

Article

## Reconceptualizing the “Publicness” of Public Housing: The Case of Brussels

Nele Aernouts \* and Michael Ryckewaert

Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research, Department of Geography, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1050 Brussels, Belgium;  
E-Mails: nele.aernouts@vub.ac.be (N.A.), michael.ryckewaert@vub.ac.be (M.R.)

\* Corresponding author

Submitted: 12 May 2014 | In Revised Form: 6 December 2014 | Accepted: 27 January 2015 |  
Published: 9 April 2015

### Abstract

This article brings together various spatial and political theorizations on the commons as a broader project to understand multiple dimensions of the inclusive nature of public housing. By picking up theorizations on the commons, the article feeds the debate on the loss of “publicness” of public housing and removes attention from what is seen as a state related business. Four core-dimensions are identified: ownership, participation, community activity and physical configuration. The article takes a sample of public housing estates in the Brussels capital region as case studies to test the capacity of this framework to detect the degree of “publicness” of various forms of public housing. The preliminary results—based on this limited sample of cases studied through interviews with privileged informers and a literature study—suggest that approaches where individual households are actively involved in the organization of the dwelling environment work best to compensate for the loss of “publicness” that has occurred since the decline of the welfare state. In that respect, these approaches tie in with some early predecessors of “public” housing, mainly cooperatively organized garden city developments. Further in-depth case study research should shed more light on the validity of this hypothesis, as well as on the precise mechanisms and features that determine this regained “publicness”.

### Keywords

commons; inclusion; publicness; public housing

### Issue

This article is part of the special issue “Housing and Space: Toward Socio-Spatial Inclusion”, edited by Dr. Dallas Rogers (University of Western Sydney, Australia), Dr. Rae Dufty-Jones (University of Western Sydney, Australia) and Dr. Wendy Steele (RMIT University, Australia).

© 2015 by the authors; licensee Cogitatio (Lisbon, Portugal). This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

### 1. Introduction

Recent literature on public space and public services has developed a discourse on the loss of “publicness”. This has been linked to declining public investments since the late 20th century, which have brought about a re-regulation of public spaces and public services. Among other things, the literature focuses on market-driven administrative reforms generalized as “New Public Management” (Haque, 2001), the de-politicization of the public sphere (Garnham, 1990), the substitution of

public by private sector ownership (Haque, 1996; Paddison & Sharp, 2007), and the commercialization of public space (Low & Smith, 2006; Sennett, 1977; Zukin, 1995). It does not only highlight the social-economic side effects of these tendencies for low-income groups, such as a less equitable distribution of resources, but also points at the lack of public debate on the nature of public good itself (Coursey & Bozeman, 1990; Paddison & Sharp, 2007).

Whereas the literature on the decline of publicness in public spaces and services is quite abundant, the loss of publicness in public housing has received less atten-

tion. Nonetheless, public housing has also experienced profound changes since the decline of the Welfare state model. Among the most important changes are the privatization of public housing (Forrest & Murie, 1988; Walker, 2001) epitomized by “right to buy” policies that allow tenants to acquire their dwelling; a shift from the provision of public housing by the state to provide support or subsidies for individual households on the private rental market (or from “aide à la pièce” to “aide à la personne”) (Kemmeny, 1995); the establishment of public housing programs reserved for middle income groups; and shifts in the social housing system from a “general” or “universal” system to “residual” or “safety net” system (Ghekière, 2007; Kemeny, 1995; Winters & Elsinga 2008).

Some scholars have attempted to explore alternative concepts that enhance publicness (Coursey & Bozeman, 1990; Fraser, 1990; Haque, 2001). One of these approaches is a reorientation towards “the common” (Bailey, 2013; Kratzwald, 2012; Mattei, 2012; Reid, 2003). A reorientation of “publicness” towards “the common” results from rethinking the meaning of the state/market paradigm in light of an appropriation of public goods by citizens for a common purpose (Bailey, 2013; Harvey, 2012; Mattei, 2012). Indeed, while traditionally, commons were associated with shared environmental resources, increasingly, public goods are being recognized as potential “commons” (Mattei, 2012; Reid, 2003; Stavrides in *An Architektur*, 2010). This reorientation is intertwined with emerging social practices, the so-called “commoning” practices (Linebaugh, 2008) of civil society that address new forms of citizenry, inclusion, co-habitation and co-production.

Although public housing concerns both a service and a space of cohabitation, few attempts have been made to re-conceptualize the “publicness” of public housing in light of the commons. This is striking as many public housing actors have origins in philanthropic or cooperative approaches at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century that heavily relied on the mobilization of common property resources. Next, emerging practices point to such reconceptualization, for instance in the appearance of government sponsored community land trust housing schemes. In addition, the history of public housing has not systematically investigated the degree to which common property resources or “commoning” practices have played a role in the establishment of the various forms of public housing that occur throughout Europe and within particular countries.

In order to do this, this article develops a framework to analyze public housing models on crucial dimensions of the commons. To explain the link between “publicness” and commons and to develop this framework, it builds on commons theory (De Angelis, Stavrides in *An Architektur*, 2010; Harvey, 2012; Mattei, 2012; Ostrom, 1990) and on planning and architecture literature on “commons” and shared space (De Rijck, Guldentops, & Vansteelant, 2000; Loeckx, 1998; Lofland,

1998; Stavrides, 2010). It then takes the Brussels Capital Region as a case study to test this framework because of two reasons. Firstly, as the capital of the first country to be subject to industrialization on the European mainland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city was very soon confronted with the need to develop adequate housing for the growing number of low income groups that came to settle in the city. This has led to a wide range of approaches and housing models since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (De Meulder, 1983; Lagrou & Janssens, 1985; Ryckewaert, 1999; Schoonbrodt, 1979; Smets 1977). Secondly, recent and emerging practices in Brussels exemplify the decline of “publicness” we identified above, as well as the rethinking of public housing in line with the commons. On the one hand, a new autonomous public real estate agency has started to develop middle income housing since the late 1980s, illustrating both the trend towards “New Public Management” and a reorientation of public housing policy towards middle-income groups. On the other hand, a first step has been taken towards an institutionalized form of housing based on commons principles, with the establishment of Community Land Trust Brussels, the first of such organizations on the European mainland. To conclude, some preliminary findings of the identification on the inclusive nature of various commons aspects in public housing in Brussels will be identified.

## 2. Redefining “Publicness” in Light of the Commons

In the welfare state model, resources such as energy, health care, infrastructure, water supplies, public transportation, housing and public media were assigned to the state. Therefore, the term “public” is intuitively used as something that is provided or owned by the state (Kratzwald, 2012). In contrast, the burgeoning public space and service literature attaches distinct, yet divergent meanings to “public”, referring to the “public sphere” as a political concept and the “publicness of space” as a spatial concept (Low & Smith, 2006). According to Habermans (1962), “the public sphere mediates between society and state”. It is a social domain in which political participation is enacted by means of public discourse, debate and where possible, a common judgment on matters of mutual interest. “Public space” on the other hand, can absorb meaning from the public sphere, but it can also reaffirm, contradict and channel social and political relations (Heynen & Loeckx, 1998; Low & Smith, 2006).

