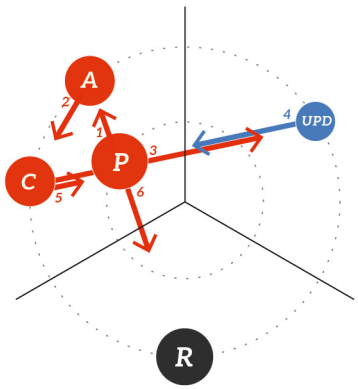
*** We refer to Sansen & Ryckewaert (2020) for detailed comparative discussions of the housing policies in each of these cities.*

Figure 10 | Main development models used by Citydev & developments abroad

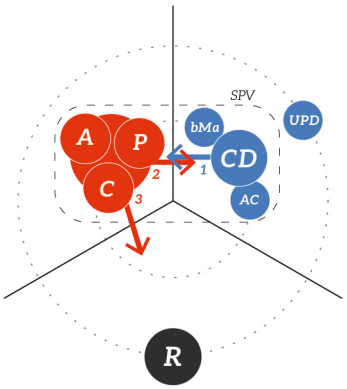
P. Promotor
C. Contractor
A. Architect
d.A. Architect (design)
c.A. Architect (construction)
CD. Citydev.brussels
AC. Advisory Committee
bMA. Bouwmeester Maître Architecte
UPD. Urban Planning Department
R. Residents

Brussels case studies

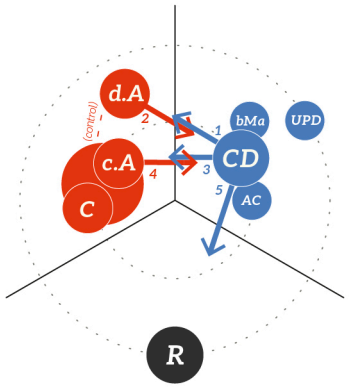
Private Development
(Real Estate Promotor)



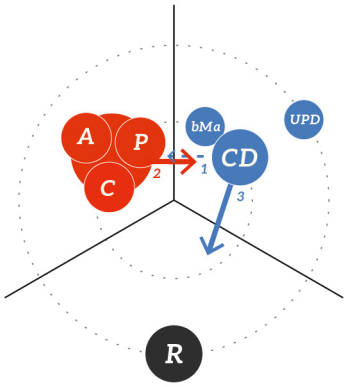
Design, Build & Finance
(promotieopdracht - marché de promotion)



'Regular' Public Procurement

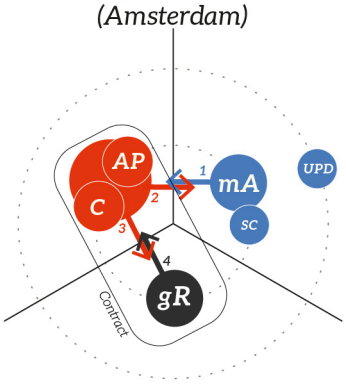


Turn Key
('call for projects' & planning charges)

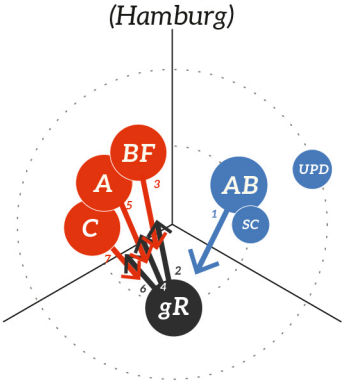


foreign case studies

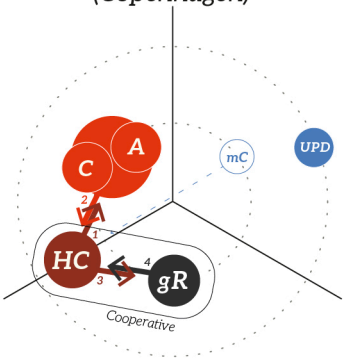
Mede-oprachtgeverschap
(Amsterdam)



Baugruppe
(Hamburg)



Almenbolig (+)
(Copenhagen)



C. Contractor
AP. Architect-Promotor
A. Architect
BF. Building Facilitator
mA. municipality of Amsterdam
mC. municipality of Copenhagen
SC. Selection Committee
AB. Agentur für Baugemeinschaften
UPD. Urban Planning Department
HC. Housing Cooperative
gR. group of Residents

government is at risk of losing control over the design and programme of publicly developed housing. This goes hand in hand with a decreasing regulation and the construction of standardised housing typologies. From this approach follows that the mismatch between what is built and what is needed and aspired for is maintained. Furthermore, since the publicly developed housing units enter the free market after a time period, public subsidies only have an impact on the short term.

Urban housing projects abroad. The selected projects in Amsterdam, Hamburg and Copenhagen show clear differences with the projects in Brussels regarding both the organisational structure and the development process (see Figure 10). As a strategy to prevent middle-income households from suburbanising, these housing projects depend on the active engagement of (groups of) citizens within the production or maintenance of housing. The common underlying premise is that increased involvement not only enables residents to shape their dwelling to individual and collective housing needs, but also induces commitment towards the project and neighbourhood. The observed differences in typologies and spaces also point to the capacity of this approach to develop alternatives dealing with different demands, socio-cultural profiles, and personal taste.

It has to be stressed that the successful implementation of these projects depends on the stimuli provided by the public authority. Most important was a clear-cut policy framework and the establishment of centralised (public) services that inform the public, and actively coordinate and facilitate housing developments. Public authorities actively coordinate and facilitate housing developments in negotiations and partnerships with private developers, rather than relying on passive 'zoning' instruments. These extra public requirements are compensated directly through an increase of public control on the programme and design of the housing projects, and on the long term as the plots remain property of a public authority or non-profit organisation (in the case of Amsterdam, with a city-wide public leasehold system; in Copenhagen, with cooperative ownership structures).

2.3.3 | Spatial mismatches and design characteristics of housing environments

At the level of the home and the housing project. The interviews with residents of the Brussels projects point out that housing preferences are indeed highly diverse. Mainstream apartments, with 2- or 3-bedroom units, are appreciated by some because of their ease-of-use, in terms of maintenance (yuppies, single parent households) or accessibility (such as lack of stairs for older people). However, other household types are put off by the tight floorplans since they offer little spatial flexibility. Residents of homes with non-standard floor plans stress the advantages of increased privacy, such as larger and secluded terraces, or the lack of direct neighbours. Some of the loft residents appreciate the increased flexibility, such as the adaptability of the open floor plan to household changes, and the possibility to 'self-construct' and spread the costs.

The interviews also reveal design requirements for private and collective outdoor spaces. Some of the Brussels projects (e.g. Jette Village, Residence Dewez, les Jardins de Jette) only provide (too) small private outdoor spaces. In some instances, residents indicate that private outdoor spaces cannot be used effectively as they do not offer enough privacy because of high exposure to views from other homes or from the street. This is the case for small street-side terraces that are attached to the building rather than incorporated in the built volume, or when private gardens are deemed to be too small. Sheltered 'loggia's' offer a greater degree of privacy, as indicated by residents.

