



Housing and segregation of migrants

Case study: Antwerp, Belgium



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About CLIP

In 2006, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the city of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) established a 'European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants', henceforth known as CLIP. The network comprises a steering committee, a group of expert European research centres and a number of European cities. In the following two years, the cities of Vienna and Amsterdam joined the CLIP Steering Committee. The network is also supported by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and has also formed a partnership with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR).

Through the medium of separate city reports (case studies) and workshops the network enables local authorities to learn from each other and to deliver a more effective integration policy. The unique character of the CLIP network is that it organises a shared learning process between the participating cities, between the cities and a group of expert European research centres as well as between policy makers at local and European level.

The CLIP network brings together more than 30 large and medium sized cities from all regions of Europe and includes: Amsterdam (NL), Arnsberg (DE), Antwerp (BE), Athens (GR), Diputació de Barcelona (ES), Bologna (IT), Breda (NL), Brescia (IT), Budapest (HU), Copenhagen (DK), Dublin (IE), Frankfurt (DE), Helsinki (FI), Istanbul (TR), Izmir (TR), Kirkcaldy (UK), Lisbon (PT), Liège (BE), City of Luxembourg (LU), Matarò (ES), Malmö (SE), Prague (CZ), Sefton (UK), Stuttgart (DE), Sundsvall (SE), Tallinn (EE), Terrassa (ES), Torino (IT), Turku (FI), Valencia (ES), Vienna (AT), Wolverhampton (UK), Wrocław (PL), Zagreb (HR), Zurich (CH).

The cities in the network are supported in their shared learning by a group of expert European research centres in:

Bamberg (European Forum for Migration Studies (EFMS));

Vienna (Institute for Urban and Regional Research (IST));

Amsterdam (Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES));

FIERI (Forum of International and European Research on Immigration);

Wrocław (Institute of International Studies);

Swansea (Centre for Migration Policy Research).

There are four research modules in total. The first module was on housing – segregation, access to, quality and affordability for migrants – which has been identified as a major issue impacting on migrants' integration into host societies. The second module examined equality and diversity policies in relation to employment within city administrations and in the provision of services. The focus of the third module is intercultural policies and intergroup relations. The final module (2009-2010) will look at ethnic entrepreneurship.

The case studies on housing were carried out in 2007.

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Background

Brief history of migration to Belgium

After the Second World War, Belgium signed several bilateral agreements with other countries in order to organise the recruitment of migrant workers – firstly in its coal mining sector and, later, in other sectors. The first agreement was concluded with Italy in 1946. This was followed by other agreements with Greece and Spain in the 1950s, with Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey in the 1960s, and with Algeria, Portugal and the then Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1970s. The majority of migrants came from these countries, but also from neighbouring countries such as France and the Netherlands. In 1974, like other European countries, Belgium decided to stop the immigration of workers. However, data on immigration during the subsequent decades show that, despite of this decision, immigrants still arrived in Belgium. Overall, six main patterns of migration were evident: mobility of EU citizens; asylum applications; mobility of foreign students; migration of highly skilled workers; irregular migration; and family reunion (Gsir, Martiniello and Wets, 2003).

By 2004, Belgium's foreign population constituted 8.3% of the total population, which is slightly lower than the proportion in the 1990s, when this population was around 9%. However, this figure did not include foreigners residing irregularly in Belgium or Belgians of foreign origin. Thus, the immigrant population and its offspring are higher.

The foreign population is spread unevenly around the country. In 2004, about 26.3% of the foreign population were located in the Brussels-Capital Region, while 9.1% were residing in Wallonia and 4.8% in Flanders. In the latter region, the foreign population is particularly concentrated in the provinces of Limbourg and Antwerp to the west of the country. In Wallonia, on the other hand, it is mainly concentrated in the old industrial provinces of Liège in the north and Hainaut in the west (Martiniello and Rea, 2003). Most of the foreigners are EU nationals, constituting 66% of the foreign population at the end of 2004 – mainly Dutch, French, Italians and Spaniards. The number of Poles coming to Belgium has also been increasing since 1990. Other foreigners who are widely represented are the Moroccans (81,279 persons) followed by the Turks (39,885). Nonetheless, these populations have diminished considerably since the change of nationality law in 2000, which has facilitated applications for Belgian nationality.

From a gender perspective, women represented less than 50% of foreign population between 1990 and 2004, whereas they constitute about 51.3% of the Belgian population. Nevertheless, the distribution of women among the foreigners varies: for example, women constitute a higher proportion (58%) of the Greek population living in Belgium, while they represent a considerably lower proportion (42.6%) of the Algerian population. Regarding the age distribution of foreigners, the highest share of people in this group are aged between 25 and 50 years (Direction générale emploi et marché du travail, 2006).

National policy context

The federated entities of Belgium – that is, the country's regions and communities – are in charge of most of the issues linked to integration – such as education, health, housing and, to some extent, employment. Flanders and Wallonia have developed their own approach to the integration of migrants. For instance, Flanders has developed multicultural policies inspired by the Dutch model, whereas Wallonia has been influenced by the French Republican model of assimilation.

Since the 1980s, the Flemish government has encouraged the involvement of migrants' associations in its integration policy. Moreover, in 1996, it passed a decree defining a policy for ethnic-cultural minorities. This minorities' policy is threefold: firstly, it encourages the emancipation of legal foreign residents (so-called *allochtones*); secondly, it promotes the integration of newcomers; and thirdly, it provides for emergency support for irregular migrants. Since 2003, the Flemish government has developed its own integration policy for newcomers in line with the concept of 'citizenisation' (*inburgering*). As of April 2004, it has put in place a compulsory integration programme for all newcomers arriving in Flanders. This programme includes the provision of Dutch and civic courses, as well as job orientation measures.

Furthermore, since 2004, Flanders has appointed a ‘minister for citizenisation’, who has the task of shifting the region’s minorities’ policy towards a diversity policy.

In Wallonia, the government has opted for general anti-exclusion policies instead of a proper integration policy. In the mid 1990s, it passed a decree on integration, without however defining precisely the concept. The task was entrusted to six regional integration centres that were recognised by the decree. At a later stage, the Walloon government adopted measures linked to cultural diversity – such as a ‘positive discrimination’ decree in the field of education – in other words, a kind of affirmative action.

The Brussels-Capital Region has sought to develop its own approach in this respect, which is largely inspired by the two models developed in the north and south of the country.

At the federal level, integration has been mainly stimulated by access to Belgian nationality. Consequently, the Belgian nationality code has been modified several times and is currently one of the more liberal codes in Europe (Gsir, Martiniello and Wets, 2003). Since 2004, another step forward has been taken by granting non-EU nationals the right to vote at local elections. However, they still do not have the right of enfranchisement (rights of citizenship). Prior registration on electoral lists is mandatory, whereas for Belgians the vote is compulsory. Nevertheless, civic and political rights are henceforth a further means of integration in Belgium.

Profile of Antwerp

Brief description of the city

Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders, is situated between France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (UK), and is located at the centre of Europe's most densely populated area. The city's central location ensures optimal links to the hinterland. Antwerp is also Europe's second major port and the world's fourth major port. The port of Antwerp is also home to the second largest concentration of petrochemicals industries in the world. At the same time, it is essential to the EU's import and export trade and is a major global trade hub. The city is also part of the **Network of Automotive Regions**¹ – a pan-European network which was set up to strengthen the competitive position of the existing car manufacturing industry in Europe. One of the four major car assembly plants in Belgium is situated in Antwerp. Moreover, Antwerp has grown into one of the world's leading trendsetters in fashion and is home to many designers with an international reputation. The city is also an important diamond centre, with various fairs and traders: more than 50% of the world's production of rough, polished and industrial diamond passes through Antwerp. The diamond trade is responsible for 8% of Belgian exports, and 12% of Flanders' exports. The city also offers a wide range of high-quality education and is home to one university, five colleges of higher education and several international schools.

Structure

The city of Antwerp is made up of nine districts: Antwerp, Berchem, Berendrecht-Zandvliet-Lillo, Borgerhout, Deurne, Ekeren, Hoboken, Merksem and Wilrijk. The District of Antwerp can be split into various neighbourhoods: Antwerp Central, Antwerp North, Europark/Linkeroever, Kiel and Luchtbal. Altogether, there are 42 neighbourhoods in the region. These neighbourhoods are sometimes further categorised according to different sections – including Atheneumbuurt, Schipperskwartier, Spoorwegemplacement and Stationsbuurt. There is also a distinction between locations inside and outside of the main ring – that is, the old city wall that encircles the area sometimes known as the city centre. The most disadvantaged neighbourhoods are located in Antwerp North and in the social housing neighbourhoods such as Europark/Linkeroever, Kiel and Luchtbal. The least disadvantaged neighbourhoods are concentrated in the Antwerp periphery.

Population

Antwerp's population totalled 470,044 persons as of January 2006. On average, there are 2,420 inhabitants per square kilometre. In terms of its age profile, the population of Antwerp is fairly old. Although the size of the population dropped for a long period, it has been rising since 2001 due to positive birth and relocation balances. The latter is mostly due to the influx of new inhabitants from outside the EU. About 13% of the city's population consists of foreigners, of whom 8% are non-EU nationals. In a globalised world, international tensions are also felt at local level, as is evident in Antwerp, which is home to a large community of Jews and Muslims. In recent years, general unease about the country's multicultural society has sometimes arisen in the city.

Economy

Economically, Antwerp has a large number of businesses operating in the services sector. Compared with other cities, the proportion of companies in the construction sector and in the knowledge economy is low. Important industries are trade, the hospitality industry (such as hotels and restaurants) and manufacturing. Some 46% of all vacancies are for 'problem jobs' – that is, jobs for which there are insufficient numbers of qualified or interested candidates. This proportion is higher than the overall Flemish average of 41%. In Flanders, it is estimated that there are six jobseekers to

¹ <http://www.automotive-regions.org/>

every open vacancy. In Antwerp, the ratio is higher at eight jobseekers to every one vacancy. The number of unemployed jobseekers has been on the rise since 2001 and stood at 32,676 jobseekers at the start of 2005. Moreover, Antwerp's unemployment rate is 15.9%, or almost twice that of Flanders as a whole. Women are slightly overrepresented in this respect, accounting for 53% of unemployed people. From an age perspective, some 22% of jobseekers are younger than 25 years of age, while 44% are aged between 25 and 39 years, and 37% are older than 40 years of age. Almost four in 10 unemployed persons are from a non-EU country, while 12.3% of people in this group are either Turkish or Moroccan nationals. The unemployment burden is divided unevenly among the neighbourhoods of Antwerp. Most jobseekers in receipt of unemployment benefit live in Antwerp North. This neighbourhood, along with Europark, Kiel and Luchtbal, have the highest unemployment levels. In general, the employment ratio is lower in the city centre than in the periphery. Most self-employed persons live in the city centre and in the southern section. In addition, more than 140,000 persons make their living in one way or another from the port. Moreover, almost one in three employed persons living in Antwerp work outside the city.