One main principle behind the commons appearing in the vast amounts of literature that is written on the concept is that society is dependent on natural and cultural resources. These resources are shared and governed for the common benefit, and therefore called “commons”. Today, academics increasingly complement this resource-based definition by notions of citizenship and inclusion. Ostrom (1990) points at the

presence of a “community”, small and stable populations with a thick social network and social norms promoting conservation of common property resources. De Angelis (in *An Architektur*, 2010) describes commons as a process that enables people to develop new kinds of relationships by acting together. For Mattei (2012) developing commons is about the creation of a community, based on specific mechanisms of participation and inclusion. However, relating commons to groups of similar people bears the danger of the creation of closed communities that exclude others from their privileged commons (Harvey, 2012; Stavrides in *An Architektur*, 2010). Therefore some researchers plead for a reorientation of the notion of the common towards the public sphere. According to Harvey, “public goods and spaces become commons when social forces appropriate, protect and enhance them for a common purpose and a mutual benefit” (Harvey, 2012, p. 73). For Stavrides, commons have to provide ground to build a public realm and give opportunities for discussing what is good for all. Kratzwald (2012) argues that the recognition and creation of common goods is not only related to self-organized social networks of citizens, but can contribute to a participation and empowerment of citizens in the public sector, as such relating to the original meaning of the “public sphere”.

In order to detect the level of “publicness” in public housing, we relate these public space, sphere and commons concepts to architecture and planning literature. We propose four core dimensions: ownership, participation, community activity and the spatial structure of the environment.

A first core dimension to interpret “publicness” is *ownership*. On a macro-level, ownership refers to the share of housing and land that is held in common. According to Angotti (2008) and Barnes (2006) a trenchant expansion of community land is crucial to counteract price elevations through gentrification and speculation. At the level of the housing project, it refers to the legal status of a place (Marcuse, 2005). In public housing we can identify three subdimensions: the legal status of the operator, the type of ownership of the house and the land on which the house is built; the presence and use of public spaces or non-residential functions. For the type of ownership, a distinction can be made between lease, individual purchase, collective purchase, hereditary tenure and the preconditions that go along with this. Preconditions such as income thresholds, regulations on re-sale of owner-occupied housing are important, as they regulate access to several types of public housing. The larger the community or group of communities that benefits from any form of ownership as defined above, the more the place is public.

The second dimension deals with the *participation* of inhabitants of the housing estate and the neighborhood in the planning, design and maintenance of their dwelling environment. The greatest degree of “public-

ness” is reached in case of co-production (Van den Broeck, Verschure, & Esho, 2004). Co-production means that there is an equitable relationship between communities, professionals, and third parties, bearing in mind existing power relations. It does not imply consulting citizens when developing a project, but an intensive process of co-creation (Marcuse, 2009).

The third dimension that entails “publicness” is the presence of *community activity*. According to Putnam, effective participation in local government depends on a tradition of small-scale community activity, strengthening mutual relationships and social cohesion (Putnam, 1993; Taylor, 1998). This especially holds true when keeping in mind the underprivileged inhabitants of public housing, for whom the neighborhood forms an important reference and source of access to contacts (Driessens, 1998; Overbekking et al., 1983). This access is often most easily found by homogeneous groups of neighbors, sharing the same network (Driessens, 1998). For this reason, it is important to have a variety of choices to be involved in community activity. This encouragement of diversity allows the expressing of different and often conflicting benefits and builds on overlapping these communities (Taylor, 1998). As Taylor states, “from these diverse activities, the confidence can grow to engage more widely, to find common ground with others”. Community activity proves to be particularly successful when inhabitants receive the means to improve their own environment (Watson, 1994). Given the limited historical data on this topic, the third dimension will not be dealt with systematically in the discussion of the cases that serve as examples of the various Brussels housing models.

The fourth aspect, the *physical configuration*, refers to the morphology and architecture of the project. Distinction can be made between a place’s macro design—its relationship with the hinterland— and the design of the place itself (Kesteloot et al., 1999; Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). For the macro design, a study of Kesteloot et al. (1999) demonstrates that centrality and connectivity are important dimensions. The two dimensions allude to the presence of commercial or social services in the vicinity and the accessibility of a place by public or private transport (Varna & Tiesdell, 2010). At the level of the dwelling, architectural-ethnographic research has delivered evidence that the quality of the housing environment contributes significantly to the development of social relationships (De Rijck et al., 2000; Loecx, 1998; Stavrides, 2010). The research illustrates that a gradual transition between public and private, open and closed spaces is significant, as it provides opportunities for informal encounters and freedom of appropriation (De Rijck et al., 2000; Lofland, 1998; Stavrides, 2010). According to Stavrides (2010), such “in between zones” or “porous places” influence informal encounter, creativity and new forms of commonality.

In order to understand the degree of “publicness”

in various approaches to create affordable housing in the Brussels Capital Region, a sample of public housing estates is crossed with the dimensions listed above. Building on former research on public housing and architectural paradigms (Ryckewaert, 1999), the sample covers both a geographical and a temporal spectrum, looking at projects built between the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today, and stretching from the greener edges of the agglomeration to the more dense neighborhoods in de the 19<sup>th</sup> century belt and the inner city.

### 3. The Publicness of Public Housing in the Brussels Capital Region

#### 3.1. Housing the Working-Class

Although in Europe public housing is seen as a product of the welfare state, its seeds go back to the beginning of the 19th century. Demographic changes, industrialization, proletarianization and related problems of hygiene and diseases initiated the so-called “housing question” all over Europe. In Belgium, the first housing law was enacted in 1889, as a result of social unrest and riots related to the poor working and living conditions of laborers. At the time, social housing was organized by private housing associations of enlightened entrepreneurs or industrialists with philanthropic ideals, like the Familistères of Godin in Laken and Guise (De Meulder, 1983; Dour, 1890; Lagrou & Janssens, 1985). Assimilated into a liberal tradition in housing policy, the first housing law was based on an indirect government intervention. It supported credit companies and savings banks in granting loans at preferential rates to self-builders and authorized the establishment of local social housing associations (Smets, 1977). The law provided a considerable stimulus for public housing but did not contribute to a fundamental improvement of living conditions of the poor. It mostly benefited individual self-built housing in the sparse space at the border of the city or, supported by cheap railway tickets, in the rural hinterland

(De Decker et al., 2005) and loans for such housing were only affordable for the more wealthy workmen.

