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Edited by Eric Corijn
and Jessica van de Ven

THE BRUSSELS READER

A SMALL WORLD CITY TO BECOME THE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

The series Urban Notebooks/Stadsschriften/Cahiers Urbains treats subjects that deal with the city and urbanity in the large sense. The series is directed by an interdisciplinary editorial committee, made up of Eric Corijn (chair), Jessica van de Ven (editorial assistant), Maarten Loopmans, Rudi Janssens, Patrick Stouthuysen and Anne Winter.

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PREFACE: BRUSSELS FOR EUROPE

Eric Corijn

This story starts in late 2005 but its roots go back to 2001. That was the year that the Treaty of Nice was drawn up with the aim of reorganising the European Union to cope with its expansion to new member states. It is the year of the Belgian presidency and the report by 12 intellectuals entitled *Brussels, Capital of Europe*, commissioned by Romano Prodi and Guy Verhofstadt. And it is also the year of a three month-long occupation of the Luxemburg Station by urban activists in Brussels in order to discuss the European Quarter as the centre of the European unification process. Europe in Brussels and Brussels for Europe.

Europe's presence in Brussels is not a complete success story. It has not fully integrated into the urban development. The growth of the institutions always occupied space without urbanism: one of the findings in the Prodi-Verhofstadt report is the feeble integration of European civil servants in urban life. But regardless of the history, Europe now plays an essential role in the dynamics of this city. In the span of a few decades the national industrial capital of Belgium became a well-connected world city, with the European functions as a driving force.

So, Europe is vital for any future scenario of Brussels. And this city is the living environment for the many thousands of expats working here. There is a need for more bridging between the two sides: Brussels needs more 'Europeanness' in its profile and the Europeans should become better citizens of Brussels.

That was our thought in 2005 when we considered organising Masterclasses on Brussels for EU staff. It took us some time to find partners. The Brussels-Europe Liaison office immediately supported the idea and together we got the help of the Brussels regional government in the person of Minister Guy Vanhengel. Within both the universities, the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the Université libre de Bruxelles, we received full support from the rectors and we discussed the content with our colleague Prof. Dr. Serge Jaumain. Next we had to convince our public. The years 2006 and 2007 represent a long journey from visits with the human resources and training departments of the European institutions – discussing our project and arguing for valuable training in the urban system –, to becoming better co-producers in what was more than an introduction for newcomers to the functioning of the city. It was not until we found our partners in the European Administrative School, now EUSA, and its director David Walker that we could envisage putting the idea to the test.

The programme was put together and the most highly ranked professors and experts accepted to contribute to the course.

The first series of Masterclasses for EU Staff started in the fall of 2008. Some 35 selected EU Staff from different institutions gathered in the premises of the Liaison Office for the first of 11 sessions. The modules vary in their organisation, featuring nine or ten classes on a range of subjects by the best experts in town coupled with three excursions to different parts of the city. Excursions include site visits and experiences of the Brussels arts scene. Many of the topics are complemented by panel discussions with politicians or urban activists. The multiple facets of this city are enlightened and analysed, always leaving time for questions and ample discussion.

A spin-off was created in the form of a series of lunch sessions for newcomers entitled 'Discover Brussels', held alternatively in English and in French and now attended by a few hundred new European civil servants.

In June 2013 we ended the tenth semester. Close to 350 staff members from various European institutions and also from other international offices have participated so far. They have all been fascinated by the insights into the urban dynamics and confronted with the interactions between the European unification process and the growth and construction of its capital. Most of them left as enthusiastic citizens of Brussels, aware of its many fragments and contradictions, but also of the many opportunities rising from its diversity and connections. The acquired passion led us to organise a network of Alumni from Brussels for Europe. Now and then, throughout the year, special meetings and events are organised. Many of the alumni have become active in discussions such as the Citizens Forum of Brussels or the Zinneke Parade.