City's migrant population

Antwerp's history of migration reflects the Belgian migration history; however, it also has some specific features of its own, mainly due to the presence of the harbour and the activities related to it. As the first migrants were recruited in the coalmining industry, they arrived mainly in Wallonia where the coalfields were situated. As soon as the Belgian state allowed migrants to work in other sectors, like industry and services, migrants from other countries such as Greece and Spain, and later from Morocco and Turkey, became distributed in all other major Belgian cities – including Brussels, but also in Flemish cities such as Antwerp with its port or Ghent in eastern Flanders. A higher proportion of Moroccans than Turks went to Antwerp (Kesteloot, 2006). After the EU enlargement of 1985, migrant workers from Portugal also arrived in Antwerp, although a larger proportion of them went to Brussels (*ibid*). Furthermore, Antwerp has attracted a significant proportion of Jews for centuries, a characteristic which is typical of the municipal migration history. After Belgium's independence in 1830, Jewish migrants arrived from central and eastern Europe and their community developed progressively. Before the Second World War, more than half of the 100,000 Jews in Belgium lived in the city. Nowadays, the orthodox Jewish community of Antwerp is one of the largest in Europe, comprising about 15,000 persons.

In terms of the nationality of Antwerp's population, some 13.3% of its inhabitants are registered as foreigners in the population register. The main nationalities are Moroccan, Dutch and Turkish. Otherwise, foreign nationals typically come from other EU Member States, or from former Yugoslavia, Russia, the Congo, China and India.

However, these percentages do not fully reflect the ethnic diversity of the city, as a large number of inhabitants of foreign origin have taken Belgian nationality in the past few decades. Overall, the number of inhabitants with a migratory background – that is, foreign nationals or Belgian nationals born with a foreign nationality – represents 26.6% of Antwerp's population. This percentage has been rising since 2000. Among them, persons of Moroccan origin constitute the largest group, followed by those of Dutch, Turkish, Polish, former Yugoslavian, Indian, Congolese, Jewish, Russian and west European origins. Some 18.4% of the inhabitants with a migratory background are from non-EU countries. From an age perspective, the age pyramid of Belgian nationals in Antwerp is fairly flat at the top, which indicates that this group contains many older persons. In contrast, the age pyramid for persons with a migratory background is narrow at the top and broad at the base, the latter corresponding to the 20–24 years age group. There are relatively few persons under 20 years of age among EU nationals.

The number of migrants arriving in Belgium for family-related reasons is rising and has risen sharply since 2000. Some 1,742 of new migrants registered in Antwerp in 2001 migrated as a result of marriage or for a family reunion. In 2004, this number rose to 3,929 persons. The number of asylum seekers (registered inhabitants) amounts to 7,727 persons, or 1.6% of the population. However, following the general trend in Belgium for some time, the number of asylum seekers

is dropping. The same cannot be said regarding the number of persons who are illegally residing in Belgium. Furthermore, of the 24,780 newcomers registered in Antwerp in 2005, 51% were Belgian.

Unemployment is higher among non-EU nationals, and is greatest in Antwerp North, Borgerhout, Linkeroever and Luchtbal. The number of persons receiving unemployment benefit among non-EU nationals of working age is almost 10%, compared with 1% among Belgians and 3% among EU nationals. A total of 72.2% of jobseekers on unemployment benefit are of non-EU nationality; this compares with just 15.2% of other jobseekers. The jobseekers of Maghrebian or Turkish origin are the least well educated on average, with just 5% of them being highly qualified. Unemployment among young adults is also highest among jobseekers of Maghrebian or Turkish origin. On the other hand, unemployment among older adults is more common among jobseekers from the EU Member States. Just under 2% of waged employees are nationals from the Maghreb or Middle East countries. Finally, in relation to self-employed persons, the proportion of foreigners is higher than that among waged employees.

Municipal integration policy

For some years, the city of Antwerp has promoted the slogan ‘the city belongs to everyone’ (*‘t stad is van iedereen’*). This catchphrase reflects the city’s municipal integration policy, which encourages ‘living together in diversity’ (*‘Samenleven in diversiteit’*). Nevertheless, the local elections in October 2006 led to a new local government agreement that could modify the policy described in this section.

Diversity policy is in any event high on the political agenda. The mission of the Integration Service, which is responsible for the region’s diversity policy, is focused on ‘promoting living in diversity by investing in social cohesion, equal opportunities and active citizenship’. This objective is further divided into four key concepts: diversity, cohesion, equal opportunities and citizenship, which are also the four poles of Antwerp’s vision on living in diversity as follows:

1. Antwerp is a city where room is allowed for differences;
2. it is a city where people live not next to each other but with each other;
3. it is a city where all inhabitants have access to the same opportunities;
4. it is a city with active citizens who assume their responsibilities.

Furthermore, five major policy lines are promoted, which reflect the action priorities of the Integration Service and its partners as follows:

- investing in cohesion and liveability in the neighbourhoods, as well as contacts between people;
- promoting city policy in the main spheres – such as work, housing, learning, leisure and services – that eliminates inequalities and which is increasingly permeated by an integral diversity strategy, with diversity as the starting point;
- requesting that those who live in Antwerp should learn the Dutch language and ensuring a pragmatic approach to multilingualism;
- increasing inhabitants’ awareness about their responsibilities and linking this to rights and obligations – in this context, integration for new inhabitants is considered the first step to active citizenship;
- governing on behalf of all of Antwerp’s inhabitants and working towards broader social support for the aim of ‘living together in diversity’.

The experiences of recent years has taught the city that the development of a coherent policy on living together in diversity – which encompasses diversity and equal opportunities on the one hand, and integration and language on the other – is a long process. Selected resulting criteria that determine the failure and success of such initiatives are as follows:

- an inclusive approach;
- a clear policy framework and vision;
- top-down steering and communication;
- a four-sphere policy – promoting a diverse workforce, an organisational culture, an accessible service and communication;
- a permanent measurement, evaluation and adjustment process.

The city government considers that it is responsible in this context for guaranteeing that Antwerp is a liveable city where everyone is entitled to basic rights. At the same time, there is an awareness of a lack of important tools for pursuing a consistent diversity policy, with a dependence on many higher government bodies. Since 2004, Flanders has appointed its first ever ‘citizenisation minister’ – a post taken up by the Flemish Minister for Domestic Affairs, Marino Keulen, whose portfolio also includes housing. Previously, integration and ethnic-cultural minority policy was more implicitly part of other competences. In his policy document 2004–2009, Minister Keulen abandons the ‘old’ formulation of a ‘minorities policy’. Instead, the focus has shifted from a minorities approach to a policy promoting living together, managing diversity, and common citizenship and equal opportunities. The policy is also centred on a more results oriented, and thus more quantitative, approach to citizenisation. Accordingly, there is less of an emphasis on a target group approach, and a greater focus on living together in diversity, as well as on the individual citizen and their responsibilities. Thus, the initial efforts made in Antwerp also seem to have had a resonance at the Flemish level.

In Flanders, there is a strong emphasis on citizenisation and individual emancipation, whereas Antwerp emphasises the importance of diversity policy. In this context, society, services and organisations are expected to take diversity as a basis for their overall policy approach. At the same time, emphasis is placed on the concept of obligations but also rights, as well as on the importance of empowerment and self-organisation, as openness to others can only grow from self-confidence. Similarly, a community can only build bridges when it feels that it is itself on solid ground.

Following the creation of the Integration Service, more uniformity, demarcation and clarity are needed with respect to the concepts of minorities, citizenisation and diversity policy. Antwerp only uses the term diversity policy; policies concerning issues such as citizenisation and equal opportunities are considered parts of a broader diversity policy.

Elsewhere, in light of recent events among other things, the national debate in Belgium is becoming harsher, focusing on issues such as: tackling undocumented migrants; or compulsory housing for asylum seekers in municipalities covered by the Public Social Welfare Centre (*Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn*, OCMW) to which they have been assigned.

Inter-city cooperation

Antwerp is active in several international and European networks. Firstly, it is a member of **EUROCITIES**², a network of major European cities. The network provides a platform for its member cities to share knowledge and ideas, to exchange experiences, and to analyse common problems and develop innovative solutions. These objectives are met through a wide range of forums, working groups, projects, activities and events. At the same time, EURO CITIES gives cities a voice in Europe, by engaging in dialogue with the European institutions on all aspects of EU legislation, policies and programmes that have an impact on cities and their citizens. In 2001, Antwerp participated in the EURO CITIES Antidiscrimination Exchange Project (EADE), as one of the project's eight partner cities. The aforementioned Integration Service was responsible for Antwerp's contribution. A local working group was set up comprising city and several private partners, which devised a text evaluating the local discrimination policy and offering proposals with respect to combating discrimination in public services, institutional change and improving the participation of discriminated groups. Pursuant to Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, the aim was to draw parallels with the fight against discrimination in other fields – for instance, in relation to age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religion – and to investigate the potential for joint action. Two transnational exchanges were held with the delegations of all partner cities. One of the outcomes of the project was the production of a good practices guide and website.

Secondly, the reception agency for newcomers to Antwerp (*Stedelijk onthaalbureau voor nieuwkomers Antwerpen*, Pina), which is part of the Integration Service, was a member of the **EQUAL**³ network in 2002. The EU-led EQUAL initiative seeks to close the gap between supply and demand in urban job markets through transnational partnership and exchange with respect to methods and expertise. Within the city of Antwerp itself, a partnership of private organisations and city services submitted in 2001 a project proposal to improve the employability of unaddressed and inadequately addressed jobseekers in the job market. The development partnership consists of an integration centre (*De Acht vzw*), the OCMW and the city, Pina, the Employment and Job Market Service, the Flemish Public Employment Service (*Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding*, VDAB) and an employment project called Vitamine W. A transnational partnership was also set up with actors in Denmark, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands.

Elsewhere, the city has taken part in the **URBACT**⁴ programme – a European programme for urban sustainable development which aims to encourage exchanges of experience between European cities and the actors involved in the URBAN programmes. The URBACT initiative is primarily focused on cities and neighbourhoods that are facing high levels of unemployment, delinquency and poverty, along with inadequate levels of public services. Antwerp also participates in URBACT's Urban Diversity and Inclusion Exchange (UDIEX-ALEP) – a thematic network of 24 EU partners and three partners from new Member States. The network consists of an action-learning programme for the transfer of experience and staff development.

Antwerp is also a member of the European Knowledge Network (EUKN), which seeks to share knowledge and experiences on tackling urban issues. EUKN aims to support policymakers and practitioners across Europe in developing an effective urban policy and to promote the vitality of Europe's towns and cities.

² <http://www.eurocities.eu/main.php>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm

⁴ <http://urbact.eu/>

In addition, Antwerp is a member of the European Regeneration Network (Quartiers en crises – European Regeneration Areas Network, **Qec-ERAN**⁵) – a network of cities promoting an integrated approach to the revitalisation of disadvantaged areas. The project encourages the involvement of politicians, technicians and local residents in this process and aims to explore original and innovative ideas for citizens' participation.

The city has also been a member of **IQ-Net**⁶, a network of regional and national partners whose aim is to improve the quality of Structural Funds programming through the exchange of experience. The network shares experience on aspects of programme development, along with management and evaluation, bringing together ideas from across the EU and sharing information on good practice.

Finally, Antwerp's advisory agency for entrepreneurs with a migratory background (*Adviesbureau Allochtoon Ondernemen*), which is now part of the city's general business service, used to be subsidised by the EU through Local Integration Action (LIA) and European Social Fund (ESF) initiatives. LIA was a two-year European policy programme, which encompassed a transnational partnership with partners in Aarhus, Barcelona, the Hague, Sheffield, Utrecht and other cities. ESF involved a Flemish partnership rather than a transnational one. Both programmes focused on citizenisation and enterprise.