Privacy conflicts not only occur in relation to private outdoor spaces but also with regards to the private interior of the home. As one resident of a ground floor apartment with large bay windows along the collective passageway testifies: 'This is an ideal apartment for an exhibitionist'. This type of design errors seriously impacts the quality of the home and results in spaces that become obsolete.

In comparison, the cases abroad offer some best practices on these design aspects (see Figure 11 & 12). They indicate how in high-density housing projects collective spaces and the access to the dwellings must be designed carefully and in close relation to the housing types and private spaces. To study this, we apply a method of urban analysis that distinguishes between what is public and what is collective, between front and back (or 'outside' and 'inside' of the building block or courtyard), between what is accessible for visitors as opposed to access that is restricted to residents (Panerai et al. 1980; Panerai et.al. 2004).

Figure 11 | Proportional size of public, collective, and private spaces in case studies Jette Village (down) and Kloverbladsgade (up). The interior of the block is split up in private gardens and a collective space, but lack the necessary size and usability in the case of Jette Village.

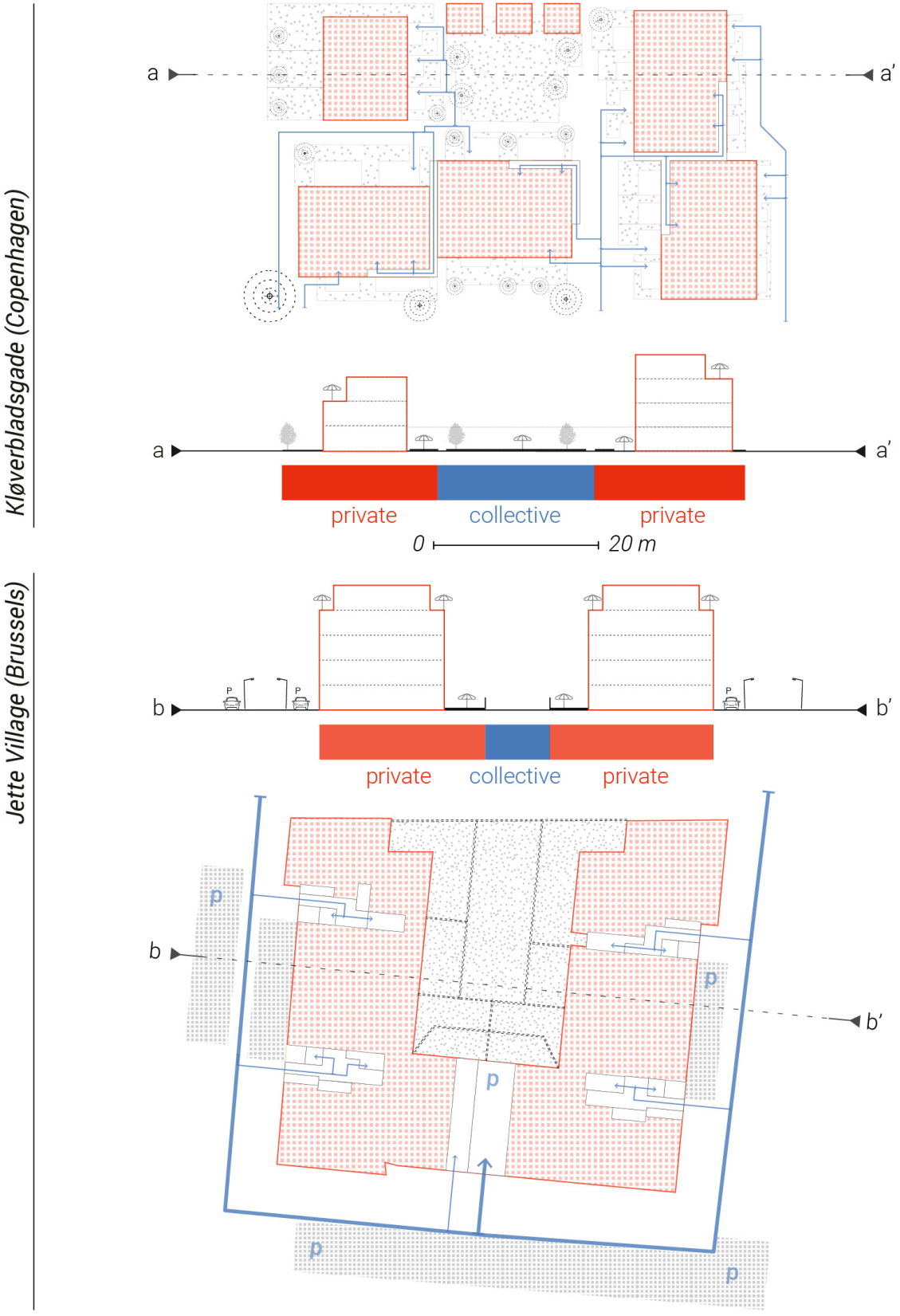


Figure 12 | Kloverbladsgade, Copenhagen. To prevent that the space inside the courtyard becomes wasted and residual, some basic elements in the design have been incorporated to increase the intensity and variety of uses. There are (1) different zones between purely private and purely collective with the use of soft borders, hedges and little trees, (2) a high amount of functional entry points, spaced more or less evenly and (3) passages or see-throughs to prevent total enclosure and a locked-in feeling.

Figure 13 | Jette Village, Brussels. The collective 'landscape garden' sole functionality is esthetical. Despite the fact that each private garden has individual access towards the inner space, the garden was specifically designed to prevent any other use.

Figure 14 | Funenpark, Amsterdam. Some specific design elements contribute to the fact that the residential aspect, and a certain level of privacy and comfort within the park is maintained. (1) social control is high due to the absence of orientation, the relatively high density and the absence of hidden spots. (2) the park is designed as a passageway, not as a place to dwell, with pavement that runs in the middle and with few benches that only lend themselves for a short rest (hip height). (3) Some ground-level houses or ground floor apartments have an outdoor terrace or individual access, allowing for a certain level of appropriation of public space, and rendering the park a more private character. Terraces on the other hand, try to maximise privacy, as they could only be of the 'loggia' type (placed inside the volume).

Figure 15 & 16 | A strictly closed off interior garden accessible to all residents that gives access to the housing units assures a safe playground with the necessary level of social control for children playing as in the case of Victoria Lofts (left). As opposed to this, in the very public interior courtyard of Jardins de Jette (right), conflicts between private and public abound: private balconies face this interior public space that is accessible to all, but residents hardly ever enter this space as the main access to the apartments occurs from the 'outside' of the building block.