After all these years and the many talks and discussions, it was finally time to publish the material gathered in these Masterclasses. This reader presents an array of contributions to form a better understanding of Brussels: academic chapters, input from the field, documentation from excursions and so on. To our knowledge this book is the first comprehensive presentation of Europe's capital in English. It gives a solid overview of the main issues at stake. Of course there is much more to say – but this series of texts at least documents one central debate that is crucial both for the city and the European Union.

After more than 50 years of its ever-increasing presence in this city, it is not longer possible to pretend that Brussels is simply 'hosting' Europe. The EU is associated with 'Brussels'. The name of the city is frequently misused to refer to decisions made by the institutions. The further development of the EU is affecting the future of the city as the image of Brussels is contributing to the image of Europe. It is that dialectical interaction that should be part of the thoughts of all responsible for policy or active in civil society. That is the agenda that will be pursued in the coming series of Masterclasses, in each of

the 12 modules, twice a year. The course now has its handbook published. We hope that this book will also benefit many readers beyond the classroom.

Such a programme could not have been successful without many supporters and sponsors. We thank all those who have made this project a success: Director Carlo Luyckx, Deputy Director Karin Impens, Ans Persoons and Nathalie San Gil Coello from the Brussels Europe Liaison Office for hosting us; Ministers Guy Vanhengel and Jean-Luc Vanraes and Frank Lelon of the cabinet for their continuous support; and EUSA Director David Walker and collaborators Ewa Wronska, Donald Tait, Pascale Moulins, Laurent Monsonego, Fay Giannarou and Patrick Lange for partnering with us in communicating with the European institutions, selecting the many candidates and keeping an eye on quality control.

And then, of course, we have to thank those who offer their expertise and passion each and every session. Our esteemed faculty, professors from all Brussels universities and experts from the field: Christian Vandermotten, Claire Billen, Caroline Van Wynsberghe, Roel Jacobs, Christian Kesteloot, Andrea Rea, Leen De Spiegelaere, Lissa Kinnaer, Geert Cochez, Sophie Alexandre, Jan Goossens, Guy Gypens, Tim Cassiers, Sarah Levy, Géry Leloutre, Joachim Declerck, Roeland Dudal, Nathanaëlle Baës-Cantillon, Benoit Moritz, Dirk Snauwaert, Hans De Wolf, Caroline Dumalin, Gawan Fagard, Philippe Van Parijs.

The various panel members that happily respond to the participants' many questions:

Jens Aerts, Constance Barrère Dangleterre, Thomas Bellinck, Sylvia Bosmans, Sophie Brouhon, Ann De Cannière, Julie de Groote, Sonia Dermience, Kristine De Mulder, Alain Deneef, Lewis Dijkstra, Daniele Dotto, Christos Doulkeridis, Paul Dujardin, Olivier Dupont, Hilde Geens, Charles Gohy, Brigit Grauman, Rik Jellema, Frederik Leen, Pierre Lemaire, Leszek Madeja, Christophe Mercier, Pierre Meynaert, Marie Nagy, Ann Olaerts, Lukas Pairon, Benoît Périlleux, Antoine Pickels, Elisabeth Pluijmen, Elke Roex, Marie-Laure Roggemans, Christophe Slagmuylder, Tom Smeets, Willy Thomas, Barbara Vanderlinden, Cédric Van Meerbeeck, Michel Van Roye, Jean-Luc Vanraes, Sabine Van Sprang, Don Verboven, Frédéric Versaen, Fabienne Verstraeten.

Last but not least I want to express my gratitude to the successive coordinators at the university, who consistently guarantee the good organisation and excellent administration of the programme: Stephanie Lemmens, Corentin Lorand, Celine Oosterlynck and now Geert Cochez, not to mention Jessica van de Ven for her work on the communication side and for her significant contribution to this publication. And finally, I would like to thank Ani Deal for revising this reader.

May the book be a token of this collaboration and a contribution to Brussels for Europe.