⁵ <http://www.qec-eran.org/>

⁶ <http://www.eprc.strath.ac.uk/iqnet/default.cfm>

Housing situation

Housing stock and market

The following sections give an overview of Antwerp's housing market – in particular, the distribution of houses, the city's role in the housing market, the quality of housing, problem neighbourhoods and mobility within the city.

Housing market segmentation

Taking the city territory as a whole, it can be seen that there are more owners than tenants in Antwerp (unreturned surveys not included) (Table 1). In relation to people who rent, the majority are private tenants. A significant minority of people live in social housing. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the ratio of owners to tenants is obviously not the same in all districts, nor in all neighbourhoods of a district.

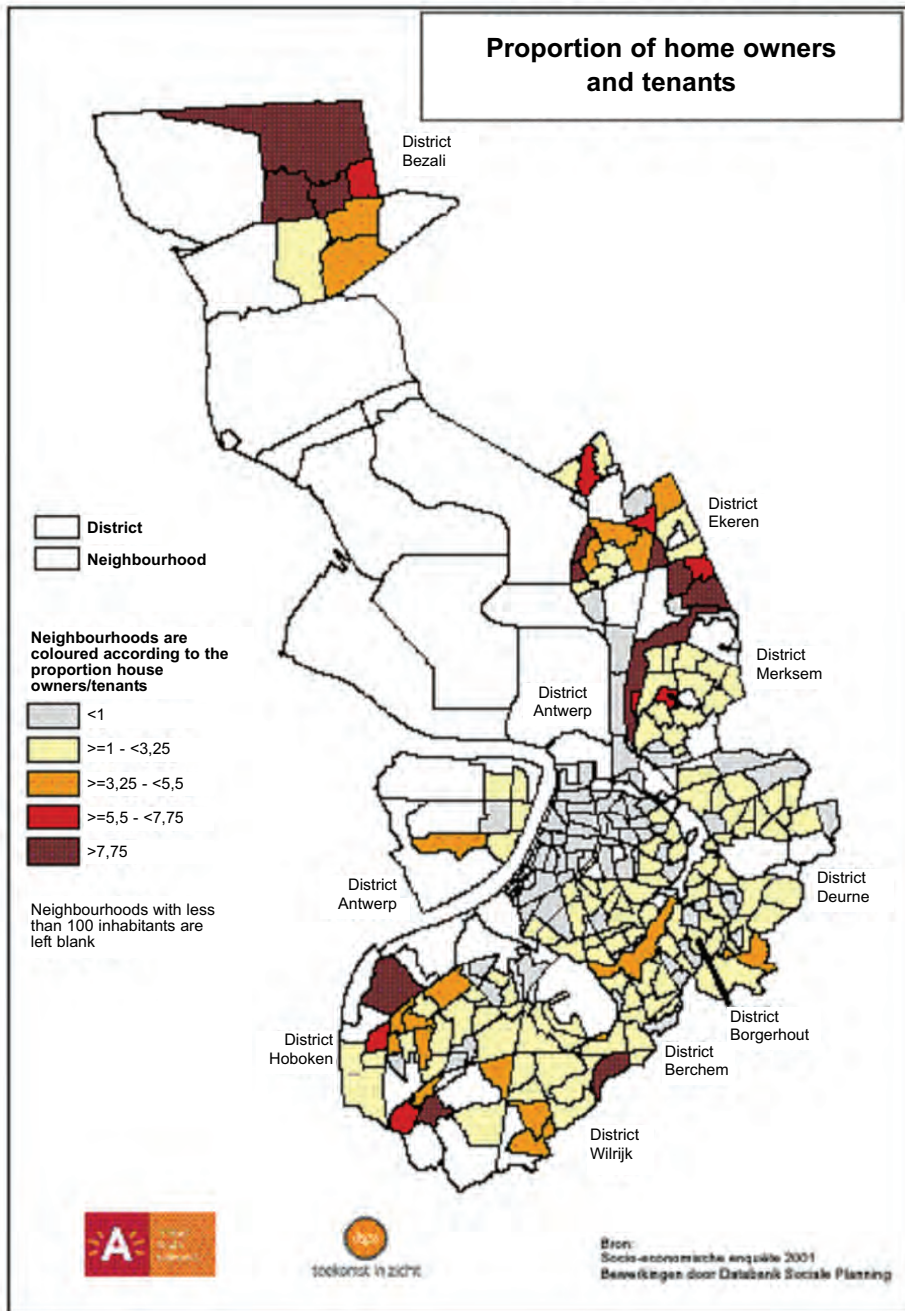
Table 1: *Number of owners and tenants in Antwerp's housing market*

Number of house owners	Number of tenants				Ratio of house owners to tenants
	Private tenants	Tenants in social housing or public institution	Tenants of private company	Total number of tenants	
104,426	56,540	20,940	9,253	86,733	1.20

Source: *Housing City Service*

At district level, the ratio of owners to tenants in the district of Antwerp is negative: there are some 41,035 tenants in this district, compared with only 27,333 home owners. This ratio is only marginally positive in the district of Borgerhout (8,639 owners versus 7,548 tenants). In all of the other districts, the proportion of home owners is higher. At neighbourhood level, the situation varies greatly depending on the district. It is often said that the current tenants are people who have financial difficulties. Figure 1 shows the ratio of home owners to tenants – the darker colours showing higher ratio of owners.

Figure 1: Proportion of home owners and tenants in Antwerp, by district



Source: 'Atlas of deprived and privileged neighbourhoods in Antwerp', 29 June 2005, based on socio-economic survey 2001.

City's role in housing market

According to a socioeconomic survey conducted in 2001, there are approximately 216,738 dwellings in Antwerp. The majority of these are flats/apartments and studio flats (58%), while single-family dwellings account for 38% of this total. Owner-occupied dwellings constitute approximately 48% of the dwellings, while privately rented accommodation accounts for 30% of the total and social housing units for over 11% of the dwellings. Vacant or uncategorised dwellings make up the remaining share, which is close to 11%.

Antwerp has a large stock of social housing, although it is not evenly spread throughout the region. In 1998, the city had a total of 23,813 social dwellings. By the end of 2004, this figure had risen to 26,103 dwellings. The dwellings mainly comprise studio flats, regular flats/apartments and single-family dwellings with between one and four bedrooms. Dwellings with five bedrooms are fairly exceptional. Altogether, there are some 2,467 single-family dwellings and 23,636 flats/apartments. Social housing is clearly not evenly distributed, as just 11.6% of households in Antwerp live in such housing. In some districts, this percentage is higher: for instance, in the district of Antwerp, the figure amounts to 20%. Moreover, compared with the overall average for Flanders of 6%, the proportion of social housing units in Antwerp is relatively high. This explains why politicians are sometimes reticent about increasing this share.

To manage the housing market, the city of Antwerp has several means at its disposal. For instance, the city participates in six social housing companies and holds the majority of shares in four of these companies. The remaining two companies are Ideale Woning, a merger company formed with Ghent, and the real cooperative company ABC. Some companies can obtain the necessary means to set up projects only through the City Fund and following well-structured consultation. Together with the other local authorities in the province, the city of Antwerp also participates in the operation of the Social Construction and Credit Company (*Sociale Bouw- en Kredietmaatschappij Arro Antwerp*) – a small social housing company specialised in the building and selling of social housing units (no rentals), as well as the granting of social loans.

Affordability, quality and overcrowding of housing

Land is quite expensive in Antwerp: for instance, a square metre of land costs almost two times more than the Flemish average. The cost of housing is also very high and Antwerp comes second after Brussels in terms of the highest house prices in Belgium. In recent years, house prices in Antwerp have increased more significantly than elsewhere, and the average sales price for detached houses and townhouses in Antwerp is far above the country average. Nevertheless, Antwerp is one of the cheapest cities to buy an apartment. In 2004, an apartment cost €106,476 on average, compared with the Belgian average of €125,919.

The city has not released any recent information on the occupation of houses and no additional statistical material is available. Although overcrowding probably exists, it is most likely to be a problem mainly for people staying illegally in the city and the country. Most of the time, government institutions are not aware of overcrowding problems, although they are sporadically informed of such issues through complaints.

Problematic neighbourhoods

The city of Antwerp uses clear criteria to identify problematic neighbourhoods and considers such an approach to be more objective. This approach was first applied in the ‘Atlas of underprivileged neighbourhoods’ (*Atlas van achtergestelde buurten*) devised by Christian Kesteloot et al. The atlas uses data from the 1991 census of population and dwellings. A number of neighbourhoods are described as being deprived on the basis of the seven following indicators:

- the percentage of dwellings without minimal conveniences;
- the percentage of manual employees;
- the percentage of single-person households as a proportion of the total number of households;
- the percentage of inhabitants with Moroccan or Turkish nationality;
- the average taxable income per person;
- the percentage of unemployed persons as a proportion of the total working population;
- the percentage of households with a telephone as a proportion of the total number of households.

The three latter indicators were not clearly identified in the factor analysis and were later added; however, they do have a strong substantive connection to poverty and social exclusion. The indicators were selected from a longer list of 23 variables extracted from a factor analysis, which identified four factors, each one measuring an aspect of deprivation according to Kesteloot. The most representative variables were in turn selected as indicators from these four factors.

A similar exercise, albeit with a slightly different approach and methodology to the first Atlas, was conducted in Antwerp in 2005 by the Social Planning Databank. The initiative sought to achieve the purest possible measurement of deprivation and privilege. Six criteria were taken for measuring deprivation and privilege, namely:

- the proportion of risk groups in the population – such as young people, pensioners, ethnic minorities, natives, and single-parent families with one child or with two children;
- job market data – including the percentage of jobseekers who are unemployed for more than one year, or the percentage of employed persons as a proportion of the working age population;
- housing data – such as the number of vacant and neglected houses, or the ratio of owners to tenants;
- education data – for example, the percentage of secondary school students following academic courses, the proportion of part-time secondary school students enrolled in vocational courses, or the number of students repeating exams;
- income poverty – such as the average net taxable income, or the percentage of people in receipt of benefits;
- illegal tipping data.

Based on these variables, a number of city maps were drawn up that clearly show which neighbourhoods in Antwerp are deprived and which are privileged. The maps are included in the ‘Atlas of deprived and privileged neighbourhoods in Antwerp’ (Atlas van kansarme en kansrijke buurten in Antwerpen).

An integrated approach is taken in the fight against deprivation through measures such as: the strengthening of neighbourhood social cohesion; more neighbourhood watch activities; increased housing inspections; greater job market guidance; the introduction of renovation contracts for dwellings, or the possibility to lease renovation equipment.

Various characteristics of ‘problematic neighbourhoods’ have been highlighted in a socioeconomic survey undertaken in 2001 by the National Institute for Statistics (*Institut National de Statistique/Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek, INS/NIS*⁷). The following issues were underlined.