In particular, problems arise when private, collective and public spaces occur in illogical sequences, leading to privacy conflicts and poor usability of outdoor spaces, as illustrated in Figure 11, 13 & 16. Our observations in situ and testimonies from residents point out that collective spaces are particularly susceptible to failure when material and social aspects concerning privacy and interaction are not considered. For example, if the real circulation pattern deviates from the design, the project potentially fails to function, rendering spaces obsolete. The main entry points and interrelated patterns of circulation thus become important design aspects. They define the buildings orientation towards public space, and define potential spaces for interaction, social control, and conflict.

The decrease of the land supply in the bigger cities results in higher density projects. This calls for higher standards concerning the design and lay-out of new developments in order to become attractive in a sustainable way. Research on high density urban housing introduced the notion of 'compensating qualities' (Schreurs et al., 1998; Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2002; Ryckewaert & De Meulder, 2009). According to this point of view, high density urban housing projects need to offer additional qualities that cannot be found in suburban environments in order to compete with these. They need to assure excellent privacy and a high quality of private and shared outdoor spaces. Other examples of compensating qualities found in urban housing projects are a highly attractive public space, a secluded shared garden, or a magnificent view.

The spatial mismatches identified in some of the Brussels cases, indicate that the current production of multi-family housing in Brussels is struggling to offer such compensating qualities. This probably adds to the mismatch between the housing offer and housing preferences of potential Brussels' residents. The selected foreign best practices illustrate what these compensating qualities at the level of the home and the housing project can be:

1 | collective spaces of high quality, their multiple usability as places to give (individual) access to the home, as places to dwell, as places of encounter, as places to play, to garden or produce food;

2 | degrees of freedom for residents to intervene or participate in the management, design, and maintenance of collective spaces;

3 | high degree of flexibility in the organization of the dwelling plan in casco (empty shell) projects;

4 | mix of different typologies and housing units of varying sizes, with the possibility to move from one type to another, adapted to the life stage and changing household composition as in cooperative housing projects;

5 | attention to the particular design of private outdoor spaces, their size and proportions, the degree in which they guarantee privacy (e.g. loggias as opposed to protruding balconies).

At the neighbourhood and metropolitan level. The interviews indicate that environmental qualities at the level of the neighbourhood and the city are equally important. Spatial mismatches occur between the desired characteristics of the neighbourhood and those that are available. Some residents indicate that they ended up in different neighbourhoods then their preferred location, due to budgetary constraints. In other cases, the preference for a particular housing type led residents to live in a location that does not correspond to their desires. Other residents end up in a location simply because it is accessible, even if they report that it is very unattractive as a living environment.

In addition to the interviews, we also conducted cartographical analysis of the activity patterns of 41 Brussels respondents (see Figure 17). They point towards two distinct patterns of use. On the one hand, some residents expressed a closer relationship and use of local neighbourhood facilities and public spaces and displayed more local movement patterns. Within our case study area (north-western section of Brussels) such spaces are the place du Mirroir or the Elisabeth park as well as nearby commercial areas. On the other hand, some residents display rather long-distance patterns of movement to metropolitan facilities (downtown or peripheral shopping areas, sports, and leisure facilities).

Although residents display both movement patterns, we see differences. Some residents of the housing projects closer to the city centre (Victoria Lofts) display rather few 'local' movements, as do some of the peripheral residents (Jardins de Jette, Wemmel). In the case of Victoria Lofts, we can probably relate this to a 'metropolitan' mindset of residents in secluded and privatised loft housing. In the case of the peripheral projects, this is probably more related to the absence of nearby services and amenities and a more car-oriented lifestyle. Residents of housing projects in Jette closer to the centre of the municipality (Residences Dewez, Jette Village)

Figure 17 | Activity patterns aggregated for case studies in the Brussels region

display a very great attachment to, and use of, local services. Here the convivial and 'village'-like reality of Jette appeals to the arcadian mindset of residents. They use local amenities intensively and have an active relationship with their immediate neighbourhood and nearby commercial centres.

2.3.4 | Matching development and design of housing projects with profiles and mindsets

In this section, we draw some conclusions by tying our analysis of the development mode and design characteristics of housing projects to the mindsets and profiles discussed in § 2.1 and § 2.2 (Figures 7 and 8). This provides some first clues to better adapt the development and design of housing environments to the aspirations and housing preferences of households with particular profiles and mindsets. Of course, there is no one-on-one relation between spatial characteristics, household profiles and individual mindsets. Nonetheless, the perspective of the mindsets offers a lens to link best practice examples in the design and development of housing projects to the concerns and aspirations of groups that might potentially consider Brussels as a place of residence.

As the main findings from § 2.1 and § 2.2 suggest, design and development improvements are mostly relevant for households with an arcadian-cosmopolitan and fearist-metropolitan mindset, or the 'dark blue' target groups in the upper left and bottom right corners of the tension field diagram (see Figures 7 and 8). Fearist arcadians strongly reject Brussels as a housing environment, while the currently available housing environments in Brussels match best -and are probably shaped by- the needs, aspirations (and financial means) of metropolitan cosmopolitans.

The case studies illustrate that both organisational aspects and design aspects can be instrumentalized to build housing solutions for the 'dark blue' target groups identified in the upper left and bottom right corners of the tension field diagram (see earlier, Figures 7 and 8). Organisationally, involvement of residents within the production of housing is targeted generally towards people who put value in actively shaping their own local environment. For some residents, this translates into a strong engagement with their local community (the arcadian dimension), while others might search to shape their dwelling environment as a collective of like-minded urbanites (cosmopolitanism). Additionally, a strong involvement of (future) residents in the design and development of their dwelling environment can (to any extent) reduce the mismatch between housing preferences and what is produced.

As far as the design-related aspects are concerned, all case studies, in Brussels and abroad, point to the importance of the quality of collective spaces within the conception of high-density multi-dwelling units. In particular towards the target groups identified, a well-designed collectively oriented housing project can provide qualities that were previously not associated with high-density developments. As an example, people who can be attributed to the right bottom part of the tension field diagram, generally value housing that provides functional and qualitative private and/or collective outdoor spaces. Especially in high-density inner-city neighbourhoods, collective spaces within multi-dwelling housing projects can offer an added privacy gradient and seclusion, an extra level of familiarity and tranquillity, incorporating qualities that are traditionally associated with towns or suburbs and link with the arcadian-cosmopolitan mindset, as illustrated in the exemplary cases abroad and in some examples in the Brussels projects.