NETWORKED CITY

BRUSSELS, A SMALL WORLD CITY

Eric Corijn & Eefje Vloeberghs

'There is no doubt that Brussels is one of the major cities in the world and that it owes its position to the international political institutions it houses, notably NATO and, above all, a majority of EU activities,' says the great political geographer and inspirer of the *Globalisation and World Cities network*, Peter Taylor (2008). In the *2012 Global Cities Index and Emerging Cities Outlook*, Brussels takes up the 9th place with an upward trend – from 11th in 2010 and 13th in 2008 (Hales & Mendoza Pena, 2012). This position is not only due to the fact that important global institutions are located in the city and function in this place. It is equally due to the city's connectivity; its relationships with other places and nodes. 'Rather the myriad cities in globalisation can prosper by finding their specific niche within world city networks. Herein lies a conundrum. How can we distinguish the process of urban specialisation that creates a relatively simple local economy with few external links that is extremely vulnerable from development of an urban niche that leads to a complex local economy strongly positioned in external networks and is therefore highly resilient?' (Taylor, 2008, p.61). For Brussels that is also its location within the north-western European centre, in the middle of the golden triangle between London, Paris and Berlin. The city offers a prime example of globalisation, of how globalisation 'takes place' and, yes, is produced from within well-situated urban nodes. In a time span of a few decades Brussels evolved from a national industrial capital city to a trans-national post-industrial service economy. A successful transition not without high social cost...

A BIT OF HISTORY

As always, the origins are hidden in the mist of time. There are remnants of a Roman settlement. A chapel dedicated to the Archangel Michael must have been built at the end of the 7th century on a hill near the Senne. In the same period (mentioned in a manuscript from 695) the bishop of Cambrai fell ill and died in a place named 'Brosella'. At the crossing with the river Senne, where the marshland became hardly navigable, goods had to be transferred for land transportation. Brussels originated alongside the commercial road between Bruges and Cologne, still present in the Chaussée de Flandre and uphill the

Mont des Arts. On the isle of Saint Géry, presumably in 976 or 979, Charles, Duke of Lower Lorraine built a *castrum*. It was a fortified building in the marshland, or in mediaeval Dutch, a 'zele' in the 'bruoc': Bruoczele. This name ultimately became Brussel. In the French period it was pronounced as brussèl and became Bruxelles.

The port developed out of the fortress. At the place of the Grand Place the first Nedermerct (low market) originated. In these pre-urban developments of the 11th and 12th centuries the activities developed alongside the natural morphology. The river Senne and its many little arms and islands attracted the merchant and productive economy. Government and better housing was constructed uphill on the eastern side. The Count of Leuven built his first Coudenberg palace to become the residence of the dukes of Brabant. It was destroyed by fire in 1731, but had been the seat of many political powers up to that date.

The first fortifications date from the 13th century when a 4 km wall with seven gates surrounded the city. After a short occupation by Flanders and a reconquest by Brabant, the second wall was added in the second half of the 14th century. In 1430, Burgundy annexed Brabant and Brussels became the capital of a very influential state. Philip the Good enlarged the Coudenberg palace and made the city pay for an Aula Magna, the biggest civic hall of those times. There, in 1465, was the first meeting of the *Etats Généraux* of the bourgeoisie of the Low Countries held. So Brussels became the scene of many events of the religious wars in Europe, as it was also a capital during the reign of the Spanish Habsburg emperors (1482-1713). Charles V, born in Ghent and raised in Malines, made it its first reigning centre before leaving for Madrid. Throughout these functions Brussels became a cosmopolitan political centre.

The early morphology based on natural form formats the basic social geography of the city. The western part downtown in the valley of the river Senne became housed the urban entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Its strength can be seen in the luxurious guild houses at the Grand Place. Its architecture wavers between the neogothic style of the catholic mayors and the renaissance style of the liberal rulers. Uphill and to the east is where the aristocracy and political powers built their quarters, as can still be seen around the Mont des Arts. The 18th century was the rule of the 'Austrians' (1713-1794), a time period which saw the construction of the Royal Square on the Mont des Arts, the Parc, the Parliament building as well as Martyrs Square. It remained the centre for rulers during the French rule (1794-1815), the Dutch rule (1815-1830) and from independence onwards (1830-...). Within the second wall the Marolles constituted the first popular neighbourhood of the time.