- About four fifths of Antwerp households are satisfied with the condition of their dwelling. One in five of the respondents feels that major or minor repairs are needed to the guttering, the roof, the electrics or the interior walls of their house. Exterior walls and windows received a less positive evaluation: some 23.6% of the households believe that major or minor repairs are needed to the exterior walls, while 26.8% are of the opinion that the windows need to be repaired. At neighbourhood level, there are a number of neighbourhoods in which defects to dwellings are observed more often. These neighbourhoods or blocks often have a high deprivation index score. However, the condition of the dwelling is not always an adequate criterion. It is striking that Antwerp North and Borgerhout inside the town do not regularly score as neighbourhoods in which there is a need for repairs.

⁷ <http://www.statbel.fgov.be/>

- The Social Planning Databank, using the results of the socioeconomic survey, drew up a number of maps showing the situation in relation to each item at neighbourhood level – that is, concerning the need for repair to the electrics, interior walls, exterior walls, windows, guttering and roof.
- The survey also collected data on occupied dwellings. For the city of Antwerp, it revealed several features. Firstly, the number of single-family dwellings in Antwerp has risen by 9.9% since the 1991 survey. In 2001, some 39.2% of households lived in a single-family dwelling. Of the five large cities – namely, Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi, Ghent and Liège – only the capital city of Brussels performs worse than Antwerp in this respect. Secondly, the number of households situated in a large flat complex fell slightly in the period 1991–2001. About 20.9% of households in Antwerp are located in large flat complexes. The cities of Charleroi, Ghent and Liège record a lower score in this respect. Thirdly, the number of dwellings with two or less bedrooms fell in this period. Dwellings are getting bigger, while the number of small dwellings (less than three living spaces) has fallen sharply, from 45,921 to 23,867 units. The total floor space of the living spaces (kitchen, living room, sitting room, dining room, office, playroom, relaxation room and bedroom) in most dwellings is 85 square metres or less. Fourthly, in Antwerp 11.6% of households live in a dwelling that is less than 20 years old. Major renovation work was carried out in 9.2% of the dwellings in Antwerp in the past decade. In this context, renovation refers to a change to the total floor space or the number of rooms. Other renovations, such as new bathrooms, kitchens, electrics, windows or roof, are not included. Furthermore, over half of Antwerp's households are owner-occupiers. Nevertheless, it is relatively cheap to rent a dwelling in Antwerp. Almost 7% of rented dwellings are rented in a furnished state and three in four dwellings in Antwerp have central heating.
- Antwerp's inhabitants appear to be relatively satisfied with the cleanliness and appearance of buildings in their vicinity. The inhabitants are generally less pleased with air quality or the quietness of their neighbourhood, with a higher proportion of inhabitants expressing their dissatisfaction with these aspects. The inhabitants of Antwerp's periphery are typically more satisfied than those who live in the centre of Antwerp. Compared with the results for Belgium as a whole, or those for Flanders and the 12 other Flemish city centres, Antwerp does not score as well in this respect.

It should be mentioned that, according to city experts, there is no obvious correlation between housing quality in general and neighbourhoods that are considered as problematic. In Antwerp's postal zone 2060⁸, for instance, housing quality is not as bad as everywhere; in fact, there are some areas with high residential potential, such as the planned zone along the Leien area in Antwerp. Peripheral highrise estates in Antwerp often offer much better quality of housing than inner city homes of similar price and type. Housing quality or affordability are generally not the main driving force for area-based policies. Officially, there has even been a shift in policy focus towards areas with potential – for example, for gentrification (redevelopment following an influx of more affluent people) or urban development – rather than problem areas; in practice, however, problems, albeit not necessarily housing problems, remain an important issue for politicians, and neighbourhoods that combine both have the greatest chance of receiving attention.

Mobility within the city

In Antwerp, mobility within the city also has to be considered in the context of external movements, mainly because the city's policy is aimed at attracting and retaining two-income households with young children in the city. Nonetheless, the findings show that two groups tend to leave the city to move to the suburbs – that is, families with children under nine years of age or 30-year olds. Conversely, people in their 20s tend to move to the city. Unlike other groups – such as European citizens or non-European citizens including Moroccans and Turks – more Belgians leave than come to the city each year.

⁸ Belgian postal codes are numeric and consist of four numbers.

In 2004, Antwerp had a migration surplus, mainly due to the influx of two groups – that is, 20-year olds and ethnic minorities. For all nationalities, a relatively high positive migration balance is evident with respect to 20-year olds, indicating that the city is attractive to young adults. At the same time, a negative balance is visible in relation to children (aged nine years or younger) and 30-year olds. However, this negative balance is mainly due to Belgian parents with young children leaving the city. For foreign citizens, the balance is positive for all ages.

In absolute figures, ‘moving movements’ occur in most neighbourhoods in the city centre, including Kiel, Merksem and parts of Deurne. Calculating the average moving movements in proportion to the population at the beginning of 2004, the rate is very high in the city centre and parts of Antwerp North. On the one hand, the ‘internal moving balance’ represents the number of arrivals from other neighbourhoods in Antwerp, as well as the number of departures to another neighbourhood in Antwerp. Thus, it shows which neighbourhoods lose or gain citizens to and from other neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the ‘external moving balance’ represents the number of arrivals from outside the city, along with the number of departures to other places outside of Antwerp, showing the interaction with areas outside of the city. Both are calculated in proportion to the population. In terms of the internal migration balance, it emerges that the neighbourhoods in areas such as Antwerp North, Oud-Borgerhout, the neighbourhood around the city park, parts of the southern area of Antwerp and the city centre lose citizens to other neighbourhoods in the city. Thus, the outskirts of the city tend to gain citizens. The external balance indicates the opposite: areas within the city walls gain citizens, while the neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the city very often lose citizens moving to areas outside of the city.

The division according to age shows that the city centre is a popular destination, except among families with young children and people in their 30s, probably the children’s parents. These two groups have a positive balance in the outskirts of the city (Ekeren, Hoboken and Merksem). Fewer 20-year olds live in the city’s suburbs, instead moving in large numbers to the city centre. For other age groups, the patterns are less distinctive. The findings show that Belgians leave almost every neighbourhood and that only the city centre is popular among this group. For other groups, a mainly positive moving balance is evident. It is striking that Moroccans and Turks, often less well-off groups, are leaving richer neighbourhoods such as Zuid and Zurenborg. For other non-EU citizens, a negative balance is visible in the areas around the city park and the eastern part of Antwerp North and Oud-Borgerhout.

Examining the migration balance according to nationality shows the following results. Firstly, most of the neighbourhoods in Antwerp show a negative moving balance for Belgians – particularly the neighbourhoods of Merksem Dokske, Oud-Borgerhout and the social housing areas. The areas which gain Belgian citizens are mainly situated in the historic city centre. Secondly, except for the Bezali neighbourhood, most neighbourhoods show a positive migration balance for EU nationals: the positive migration balance is evident in both poorer areas (social housing neighbourhoods, Antwerp North, Oud-Borgerhout), as well as in a number of richer areas (Eilandje, Wilrijk and Zuid). Thirdly, a positive migration balance is evident almost everywhere for Moroccans and Turks, although there is a negative balance in the richer neighbourhoods of Zuid and Zurenborg. In Antwerp North, Deurne North, Hoboken, Merksem-Dokske, Oud-Borgerhout and the social housing areas, the number of Moroccans and Turks is increasing. Finally, a more varied picture is evident for the other non-EU nationals. In general, most of the neighbourhoods record an increase in people from this group; nonetheless, a decrease is also apparent in a number of neighbourhoods, such as those around the city park and certain parts of Antwerp North.

Housing situation of residents with migration background

Distribution of migrants in housing

According to the city experts, residents with a migration background – particularly former ‘guest workers’ – used to be restricted to privately rented housing, often of modest or bad quality. However, in the 1980s, a significant number of these residents became homeowners, often in precarious circumstances. In the 1990s, due to more strict application procedures (reduction of ‘clientelism’) for access to housing – for instance, in terms of an upper limit regarding

household income – more recent immigrants such as asylum seekers on allowance, as well as the established population with a migration background on low incomes, moved into social housing relatively rapidly.

The ‘Atlas note 2006–2008’, a policy document issued by the City Integration Service, describes the housing situation among migrants as follows:

Although there are no recent figures, the housing situation of many ethnic minorities is inadequate. They are often in a bad position with respect to comfort and quality. The share of owners is lower among ethnic minorities, although they are catching up. The property acquisition witnessed an increase from the beginning of the 80s, when more and more Turks (and to a lesser degree Moroccans) proceeded to the purchase of often cheap houses of bad quality. In professional literature, this group is indicated by the term ‘emergency buyers’. They bought their own house to leave a bad rental situation or because they were discriminated against in the private rental market. Now, many years later, the housing quality of the emergency buyers is relatively good. Step by step, they renovated their houses. The property acquisition by ethnic minorities remains nonetheless smaller than the acquisition of real estate by non-ethnic minorities.

Nowadays, newcomers encounter as many problems in the private rental market as the emergency buyers did before. They end up in the secondary rental market in deprived neighbourhoods. Asylum seekers, people with a precarious status and people without legal residence documents are most likely to become victims of slum lords. The high number of these population categories found in slums during law enforcement actions proves this theory. Some 109 out of 150 people – or two out of three persons – that qualified for rehousing belonged to this category. This is not all. In many cases, they cannot claim compulsory rehousing from the authorities. Most of the time, they end up in a slum again.

Over the last few decades, urban exodus and migration have thoroughly changed the composition of the population and the social web in neighbourhoods of special attention. Those who could afford it went to live in the outskirts or outside the city: initially, non-ethnic minority groups, and later on also the well-off ethnic minority groups. Their place was taken by new immigrants. This creates transit neighbourhoods with high percentages of non-Dutch speaking newcomers, high-migrant schools and community problems. This also leads to segregation and intergenerational transfer of backwardness.

According to the city experts, it seems that vulnerable groups of migrants are being pushed into the neighbourhoods along the periphery of the city. This mechanism of exclusion is being coupled with a process of gentrification, which can be seen in neighbourhoods such as Borgerhout. It should also be mentioned that a large proportion of ethnic minorities also live in social housing in the city. By overemphasising new population groups, strong changes are emerging in cohabitation and this form of housing. It also explains the political willingness to address the issue of ethnic minorities’ knowledge of Dutch.

Given that few social housing units have more than four bedrooms, that more apartments are offered than one-family houses and that legal criteria regarding occupation have to be taken into account, it is understandable that large families do not find it easy to apply for social housing – although this still occurs to some extent among some ethnic minorities. Even within the private rental market, ethnic minorities encounter problems – not only due to the price setting for large houses, but also because owners or leasers, according to some jurisprudence, may prefer a family with few children over a family with many children. As Kusters (2003) explains: ‘A family with five children will cause more wear and tear to a house than a family with two children, willing to pay the same rent for the same house.’ Such discretion does not constitute an illegal action according to case law.

In a study entitled ‘Social housing – a comparative study on four cities around tolerant cohabitation’ (*Sociale huisvesting – Een vergelijkend vierstedenonderzoek rond verdraagzaam samenleven*), the former Antwerp mayor and OCMW president, Bob Cools, addresses the issue of social housing. It appears that from 1999 to 2004, the number of non-ethnic prospective tenants decreased from 45.72% to 16.5%. In the same period, the proportion of foreigners in social housing increased from 37.9% to 65.72%. In this group, the category of new Belgians is not taken into account. New applicants refer to those coming from new countries of origin – such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, this case cannot be extrapolated to the Flemish level. From the perspective of nationality, the proportion of candidates for social housing is highest among Belgians, who constitute 79.74% of the candidates. Furthermore, compared with most other parts of Flanders, Antwerp appears to have a relatively higher number of prospective tenants.

