BMiX excursion, May 11, 2015

Report compiled by Kobe Boussauw, Sarah De Boeck, Nicolas Dewulf and Fabio Vanin

Purpose
The purpose of this first BMiX excursion was multiple: on the one hand, the intention was to get better acquainted with the concerns of the stakeholders that are involved in our research. On the other hand we wanted to take the opportunity to get more familiar with our study area, particularly with a number of areas where mixed use is today under development, or could be realized in the future.

Programma

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<td>Noordstation, Salle Atomium*</td>
<td>Onthaal met koffie Introductie BmiX-onderzoek Presentatie Richtschema Schaarbeek Vorming</td>
<td>BmiX-team Maarten Lenaerts, Studie en Planning</td>
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<td>11u00-12u00</td>
<td>Infopunt Vilvoorde</td>
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<td>Schaarbeek Vorming</td>
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<td>12u30-14u30</td>
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<td>14u30-15u15</td>
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<td>15u30-16u00</td>
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<td>Sitebezoek Heyvaertwijk, autohandel Wijkcontract Kleine Zenne, park Ninoofse Poort, park Libelco</td>
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<td>16u10-16u40</td>
<td>Sint-Jans-Molenbeek</td>
<td>Sitebezoek Biestebroek</td>
<td>Yves Rouyet, departementshoofd Territoriale Ontwikkeling ATO</td>
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<td>16u45-17u00</td>
<td>Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Anderlecht</td>
<td>Voorstelling TOP Noordrand, interregionale samenwerking BHG &amp; Vlaanderen</td>
<td>Wiet Vandaele, projectmanager Ruimte Vlaanderen</td>
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<td>17u00-17u30</td>
<td>Anderlecht</td>
<td>Sitebezoek Abattoir, voedingshal Afsluiting met koffie</td>
<td>Jo Huygh, Abattoir nv</td>
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* Salle Atomium, Brussel Stedelijke Ontwikkeling: neem de roltrap aan de Quick in het Noordstation naar verdieping 1.5. Vraag aan het onthaal naar Salle Atomium.

Contactpersoon: Sarah De Boeck, Cosmopolis (VUB) – t: 02/629.28.28 & gsm: 0484/627.867

Deze excursie kadert in het onderzoek BMiX, een onderzoek van Cosmopolis (VUB), Louise (ULB) en AMRP (UGent), onder peterschap van het Agentschap voor Territoriale Ontwikkeling en Citydev, gefinancieerd door Prospective Research for Brussels, Innoviris.
**Introductory session**

The excursion started in the premises of the Brussels-Capital Region (CCN, Atomium Hall), where a number of presentations were delivered. Attendees were Michael Ryckewaert, David Bassens, Kobe Boussauw, Fabio Vanin, Sarah De Boeck, and Nicolas Dewulf (promoters and researchers from the BMiX team), Maarten Lenaerts (Study and Planning Department of the Brussels-Capital Region), Dirk Van de Putte (ADT/ATO), Martine Gossuin (CityDev), and Sven De Bruyckere (Brussels Urban Development).

**Research consortium**

In the first part of the presentation Michael Ryckewaert discussed the composition of the research consortium, comprising also partners from Ghent University (Luuk Boelens) and the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Benoit Moritz). Then, the different work packages were presented, each with its own scope within the realm of urban livability. WP1 studies strategies for inner-city mixed development, while WP2 focuses on the interaction between the city and the fringe, where the emphasis will be on the opportunities offered by transit-oriented development (TOD). WP3 applies research by design as a framework to develop spatial solutions for a better alignment of living and working in the entire Brussels metropolitan area.
**Work packages on mixed development, spatial mismatch and transport, and research by design**

Next, Sarah De Boeck provided an introduction to mixed urban development as a possible solution to issues related to the exodus of industrial employment and jobs for the lower-skilled, and gentrification. In the first phase of the study, she examines the impact in the field of a number of existing local planning instruments that aim for encouraging urban economic development (the so-called ‘urban enterprise zones’).