Considering the diversity in profiles of potential urban dwellers, from arcadian cosmopolitans to fearist metropolitans (see figure 18), it is clear that a range of housing types must be offered to appeal to the diverse housing preferenc-

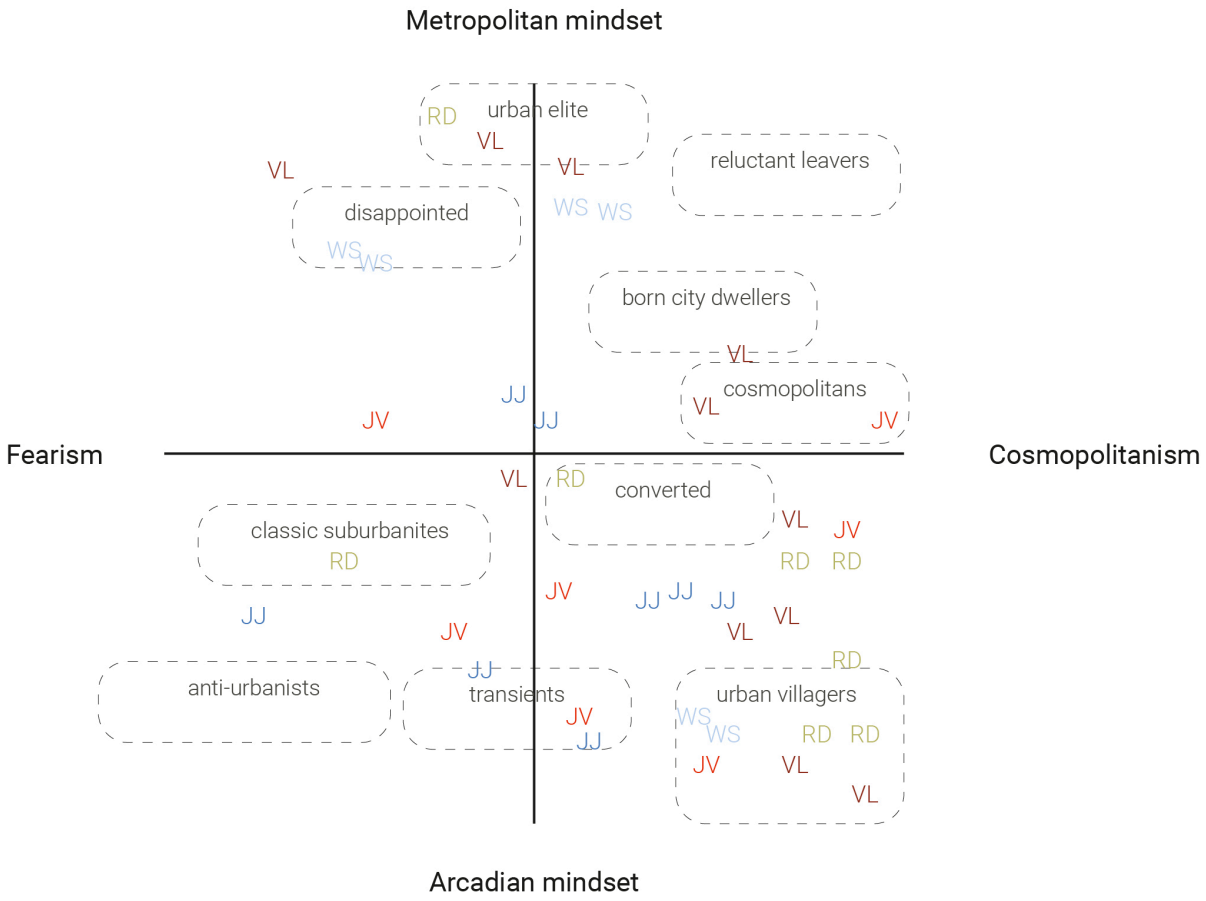


Figure 18 | Individual respondents (represented by the initials of the housing project), situated along the tension fields 'Metropolitan vs. Arcadian mindset' and 'Fearism vs. Cosmopolitanism' (see for a detailed explanation of the tension fields, Verhoest 2020). 10 ideal typical resident profiles (see for a detailed explanation of the profiles, Schillebeeckx & De Decker, 2020) are included, positioned indicatively within the tension field diagram.

es. In combination with changing household sizes and composition in terms of age, it goes without saying that a good mixture between smaller and larger apartments is needed in urban housing projects.

Given the reality of an increasing need for high-density development, we consider the provision of homes with individual gardens not to be a priority in urban housing projects. Surprisingly, hardly any of the interviewed respondents report that they miss an individual garden. A respondent of an individual home with a private garden in a Citydev project even testifies to make little use of the garden, although it must be said that the quality of the garden is relatively poor in terms of orientation and the privacy it offers. Just like Citydev, public development agencies in Flemish cities (Ryckewaert, 2014) have focused on the provision of individual homes with gardens to attempt to prevent dual income households and families from suburbanizing. This results in a mismatch between housing type and household type, as in reality the intended household profiles hardly ever settle in these housing types within the city. This is mainly the result of budgetary constraints and because these housing types are more affordable elsewhere (Ryckewaert, 2014, 2018). The urban housing projects from Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Copenhagen rather focus on combining compact, usable, and sheltered private outdoor spaces with collective gardens or courtyards. In some cases, these shared outdoor spaces can have a semi-private character, appealing to an arcadian mindset where residents value ties with the local community and interaction with the neighbourhood. For the more fearist metropolitans more secluded shared outdoor spaces might work better in providing a safe environment. Loft typologies and forms of empty shell-building, where residents can have a final say in the actual subdivision and lay-out of the home can appeal to those residents who value to shape their own dwelling environment, allowing for flexibility.

3 | POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The two tension fields that emerge out of the perception analysis and are further complemented by insights from the in-depth interviews, clearly reveal how some households (mostly households that combine an arcadian and fear-motivated attitude towards living in Brussels) are very difficult to convince of the many virtues of Brussels as a place of residence. The suggested policy recommendations in this chapter are therefore mostly targeting all other households.

In the first section we focus on policy recommendations concerning housing developments. Lessons are also drawn from international housing models and developments. The second section focuses on policy recommendations regarding the living environment and the city's social fabric. The third section provides recommendations on how to challenge the negative perceptions of Brussels, how to communicate with people about Brussels and how to alter the dominant press narratives.

The recommendations are based on the integration of the wealth of data collected by the three research groups, i.e.: a perception study with 180 respondents; a content analysis of 800 newspaper articles in the Dutch- and French-speaking press; an interview study with 153 participants; 5 Brussels housing and 7 international housing case studies (based on observations, document analysis, cartography and 41 interviews). Important input for the policy recommendations was also gathered during the stakeholder workshops organised at Perspective Brussels on 18 and 19 February 2020. In particular, recommendations with regard to Brussels housing policy for low- and middle-income housing, and the development and design of housing projects were co-produced based on discussions during these workshops.

3.1 | RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN BRUSSELS

Combine different affordable housing solutions in a balanced way

Key findings

| Our results show that Brussels runs the risk of losing profiles that are convinced of the city's virtues, but find it increasingly difficult to afford a house in Brussels that fits their budget, life stage and housing aspirations (see e.g. reluctant leavers, urban villagers).

| Brussels faces a high demand for affordable housing for low- and middle-income groups. As development opportunities become scarce, housing projects initiated by public authorities struggle to find the right balance between offering low-income or middle income housing.