Housing-related aspects of some neighbourhoods

Health

Currently, the city of Antwerp does not have sufficient information for conducting a precise health environment analysis of each neighbourhood. Initial attempts were made to conduct a general analysis as part of a draft local health policy plan developed by the city and the OCMW. This plan acknowledges the importance of information at neighbourhood level and with regard to each target group. For instance, cancer or suicide registration at neighbourhood level can be useful information for developing policy options. However, this information is not yet available. Therefore, some interesting research results are not always linked to the neighbourhood. It is likely that there is a connection between health and the inferior quality of housing among ethnic minority groups – based on the human poverty index – in problem areas.

Regarding health, several elements can be highlighted based on various data sources. Firstly, a general poverty survey indicates that people living in poverty have a lower life expectancy. Secondly, an investigation by Children and Family Care (*Kind & Gezin*), the Flemish public institution for children’s well-being, shows that families with a negative health score can be found in well-defined Antwerp neighbourhoods. The high-risk neighbourhoods are Oud-Merksem and Stuivenberg and, to a lesser degree, Dam-Eilandje, Hoboken North and West, Kiel and Merksem Heide-Tuinwijk. Thirdly, the Health Survey shows that, in Flanders, people’s financial position is decisive in their use of healthcare services and that people with a lower socioeconomic status have more chronic diseases.

Fourthly, Antwerp has not escaped the typical metropolitan phenomenon related to increasing poverty and the presence of certain serious or contagious diseases. For instance, the incidence of tuberculosis (TB) infection has reappeared in Antwerp’s statistics more frequently than in other Flemish cities: the incidence of TB within the Flemish community as a whole, based on the number of TB registrations per 100,000 inhabitants, is 7.6; in the city of Antwerp, this figure is significantly higher at 24.1. Since 2000, Antwerp has repeatedly had the second highest incidence rate of TB compared with other Belgian cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. According to the Flemish Association of Respiratory Health Care and Tuberculosis Elimination, differences between Antwerp and other large Flemish cities, such as Ghent and Bruges, are mainly due to the population profile: in Antwerp, there is a larger share of high-risk groups. Nevertheless, after a serious increase in TB in 2004, the results for 2005 appear to be more positive compared with the previous year. Striking differences emerge between the different postal zones in Antwerp. In postal zones 2060, 2000 and 2030 within the district of Antwerp, as well as in Borgerhout, the TB incidence rate is remarkably higher than the overall average for Antwerp. The postal zones 2018, 2020 and 2050 in Antwerp, and Hoboken, do not differ much from the average figure for Antwerp, although the rates are still much higher than the Flemish average. In the Flemish community, five nationalities among non-nationals were most frequently infected with TB in 2003: namely, Moroccans, Indians, Chinese, Turks and Pakistanis. Among the Asian nationalities in particular, with the exception of Turkish nationals, the risk of infection is clearly higher. The risk also seems to be higher among asylum seekers. It can be assumed that people from these high-risk groups also belong to high-risk groups within the city of Antwerp. All of these

high-risk nationalities, with the exception of Indians, are quite strongly represented in postal zone 2060. In the postal zones 2020 and 2018, there is also a relatively strong representation of Moroccans and Turks. In Deurne, there are relatively more Moroccans, while in Berchem there are relatively more Turks. Chinese people mainly live in the postal zones 2000 and 2060 and in Wilrijk. Indians mainly reside in Wilrijk and in postal zone 2018, while Pakistanis mainly live in Borgerhout and Deurne, as well as in postal zone 2060. Refugees also live in these areas, as well as in Borgerhout, Deurne, Hoboken and Linkeroever.

Education

In deprived neighbourhoods, which generally comprise a large number of ethnic minorities, more children usually need special education. This type of education can be divided into sub-types, with education being tailored to suit the needs of children with certain requirements or disabilities. Indeed, there is a larger concentration of children requiring special education in neighbourhoods such as Antwerp North, Hoboken-Centrum and Luchtbal. Children tend to fall behind in school when they have to repeat a year or when elementary education is started at a later age. The situation is not necessarily the same in all neighbourhoods – for instance, there is a larger concentration of children in this category in Antwerp North, Antwerp South, Borgerhout (outside city walls), Kiel, Luchtbal and Oud-Berchem.

In terms of the number of students with a general secondary education (Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs, ASO), which is focused on general knowledge and higher studies, the situation also differs at neighbourhood level. For example, Antwerp North, Borgerhout (inside city walls) and Kiel score badly in this respect.

A variable situation is also evident regarding the number of students with a vocational secondary education (*Beroeps Secundair Onderwijs*, BSO) – a practical type of education which combines specialised job training with general knowledge. For instance, larger proportions of students are engaged in vocational education in Antwerp North and Borgerhout (inside city walls), as well as in Deurne North, Kiel, Luchtbal, Oud-Berchem and some neighbourhoods in Hoboken.

Other findings also clearly show the differences between neighbourhoods. For instance, the majority of young non-native newcomers live in Antwerp North. Together with Borgerhout (inside city walls) and Kiel, this neighbourhood is also better represented in terms of students engaged in part-time vocational secondary education, as well as those participating in special secondary education (pupils with disabilities). In these three neighbourhoods, as well as in neighbourhoods such as Deurne North, Luchtbal and Oud-Berchem, more problems are evident regarding delayed school learning.

Unemployment

In the Labour Monitor (*Arbeidsmonitor*), the city of Antwerp records the number of job opportunities and the extent of unemployment in the city for each semester. Certain neighbourhoods in Antwerp have been hit more badly by unemployment than others. Once again, the problem areas include Antwerp North, Europark (*Linkeroever*), Kiel and Luchtbal.

Segregation

An analysis of the size of each population group – that is, Belgians, other EU nationals and non-EU nationals – shows which districts and neighbourhoods have a higher concentration of foreign nationals. Table 2 below shows that the districts of Antwerp and Borgerhout have a high concentration of foreigners, particularly non-EU nationals. EU nationals, other than Belgians, are mainly concentrated in the district of Antwerp. All other districts show a lower score in this respect than the citywide score. The lowest scores are registered in Berendrecht, Ekeren and Zandvliet, whereas Berchem, Deurne and Hoboken have the highest percentage of ethnic minorities.

Table 2: Proportion of residents in Antwerp, by population group and district

District	Belgians		EU nationals		Non-EU nationals		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
City of Antwerp	404,772	86.7%	24,086	5.2%	37,933	8.1%	466,791
Onbekend (Unknown)			3		2		5
Antwerp	134,306	79.7%	13,394	7.9%	20,798	12.3%	168,498
Berchem	35,948	89.4%	1,923	4.8%	2,320	5.8%	40,191
Berendrecht	5,756	96.9%	131	2.2%	56	0.9%	5,943
Borgerhout	34,526	82.2%	2,094	5.0%	5,404	12.9%	42,024
Deurne	63,283	90.6%	2,438	3.5%	4,123	5.9%	69,844
Ekeren	21,491	96.3%	553	2.5%	268	1.2%	22,312
Hoboken	31,962	92.2%	888	2.6%	1,813	5.2%	34,663
Merksem	38,396	93.2%	1,242	3.0%	1,560	3.8%	41,198
Wilrijk	35,631	92.6%	1,264	3.3%	1,573	4.1%	38,468
Zandvliet	3,473	95.3%	156	4.3%	16	0.4%	3,645

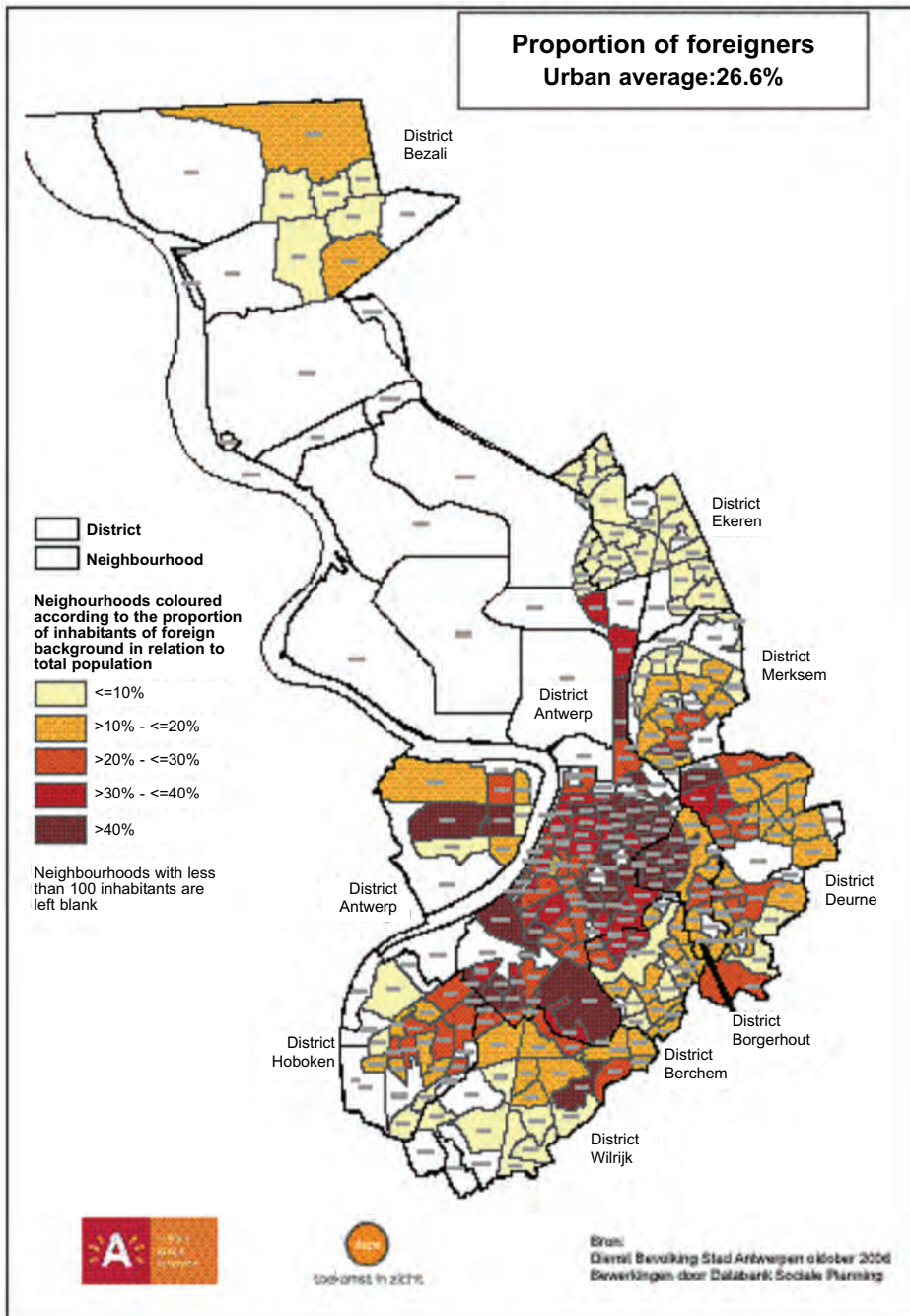
Source: City of Antwerp, Statistics Office, October 2006, Revisions by city of Antwerp, Social Planning Databank

At neighbourhood level, the various ethnic minority groups are distributed as follows. The areas around ‘the Ring’ in Antwerp have a particularly high percentage of ethnic minorities. These groups are most strongly represented in Antwerp North, Oud-Borgerhout, the Diamond neighbourhood and the social housing neighbourhoods (Kiel, Europark/Linkeroever and Luchtbal), where they account for more than 40% of the population. In contrast, a low percentage of ethnic minorities can be found in the neighbourhoods of Bezali, Ekeren and the south of Wilrijk (see Figure 2).