URBAN SPRAWL

The expansion beyond the walls was basically a process that occurred from the second half of the 19th century (Zitouni, 2010). The industrial revolution arrived from England to the continent. New industrial activities related to transport (trains) and production (textile) took place at the edges of the city. These activities attract vast quantities of rural migrants to the nearby residential neighbourhoods for workers. Brussels as the capital of the new nation state led to the erection of a number of national monuments: the Martyrs Square (1838), the Congress column (1850-1859), the Cinquantenaire (1880) and the Palace of Justice (1866-1883). Significant works also changed the aspect of downtown, including the construction of the Galeries (1846) and the vaulting of the Senne (1867-1871). These transformations brought about the first bourgeois suburbanisation east of the Royal Quarter, with the construction of the Leopold Quarter (1838-1847), the Luxemburg station (1854-1855) and the Leopold Park with a zoo and leisure area (1851). The rural surroundings in the other directions were taken up by the industrial revolution and the construction of railway stations in the south (first located in 1840 in present-day Place Rouppe, it was moved to its current location in 1864) and in the north (1846). New industries around the canal transformed Molenbeek into a 'Little Manchester'. That expansion was structured in 1862 with the General Plan for the Extension and Embellishment of the City and Suburbs of Brussels (Figure 1), by Victor Besme, the road inspector for King Leopold II and, as such, the architect of the structure of the expansion beyond the inner ring road. The expansion was structured by the Avenue Leopold II towards Koekelberg, the Avenue Tervueren towards the colonial museum, the Avenue Louise towards the park or the Royal Tracé, connecting the Royal Palace with the private residences of the monarchy in Laeken.

That structure contained the first belt around the pentagon, totally urbanised in the Interbellum. After World War II, a second expansion urbanised the outer belt of municipalities within the actual Brussels-Capital Region. Today, the urban fabric expands far beyond that administrative border and goes even beyond the outer ring road around Brussels.

POPULATION

As of Belgium's independence its capital counted close to 100,000 inhabitants (98,279). That increased, mainly with territorial expansion (annexation of the Leopold Quarter in 1853 and Louisa in 1864) to 158,000 by 1866. In 1921 the villages of Haren, Laeken and Neder-over-Heembeek were annexed and in 1930 the city counted more than 200,000 inhabitants. That number diminished to the current 170,000 in the City of Brussels because of the rearrangement of the centre and continuous suburbanisation that caused people to move to more peripheral residential zones. As the city grew and rural surroundings were urbanised the population increase was felt more in the first and later in the second belt.

The Brussels agglomeration is now the biggest of the 18 urban centres in Belgium occupying 27 % of the surface with 56 % of the population. If one looks at the functional urban zones (agglomeration + suburbs) 75 % of the Belgian population occupies 51 % of the surface. The Brussels agglomeration, the continuous urban fabric, embraces some 36 municipalities for more than 1.5 million inhabitants. The metropolitan area comprises the whole of the old province of Brabant, or 111 municipalities with some 2.6 million inhabitants. The area covered by the planned RER, the regional urban train system, is even bigger and covers up to 3 million inhabitants.[1]

The Brussels-Capital Region achieved a maximum population in 1968, during the industrial era, of 1,079,181 inhabitants within its administrative borders. However in 1996, less than a decade later, the lowest point since the census of 1947 was reached with nearly 956,000 inhabitants. Only since 2000 have figures increased again with a growth rate of 6.2 % between 2000 and 2006. Today that number again exceeds the 1.1 million. If one includes permanent residents that are not registered in the official numbers (diplomatic staff, students, illegal residents, 'permanent' tourists, asylum seekers, etc.) the figure increases by more than 100,000. If one adds the 360,000 or so daily commuters, the population of Brussels reaches more than 1.5 million citizens. Furthermore, a demographic boom of an additional 180,000 to 200,000 is forecasted by 2020.