Recommendations

| Pursue a housing policy with integrated and balanced (quantitative) goals for low-income and middle-income housing provision.

| Balance the offer of affordable and middle-income housing at project level, based on regional and neighbourhood analysis and local specificities.

| Housing projects initiated by public authorities offer a mix of affordable, cooperative, and innovative housing.

Support new approaches to affordable housing that guarantee long term affordability

Key findings

| Residents who benefit from middle-income housing developed by public authorities (such as Citydev) are initially bound by resale and occupancy conditions. This impedes them to move to housing that is adapted to a changing household size and composition. In the long run however, due to sharply rising housing prices, such residents can realise an important added value on their property. The original subsidy is lost as the housing unit is no longer available at a sub-market price cost.

| Foreign examples of cooperative housing show how residents are able to move to homes adapted to changing household sizes within cooperative housing.

| Foreign examples show that low- or middle-income housing provision in private or cooperative developments on public land can be achieved via regulations in leasehold contracts, by reserving a share of housing for these target groups.

Recommendations

| Use leasehold systems for housing development to avoid rising housing prices on (former) public land. Leasehold contracts should stipulate clear conditions for rent, sale, or cooperative tenures.

| Support cooperative housing solutions by allowing social mortgage loans of the Brussels Housing Fund for the acquisition of shares in cooperative housing projects.

Improve the age-friendliness of the city

Key findings

| As a living environment Brussels has a lot to offer to older people in society thanks to the proximity of various facilities and services. The interview study showed how some so-called 'young elderly' move to Brussels after retirement in search for a more vibrant living environment, which is, by the way, one of the main positive images of Brussels. While the more affluent households often end up in qualitative lofts adapted to future care needs, accessible housing in a lower price category is much scarcer.

| Many of our (younger) respondents who are now living in Brussels, also consider the city as the most suitable place to live when growing older, but some worry about the inadequacy of the public space in light of future decreasing levels of mobility and about the affordability and availability of adapted housing.

| The stakeholder workshops revealed that there is a growing interest in collective housing projects in Brussels that focus on intergenerational housing and solidarity. This is especially true for the diverse ethnic communities in Brussels. However, these projects often strand in the conceptual phase due to problems with spatial legislation.

Recommendations

| Brussels should become a more 'age-friendly city'. Guides such as the WHO Checklist for Age-friendly cities are indispensable for all new housing developments and the (re)development of the public space.

| Support and invest in intergenerational housing projects and initiatives that make it possible to care for older people at home, without compromising the privacy of the nuclear family. This also implies that experiments with more flexible or even modular housing units should be encouraged and allowed by planning legislation.

Strengthen the governance of housing production in Brussels

Key findings

| The production of new housing projects in Brussels is dominated by private parties, even in projects initiated by public authorities. Public-private partnerships and turn-key developments create limited opportunities for housing development to meet housing policy goals and address the needs of specific target groups such as older people, large families, low- and middle-income households.

| The different public housing actors in Brussels focus on separate sub-markets and address different and sometimes conflicting goals in Brussels housing policy, even if collaboration among these actors increases.

| Foreign examples show that public land management and leasehold systems create leverage for urban governments to develop a housing offer that meets specific goals and reaches specific target groups.

Recommendations

| Focus on housing developments that aim for housing quality and typological diversity, housing affordability and diverse residential environments.

| Reinforce public land policy by keeping public land in public ownership, by expanding the portfolio of public land, and by applying leasehold systems for housing development on public land.

| Public land for housing development should only be sold to housing developers who agree to develop projects with open accounts of construction and management costs.

| Focus on the establishment of centralised (public) services that actively coordinate and facilitate housing developments in order to allow for a larger-scale implementation of alternative housing models (as successfully implemented in foreign housing models).

Improve procedures to safeguard the design quality of housing projects

Key findings

| As mentioned earlier, the production of new housing projects in Brussels is dominated by private parties, even in projects initiated by public authorities.

| Foreign projects and practices show that the design quality of housing projects is very often the result of transparent negotiation and close collaboration between public authorities and developers, rather than 'passive' zoning instruments and planning regulations.

Recommendations

| Develop all public housing projects with public tenders based on competitions with clear project definitions under supervision of the team of the bMa (Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte) to achieve the highest standards of design quality for public housing projects.

| Develop a clear quality framework for private housing projects based on (1) the general zoning ordinance (RRU-GSV) that defines basic qualities of housing; (2) additional recommendations and references for qualitative housing; and (3) by establishing a quality chamber that supports developers throughout the design and up until the delivery of the construction permit.

| Enforce preliminary consultations between housing developers, the quality chamber, and local and regional authorities in very early project stages or even before acquisition of land for housing projects of more than N* housing units or of strategic importance. Include regional and neighbourhood analysis of housing needs in this consultation procedure.

| Envisage to establish a 'priority lane' for building permit delivery for private projects that are developed under bMa supervision.

| Develop guidelines to evaluate housing projects that deviate from the RRU-GSV or zoning plans. These guidelines can

* *Determining the exact size of housing projects to be subjected to this type of approach should be the result of additional operational research and political consensus.*

rely on the concept of compensating qualities that increase the attractiveness of urban housing and warrant deviations from regulations. Examples are projects that offer services to their wider environment such as neighbourhood facilities or greenery. Other compensating qualities can be found in typological innovation, such as projects that combine smaller housing units with shared facilities. Finally, projects that organize increased social interaction, or rely on an increased involvement of neighbourhood and future residents could also warrant derogations of the RRU-GSV. A collection of best practice examples can serve as a source of inspiration for designers and developers.

Assure typological diversity in housing projects

Key findings

| We have seen a lot of diversity in the way current and former residents of Brussels experience and perceive Brussels as living environment, and what they expect from the city. In the interview study the dynamic component of residence experiences has been manifestly demonstrated. Expectations and experiences are not static, but change and develop over time. However, new housing developments in the Brussels Capital Region show little typological diversity with a dominance of two-bedroom apartments.

| Housing projects often rely on standardised floor plans that are not adapted to the particular context and location within the housing project.

| Casco or shell-building and loft typologies allow a greater degree of flexibility for residents to shape their home to their needs and preferences.

Recommendations

| Reinforce regulations on functionality and usability of floorplans and on accessibility in the General Zoning Ordinance (RRU-GSV).

| Include regulations on mix in housing typologies and sizes for all housing projects with a minimum of N housing units in the General Zoning Ordinance (RRU-GSV).