Subsequently Nicolas Dewulf gave an overview of the research line of WP2. This work package starts from an analysis of the spatial mismatch between the Brussels-Capital Region and the Flemish fringe in terms of jobs-housing balance. Some maps support this hypothesis: Brussels is not only home to the highest concentration of jobs in the country, it is also one of the regions where unemployment is excessive. This paradox is the guideline of a study that will focus on the possible role of housing, spatial development of the labour market, and transit oriented development in bringing solutions to this issue.

Fabio Vanin then explained the third work package, focusing on the role of research by design as a method in developing spatial visions and solutions to the problems outlined.

The presentation was wrapped up with an overview of how the collaboration with mentors and stakeholders could work out during the lifetime of the research project. For this purpose, regularly stakeholder workshops and steering committee meetings will be organized. The BMiX project staff will consult stakeholders regarding the selection of literature, research hypothesis definitions, collecting data, and participation in the design workshops.

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**Master plan Schaarbeek-Formation**

The last presentation was performed by Maarten Lenaerts, who talked about the master plan for the so-called leverage area no. 11, the site of Schaarbeek-Formation. The southern part of the old railroad yard on the territory of Brussels (Haren) offers room for the development of more than 2,000 homes, combined with other activities. In the north of the area, the Brussels government wants to build a multimodal logistics platform, to which also the wholesale market would be relocated. In that way, Schaarbeek-Formation can play a role in the goods supply of the Brussels metropolitan area, and act as a distribution centre for the wider region. The joint development approach of this area, where both residential and industrial activities will take place, dovetails with the goals of the BMiX project, in which urban development should be compatible with maintaining or creating less-specialized employment.
Northern fringe - Vilvoorde

Noordrand

One of the areas where the issues outlined in the research proposal are really pronounced is the Noordrand, the northern fringe of Brussels which cross-borders the Brussels Capital Region and a Flemish patch of municipalities, comprising Vilvoorde, Machelen, Meise, Wemmel, Grimbergen and Asse, among others.

The northern fringe of Brussels, ‘Noordrand’ in short, is a dynamic and complex area with ample spatial opportunities. A range of actors from Flanders and Brussels cooperate in function of establishing greater understanding between cross-border issues like mobility and commuting, affordable housing, adequate job location, mixed development projects, leisure and so on, in face of demographic growth and the associated spatial development and sprawl. Attuning these interests and developments is a challenging, but necessary task, since visions and implementations are mainly under the competences of the regions involved. A territorial development programme (Territoriaal Ontwikkelingsprogramma) called T.OP Noordrand was initiated through Ruimte Vlaanderen, and includes the Brussels Urban Development department (Brussel Stedelijke Ontwikkeling), the province of Flemish-Brabant and OVAM, the Public Flemish Waste Association, who join forces to forge this greater metropolitan vision.

Water Site redevelopment project

After the introductory morning meeting and presentation, the programme was continued on the road with a presentation by Eva Fonteyn, project manager at the city of Vilvoorde for the Water Site reconversion project. On the way to Vilvoorde, we drove along the Familistère Godin and passed the Van Praet Bridge and the construction site of the new shopping mall of Dockx Bruxsel.

The Vilvoorde Water Site consists of about 100 ha of lots that are in full process of reconversion, directed through the ‘Strategic Masterplan Vilvoorde-Machelen’ (approved by the Flemish government in 2009) and part of a 250 ha area of old polluted industry land, located between the Canal, the Woluwelaan (R22), Vilvoorde and Brussels. In the Flemish regional zoning plan this area was assigned an industrial status, but this was changed into an urban development zone in the year 2000. The Watersite is divided into the Kanaalpark (Canal Park), M3 Molens – 4Fonteinen (M3 Mills – 4Fountains) and Broek, redeveloped from 2005, 2009 and 2012 respectively. The Watersite is a public-private partnership between the city of Vilvoorde, Waterwegen & Zeekanaal NV and several private actors.