That population increase is not due to a return to the city. On the contrary, there remains a negative internal migration deficit of about 5,000 unities a year. More people leave Brussels than return. Every year the region loses around 15,000 to 20,000 citizens who move to the periphery, while only 10,000 new inhabitants move from outside into the region. Whereas during the Fordist suburbanisation this phenomenon could be called an urban exodus – people

1 For a comprehensive analysis of Brussels, see Corijn & Vloeberghs (2009).

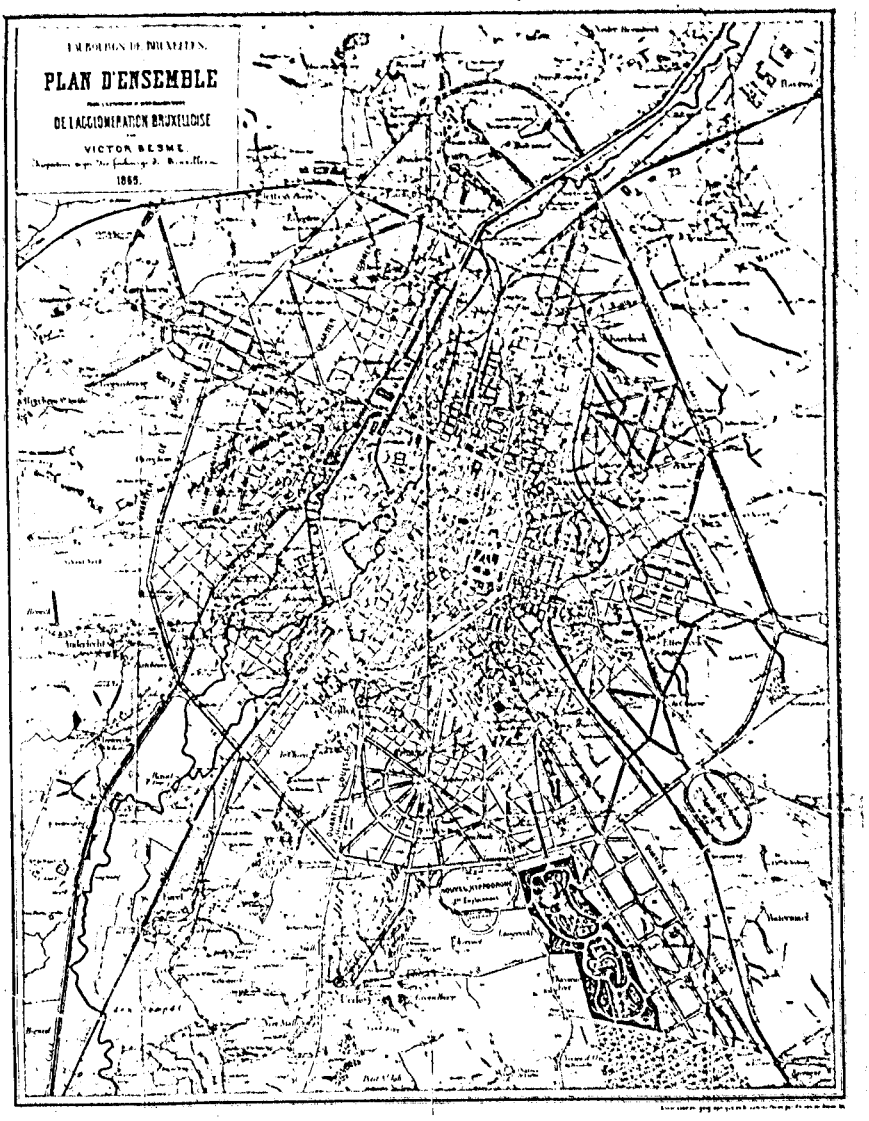

Fig. 1. General Plan for the Extension and Embellishment of the City and Suburbs of Brussels of Victor Besme (1866)

moving to a more residential green belt (see chapter by Kesteloot) –, today we have to speak of an urbanisation of the periphery, a densification of the outskirts. Indeed, the search for affordable housing drives young families to residential areas just outside the Region. This trend is, however, not followed by a large segment of the young families, not having these means to leave and mainly from foreign backgrounds.