The development of two housing complexes in the Rue Victor Hugo in Schaarbeek, designed in 1902, is a clear result of the first housing laws. The municipal social housing association that was in charge of the project was “the result of a difficult compromise” (Huberty, 1999, p. 36). At the end of the 19th century, social policy was still in its infancy, and although many were convinced that housing workmen deserved specific attention, visions on ownership and architecture were very dependent on different ideologies. While liberals and Christian-democrats of the municipality were convinced that home ownership, preferably of small, clustered housing of one floor outside the physical and moral unhealthy city center was most preferential, the socialist fraction was more interested in tenant multi-family housing close to work and recreation activities. In a discussion among municipal councilors it was stated: “Isn't it self-evident that collective housing will facilitate bad habits typical for an agglomeration, on the same place, between people of the same class?...When you only ensure a workman a dwelling under cheap conditions, without forcing him to save money, you do not do more than encouraging him to a greater consumption in the bar” (Simonetti, 1999, p. 28). In contrast, the socialist founding father of the association, Louis Bertrand, was convinced that “The house should be part of a public service....The task the socialist municipal government has to fulfill is to make the municipality owner of the housing stock, to make these houses as healthy as possible and to rent them for the lowest price” (Bertrand as cited in Simonetti, 1999, p. 22). While there was no question of participation of inhabitants in decision-making bodies, the emancipation of the working class was an important feature for Bertrand. It was his belief that political power, and as such the emancipation of the proletariat, could only be conquered through the power of the municipalities, which were able to exert pressure on the state and central power (Bertrand & Vinck, 1900).

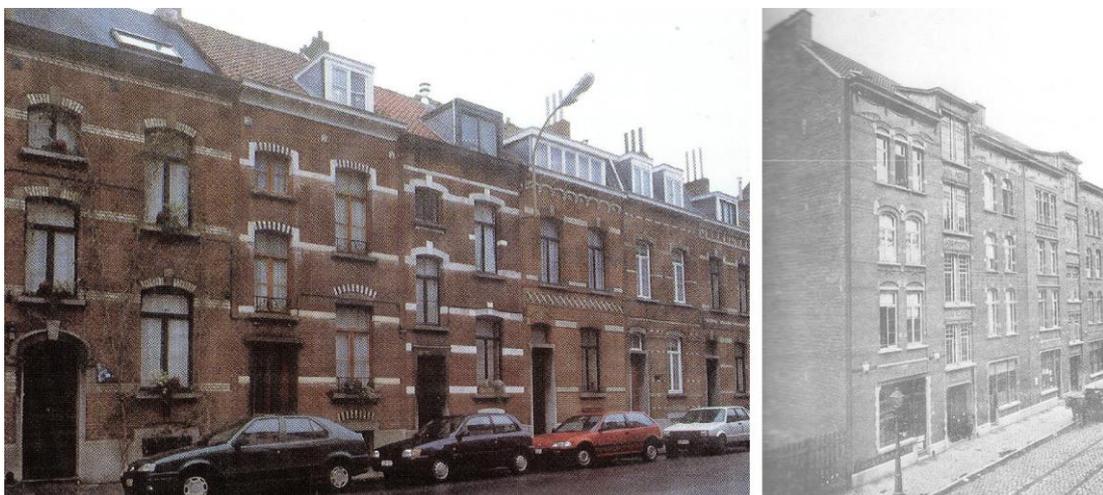


Figure 1. Owner-occupied and tenant housing Victor Hugo (date unknown). Source data: Huberty, 1999.

The first constructions of the housing association, “Victor Hugo”, designed by laureates of an architect competition, are exemplifying for this compromise (Figure 1). Nowadays swallowed by the center of the Brussels Capital Region, back then the owner-occupied lines of row housing and multifamily housing were built on a piece of land in a neighborhood in full expansion at the edge of an agglomeration, where land prices and the connection to the water and sewage system were not too expensive. In the architecture of both projects, the sense of community of former workmen's quarters or philanthropic experiments is hard to find. The facades line the pavement and are kept neatly to the building line. The row house is similar to the typology of the bourgeois house, but reduced in size and refinement, while the multifamily housing is based on the “maison de rapport” (e.g., tenements house), the former speculation housing with four or five levels and more than two apartments per floor (Smets, 1997). Despite this, the architects undertook some undeniable efforts in order to pursue variety in the repetition of blocks. In the lines of row houses, a small niche and a step buffer the door from the footpath. The elevated first floor enables a visual relationship with the street, without allowing passersby to look inside the house. By varying brickwork colors and patterns, cornices, form and montage of the windows, each house has its own particularity. Also the architect of the multifamily apartment blocks played with these components in the design of the facade. The plan of the blocks is based on the system of “double houses”: the hall, which was seen as the extension of the street, leads visitors to a collective garden on the ground floor and two individual apartments on each floor upstairs. The heightened roof and the French and Dutch statements on the facade of the stairwells, supporting the inhabitants to “be hardworking, clean and economical for all”, accentuates this communal space and interestingly reveals how fears of bad behavior were met.

Similarly to the development of the housing association, the “publicness” of the two housing projects could be defined as a compromise. Although the row of single-family houses was available at an affordable price for working families, the public investment was channeled back to the private market once the project was resold. Also the in-between spaces are less pronounced when compared to the multi-family housing. Furthermore, the construction of the projects was not a result of coproduction with future residents or inhabitants of the neighborhood, but some of the founders of the housing associations hoped for a greater power for municipalities in order to ensure citizen participation.

### *3.2. Living in Good Spirit with Nature. The Cooperative Garden Neighborhood Model*

The social and political transformations in the after-

math of World War I paved the way for a new approach towards the housing question. The devastation and great housing need during and after the war awakened a strong social sensibility among Belgian politicians and city planners. The reconstruction congress that was organized in 1920 on the initiative of *Union des Villes* was a yardstick in this respect. The main targets of the congress were the struggle against private speculation and the connected question of land ownership. Out of the social consequences of speculation building, conference participants Verwilghen and Van den Brempt concluded that the housing problem in large cities could be reduced to questions of land ownership. In order to remediate speculation following postwar austerity, both speakers were convinced that it was desirable “to steer a maximum of effort to re-obtain land for the community” (Van den Brempt as cited in Smets, 1977, p. 106). The plentiful, affordable lands around the city center were seen as the location and the garden city as the urban model to do this. The “garden city”, the brainchild of Ebenezer Howard, was seen as the synthesis between the city and the countryside, a place in which different populations lived together in good contact with nature (De Meulder et al., 1997). The viewpoints reflected at the congress would become the source of inspiration of the National Company of Cheap Housing. The Belgian umbrella organization had been created a year earlier to set up construction programs for social housing companies. The projects realized in its early period clearly pronounce a preference for the, in 1920, proposed garden city, but diverged from the concept of Howard (Smets, 1977).