Kanaalpark was the first renewal project. It consists of 12 ha of mixed-use development, combining residential and professional buildings (500 dwellings and 20,000 m² of offices) and 3500 m² of other amenities. Secondly, the 4Fonteinen was based on four brownfield covenants which served as the basis for two RUPs (land use changes through a Spatial Implementation Plan). The site will consist of 1000 residential units, of which seventy will be single family dwellings, 13,000 m² of office space, 5,000 m² of commercial facilities, and a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. Broek is the zone between Kanaalpark and 4Fonteinen. Contrary to most redevelopment approaches in the surroundings, this area is not rebuilt from scratch, but was transformed, based on the existing identity of the site, whereby the Marie-José neighbourhood, the dwellings along the Harensesteenweg and a few companies all have a specific spot on-site. In an attempt to optimise the northern Watersite part’s accessibility, a realignment of road and transit infrastructure is developed. Moreover, a park was created through a large part of the reconversion projects, as a means to emphasise the river Zenne, forming a
continuous element along which public space is organised. Walking and cycling are promoted with the construction of walking and cycling lanes in 2011.

During Eva Fonteyn’s presentation, it became clear that mobility-wise, a couple of urgent measures to improve performance need to be taken, consisting of a new tram line along the Woluwelaan and transforming the Kerklaan into an axis for public transit, cycling, local and slow traffic. Kerklaan would also house a new train station (relocation of the present Buda station) and Vilvoorde station will be renovated on short term. Also, a number of roads will be lengthened and a new connection between the R22 and N1 will be put in place.

Generally, the so-called ‘GRUP VSGB’ (which is the new land use plan for the Flemish part for the fringe) encompasses the broader vision on redeveloping the Noordrand. Besides that, it is important to keep in mind attuning the implementation of projects to Brussels and the whole region and considering the important results of the T.OP Noordrand survey and the Bouwmeester’s Metropolitan Landscapes initiative. An overview of the sites and (planned) projects can be found below (both © City of Vilvoorde).
Greenbizz-Tivoli

Guide: Martine Gossuin, director Mixed Development, Citydev

Greenbizz and Tivoli are two interrelated projects occupying a string of urban blocks just north of the TIR zone of the Tour & Taxis site. Greenbizz is an incubator for sustainable businesses combining workshops and office space, while Tivoli is a sustainable housing quarter. Citydev develops both projects.

The urban framework for both sites is developed by MSA (Moritz-Simon architectes) who designed on the one hand the ‘Schema Directeur’ for Tour & Taxis, and developed a preparatory urban design scheme for Tivoli. The Greenbizz building plot connects both areas.

The Greenbizz workshop & offices center serves as a kind of functional interface between logistics and housing. In that sense, the project presents a possible interesting approach in mixing work- and housing-related functions, by juxtaposing different functions in a way that conflicts are mitigated.
The Tivoli housing development occupies 4 urban blocks, and can be considered as a demonstration project for sustainable housing, taking into account ecological as well as socio-economic dimensions of sustainability. Building technologies include green roofs, zero-energy construction, high permeability of the soil to limit run off water, etc. The quarter will consist of about 450 dwellings, 70% of which are for owner-occupied dwellings for middle income groups, 30% is social rental housing, and 40 units are set aside for innovative housing scheme's (cohousing...). In terms of social sustainability, participation played an important role, while sustainable modes of transport will be provided (Villo Station, car sharing, ...). The project also includes two child care centers, shops and a neighbourhood center.

The project adopts a morphology of ‘open’ urban blocks. The entire is divided into four urban blocks by a cross-pattern of streets, but the interior of blocks is exposed to the streets. At the edges, where the blocks are cut open, higher volumes (7 floors) are added to the 4 floor edge buildings.