EU nationals tend to live in the housing blocks in and around the Old Town (*Oude Binnenstad*) and Het Eilandje. On the other hand, non-EU nationals are mainly concentrated in the 19th century belt and the social housing neighbourhoods, making up over 40% of the population in Antwerp North and in most parts of Oud-Borgerhout and Het Kiel.

Non-EU Europeans – including those from the former Warsaw Pact countries and Russia – are most strongly concentrated in Antwerp North, the area around the main railway station and the area extending from there towards Oud-Borgerhout and Deurne North. Inhabitants of Moroccan origin are highly concentrated in Oud-Borgerhout and the area extending from there towards Antwerp North and the blocks around Provinciestraat. The percentage of ethnic Moroccans is also high in Het Kiel; moreover, residents from this group are well represented in Deurne North, Luchtbal, Merksem Dokske and parts of Hoboken. The Turkish community is mainly based in Zuid, Kiel (and the adjacent part of Hoboken), Antwerp North and Oud Berchem. Inhabitants of Asian origin, excluding Turks, are highly concentrated in the Diamond neighbourhood; such inhabitants mainly comprise Israelis and Indians, who are well represented in the diamond trade. There is a fairly high concentration of Africans (not including Moroccans) in the social housing neighbourhoods of Linkeroever and Luchtbal.

Figure 2: Proportion of foreigners (city average 26.6%)



Source: Population Service City of Antwerp, October 2006, Revisions made by Social Planning Databank

High concentrations of ethnic minorities are found in both district and intra-district neighbourhoods. Thus, while diversity is concentrated in some parts of the city, it is also expanding into other areas. Generally, the percentage of migrants is highest in the city centre, specifically in the districts of Antwerp and Borgerhout, where they constitute almost 40% of the population. A comparison between 2000 and 2005 findings shows that, a significant percentage of migrants can also be found outside the ring area. The city centre therefore has as many migrants as all neighbourhoods. According to the city experts, residents with a migration background are predominantly concentrated within the contours of the 19th century city, although recently there has been some movement to the interbellum districts (areas developed

in the period between the two world wars (1918–1939)). Newly arriving immigrants still end up in the areas of the city with the least attractive housing stock, although from the 1960s onwards, the dominant reception area has changed: that is, from Antwerpen-Zuid in the 1960s to Borgerhout in the 1970s–1980s to Antwerp North in the 1990s–2000s. Recent signs of gentrification in Antwerp North (postal zone 2060) signal that this area will also be succeeded by another in due time. Consequently, Antwerp North is today experiencing the greatest diversity in terms of the largest number of nationalities. In Borgerhout, residents with an immigrant origin are mainly of Moroccan descent. Elsewhere, the orthodox Jewish neighbourhood between Central Station and the city park in Antwerp expands towards the south along the railway to Berchem. Antwerpen-Zuid has ceased to be an important ethnic neighbourhood, with the exception of a small established Turkish community. Berchem (within the city walls) retains a mixed Turkish-Moroccan population that has nevertheless stabilised. Residents of mainly Moroccan descent, and to a lesser extent Turks, are spreading towards interbellumdistricts, resulting in a lower segregation index than 10 years ago. Overall, segregation indexes for foreigners are lower than before.

Some of the more affluent immigrants live in upper class areas within the city limits – for instance, the Middelheim Park area and its surroundings have become a popular residential area for the Indian community in recent years. However, most of these immigrants – mainly Dutch people – live in the suburban green belt in relatively large estates to the northeast of the city (Kalmthout, Kapellen, Brasschaat, Schoten, Schilde). The rest of the suburban area and the main part of the post-war extensions within the administrative borders of Antwerp have a very homogeneous population of Belgian origin.

Accessibility of housing market

The housing situation in Belgium is quite specific to this country in the sense that housing competences are divided in a particular way. While the regions have responsibility for all questions related to social housing as well as housing at risk of dilapidation, the federal government is only in charge of competences related to the private housing market – namely, information on value-added tax (VAT) percentages, recognition of real estate agents and the funding of socioeconomic initiatives in urban areas as well as for measures combating racism and discrimination. It should be mentioned that the percentage of social dwellings in Belgium is significantly lower than in neighbouring countries. Moreover, Belgium has a high rate of homeowners.

In general, the housing market can be divided into two parts in this context: the private rental sector and social housing. Social rental agencies act as a bridge between both. In the private rental market, the law of supply and demand applies. In optimal conditions, tenants and lessors agree on a price and contract. Tenant associations will point out that tenants are the weakest party and that they are often forced to accept financial conditions laid down by the person leasing the dwelling, arguing that dwellings are too expensive nowadays. This is certainly the case in relation to vulnerable groups, such as those at risk of deprivation, newcomers or people without legal residence papers. However, in the private rental sector, legal rules have to be observed. In the case of a dispute, the weaker contracting party, that is the tenant, has to apply to the courts. Furthermore, it is generally assumed that refusals on the grounds of racist or discriminatory reasons are quite common in the private rental sector. Yet, this has not resulted in the development of extensive case law, largely due to difficulties with respect to the burden of proof.

According to experts, policy-regulated housing allocation refers mainly to social housing; there are few rules concerning allocation in the private rental market or regarding privately owned housing, except for anti-discrimination law. Due to pressures from established residents and from social housing companies, attempts are now being made to restrict access to social housing for certain residents of migrant origin. Antwerp social housing companies, organised social housing residents and local politicians have taken the lead in lobbying for these changes in policy regulation at the Flemish level. For reasons of ‘liveability’, the Flemish housing minister wants to restrict access to social housing to those speaking Dutch or willing to learn the language. Illegal immigrants have already been denied access to social housing following

the issuing of a circular by the federal minister. Moreover, while the impending asylum law will provide for material relief, including housing in asylum centres or small-scale asylum infrastructures, it will also deny access to social housing for asylum seekers.

According to expert opinion, it is currently unknown whether and to what extent real estate in Antwerp city is affordable in general, and for ethnic minority groups in particular. Considering the increasing price of real estate – although the housing market is currently cooling and is partly set off by the higher interest rates requested by banks – along with the weak socioeconomic position of certain parts of the immigrant population, it is likely that a large proportion of this group lacks the financial means to buy a house. As a result, they have to resort to the private or social housing rental market.

Immigrants with the financial means to buy a house usually choose affordable houses. Unfortunately, ‘affordable’ often implies ‘inferior’ quality housing, which involves extra costs. For example, the absence of insulation or defective insulation leads to higher heating costs. There is also a tendency to take out loans from banking institutions that ask for higher rates – a device used by the banks to anticipate possible payment problems.

The subscription and allocation of a social housing unit is subject to certain rules. For instance, the Social Housing Act stipulates that a prospective tenant has to fall into a certain income bracket, that registered tenants have to comply with certain rules and that, at the moment of the agreement’s execution, the tenant may not own any real estate.

The number of housing related complaints received by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism never exceeds 10% of the total of complaints. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that there is a serious level of underreporting with regard to housing related discrimination. People looking for a new dwelling and who are confronted with some form of discrimination will probably continue to look for other possibilities rather than report the discrimination to officials; only the most flagrant cases are reported to the centre.

Under the recommendation of the Housing and Discrimination working group of the Interministerial Conference on Housing, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism has issued an overview of the types of complaints most frequently encountered. From this qualitative overview, six types of complaints become apparent. The first relates to cases where the victim feels that they are being discriminated against without being subjected to clear discriminatory statements from the owner. These owners are often very familiar with the ‘freedom of contract’ principle, which allows them to select a candidate on the basis of objective (such as solvability) as well as more subjective (such as confidence) criteria. These accepted criteria are then used to cloak discriminatory practices. The second type of complaint relates to victims that are overtly discriminated against, while the third type concerns refusals after an initial oral, or sometimes written, contract has been concluded. A fourth and very specific type of discrimination occurs when the owner allows tenants to sublease a dwelling if, and only if, the tenant applies certain discriminating criteria. In such cases, the tenant is placed in a difficult situation as subleasing is not a tenant’s right but only that of the owner. A fifth type of complaint relates to property advertisements for the rental or purchasing of housing that can contain discriminatory statements. Finally, the centre is also confronted with complaints about deliberate discriminatory practices by real estate agencies. Based on mere economic reasoning, real estate agents deliberately resort to clandestine discriminatory practices in order to please their clients. Extracting quantitative data from this qualitative list of complaints is impossible. Whatever the type of discrimination, it will always be extremely difficult to prove discrimination, except in the case of written discriminatory statements. This might help to explain the high levels of underreporting.

Institutional setting and relevant actors

In Flanders, the policy concerning minority groups is mainly an inclusive matter. In this context, the housing policy with respect to ethnic minorities is always included and dealt with as a task of the City Housing Service, which coordinates housing policy and realises basic housing rights. The Housing Service monitors housing quality, gives information and advice, and coordinates social housing. The main objectives are preventing vacancies and dilapidation in city housing and procuring renovated quality houses, increasing the range of social rental houses and social houses, facilitating access through administrative simplification, and increasing the range of affordable, high quality owner-occupied properties in the city. The Housing Service consists of a number of divisions: the Housing Offices, which provide services including housing advice; the Social Housing division and the Housing Inspection division, which conduct preventive inspections and offer transit houses.

Up until now, the City Integration Service has played a very limited role in the housing debate. However, it has been more active in relation to the target group encompassing gypsies, travellers and caravan dwellers. In particular, it has played a central role in the management of travellers' sites in the city of Antwerp. The traveller site manager communicates the information given by the site's occupants and channels it into policy decisions. The manager is the intermediary and trusted representative and, at the same time, monitors the observance of the city regulations. Currently, this management is the responsibility of the Housing Service. Indeed, caravan dwelling can be considered a special form of social housing. The Integration Service also assists the Housing Service in the juridical analysis of rehousing issues. At the request of the Housing Service, the Integration Service finds ethnic minority organisations that want to work around liveability in social housing. In terms of housing policy, the contribution of the Integration Service is mainly ad hoc.

The Housing Service and the Integration Service are both part of the Social Affairs unit. Together with the other services of this unit, they meet weekly for reporting and policy consultation. The meeting assembles coordinators of the various services under the direction of the unit manager. At a higher level, managers of the various city business units meet in the management team. The Housing Service is under the political responsibility of the competent alderman, who sets out the policy lines in accordance with the managerial agreement.