This is also the case for Moortebek, a garden neighborhood of the cooperative “Les Foyers Collectifs” (Figure 2). The German garden suburb, rather than the garden city of Howard was the inspiration source for the establishment of a tenant cooperative, an ownership structure in which tenants are shareholders of the organization. The founding member of “Les Foyers Collectifs” got acquainted with the model while living in Germany. In the “Maison du Peuple”, where he worked as a jurist, he elaborated the idea to do a similar thing in Brussels and launched a call for different sections of the Belgian labor party to become candidate-member of the cooperative. With the money of the members, the state, the province and the National Company, the Foyer acquired a remote piece of forested land at the confines of three municipalities (Les Foyers Collectifs, 1981). A tramline would make up for this peripheral location. The base lines of the master plan for the piece of land—the respect for the topography, the orientation of the streets, the lighting of the houses and parcels, the dimensions of the streets—were largely based on the directives of the National Companies. Next to housing, a center was to be included with a cooperative grocery store, butcher, shoemaker shop, pharmacy, a meeting and medical consultation center, an office and residence

for the concierge. In order to avoid monotony, for the architecture of each street, the urban planner in charge relied on several teams of architects. Although the cooperative was not involved in the design of the master plan, the administrative council organized a premature form of member participation for the architecture of the buildings. They questioned the 115 members of the cooperative about their wishes regarding the interior spaces. The architects got down to work with the results of the referendum and afterwards discussed their design with the cooperative (Les Foyers Collectifs, 1981).

Nowadays the tramline has been abolished and a highway borders the garden neighborhood, but the quarter has been able to preserve its specific spatial qualities. A linear park that replaced a former car route and public grass fields offer a great playground for pedestrians. The profile of the streets makes their route even more comfortable: pedestrian paths are divided from car traffic through rows of grass and trees.

The houses are not fenced, but buffered from the pedestrian paths by a “front garden” decorated with a wide range of plants and pottery. Also, the involvement of inhabitants in decision-making processes remains an important feature today. The governing board is still comprised of tenants. They gather yearly with all inhabitants to inform and negotiate about activities and renovation work. In contrast, community activity has diminished. Since the arrival of the car, many people have started to spend their free time abroad. Before, they relied on several sports and cultural activities in the community center, including horticulture classes, theatre, basketball, football and gymnastics (Figure 3). Besides that, the changing composition of inhabitants due to more strict entrance rules to housing makes it difficult for the aging government board to attract people to their activities. Nevertheless, sports facilities in the community center and the public parks are still intensively used by inhabitants of the surroundings.



**Figure 2.** Moortebeek (2014). Source data: Bing Maps (2014).



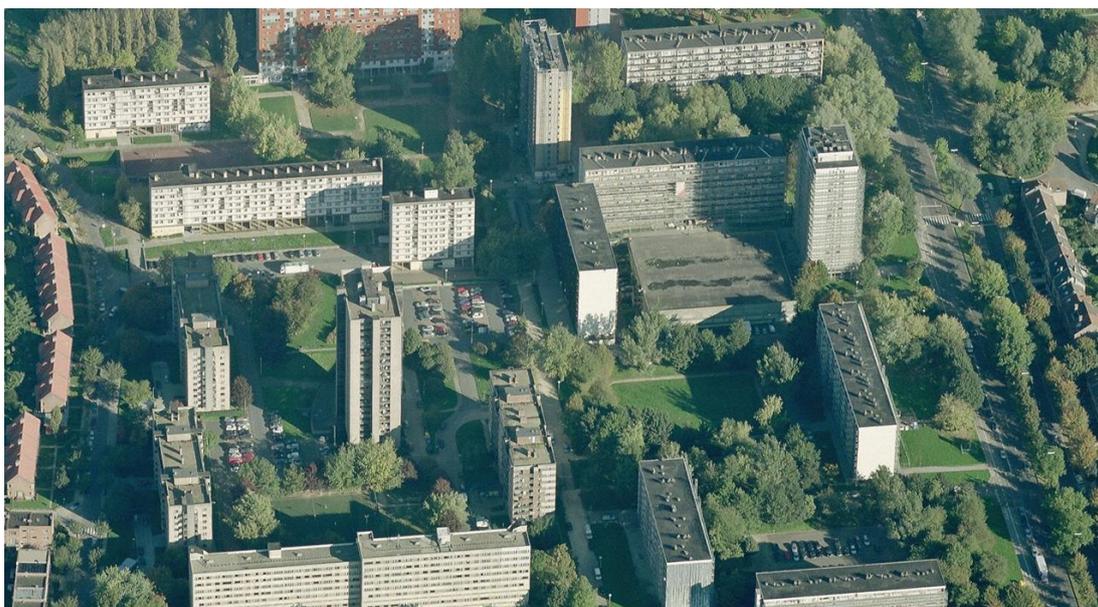
**Figure 3.** Moortebeek between 1921 and 1980 (exact date unknown): private garden and sports field. Source data: Les Foyers Collectifs (1996).

Although the thick social network of former times is not present anymore, the garden suburb has many elements that point to a high degree of publicness: the legal structure of tenant-shareholders; the pedestrian routes, public spaces and community activities that attract inhabitants from outside; and the participation of inhabitants in decision-making processes.

*3.3. Housing the Masses. The High-Rise Housing of the Modern Movement*

The end of the 1920s induced a break from the garden city model in Belgium. The autonomy of the tenant cooperatives of the garden neighborhood, which did not appeal to municipal governments, and the financial limitations imposed on the public sector in light of the economic crisis were decisive in this respect. After the congress of the influential architecture platform CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) that took place in Brussels in 1930, the formula of the free-standing tower in an open park landscape would dominate modernist urban thinking in Belgium (Smets, 1977). In order to guarantee habitability and affordability in this new ideal environment, the boundaries of the minimum dwelling were defined, limiting space to the precise movements and needs of human beings (Mumford, 2002). The maximal functionality and plentiful community services in a healthy green environment would make up for the limited footprint of the individual house (De Meulder et al., 1999). While this modernist ideal found consensus among architecture circles, in Belgium, its principles were only applied after World War II. The serial production, rational land use and functional units were an economic solution for the construction of social tenant housing in the strongly industrialized post-war period (Smets, 1977). In contrast

to the cooperative garden city, which was created as an alternative to the existing city, social tenant housing was built as a green field development at the border of the city or in the context of slum clearance programs in the city center. Nevertheless, in Belgium, high-rise housing projects were not produced on the same scale as in neighboring countries like the Netherlands and France. Communal services and shops at the ground floor of the housing estates were projected, but often not built. The historic Catholic hegemony preferring individual houses and family above community life certainly played a role in this respect (De Decker et al., 2005). Housing policy primarily supported access to homeownership, even if the amount of public housing produced reached a peak in this period. The strict regulations for social housing companies played a role as well. They did not allow social housing companies to build anything but housing and the involvement of private partners to include other functions seemed bureaucratically impossible (De Meulder et al., 1999). The high-rise social tenant neighborhood of Peterbos illustrates some of these shortcomings (Figure 4). The ambitious master plan of the architect to steer the urbanization of a green suburb through the development of a park neighborhood was bogged down as a result of several limitations (Kesteloot et al., 1999). First, due to the upgrade of the adjacent old boulevard into an intermediary ring, the area was cut off from the old center of the community. Next, after the construction of the first towers of the projects, the plan to mix high-rise towers with low-rise blocks to respond to the existing fine-meshed fabric of the village of Anderlecht was reduced due to budgetary limitations of one of the two social housing associations in charge. The blocks and towers would be positioned around a central court, on which the main axes of the surrounding street would converge.