Provide incentives for well-designed collective spaces

Key findings

| In many high-density housing projects, the usability and quality of private and collective outdoor spaces is low due to privacy conflicts. In particular, private gardens in high-density housing projects provide little added value due to their limited size and privacy conflicts.

| Well-designed transitions between public, collective, semi-private and private spaces in housing projects increase the usability of scarce space in high-density urban housing projects.

| Clearly defined and secluded collective outdoor spaces can provide safe playing environments for children.

Recommendations

| Include additional guidelines for shared and collective spaces in housing projects in the General Zoning Ordinance (RRU-GSV).

| Provide subsidies for collective spaces (indoor and outdoor) in public housing projects.

| Encourage the provision of high quality collective or public spaces in housing projects via 'urbanistic charges' (incentive zoning).

Involve residents in shaping their dwelling environment

Key findings

| Casco or shell-building and loft typologies allow a greater degree of flexibility for residents to shape their home to their needs and preferences.

| Tenants and owners have different attitudes and a different level of involvement in the maintenance of collective housing projects, public as well as private. Tenants are poorly represented in the management of collective housing projects.

| Cooperative tenancy blurs the boundaries between renters and owners and assures equal representation.

Recommendations

| Develop systems to support and include future residents in the development process of public housing projects developed by public housing actors such as Citydev.brussels, the Housing Fund, the SLRB, municipalities, CPAS and CLTB.

| Design and provide good management and condominium contracts to determine the rights and duties of all residents (tenants, owners, and residents in housing cooperatives) in all collective housing projects, both private and public.

3.2 | RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT AND THE CITY'S SOCIAL FABRIC

Decrease the dominance of cars in the city

Key findings

| Brussels is still a car-dominated city resulting in high dissatisfaction with road safety, noise and air pollution, traffic congestion and a too much car-centred road infrastructure. This became evident from the interviews, but also clearly emerged as an important negative element within the second cluster of the perception analysis amongst Brussels' residents.

| Law enforcement concerning traffic and road safety measures is perceived as lacking.

| Public transport emerged as an important factor within the third (positive) cluster of the perception analysis of Brussels' residents. Also, from the interview study and perception study, it became clear that residents are very satisfied with the regional public transport system (STIB/MIVB). Most negative comments on the public transport system relate to feelings of unsafety on metro lines during evening hours. Some parts of Brussels remain also underserviced by public transport.

Recommendations

| The approval of the 'Good Move' regional mobility plan (March 2020) is an important step in the transition towards a reduction of car traffic and safer roads. However, it is really important that the region guarantees a strict enforcement of the different proposed measures to drastically improve road safety.

| Concerning public transport, it is clear that the large investments done by STIB/MIVB are rewarded by high satisfaction levels. It is recommended that Brussels continues to invest in its public transport system to strengthen the frequency and scope of the network to neighbourhoods that are now being underserviced, but also to guarantee the safety of (especially female) travellers on metro lines during evening hours.

| The lay-out of public space in Brussels is not adapted to pedestrians and cyclists. A redesign of the urban infrastructure reducing the space attributed to cars is strongly recommended. Here, the cooperation between the various municipalities is essential.

Support (young) families in the city

Key findings

| A great deal of respondents that moved to Brussels and now have young children, live far away from their support network.

| Since most respondents in our study were Dutch-speaking, the insufficient capacity of the Brussels Dutch-speaking education system was often reported as an important stress factor for many households with young children, causing some of them to leave Brussels. Despite many efforts in recent years to increase the capacity in Dutch-speaking schools, the demand still exceeds the supply, especially in the western part of Brussels.

Recommendations

| In order to compensate for a restricted support network, the city should invest in a wide range of flexible child care facilities, such as creches, but also after-school child care and activities. Initiatives that enable extracurricular activities to take place after school or within the same building, should be developed more (e.g., 'Brede scholen', 'EDD: écoles de devoirs'…).

| It is highly recommended that the Brussels Capital Region (in cooperation with the responsible educational institutions) focuses even more on the creation of additional capacity in the Brussels education system (ranging from nursery to primary and secondary education), especially in the western part of Brussels.

| On the long term, investing in multilingual education* might not only solve the issue of the long waiting lists for Dutch-speaking schools, but might also be more adapted to the needs of a super-diverse city such as Brussels.

| Involve experts in order to improve the child friendliness of the Brussels' public space and create more places to play outside. Here, it is important to also move beyond the classic playground and open up unused spaces or derelict land where there is room for creativity and adventure.

Strengthen and support existing local (civil society and citizen) initiatives

Key findings

| In addition to the various welfare organisations in Brussels, there is a wide range of citizen initiatives that aim to improve the living environment and social cohesion in Brussels.

| Many of these citizen initiatives remain unknown or are not being supported by the government. This can partially be explained by the content analysis (see § 2.1.3) which clearly revealed how the fourth press narrative, which presented Brussels as a social city with engaged citizens, only marginally emerged in the Dutch-speaking press.

| From the interviews, it became very clear how the involvement with such citizen initiatives contribute to a stronger attachment to the city.

Recommendations

| Enhance the visibility of small bottom-up local citizen initiatives or initiatives of local (often partly volunteer-based) organisations. This can be done by creating and frequently updating a map of all initiatives and distributing this offline (in the neighbourhood) and online (on social media, websites). News media also play an important role here and should be tantalized to report more on local citizen activities. In particular, the attention of the Dutch-

* *Also known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), see e.g. Janssens, Carlier & Van de Craen (2009).*

speaking press should be more attracted as to counterbalance the polarized image of Brussels as a city where life is exciting or problematic, and very little in between.

| When starting up new initiatives, local policy makers should not try to reinvent the wheel, but instead make use of local knowledge and expertise that is widely available within this kind of initiatives.

Secure the role of women in the public space

Key findings

| Many female respondents struggle with feelings of unsafety on Brussels' streets and adjust their behaviour (such as avoiding certain places and neighbourhoods, not going out on their own after dark or avoiding the use of public transport after dark; see also § 2.2.2).

| The stakeholder workshop clearly revealed how in many communities in Brussels, women are not supposed to 'hang out' in public spaces.

Recommendations

| The redevelopment or design of the public space should always be evaluated from a woman's perspective so that elements that increase safety or stimulate the use by women coming from different ethnic communities are included in the design.

| Involve female experts from different communities in Brussels in order to improve some of the streets, metro stops, etc. where feelings of unsafety are reported the most.

3.3 | RECOMMENDATIONS ON BRUSSELS' IMAGE AS A PLACE TO LIVE

Focus on the things that are already positive

Key findings

| Brussels is perceived as a lively, pleasant, beautiful, and historic city with plenty of amenities, in terms of public transport, leisure, pubs and restaurants, arts and culture, and social life.

| Given that the respondents in our study were mainly Belgo-Belgians, it must be emphasized that the multicultural, diverse, and international character of Brussels is appealing to this group of (potential) residents.

| In the Dutch- and French-speaking press, Brussels is often presented as a locus of urban hedonism. This is the main positive narrative. It shows Brussels as a source of pleasure and distraction. Multiculturalism is positively framed in this narrative.