The demographic growth has two sources. A bit less than half of it is due to natural growth, *i.e.* to a positive ratio of natality over mortality. Relatively, Brussels has more young adults than the rest of the country and that naturally leads to a high birth rate, especially in the central neighbourhoods. The bigger half of the population growth is due to international immigration, of which a large part is now due to EU citizens, mainly from the east. So the overall trends are clear: the population is becoming relatively younger, more diverse and also less wealthy. We also see a further reduction of the size of households with a typical urban phenomenon which is the prevalence of one adult households with or without children. In Brussels the majority of households fall in that category.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, Brussels is not very densely populated. Today there are around 65 inhabitants per ha, by 2020 it will increase to 73 and by 2060 to 82 (de Salle, 2013). Compared to Lyon (with 90inh/ha) that is low. Only the pentagon with 105 inh/ha or Saint-Josse-ten-Noode with more than 200 inh/ha can compare with the average for Paris (200 inh/ha). These high-density neighbourhoods are at the same time characterised by the limited public access to green areas, especially compared to other areas, and the highest number of young children.

Brussels should be able to withstand an increased population, but then densification has to be considered for areas outside the city centre, within the second belt and the middle class residential zones. Of course that will not be met without resistance. Moreover, the demographic boom challenges a number of provisions and the structural under-financing of the region. To keep up with the pace, housing should increase by some 7,000 units a year, whereas the actual rhythm is around 4,500. More than 20,000 additional places are needed in education, mainly in maternities and primary schools. Other services like public transport, recreation, health care and culture need to be substantially increased, not to mention employment.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES

The rapid growth of the population only accentuates the tensions within the Brussels urban system. Let us take up the main challenges: employment, housing, education and mobility.

Employment

The Brussels economy is not doing so badly. The Brussels metropolis, looking at the territory of the old province of Brabant, accounts for one third of the Belgian GDP and the inner centre alone, the BCR, represents nearly one fifth (Vandermotten, 2013). The dynamics of the post-industrial economy tend to concentrate more activity within urban centres whilst the peripheral industrial zones are declining. Brussels offers more than 710,000 jobs to what is the most highly educated labour market of Europe, of which 91 % are in the tertiary and quaternary sectors. Economic growth has been greater than in the two other regions of the country. The pure figures are not so bad. It is the structure of the economy in relation to the structure of the population that raises some questions. Two figures illustrate this. The majority of the jobs are not taken up by Brusselers, but by the more than 360,000 commuters living outside the region. Furthermore, the region has an unemployment rate of 22 % with more than 110,000 unemployed, mostly concentrated in the broader Canal Zone (from lower Forest, Saint-Gilles, to Anderlecht, Molenbeek, Laeken, Schaerbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode) where rates can go up to 50 %.

One could consider these contrasts as a simple result of the fact that the statistical and administrative limits do not coincide with the functional urban area including the periphery. Adding the figures of the Brussels-Capital Region to those of the adjacent provinces would of course give less contrasted ratios. Nevertheless these figures illustrate two structural characteristics of the Brussels metropolis. The first is the very drastic transition from an industrial national capital to a post-industrial international centre. At the height of industrial employment in Brussels at the end of the 50s there were more than 170,000 jobs available in manufacturing. Now that number is not more than 40,000 of which most are employees. The industrial Canal Zone has not transitioned, has not delivered an alternative urban productive sector, and does not offer a labour market for the unemployed workers of its neighbourhoods. Now even labourers coming from the peripheral residential areas outside Brussels take up the remaining industrial jobs. The broader Brussels Canal Zone has become an area with many unemployed and poor people. This area holds the majority of the 28 % Brusselers living on or below the poverty line and many of the 30 % of Brussels children living in families without an income; this area is the location of Brussels' social cleavage. The second structural characteristic is the mirror image: most of our elites are often anti-urban, do not invest the city centre and prefer to live in the green suburban belt that is mostly outside of the administrative border of the region. There are historical reasons for this suburbanity, reinforced by the suburbanisation of the Fordist welfare politics (see chapter by Kesteloot). These two elements explain the