**Figure 4.** Peterbos (2014). Source data: Bing Maps (2014).

This urban logic evaporated to a plantation of north-south and east-west blocks delimiting spaces monopolized by cars. Not only did the typology of the building change but also the circulation inside. In order to reduce conflict a large communal circulation space was divided into several stairwells on each floor. More budgetary limitations scaled down the envisaged articulation of the entrances to these circulation spaces. Next, out of the planned public facilities along the existing road, such as a school, a church and a community center, only a community center was built in the basement of a block in the middle of the area. The planned commercial services were also limited to three grocery shops and a laundry store. However, the park landscape offers a creative environment for children living in and around the estate, who intensively use the seemingly undefined or reduced spaces in the middle of the estate, as well as the sports fields at the border of the estate.

The attenuation of public facilities, of connections to the adjacent neighborhoods, of intermediary zones between the public areas and the private apartments in the seemingly ad hoc placed blocks and of citizen participation, highly diminishes the level of publicness in Peterbos. However, in one of the following sections, we will see that nowadays attempts are being made to improve participation and community activity to meet this loss.

#### *3.4. The Public Housing Sector in Crisis*

With the repercussions of the oil crisis in the 1970s and the socio-economic transformations in its aftermath, the role and functions of the state, and likewise the public housing sector, would be redefined. In the first instance, in Belgium, it did not directly lead to a standstill in building activities. On the contrary, as in the postwar period, the Belgian government based itself on Keynesian principles to stimulate the economy. The extra investments in social housing associations created breathing space to take up new activities. In the Brussels Capital Region between 1971 and 1980, 11,203 public dwellings were built (Zimmer, 2009). This corresponds to one fourth of the total amount of public housing in Brussels today and remains the highest number of housing produced in a decade (Zimmer, 2009). However, during this period town rehabilitation reached an apotheosis while modernism seemed to be further stripped of any architectural aspiration (De Meulder et al., 1999).

Exemplary for this period is the housing complex “Evenepoel” and the organizational changes of the municipal social housing association in charge. In order to include more low-income households, the association barred renters with higher incomes from its

patrimony. In addition, it established a management committee that gathered monthly to follow up on renters’ files. Residents were however still not included in this new governance set up (Huberty, 1999).

The four high-rise blocks of Evenepoel that were built between 1977 and 1980 are located in a former residential zone, encroached by business developments (Figure 5). While their size somehow fits in this area with medium size buildings and the buildings contain high-quality apartments with large terraces, the architecture of the building does not add value to the surrounding urban tissue. A lack of pedestrian connections to commercial and cultural services increases the isolation of the estate. The formation of trees that demarcate the public spaces between the buildings reinforces the green structure of the adjacent sports park, but a physical connection is lacking.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the full brunt of the crisis hit Belgium. The policy measures of the right wing government in power struck a hard blow against the existing housing policy. The demolition of entire city quarters and difficult-to-appropriate and “inhuman” dwelling complexes and public space, united housing activists in a struggle against the destruction of the traditional city. Activists, ecologists, youth and women’s movements pleaded for a more human approach to dwelling, with attention for participation and community aspects of cohabitation (De Meulder, 1997). Against this background, the regionalization of Belgium into a federal state with three communities (the Flemish, French and German Community) and three regions (Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels Capital Region) took place. In light of this regionalization, in 1989 the national public housing company was split into three separate and autonomous regional public housing companies. These regional companies became responsible for social municipal housing associations and tenant cooperatives, operating on their respective territories (Zimmer, 2009). In Brussels, this regionalization coincided with a strong stagnation of the public housing sector. While in Flanders at the beginning of the 1990s operations were set up to increase the share of public housing, in Brussels the yearly production of public housing between 1990 and 2014 decreased to a historically low level. Although the extensive financial debt inherited after the regionalization and the obsolete public housing patrimony are part of the explanation, political choices play an important role as well (Romainville, 2010). Despite an increasing lack of affordable housing, today only 40% of the housing budget is devoted to the maintenance of and support for social rented housing, while the remainder is geared towards the support of homeownership and city renewal programs.



**Figure 5.** Evenepoel (2014). Source data: Bing Maps (2014).

### 3.5. New Public Housing Approaches with Shifting Meanings of “Publicness” in Response to the Housing Crisis

The invigorated support for homeownership is since 1989, among other things, has been dedicated to the construction of housing for owner occupation, organized by a regional development company (Citydev, the former Gomb). The main goals of the housing program of the company are to attract or keep middle-class families in the city and to support city rehabilitation. The attraction of middle-class families is often a double gain for the municipalities that they inhabit: it encourages investments in areas mostly left aside by private developers and ensures an increased tax income. For inhabitants of these municipalities who are bound to rent an apartment on the private market, the gains are less clear. The attraction of people with higher incomes supports gentrification. In advanced stages of gentrification, the influx of higher income groups causes property prices to rise. An additional factor that increases this possibility is that these projects are often acquired as investment property. Not only the ownership structure, but also the spatial layout of housing projects of Citydev has little to offer in terms of publicness, especially in its early period.

This can be verified by looking at one of their city renewal projects containing 4 apartment buildings along two roads (Figure 6). The project is located in Kuregem, a central and well-connected neighborhood at the border of the center of the city and housing many migrants and low-income families. Two adjacent buildings are located next to a square, but hardly have any involvement beyond the confines of it, nor one another. The outdoor space is entirely subdivided into a

patchwork of private gardens. The lifted ground floor elevates the distance between the apartments and the street, while the minimalistic materialization and positioning of the windows of the brick building indicate non-involvement with the public realm. In the more recent building at the other side of the block the ground floor is also elevated, but the entrances lie one step higher, and have a setback with a niche. In contrast to the brick building, the facade is appropriated by the inhabitants of the block. Clotheslines, climbers, plants and flowerpots decorate the facade and give a lively impression to the in-between realm created by entrances, protruding terraces and bay windows.