Designers:
Urban scheme: MSA
Architects: ux d’architectes / Atelier 55, Atlante, Cerau & Y+Y
Promotor: ParBam
Developer: Citydev

‘Greenbizz is a business incubator ... but also a new development hub for the green economy, sustainable development and environmental entrepreneurship’ (www.greenbizz.be)

The building is designed to serve as a connector between the logistics zone of the TIR on Tour & Taxis on the one hand, and the Tivoli quarter on the other. Offices are projected on top of large workshop spaces, and the building is cut through by a number of passages that allow permeability between the TIR and Tivoli.

Designers: Architectes Associés
Developer: Citydev
Heyvaert, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek & Anderlecht

Guides: Tine Van Herck, partner of PTArchitecten / Sarah De Boeck, researcher Cosmopolis
Main topics: the creation and development of the neighbourhood development plan “Kleine Zenne/ Petite Senne”, the transition of the neighbourhood as an international hub of car export into ...

A certain lack of government control in urban development

The municipalities agreed to refuse permits to prolong the stay of the car traders, but this refusal is mostly overruled by an appeal on the regional government level. Today, nor the municipalities nor the region have policy or planning instruments that can refuse permits for certain economic activities that are no longer welcome in the city centre. Mayors at the municipality of Anderlecht are afraid to lose the multifunctionality that exists today and are not convinced that they have proper policy and planning instruments to direct the transition of the neighbourhood into a balanced mixed-use development area.

Neighbourhood development plan “Kleine Zenne/Petite Senne”

Due to the limited amount of subsidy to realize the neighbourhood development plan, the vision of PTArchitecten is to focus on the biggest building block along the Heyvaert Street. They create a connection between the Heyvaert Street and the Canal by designing a roofed park/garden on the parcel which is owned today by Libelco. The park is conceived as a strategic space in the middle of the Heyvaert Quarters and foresees in green and meeting space which is almost absent in this neighbourhood.

Transition of neighbourhood of international hub of car export

Today the Heyvaert neighbourhood is internationally known as an international hub of car export. Since many years the regional government would like to move these car trading activities to Schaarbeek-Formation and to build a roll-on roll-off terminal next to the canal to ship the cars to the harbor of Antwerp instead of transporting them by truck. Also the municipalities Sint-Jans-Molenbeek and Anderlecht would prefer to see the car exporters go because their activities put a lot of pressure on the residential function and the local mobility. Some researchers (like Mathieu Van Criekingen) and local welfare groups point to the fact that the car trade plays an important role in the survival economy in this part of the city that functions as an ‘arrival city’, not only through the car trade but also through the side activities that are attracted by the trading (restaurants, hotels, street sells...). They are concerned that the neighbourhood will collapse and lose its important social climbing dynamics. Although the municipality of Anderlecht prefers to see the car exporters go, they are concerned about what happens after a possible movement of the car traders: the chance exists that the Heyvaert Street will turn into a gentrified mono-functional high-residential loft area and will lose its mixity.
Biestebroeck, Anderlecht

Guide: Yves Rouyet, director of the department of Territorial Development of ATO/ADT
Main topics: the tension between the planning instruments (OGSO/ZEMU, ZEUS, PRAS) which reflect the goals of the Brussels region (mixed-use development, employment) and the maximum profit-seeking agenda of private developers.

Residential development pushes industrial development away

ATO/ADT accompanies the development of the OGSO/ZEMU Biestebroek in Anderlecht. The goal of the planning instrument OGSO/ZEMU is to make mixed-use development possible by changing former mono-functional industrial zones into mixed-use zones. It appears to be difficult to maintain a balance of functions in this area since private developers, like Atenor, bought a lot of land and prefer to develop mainly residential buildings, combined with retail. Residential development and retail guarantee a bigger profit per square meter than industrial development. Next to private developers, also Citydev plans to develop a mixed-use development building. Affordable housing (social housing, collective land trust...) is not foreseen.