With regard to senior housing in particular, the OCMW plays an important role. It also leases social housing. In addition, the centre disposes of an extensive real estate inheritance and may be considered as a social housing company. At this moment, the OCMW leases more than 2,000 houses and flats to less well-off citizens. By putting these houses on the rental market, the OCMW contributes considerably to the existing supply of social housing. However, there is still a great need for suitable, affordable houses in Antwerp.

The autonomous city company for real estate and city projects, AG Vespa, takes care of the programming of city projects; it also monitors the city projects supported by public-private cooperation or aimed at a commercial return.

In short, local authorities are the directors of housing policy. In line with the Flemish Housing Act, they apply several instruments to improve housing stock. Subsidies are granted through local or supra-local means. The latter are often made available by means of projects through the City Fund or the Federal Urban Policy.

There are six social housing companies in Antwerp. Huisvesting is the largest housing company in Flanders; the other five companies are ABC, De Goede Woning, De Ideale Woning, Onze woning and Perisfeer.

An innovative initiative which bridges the gap between the private rental market and social housing are the social renting agencies (*sociale verhuurkantoren/agences immobilières sociales*). At present, these agencies are becoming a growing player in housing market. They rent houses in the private rental market and sublease them to people with low incomes. Since 1997, social housing offices must conform to the Flemish Housing Act. These offices serve the interests of both

tenants and leasers. Tenants are provided with a quality home at an affordable price, while leasers are guaranteed a fixed (and always paid) monthly rent, in principle for a nine-year period. Although the rent is lower than what leaser would normally receive for the house, the price difference is offset by the guarantee of rental over a fixed term. Moreover, not only is payment guaranteed, but small works are also carried out and quarrels with neighbours are solved by the social rental office. As such, the social renting agency acts as a middleman between the owner-leaser and the sub-leaser. Currently, there are three social renting agencies in Antwerp, which still handle a limited number of houses. Nevertheless, during the last city council elections in October 2006, several political parties proposed to promote these offices.

Few ethnic minority organisations specifically focus on housing. In Flanders, the Ethnic Minority Forum (*Minderhedenforum*) is the voice of ethnic-cultural minorities, while other organisations have been established to defend the interests of tenants. However, according to the Integration Service, none of the organisations specifically focus on the housing problems of ethnic minorities – although a lot of organisations probably have to occasionally deal with housing issues. The Ethnic Minority Forum wants to promote the social position of ethnic-cultural minorities in Flanders and to improve the relationship between communities. In the past, the forum worked around this theme on account of the still pending provision of knowledge of Dutch as a condition for social housing. According to the forum, while knowledge of Dutch is important, it should not be linked to social housing: the right to decent housing is a basic right. Thus, the Ethnic Minority Forum strongly opposes any proposal for imposing extra conditions regarding access to social housing. In the past, the forum has also questioned the city's caravan site policy.

Elsewhere, the Flemish Minority Centre (*Vlaams Minderhedencentrum*) is an expert centre specialised in issues concerning ethnic minorities. It investigates how people from different countries or with different cultural backgrounds can live together and be equal citizens. The centre also advises the Flemish government on various aspects of minority policy. With respect to social housing, the centre's activities have mainly focused on caravan dwellers, a group which is legally considered as an ethnic-cultural minority.

Another group is the Antwerp Social Tenants' Platform (*Platform Antwerpse Sociale Huurders*, PASH), established in September 1999, which currently coordinates 13 residents' associations in different social housing complexes in Antwerp. The group represents tenants and seeks to contribute to the liveability of their neighbourhoods. Residents' associations are also considered an important group, providing incentives, promoting cohesion and enhancing the housing culture. The Housing Service supports PASH in its dialogue with social housing companies, the local authorities and the Flemish government. In 2005, a 'PASH-A' ethnic working group was established within the organisation; the group met five times that year. The Hoogbouw construction team of the Regional Institute for the Construction Society (*Regionaal instituut voor samenlevingsopbouw*, RISO) tries to involve ethnic minority tenants in PASH. The language barrier has emerged as a key issue in this context. At the same time, the Housing Service has entered into a number of agreements at neighbourhood level with RISO. Other important players are the umbrella organisation for social letting offices (*Koepel Sociaal Verhuurkantoren Antwerpen*, KOSOVA), and the Flemish Dialogue Group for Tenants' Interests (*Vlaams Overleg Bewonersbelangen*, VOB), which is only active in Flanders.

Housing policy

Vision, concepts and policy of administration

The Council of State explains the application of the right to decent housing, as described in the constitution, as encouraging the government ‘to make every endeavour to ensure that everyone can live in a house which with respect to safety, quality and size is adjusted to the social and economic situation of the society’. The Flemish Housing Act also includes such obligation for the Flemish government to promote the availability of good quality and affordable housing, in a decent environment and with sufficient security. The act also stipulates a rehousing obligation for occupants of premises that were declared unfit for habitation, except for people with a precarious status and those without legal residence documents. In addition, a dispute has arisen over whether this obligation implies an obligation for local authorities to guarantee a certain result or to perform to the best of its abilities. Moreover, in the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980, an extra article was added that explicitly considers ‘slum lord’ practices and multiple renting of the same premises as an offence.

In his third book on Antwerp, Patrick Janssens, Antwerp’s mayor since July 2003, gives his vision on housing policy in one of the book’s chapters (Janssens, 2006). Firstly, he considers that ‘town planning is so important for the future of the city that we can’t leave it to chance. This is a plea for authorities that steer more, not for authorities that suffocate everything’ (ibid). Furthermore, Janssens highlights the following:

Almost as important are the large city development projects, which have to make living and working in the city more pleasant. A number of housing projects that are now under construction are for the city as far-reaching as the city extensions in the nineteenth century ... The city developments of Spoor Noord, Nieuw Zuid, Militair Hospitaal, Eksterlaar in Deurne, Galgenweel in Linkeroever, Neerland in Wilrijk ... create thousands of new houses ... A city like Antwerp is by definition an appropriate place for families in every composition possible: classic, young, old, single, living together, blended, hetero and gay, independent, unemployed, white and blue-collar workers, white and coloured, religious and free-thinking, rich and poor, highly skilled and shortly trained. More than before, we have to keep working hard for an affordable and comfortable residence for all these people. Yet, the city has to make an extra effort for one target group: young families with two salaries and young children. It is of the utmost importance for the future of the city that we can keep the families of two-income households with young children in the city. Or, even more ambitious, that we can convince these families to come and live in the city (ibid, p. 37).

We do not only have to increase the supply of good houses. The city (housing) policy in the next few years has to fulfil a second big ambition: it has to counter the increasing social segregation in the city. In the 1950s and 1960s, the gap between owners and people in need of a house was made smaller by the construction of large social housing projects in Hoboken, Linkeroever, Luchtbal, Rozemaai and Kiel. Today, these neighbourhoods, much more than in the early years, create a strong concentration of the weakest people in our society. It is just the opposite, for instance, in the neighbourhood Zuid. By the revaluation today in this neighbourhood, there is a large concentration of people with higher salaries, and therefore an elimination of people with less money. We have to break this segregation. We have to strive for a well-balanced population structure in the various neighbourhoods and therefore a varied housing offer (ibid, pp. 37–38).

A lot has to be changed in our large social housing blocks. Which adjustments are required? The recipe contains three main ingredients. One: in Antwerp we have to forget about the exclusive attention for social rental houses, and we also have to offer social owner-occupied housing. Two: we have to open our social housing blocks not only for people with the lowest (replacement) income. This would lead to a better mix of the population groups. Three: the social housing companies and the private sector have to cooperate more often (ibid, p. 43).

We have to adjust the adjudication rules for social rental housing considerably. The (due) care for people who are financially vulnerable has to be set off against the care for quality housing for these people. The creation of unliveable social ghettos was or is not the task of social housing. Precisely, to avoid ghettos, we have to attract tenants with an income from labour (and not from social benefits) ... The housing companies have to decide more and more who can live in their apartments. They have to make sure that, especially in their large buildings, there is a liveable mix of young and old, working people and unemployed, ethnic and non-ethnic minorities, singles and families with children, poor people and people with a good income ... For the allocation [of social housing units], objective standards have to be applied. But the (lower) income may no longer be the only decisive criterion (ibid, p. 45).

Public discourse

According to the City Integration Service, urban living and disadvantaged or problematic neighbourhoods have attracted growing media attention in recent years. During this time, a lot of attention has been given – certainly in the local media, but also in the national media – to living and coexistence problems in Antwerp neighbourhoods such as Seefhoek (and Antwerp North in general), Het Kiel, Europark Linkeroever, Hoboken and Deurne North. Some of the issues that emerged include the following:

- the issue of ‘slum landlords’ in connection with asylum seekers and the problems associated with smaller municipalities that ‘dump’ asylum seekers allocated to them in the city;
- dilapidation and government campaigns encouraging owners to renovate their dwelling;
- social housing – the media have covered many issues in this respect, such as waiting lists, geographical concentration, the access of specific migrant interest groups – for example, a proposal by the competent minister to make command of the language a criterion for housing allocations, or a recent proposal by the city management to no longer offer social housing to asylum seekers whose applications are still being processed – and coexistence problems in housing blocks;
- different kinds of nuisance factors – such as littering and illegal waste dumping, coexistence problems, and loitering by young people.

In general, media reports have projected a negative image of problematic neighbourhoods in Antwerp – mainly based on objective problems, but sometimes also on a somewhat one-sided focus on such issues. This has resulted in a certain degree of stigmatisation: for instance, people from outside the city often have a more negative impression of these neighbourhoods than those who live there; residents of these neighbourhoods also have positive living experiences and not only problems. Nevertheless, in the past two years in particular, the media coverage on life in Antwerp’s problematic neighbourhoods has been more positive: for example, the press has reported on city renewal projects in these neighbourhoods that are linked to ‘living’ – such as new large-scale ‘mixed’ housing projects in various parts of the city. Moreover, positive media coverage has been given to the ‘rolling fund’ used by the autonomous city company for real estate and city projects Antwerp Vespa, which buys up and renovates slum dwellings, selling them off as high-quality family dwellings. Similarly, the new city park Spoor Noord in Antwerp North has received favourable coverage, as has the fact that some of these neighbourhoods are attracting more young families once again.

Furthermore, the manner in which these problems are reported differs significantly according to the type of media. In Flanders, just like elsewhere in the world, differences in style and tone are evident between the so-called quality newspapers and the tabloids. Some forms of media tend to sensationalise defamatory comments about deprived areas. Other types of media seek to present a more well-balanced picture, focusing on both positive as well as negative aspects. In terms of housing problems, the media coverage tends to vary, depending on whether the coverage is by local

television, newspapers or tabloids, or whether the coverage is more extensive through the national press or television. Thus, some reports are objective, while others are biased.

According to the Integration Service, the city has paid greater attention in recent years to communications policy. For example, it has used novel marketing techniques such as painting a white capital letter A, the initial of Antwerp, throughout the city and publicising the aforementioned slogan 'the city belongs to everyone' (*'t stad is van iedereen*). The capital letter A and the slogan can be found in many places throughout the city and on all kind of media, giving a dynamic and positive picture of the city among its own inhabitants and for visitors. Moreover, 'positive' reporting about investments in urban renewal in the problematic neighbourhoods has been generated in the media – for instance, by organising activities such as the 'Your neighbourhood now' (*buurt in zicht*) initiative. Such activities paint a different picture of life in Antwerp's neighbourhoods, such as Antwerp North, which usually receive a lot of negative attention. Moreover, in recent years, many young families have started to invest in these neighbourhoods, purchasing cheap, old houses to renovate. The new occupants are proud of their work and want to convince outsiders that living in these neighbourhoods can be very pleasant and gives them the opportunity to live in nice, affordable houses. The city's own communication channels have also highlighted positive aspects of neighbourhood life, such as urban renewal and coexistence schemes – for example, through the city's newsheet *De Antwerpenaar*, the eponymous television current affairs programme and the city's website.