Despite the serious stagnation in the social housing production in Brussels since 1989, the social housing sector has made progress in its policy. The regional company introduced strict rules for each housing association in its territory concerning the lease of social housing. In a second phase, the region has developed diverse systems to strengthen existing initiatives provided by public housing agencies, such as a service for social support and an expansion of resources for staff (Zimmer, 2009). Regarding the dimensions of participation and community activity, the regional company has encouraged social cohesion projects in specific housing estates and the establishment of advisory boards in all social housing associations in its territory. First, the “social cohesion projects” are collaborations between a community development agency and one or more social housing agencies that aim to increase citizen participation and chances to encounter among inhabitants of housing estates with specific social problems. At present there are twenty social cohesion projects in the Brussels Capital Region. Since 2000, a community development agency has worked on such projects in



**Figure 6.** Amélie, Borsalino, Canotier, Clémenceau (2014). Source data: Bing Maps (2014).

the aforementioned housing estate of Peterbos. Their work depends on the needs and opportunities they detect: from the support of tenants's initiatives, to the organization of family excursions, social restaurants, language courses for women, workshops on rational energy use, artistic interventions and yearly fairs. Even if there is still a lot of work to do in terms of physical improvement and collaboration with social organizations working in the neighborhood, according to the community worker in charge, in 14 years community activity and solidarity among inhabitants have remarkably increased. Second, in the cooperative limited liability companies—the traditional legal status of housing associations in Brussels—residents are not part of the governing board. This was changed in 2004 in order to create a better relationship and to enhance dialogue between public housing associations and inhabitants of social housing. Nowadays, tenants can elect representatives for a period of three years. In case of maintenance and renovation works in the buildings and public spaces, they are heard by the housing association. Two representatives also have a deliberative voice on the government board. However, the effectiveness of these advisory boards strongly depends on the involvement of housing associations. In the municipal housing associations of the Evenepoel project for example, the advisory board struggles to find sufficient members to represent the 2,250 families of the housing association. Moreover, the representatives encounter difficulties raising their voices on the governance board.

### *3.6. The Establishment of a Community Land Trust in Brussels*

In 2010 the specific housing problems of the Brussels

Capital Region—the lack of affordable, quality housing on the private rental market and the limited amount of social housing expanding only very slowly, as well as pockets of gentrification in deprived neighborhoods—urged groups of citizens to seek alternative housing solutions for low-income groups. Among the participating groups were community centers, a refugee and immigrant organization, a cooperative bank, social economy associations and specialists in citizen participation. Two of these organizations, a community center and the refugee and immigrant organization, were important agencies steering this network of action. Together they had set up a zero-energy collective housing project for underprivileged households. The search for an adequate legal framework to implement similar kinds of projects raised their interest in the American Community Land Trust model as applied in the US. In 2010 a research consortium conducted a feasibility study on the implementation of the US Community Land Trust model in Brussels. At the end of 2012, the research proposed the establishment of the Brussels CLT (CLTB) as a private trust fund combined with a nonprofit organization. This setup was approved by the Brussels Capital Region and became eligible for financial support. Today, the organization is recognized by the Housing Code of Brussels and granted yearly subsidies for the construction of 30 dwellings a year. The recognition by and the (significant) subsidies from the Brussels Capital Region were important conditions to maintain affordability for low-income groups. The subsidies cover the costs of both the land and a portion of the building.

Nowadays, the legal structure of CLTB has a great influence on the ownership structure and on participation. Firstly, one of the main legal principles behind the Community Land Trust Brussels is a separation be-

tween the ownership of the home and the land ownership. The land on which collective housing projects are realized is owned and managed by the foundation of CLTB, while the dwellings are owned by the inhabitants. Inhabitants are thus able to adapt their dwelling and to live in it as long as they want. However, a clause limits the surplus value when the dwelling is sold. In order to make the dwelling affordable for the next candidate-buyer, the inhabitant can only gain 25% of the added value in case of resale. Moreover, Community Land Trust has a preemptive right and a right of priority in cases of resale. This enables the organization to make the house available for a next candidate-buyer. These legal conditions have important implications. On the one hand, inhabitants of the projects become “owners”, enabling them to save money, while offering them housing security. On the other hand, CLTB holds the property rights to the land, and has an important degree of control over the property of the dwelling. These mechanisms ensure affordability on a long term.

Secondly, the operational structure of CLTB is a not-for-profit association. The governing board of this association consists of equally three parties. One third of the organization represents the (future) inhabitants of its projects, one third stands for citizens of Brussels and one third is covered by political representatives. Although for candidate-buyers, income thresholds of social rental housing are adopted, CLTB is an open-member association. Everyone is able to become a member and to join the general meetings.

When a new project is launched, candidate-buyers are asked to join a savings group. This group is in turn a factual association. Next to the general meetings and reunions of the elected governing board, architecture workshops are organized to involve this group in the design process of the project. The recommendations of the candidate-buyers are included in the design brief to select the architects and builders for the project. Designers and builders are indeed selected through public procurement procedure as the Brussels Housing Fund—a limited liability company controlled and supported by the Brussels Capital Region—acts as the prime contractor for CLTB projects. The design workshops and meetings evolve around more informal activities that offer a chance for future inhabitants and people from the neighborhood to meet.

As none of the projects is finished yet, it is not possible to discuss the physical configuration of the dwellings. In legal terms, Community Land Trust housing cannot be labeled as “public housing”, but referring to the commons framework and the shared ownership, the thoroughly pursued co-production from the very inception of the project to elaborate community activities, it becomes clear that the initiative scores high on the dimensions of “publicness” proposed in this article.

#### 4. Conclusion

With reduced public sector investments and an increasing privatization of public spaces, the loss of “publicness” has entered the debate on socio-spatial inclusion. As the term “public” is today often associated with a state related resource, some scholars have started to feed this debate by picking up the classic vocabulary of “the commons”. Commons relate to resources that are actively protected and managed by groups of citizens. This article argues that this reorientation of “publicness” towards “the common” is a relevant angle to study the publicness of public housing. A double line of reasoning is followed. On the one hand, several changes in the public housing sector such as the privatization of public housing, the development of public housing programs to create owner-occupied housing for middle-income groups and the shift from a “general” housing system to a “safety net” system, indicate a loss of “publicness”. On the other hand, emerging practices point at a reconceptualization of the public towards the commons, for instance in the appearance of government sponsored community land trust housing schemes. Such schemes seem to go back to the origins of public housing, as many public housing actors started from philanthropic or cooperative approaches that heavily rely on the mobilization of common property resources.