Recommendations

| Consolidate this positive image in place marketing campaigns as it resonates well with certain groups of residents, non-residents and commuters who are open to living in Brussels.

| Aim with this image at people who can be labelled as cosmopolitans, urban elite, born city dwellers, or converted.

| Use this image, especially, to target people with a cosmopolitan mindset who feel attracted to the city as a potential space for tolerance, cultural exchange, liberality, and a source of civilizing stimulation.

| Aim also for people with a positive disposition to city life with its density, vitality, and diversity, so-called metropolitanism. These people are more receptive to this image, even if they do not live in Brussels.

| Supply news and social media outlets with the rich and diverse offer of Brussels in terms of culture, arts, and social scene.

Show how the negative perceptions are biased and reverse them in reality through concrete policy interventions

Key findings

| Brussels is perceived as a busy, chaotic, and crowded city that suffers from traffic congestion, crime and unsafety, noise, dirt, pollution, lack of green and space.

| To some people the multicultural character of the city is a drawback.

| In the press, the anti-urban, gloomy narrative is most persistent, especially in the Dutch-speaking press. Living in Brussels is most often associated with unsafety, risk and danger and the negative aspects of multicultural society. Likewise, Belgian newspapers, Dutch-speaking more often than French-speaking, write about Brussels as a place that struggles with social division (in terms of poverty and misery) and cultural diversity, facing many policy challenges.

Recommendations

| The quality of the product (i.e. the living environment) counts the most. Hence, demonstrating the vision, rather than merely communicating it, is key.

| Enhance the sense of security, especially among women, elderly and young families. Improve the perception of safety in public places as they can be seen as the most important connection between denizens, commuters, and visitors. Streets and public transport, where many people pass through, are essential in that respect for the appeal and image of the city.

| Invest in the quality of the living environment by encouraging more sustainable city traffic, the development of green areas across the entire city, wider footpaths and corridors in busy places, and work on neatness of public places.

| Show to new residents which places and spots in their neighbourhood and the region already provide opportunities for retreat from the city's hectic. Involve inhabitants more as they prove to be good ambassadors of their city. In the interviews we learn that cosmopolitans and urban villagers can play an important part here.

| Invest in housing projects where residents can find peace and space in a clean, quiet, safe, and green area. Flagship housing projects demonstrating high quality urban living can be developed and widely publicized.

| Show how certain perceptions are biased, without counter-arguing with the target audience, by tapping into existing perceptions as entry points. For example, by substantiating in an objective manner the achievements and improvements in terms of combating crime, quality of life, and dirt. Or by drawing attention to unexpected pleasant aspects of city life (e.g., after a crowded metro ride a convivial chat with the neighbours).

Consider the differences between the Dutch- and French-speaking press

Key findings

| To the extent that it emphasises Brussels as a locus of unsafety on the one hand, and Brussels as a locus of hedonism on the other hand, the press may be assumed to reinforce the existing polarization of perceptions. This is particularly the case in the Dutch-speaking press.

| The French-speaking press is more diverse and nuanced in its accounts about Brussels than the Dutch-speaking press. Unlike the Dutch-speaking press, the French-speaking press pays significant attention to social life in Brussels.

| The difference between the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking press is most likely due to a greater proximity, both in geo-political terms and cultural terms (cf. Francophone community; newsrooms of the French-speaking newspapers are mostly located in Brussels).

Recommendations

| Brussels has a disrupted image that is based on stereotypes that have been built up over many years. Inviting the media to locate (part of) their offices in Brussels might contribute to change this by increasing their familiarity with and perspective on the city as local insiders.*

| Acknowledge the differences between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking news coverage in PR. The Flemish press is culturally more distant to Brussels in comparison with the French-speaking press, which results in a more polarized view on Brussels.

| A contribution to reverse Brussels' negative image might be supported by drawing attention to positive human-interest accounts on social life, local communities, or family life. Narratives on how people in Brussels go about in urban life and how they act upon their life environment could contribute to an image of Brussels as a friendly and humanly tailored habitat.

Focus on the things that are changing for the better and represent Brussels as 'a place to become'

Key findings

| It is quite worrisome that for a significant group of people in Brussels, bad governance has become a negative characteristic of their day-to-day residential life. In the perception study, only inhabitants associate Brussels with bad policies. In the interviews, the disappointed ventilate the same frustrations and disappointments about Brussels' mismanagement.

| On the other hand, two narratives in the French-speaking press point at Brussels as a place where citizens themselves work together for the cohesion of their city. This is a hopeful projection of a big city that is characterized by a sense of solidarity, engagement, and community.

| In the interviews, these ideas and experiences are articulated by urban villagers who emphasize the importance of local-scale activities, networks and communities in their metropolitan lives.

Recommendations

| Build a place promotion vision in which inhabitants of Brussels play a key role. Consider the positive and negative perceptions they have of living in Brussels. Especially the negative perceptions should be taken more seriously, as they are also found among denizens who have a warm heart for Brussels, but are critical about the quality of the living environment, policy, basic infrastructure. Exactly their expectations and frustrations show the way towards a vision of Brussels as a better place to live.

| Listen more carefully to the sense of pride and dynamism among Brussels' denizens and use their voices to project an image of Brussels they believe in, not so much as an exciting place that is worthwhile visiting and experiencing, but as a city where people lead everyday lives.

| Residents see their city often negatively represented in the national and international media and are sensitive to that. Community, local and citizen media outlets thus remain pivotal to counterbalance the stereotypical imagery about Brussels. Policy makers should continue to invest in these types of media- and news-making.

Centre on the affinity people have with Brussels and with city life in general

Key findings

| The perception of people varies according to their affinity with Brussels and to city life in general.

| Non-residents of Brussels who also do not work in the city can be divided into a positive and negative group. Yet, both groups perceive Brussels in terms of crime and xenophobia. This is possibly so because they have little experience of the city and are influenced by the press.

| Commuters can be divided between two groups, a positive and a negative one. The negative perceptions are much more dominant among commuters, compared to the other groups. Their perceptions seem to be linked to their experience of public places, such as the specific commuting trajectories and the neighbourhoods in which they work.

| Residents can be divided in three groups: a positive and negative group that bear many resemblances with the other groups; and a more moderate one. The positive and negative perceptions are clearly demarcated on the basis of fearism and cosmopolitanism. In comparison with the other groups, however, residents are much more concerned about social life (positively) and the quality of policies (negatively).

| Arcadianism, or the tendency to feel attracted to the rural and suburbs' promise of a spacious, peaceful, and quiet environment, plays an important role in understanding why a considerable part of non-residents and commuters view Brussels as a less attractive place to live. Even among city dwellers (cf. urban villagers) this disposition can be found, as the interview study demonstrates.

| However, it should not be ignored that an equally large number of non-residents and a smaller portion of commuters show a tendency to metropolitanism and have a positive view of the benefits of living in a big city like Brussels.

| Fearism, or the tendency to fear people coming from other cultures (i.e. xenophobia and ethnocentrism) and to be anxious about crime, is a determining factor in understanding the negative beliefs non-residents and commuters have about Brussels as a place to live.