mismatch of the social geography and the economic activity in the Brussels-Capital Region. An in-depth analysis should take into consideration the urban sprawl. But, of course, the administrative borders determine the fiscal base of the region. And there the diagnosis is clear: inhabitants do not take up the majority of the jobs in Brussels. Reducing unemployment can only be done in three ways: an increased employment of Brusselers in the periphery, better training opportunities for the existing labour market and, above all, the development of a new type of urban productive economy closer to jobseekers' exiting abilities.

Housing crisis

As opposed to other Belgian cities the majority of the population in Brussels rents houses. Brussels is in that sense more comparable to other large cities in Europe. More than 55 % of households rent and in the city centre that is up to 80 %. In the outskirts and the periphery the ratio is inversed: there more than two thirds own their house. In the city centre three quarters of households are one adult with or without children. There is high mobility in those neighbourhoods. Young families, especially with children, cannot afford to buy or rent a house that is big enough and that fulfils other requirements regarding environment, space and quality in the central areas. They tend to move outwards. The rise in prices, not least due to the internationalisation process, influences those movements. The less well-off families are expelled from the centre-east between the Grand Place and the European Quarter and till the university campuses. They tend to concentrate in the cheaper neighbourhoods at the other side of the canal. The high rates of mobility are completely led by the market. Those families do not have the means to follow the pattern of moving out Brussels in search of better conditions.

There is a great deficit in social housing. Social housing only reaches 8.5 % in the region and even if one includes regulated rents it does not exceed 10 %. That contrasts with the 26 % of households on waiting lists (over 36,000!). Paris offers 14 % social housing, London 25 % and Amsterdam up to 55 %. It is really a question of policy as the city of Brussels owns close to half of the houses on its territory.

Housing prices are too expensive for 70 % of the Brussels population. And that pressure tends to increase as the demand exceeds the offer. The estimate derived from the demographic boom is that there will be a need for 70,000 new dwellings within the next ten years, whereas the yearly production

does not reach 5,000 units.[2] That situation does not only regulate the lack of housing but also influences the high numbers of homeless people, the lack of renovation and thus the bad condition of a number of these dwellings and the maintenance of a negative internal migration balance driving out the middle class families.

Educational gap

There is no 'Brussels' educational system. The institutional organisation of this city-region does not give it competences at the level of personal matters like welfare, culture or education. Thus the two Communities present in this bilingual capital region organise their own educational systems. Then there is a third operator made up of the international schools, the private academies and the European schools. The French community caters for nearly 80 % of the education, the Flemish for about 15 % and the third sector for the remaining 5 %. Overall, at the secondary level 64 % of the youth follow a general education, nearly 20 % a professional track and 16 % a technical school. That produces a very dispersed educational landscape, without Brussels having responsibility over coordination or integration.

The educational system does rather well in European comparative terms (PISA data). But at the same time the system in Brussels is one of the most socially selective. There is a rapid cascade from comprehensive education towards professional and then technical fields. That selection coincides with the social geography of the city: the most excluded categories are also the migrants and lower social classes. That leads to a dramatic educational gap: one fifth of the Brussels youth leaves school without secondary education, which is almost double compared to Flanders and Wallonia.

There seems to be a great gap between the very multicultural and multilingual composition of the Brussels population and the conception of a communitarian monolingual school system. One third of the Brussels population is of foreign origin, more than half of the population does not have Belgo-Belgian references and more than 40 % of the families are multilingual, while the educational policies are part of the successive Belgian state reforms towards a federal state, officially based on monolingual territories. That means that Flemish schools in Brussels only have one teaching language, but a majority of pupils speak another language at home. The French schools also do not deliver the necessary language skills to operate in the Brussels labour market and that is especially the case in the professional and technical schools.

2 For an overview, see Dessouroux & Romainville (2011).