In order to understand the publicness of public housing starting from the concept of the commons, the article develops a framework to analyze various historical public housing models on crucial dimensions of the commons. Building on commons theory (De Angelis, Stavrides in *An Architektur*, 2010; Harvey, 2012; Mattei, 2012; Ostrom, 1990), on planning and architecture literature on “commons” and shared space (De Rijck et al., 2000; Loeckx, 1998; Lofland, 1998; Stavrides, 2010) the article identifies four core dimensions: ownership, co-production, community activity and physical configuration. It then takes different public housing models in the Brussels Capital Region as a case study to test this framework and to identify the inclusive nature of various aspects of “publicness” under study. For each housing model, preliminary findings can be drawn from the four dimensions of the framework and the relationship between them.

First of all, for the first core dimension of “ownership”, in the Brussels Capital Region, the most inclusive situation is reached in case of the cooperative garden city neighborhood, containing tenant social housing, public spaces and non-residential functions. In this estate, most people benefit from the type of ownership and outsiders are also able to use the public spaces and external functions. The democratic administration of the governing board assures that residents are involved when it comes to decisions about new dwelling projects on the site, while the supervision of the re-

gional housing company ensures the same entrance rules as for other social housing in Brussels. The projects of Citydev, and the owner-occupied prewar working class housing are the least public as only the first buyer benefits from the reduced acquisition price.

Secondly, the cases show that the legal status of the operator—i.e., the “ownership” dimension—has a great influence on the participation of inhabitants in the planning, design and maintenance of the building. One third of the governing board of the Community Land Trust organization consists of residents, and one third of inhabitants of the wider Brussels Capital Region. The integration of citizens of Brussels ensures a closed community is not created and lets the neighborhood engage with the plans of Community Land Trust. In addition to this, the Community Land Trust scores highest in the dimension of co-production as the organization actively involves future inhabitants in the design of their collective dwelling.

Thirdly, in the framework, centrality and connectivity on a macro level, as well as a gradual transition between the public and the private and open and closed spaces are described as important features. In the case of Peterbos it has become clear that well-connected spaces sometimes feel isolated as a result of their location between important junctions. On the micro-level, the way the facade regulates the transition between street and house, and the quality of shared circulation spaces, such as stairwells and corridors, plays an important role in the creation of an in-between realm. The elevated entrances with a setback and niche, the protruding terraces and bay windows in one earlier discussed project of Citydev evoke a direct engagement of inhabitants with their environment.

Finally, although community activity is difficult to measure without performing sociologic or ethnographic research, this preliminary study shows that when a physical configuration offers little space for encounter due to a lack of transition zones, as in the case of Peterbos, the organization of community activities by community development agencies becomes important to guide social cohesion between inhabitants.

Strikingly, but not unexpectedly, the types of housing originating from private initiative or by intermediary organizations, such as the housing cooperatives and the CLT scheme, score best on the dimensions of “publicness”. Picked up by public policy and granted government support, this article points out that these instances of bottom-up institutionalization seem to offer a promising path for the development of inclusive dwelling environments. Nonetheless, it has to be noted too that the more traditional “public” initiatives that find inspiration from “communing” practices, such as the set up of social cohesion projects, offer opportunities to “repair” the “publicness” in existing housing estates. In that sense, also strategies stemmed from other dimensions, such as the introduction of alternative

ownership schemes (representation of residents on governing boards, introduction of long lease schemes as opposed to traditional rental contracts or owner-occupation), the layout of shared spaces, the inclusion of residents in decision making processes in maintenance works might contribute to more inclusive estates. Further in-depth research involving ethnographic research and spatial analysis could shed more light on the merits and limitations of housing solutions that incorporate “commoning” dimensions as well as the precise mechanisms and features of the interaction between the different dimensions.

### Acknowledgements

This research was funded by Innoviris through the Prospective Research for Brussels program. The authors wish to thank the reviewers of the article for their comments and suggestions.

### Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

### References

- An Architektur. (2010). On the commons: A public interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides. *An Architektur*, 23, 4-27.
- Angotti, T. (2008). *New York for sale. Community planning confronts global Real Estate*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Bailey, S. (2013). *Beyond ownership. Governing the wealth of urban commons*. article presented at the Commoning the City Conference, Stockholm, Sweden. Retrieved from [www.kkh.se/video/Saki.html](http://www.kkh.se/video/Saki.html)
- Barnes, P. (2006). *Capitalism 3.0: A guide to reclaiming the commons*. San Fransisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Bertrand, L., & Vinck, E. (1900). *Rapport sur le socialisme communal*. article presented at International Socialist Congress, Paris, France.
- Bing Maps. (2014). Bing Maps. Retrieved from [www.bing.com/maps](http://www.bing.com/maps)
- Coursey, D., & Bozeman, B. (1990). Decision making in public and private organizations: A test of alternative concepts of publicness. *Public Administration Review*, 50(5), 525-535.
- De Decker, P., Kesteloot, C., Maesschalck, F. de, & Vranken, J. (2005). Revitalising the city in an anti-urban context: Extreme right and the rise of urban policies in Flanders, Belgium. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29, 152-171.
- De Meulder, B. (1983). *Galerijwoningen te Brussel* (Doctoral dissertation). Belgium: KU Leuven.
- De Meulder, B. (1997). *Wonen tussen de gemeenplaats van de fermette en het stigma van het woonblok*.