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* *Currently, none of the big Dutch-speaking newspapers has its head office in Brussels, although De Standaard is preparing its relocation from the Flemish outskirts of the city (Groot-Bijgaarden) to the heart of Brussels right by Central Station by the end of 2020.*

Recommendations

| Taking people's actual perceptions as a starting point is a challenging task, given the different affinities people have with Brussels as a place to live. Therefore, rather than targeting everybody, it is recommended to develop first a long-term place development strategy for a desirable and attainable city identity.

| People outside of Brussels who show a tendency to fearism are not a priority target for place marketing campaigns, since their fear of crime and multiculturalism overshadows their view of Brussels. However, people from Brussels who express these concerns should be taken more seriously in urban policy, governance, and development.

| People outside of Brussels who favour an arcadian lifestyle are also not a priority target. Yet, among inhabitants who have a heart for Brussels the desire for a liveable environment in terms of tranquil and green areas is also prevalent. This group does not benefit from place development strategies that only focus on the assets of a vibrant and eventful city culture, but expects the city also to be compatible with their basic need for personal space, quiet and nature.

| People outside Brussels who appreciate the metropolitan and cosmopolitan aspects of living in Brussels are the easiest groups to target, as they already like the city because of its actual characteristics. From the interviews with inhabitants we learn that life stage and lifecycle are crucial, since the attractiveness of Brussels to these people is often very temporal: before settling down, starting a family; or after retirement, going through a second youth. It is therefore crucial to engage these people with a vision of Brussels as a city that is livable, your whole life.

Invest in a harmonized and long-term place branding strategy

Key findings

| There are too many levels and people responsible for the image of Brussels. On the level of the municipality, very rarely one communication officer is appointed and communication is often part of the mayor's or one of the council members tasks. The place branding process clearly requires a more harmonized and long-term strategy. Political fragmentation and fragmented policies are thus not only an obstacle to a larger-scale implementation of alternative housing models in Brussels (see § 2.3.2 and § 3.1) but also to consistent, long-term, and effective place marketing.

| Place branding strategies for Brussels rarely consider the different perceptions people have of living in Brussels, the related dispositions to city life and their expectations in the long run.

| Residents are important stakeholders in building a credible and supported city's image. The two positive press narratives in which Brussels' citizens are given a voice are only found in the French-speaking press, i.e. the press narrative of Brussels as an urban community and Brussels as togetherness-in-difference.

Recommendations

| Start from empirical data on the image of Brussels among the public and in the press and use these data to develop evidence-based campaigns.

| Use one or more of the concepts found in the perception study as entry points to get access to people's mind. Use concepts that resonate strongly with a target group to get mental access to people in that group.*

| Policy makers need to be aware in this context that the political quarrel and perceived ineffectiveness of its institutions has become a part of the perception of Brussels as a living environment by a significant number of its inhabitants.

| Involve key stakeholders and local knowledge in the place marketing process. Identify residents, politicians, governmental organisations, promotional agencies, infrastructure and transport providers, cultural and sports organisations, business, academic organisations and schools, and religious organisations that both contribute to and benefit from a more positive image of Brussels.

| Given the positive perception of public transport in Brussels, the STIB/MIVB in particular should always be involved as one of the key actors in Brussels' place branding strategy. But, also other partners should be pulled in. For example, the efforts of the sister universities VUB and ULB to contribute to a better image of Brussels could be embedded in a more long-term vision on place promotion coordinated at the Brussels regional level. Given that people who do not live in Brussels also play an important part in the construction of the city's image as a place to live both in positive and negative terms, the promotional agency Visit Brussels could also play a stronger part in co-conceiving place marketing ideas that encourage visitors to view the city as a place where people actually live.

| Brussels has a rich image, as the city is often portrayed in the media and frequented by visitors and commuters. However, many conflicting narratives exist about Brussels, contributing to a fragmented image of the city, if not to the absence of a distinct identity. It is therefore worth considering to appoint a chief storyteller for Brussels, possibly assisted by a team of local storytellers' coming from, for example, the different municipalities, police zones, etc. In any case, Brussels policy makers and leaders will have to work together.

| Provide training for all communications professionals working in institutions that build the place and image of Brussels. Provide insight in how different perceptions of Brussels are composed and patterned. Start with the key institutional stakeholders (see earlier).

* *The VUB research centre CEMESO organises workshops (in French, Dutch or English) in which the main results of the perception analysis on 'living in Brussels' are explained and put into practice by assisting participants in developing their own communication campaign.*

4 | SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since the respondents in the B-REL research project do not reflect the great diversity of Brussels, both in terms of socio-economic status as in terms of ethnicity, further research is highly recommended. It might be interesting, for example, to examine whether the perception of Brussels and the housing aspirations and needs differ for the different ethnic communities.

Furthermore, while the research on older people in Brussels is quite elaborate, the focus is mainly on frailty related topics such as feelings of loneliness (Vandenbroucke et. al., 2012), residential care (Vanmechelen, 2013), care needs (Laermans & Smetcoren, 2017) or cultural-sensitive care (Demeere & Van Den Daele, 2010; Taspinar, 2017). However, less attention is given to older people as active citizens with clear housing needs and demands with regard to the living environment. The B-REL project already touches upon some of these elements such as the need for accessible, centrally located housing, a rich cultural offer, and community life. However, further research is needed in order to entice and retain this fiscally interesting group.

In addition, our results confirm that women in Brussels are struggling with feelings of unsafety. The role of the design of the public space should be further explored in order to give all women equal access to all parts of the city.

Further research is also needed to determine the minimal size (in number of housing units) to submit housing projects to a quality chamber and to regulations on the mix of housing types. This can be based on additional housing projects that are exemplary within Brussels and abroad. Establishing such a corpus of exemplary projects can be developed into a Vademecum of good housing design to be consulted by public authorities, municipalities, designers, and developers. In particular, research on the size and quality of collective spaces is needed to develop clear guidelines.

As to the image of Brussels, a methodical exercise of mapping all levels and actors that have been involved in and are currently actively working in the area of city marketing is crucial in order to identify the opportunities for a more harmonized and coordinated vision on place marketing. In that matter, a systematic analysis of place marketing campaigns that ran in the past could expose the strategies that have been used so far. Another related question to explore is how the image of Brussels that is projected in these campaigns engages with the perceptions and narratives found in the B-REL research project. Further empirical research on a larger scale is necessary to gain greater understanding of how perceptions co-vary with media use, socio-demographics, and views on society and culture.

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