Mechanisms of speculation and gentrification
The transformation of industrial zone into mixed zone made speculation possible. The municipality and habitants represented by socio-cultural and welfare organizations, like Samenlevingsopbouw vzw, are concerned that high-residential development will gentrify the neighbourhood and will chase the present industrial/productive activities away.

A certain lack of government control in urban development
As well the municipality of Anderlecht as the Brussels region identify a certain lack of control in the urban development tools that exist today. The present planning instruments (permits, land use plans, zoning, strategic plans) have not enough leverage to control mechanisms of speculation.
Abattoir, Anderlecht

Guides: Jo Huygh, consultant/urbanist Abattoir, Joris Tiebout, CEO Abattoir
Main topics: the masterplan of Abattoir, the re-alization of the food market (+ guided tour), the future realization of the slaughterhouse, Flemish city renewal project

Master plan

In 2009 Abattoir ordered a master plan for the future development of their site (ORG). Until then, they followed a rather suburbanized pattern to build new facilities needed for the market and the slaughterhouse. Their goal was to energize the site with extra functions and to integrate their enormous mineral space into the tissue of the surrounding city. New buildings can follow the basic structure of the master plan which forces Abattoir to rethink their space in a more organized way. Thanks to European subsidies (EFRO) they were able to build a permanent food market, which is inspired by the mercados of southern Europe and has opened his doors in May. For the moment, they are looking for an urban farmer who can exploit 6,000 m² of roof space for agri- and aquacultural farming. Abattoir also participated in a next EFRO call and received a positive advice to build the first manufacture which will host a vertical slaughterhouse.

Flemish city renewal project

Together with the Brussels’ Erasmus university college next door, Abattoir is involved in a Flemish subsidy program (‘Thuis in de Stad’) which tries to open up the enormous building block that both the school and the market/slaughterhouse occupy, and to integrate this big space into the city tissue. They are looking for functions that they can share on the borders of their parcels, and ways to collaborate through synergies (for example: parking space).
Addendum: BMiX project outline

“Living and working in the Brussels metropolitan area: Searching for pathways to liveable urbanisation (BMiX)”

This text is a summary of the BMiX research proposal officially approved by Innoviris. For more information, please contact one of the researchers.

The BMiX project starts from the observation of a double socio-spatial mismatch between working and living in the Brussels Metropolitan Area (BMA). This mismatch is expressed both between the Brussels Capital Region (BCR) and its hinterland and within the BCR itself. On the one hand, Brussels offers ample high-skilled jobs, mostly occupied by inhabitants of the hinterland. On the other, the BCR contains a high share of low-skilled inhabitants for whom access to the labour market is restricted and adequate job offer is insufficient, especially within the neighbourhoods where these groups live.

Moreover, the BCR is being challenged by a demographic boom that makes an enlargement of the housing market direly necessary. Socially and spatially, this mismatch translates to urban liveability problems. Firstly, it generates commuter flows resulting in excessive automobile pressure in urban areas. Secondly, mixed neighbourhoods (especially those within the so-called poor crescent) are being gradually targeted by real-estate project developments, which elevates the risk of gentrification, with a double effect: (1) lower income groups are systematically driven off the housing market and spatially relocated elsewhere and (2) the scarce areas where opportunities remain for low-skilled labour will come under increased pressure from residential real-estate development.

This research aims to develop strategies to tackle this double mismatch between working and living in the BMA. The main hypothesis of this research is that an overarching vision on the spatial development of working and living ought to be conceptualised, which organises both in a way that improves urban liveability. This hypothesis can be divided into two sub-hypotheses.

First we will investigate how within areas for mixed-use development, but also within potential other strategic zones en spaces, an optimal intertwining of working and living functions can be established. Whereas traditional views and indexes of functional mixity tend to emphasise the compa-