- Naorlogse stedenbouw en huisvesting in de versplinterde Vlaamse ruimte. In VHM, *Bouwstenen van sociaal woonbeleid 1945-1995* (pp. 295-335). Brussels: VHM.
- De Meulder, B., De Decker, P., Van Herck, K., Ryckewaert M., & Vansteelant, H. (1999). Over de plaats van de volkswoningbouw in de Vlaamse ruimte. In P. De Decker, E. Van Mele, & M. Demalsche (Eds.), *Huiszoeking: Kijkboek sociale woningbouw* (pp. 10-86). Brussels: Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.
- De Rijck, T., Guldentops, F., & Vansteelant, H. (2000). Economische integratie en sociale uitsluiting: De invloed van de architecturale omgeving in sociale woonwijken. *Agora*, 16 (2), 38-42.
- Dour, R. de (1890). *Les habitations ouvrières en Belgique*. Brussels: Parijs.
- Driessens, K. (1998). De geologie van armoede. In J. Vranken, D. Geldof, & G. Van Menxel (Eds.), *Armoede en sociale uitsluiting: Jaarboek 1998* (pp.67-84). Leuven: Acco.
- Forrest, R., & Murie, A. (1988). *Selling the welfare state: The privatisation of public housing*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, 26(25), 56-80.
- Garnham, N. (1990). *Capitalism and communication: Global culture and the economics of information*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ghekière, L. (2007). *The development of social housing in the European Union; when general interest meets community interest, summary of the publication*. Paris: Dexia Editors.
- Habermans, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Haque, M. S. (1996). The intellectual crisis in public administration in the current epoch of privatization. *Administration and Society*, 27(4), 510-536.
- Haque, M. S. (2001). The diminishing publicness of public service under the current mode of governance. *Public Administration Review*, 61(1), 65-82.
- Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities. From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. London: Verso.
- Heynen, H., & Loecx, A. (1998). Scenes of ambivalence: Concluding remarks on architectural patterns of displacement. *Journal of architectural education*, 52(2), 100-108.
- Huberty, C. (1999). Een geschiedenis van schaarbeekse "harden". In *Schaarbeekse Haard 100 jaar* (pp. 35-94). Brussels: Les dossiers de la Fonderie.
- Kemeny J. (1995). *From public housing to the social rental market. Rental policy strategies in a comparative perspective*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Kesteloot, C., Loecx, A., Meert, H., Heynen, H., De Meulder, B., De Rijck, T., Guldentops, F., Ryckewaert, M., Van den Broecke, H., & Vansteelant, H. (1999). *Lage inkomensbuurten: Onderzoek naar ruimtelijke kwaliteiten en hun implicatie voor de sociaal-economische integratiemogelijkheden van bewoners* (Commissioned by the Flemish Community). Leuven: Instituut voor Sociale en Economische Geografie, OSA.
- Kratzwald, B. (2012). Commons und das Öffentliche. Wem gehören öffentliche Dienstleistungen? In S. Helfrich & Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (Eds.), *Commons. Für eine neue Politik jenseits von Markt und Staat* (pp. 79-84). Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Lagrou, E., & Janssens, L. (1985). *Inventaris van de volkswoningen te Brussel. Inventaire des logements sociaux à Bruxelles*. Brussels: Sint-Lukaswerkgemeenschap.
- Les Foyers Collectifs. (1981). *Vivre à Moortebeek. Historique de la cité-jardin de Moortebeek 1921-1981*. Brussels: Les Foyers Collectifs.
- Les Foyers Collectifs. (1996). *75 Années de vie collective. 1921-1996*. Brussels: Les Foyers Collectifs
- Linebaugh, P. (2008). *The Magna Carta Manifesto. Liberties and Commons for All*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Loecx, A. (1998). Kabylia, the house and the road: Games of reversal and displacement. *Journal of architectural education*, 52(2), 87-99.
- Lofland, L. (1998). *The public realm: Exploring the city's quintessential social territory (communication and social order)*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Low, S., & Smith, N. (2006). The imperative of public space. In S. Low & N. Smith (Eds.), *The politics of public space* (pp. 1-16). London: Routledge.
- Marcuse, P. (2005). The "threat of terrorism" and the right to the city. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, 32(4), 767-785.
- Marcuse, P. (2009). From justice planning to commons planning. In P. Marcuse, J. Connolly, J. Novy, I. Olivero, C. Potter, J. Steil (Eds.), *Searching for the just city* (pp. 91-102). New York: Routledge.
- Mattei, U. (2012). The strategy of common assets: Providing direct access to social justice by renewing common sense: the state, the market and some preliminary questions about the commons. In *Redefining and combating poverty: Human rights, democracy and common assets in today's Europe* (Trends in social cohesion n°25, pp.307-324). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Mumford, E. (2002). *The CIAM discourse on urbanism, 1928-1960*. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons. The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paddison, R., & Sharp, J. (2007). Questioning the end of public space: Reclaiming control of local banal spaces, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 123(2), 87-

106.

- Putnam, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton: University Press.
- Reid, A. (2003). *Public education as an education commons* (Discussion Paper). Bundoora: Australian Council of Deans of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.acde.edu.au/pages/images/Public%20Education%20as%20an%20Education%20Commons%20%28199Kb%29.pdf>
- Romainville, A. (2010). Who benefits from home ownership support. *Brussels Studies*, 25 January 2010(34). Retrieved from [http://www.brusselsstudies.be/medias/publications/EN\\_121\\_BruS34\\_EN.pdf](http://www.brusselsstudies.be/medias/publications/EN_121_BruS34_EN.pdf)
- Ryckewaert, M. (1999). Woningbouw in stad en land. Marges en vernieuwende strategieën. *Stedebouw en ruimtelijke ordening: Tijdschrift voor ruimtelijke ontwikkeling en omgevingskwaliteit*, 80(5), 37-42.
- Schoonbrodt, R. (1979). *Sociologie de l'habitat social: Comportement des habitants et architecture des cites*. Brussels: Editions des architectes d'architecture moderne.
- Sennett, R. (1977). *The fall of public man*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Simonetti, P. (1999). De oorsprong van de Schaarbeekse Haard. In *De Schaarbeekse Haard 100 jaar*, (pp. 5-112). Brussels: Les dossiers de la Fonderie.
- Smets, M. (1977). *De ontwikkeling van de tuinvijkgedachte in België: Een overzicht van de Belgische volkswoningbouw in de periode van 1830 tot 1930*. Brussels: Pierre Mardaga.
- Stravrides, S. (2010). Heterotopias and the Experience of Poured Urban Space. In K. A. Franck & Q. Stevens (Eds.), *Loose space: Possibility and diversity in urban life* (pp. 174-192). London/New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, M. (1998). Combating the social exclusion of housing estates. *Housing Studies*, 13(6), 819-823.
- Van den Broeck, J., Verschure, H., & Esho, L. (2004). Urban Development by Coproduction. In A. Loeckx, K. Shannon, R. Tuts, & H. Verschure (Eds.), *Urban dialogues: Visions, projects, co-production* (pp. 198-212). Nairobi: UN-Habitat, KULeuven.
- Varna, G., & Tiesdell, S. (2010). Assessing the publicness of public space: The star model of publicness. *Journal of Urban Design*, 15(4), 575-598.
- Walker, R. M. (2001). How to abolish public housing: Implications and lessons from public management reform. *Housing Studies*, 16(5), 675-696.
- Watson, D. (1994). *Putting back the pride: A case study of a power-sharing approach to tenant participation*. Liverpool: ACTAC.
- Winters, S., & Elsinga, M. (2008). The future of Flemish social housing. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 23(3), 215-230.
- Zimmer, P. (2009). *Diachronische analyse van de Brusselse sociale huisvesting*. Brussels: BGHM.
- Zukin, S. (1995). *The cultures of Cities*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

## About the Authors



### Nele Aernouts

Nele Aernouts is an architect, urban designer and PhD researcher of the Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Since 2013 she has been conducting research on forms of collective dwelling that addresses the housing needs of underprivileged groups. By focusing on the Brussels Capital Region, her main interest is to uncover the complex interplay between planning processes and spatial configurations of social housing estates and the co-habitation of its residents.



### Dr. Michael Ryckewaert

Michael Ryckewaert is Assistant Professor of Urbanism and program director of the MSc in Urban Design and Spatial Planning at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. He is also associate director of the Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research. His research focuses on housing and social inclusion, spatial policy, urbanism history and theory, and infrastructure planning.