Elsewhere, Antwerp has a sleeping City Advisory Council for ethno-cultural diversity policy. The aim of this initiative is to optimise communication between migrant communities and their organisations, on the one hand, and Antwerp's city management on the other. The City Advisory Council seeks to strengthen the involvement and participation of migrant communities and their organisations in the city's ethno-cultural diversity policy, using tools such as: the development and issuing of recommendations and positions; and dialogue with the migrant communities. According to the expert opinion of the Integration Service, experience has shown that this tool is too restrictive and categorial to guarantee the broad involvement of migrant communities. The representativity of those representing migrant communities is not self-evident, particularly in religious matters. Nonetheless, the Integration Service has recently initiated structural dialogue with the Muslim communities.

A number of sub-projects have been helpful in developing many good contacts. However, dialogue seems to have been blocked at the level of the categorial Advisory Council. This formula appears to generate a more 'us and them' mindset and reinforces the polarisation of migrant umbrella organisations, in spite of good bilateral contacts. It seems that effective participation policy requires a more inclusive and pragmatic approach, using various mechanisms. The migrant umbrella organisations are funded by Flanders, based on the support of the migrant member organisations.

Interventions on housing and integration

Antwerp's city housing policy, as in all other domains, is inclusively oriented and focused on the improvement of deprived areas through city renewal projects. Financing comes from resources generated by the city, as well as from supra-local funds – for instance, from the EU initiative Urban II or the Federal Urban Policy. Considering the socioeconomic profile of many ethnic minority groups in the city, at least in theory this policy should also be favourable for them.

On the one hand, the city renewal management takes the initiative in a number of ways, for example: by pursuing an active sites and premises policy; by renovating parts of the city or creating new city neighbourhoods; and by paying strict attention to dilapidation and slum landlords. On the other hand, the management provides inhabitants with enough space by creating incentives in the form of redevelopment grants. A housing policy aimed at the restriction (or promotion) of segregation and/or integration has been pursued by the city only to a limited extent. For instance, in the administrative agreement 2001–2006, an initial impetus was given to an integrative policy by calling for a greater social mix through the spreading of social housing projects. At the same time, attention was paid to the restriction of social elimination, for example by establishing social housing projects in new parts of the city. These initiatives are concrete; even more so are the initiatives aimed at keeping two-income households with young children in the city or attracting them to the city.

The city has always based its housing policy on general principles, for example by: stepping up its efforts to combat slums, vacant dwellings and slum landlords; introducing premiums to promote house improvements; and establishing housing offices to provide information. While most of these measures are aimed at the part of the housing market that also has lots of ethnic minorities as occupants, a specific policy has never been considered up until now.

Recent events such as the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 and the assassination of the Dutch film director Theo Van Gogh at the hands of a Muslim extremist in 2004 did not result in a change of policy with respect to these elements. Opinions on the renewal of deprived neighbourhoods date from before, at least since the beginning of the 1990s.

At regional level, the spatial planning competences include urban development and spatial planning, urban renewal and housing and zoning policy. In recent years, the Flemish region has opted for a policy relating to 'living in diversity'. In its 2004–2009 programme, the Flemish government states that Flanders will pursue a housing policy that is (pp. 46–47):

oriented to organising diversity in neighbourhoods in a more liveable way, by combating the departure of those that have improved their social and financial position, and distributing newcomers and existing inhabitants. This can be achieved through: (1) stronger stimulation of home ownership, provided the housing corporations agree and there is sufficient social housing to allow some social housing stock to be sold; (2) a more focused and harder policy on slum landlords; (3) a better spread of social housing across and within all towns, cities and municipalities; (4) more space for the social housing corporations to allocate social housing based on objective criteria in order to achieve an appropriate and good mix in social housing.

This principle is elaborated on in annual policy documents. In the latest document (2006–2007), the Flemish Minister for Domestic Affairs, Minister Keulen, with responsibility for city policy in relation to living and integration, refers to a number of upcoming amendments to the Flemish Housing Code Decree of 15 July 1997. He outlines that such amendments will seek to make 'optimal liveability in the neighbourhoods, the promotion of the social integration of inhabitants and the promotion of equal opportunities for everyone special objectives of Flemish housing policy'. As such, the aim of Flemish housing policy is to 'contribute to achieving optimal development opportunities for everyone'.

Furthermore, the rule that potential social housing tenants must show a willingness to learn Dutch is significant one, which has been discussed a lot in the media. As Minister Keulen outlines in the 2006–2007 policy document:

Knowledge of Dutch plays an essential role in mutual understanding and positive interaction between individuals. It is examined whether the involvement of residents of social housing projects can be stimulated and supported. This also benefits liveability and coexistence in the social housing neighbourhoods. I want to promote giving Dutch lessons in the social housing complexes so that the largest number of tenants is able to learn Dutch. I applaud the offer of residents groups to assist these lessons, which are oriented to both language and social integration, and I will study it further.

Accordingly, ‘to be registered, as well as meeting the existing conditions with respect to the possession of real estate and household income, a person must also show a willingness to learn Dutch’ (*ibid*). The potential tenant who also falls within the scope of application of the Citizenisation Decree must similarly meet these conditions. In this way, the minister wishes to ‘encourage every potential tenant to show a willingness to learn Dutch as soon as they register for social housing and so prior to the allocation of the dwelling’. Compliance with this criterion will be checked again when the social dwelling is allocated. The willingness to learn Dutch, and to citizenise where the Citizenisation Decree is applicable, are incumbent on the tenant (*ibid*).

This policy measure has caused extreme controversy in political spheres, albeit not so much at regional level but rather at federal level in Flanders, chiefly among French-speaking politicians. They view the measure as an illegal means of fighting against the gallicisation (making or becoming French) of the Brussels periphery. After parliamentary questions and debates in the federal parliament and the parliament of the Brussels Capital region, the Council of State has concluded that the measure ‘does not entail any infringement of the equality principle or of the constitutional right of residency or of the European Union rules on free movement of employees and people, and that the draft does not entail any lowering of the degree of protection that the social constitutional laws guarantee’ (Press release issued by the Office of Minister Keulen, 2 May 2005). Even so, the Walloon Region and French-speaking Community Council have invoked a conflict of interest, leading to temporary suspension of the measure. This is one of the most important points of discussion between the two levels of power – or rather between the Flemish and the French speakers.

Another continuing point of dispute is the distribution of asylum seekers all over the territory. To date, this has meant that rich or more affluent rural municipalities have been able to transfer their asylum seekers to the large cities and city centres. The limited financial penalties that these municipalities could suffer have never had much impact. For this reason, a rule has now been introduced – although it has yet to come into force – that asylum seekers are obliged to reside in the place allocated for the duration of their application procedure.

The lack of government control in the housing market has impeded the issuing of an effective housing policy targeted at the needs of people with an immigrant background. Thus, increased government control would be welcomed since the experience of the Special Body on Racism and Discrimination shows that different types of housing discrimination exist. Action by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is being taken to try to influence policymakers regarding this issue. The market is dominated by the private sector and, as mentioned, the lack of policies to improve access to housing for immigrants is problematic. Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing interest in all regions of Belgium to increase social housing. In every region, social renting agencies have been set up. These NGOs aim to overcome difficulties in the private rental market by guaranteeing landlords that rents will be paid on time and, at the same time, by monitoring the housing quality and offering tenants a suitable dwelling at an affordable price. Despite the appeal of these agencies, they only control a small proportion of the housing market, which leads to the conclusion that the overwhelming majority of housing is determined by market conditions – indicating that tenants are often subject of discrimination.

Finally, at the federal level, many urban renewal initiatives limited to the country's large cities and city centres are shaped by the Federal Service for Large Cities Policy (also known as 'Urban Policy'). Since its establishment in 1999, the Urban Policy service has focused on the social and economic progress of underdeveloped neighbourhoods. The federal government wants to stimulate its dialogue with other players – especially 'the towns, cities and municipalities, the regions and communities that are principally competent, and the EU governments, to achieve the best coherence in the actions'. Urban Policy is responsible for 12 core areas, including housing and urban renewal. Through its housing policy, the federal government subsidises 'a number of housing projects, renovations to dwellings in underdeveloped neighbourhoods, initiatives to improve the living environment, and employment projects for people with little schooling on housing renovation projects'. Through its urban renewal projects, the service encourages overall city and neighbourhood development, where dialogue with residents is considered as being essential to the success of the city projects.

Improving access to housing for migrants

The City Fund (*Stedenfonds*) is a Flemish instrument that finances actions concerning cities' social policy (2003–2007), including the area of urban housing. With respect to the Housing Service, this mainly includes social housing projects. On the one hand, the city works on an operational social housing plan in order to increase the number of social housing units, but according to the principles of small-scale projects, infill development and social mix. At the same time, the city seeks to increase the liveability of social housing units through structured consultation between social housing companies and their tenants.

Occasionally, tenants are entitled to premium or rent subsidy. This subsidy only applies if the applicant has to move from an unhealthy and irreparable or overcrowded house with certain problems to a house that complies with specific standards; in addition, the (joint) net taxable income of the applicant and other occupants of the house must fall within a certain income threshold (€13,930). To qualify for a subsidy, maximum net rent (excluding additional costs) may not be less than €371.84, or € 446.20 with three dependent persons. The rent subsidy is a monthly subsidy up to a maximum of €123.94, to be increased for each dependent person. The calculation is based on rent and salary levels.

The Federal Urban Policy – City Contract (*Federaal Grootstedenbeleid – Stadscontract*) is an agreement between the city of Antwerp and the Belgian state in the context of the Urban Policy (2005–2007). In general, this contract focuses on 'liveable neighbourhoods in liveable cities'. It comprises five strategic objectives, one of which concerns a better social housing supply. The Housing Service focuses on its efforts to combat vacant dwellings and dilapidation. The extension of the Slum Property Inspection Team and the conversion of the Housing Quality division to the Urban Housing Inspection unit fit in with this project.

The Federal Urban Policy – Housing Contract (*Federaal Grootstedenbeleid – Huisvestingscontract*) is another agreement between the city and the Belgian state (2005–2007). In this context, the federal government has four main objectives: (1) to increase the number of quality rental properties, which are adjusted to occupants' present and future needs; (2) to facilitate the acquisition of property for families with a low or medium-sized income and for young people; (3) to reinforce urban policy with regard to the fight against slum landlords, vacant dwellings and unhealthy houses; and (4) to set up transversal actions for the reintegration of deprived groups, by giving them access to housing. At the same time, the federal government stipulated that the available means could only be used for investments and not for operational or personnel costs. Under this contract, the Housing Service is responsible for the realisation of three main projects: (1) entering into redevelopment contracts for 369 houses; (2) realising renovation contracts for 100 houses; and (3) creating 22 places in transit houses.

To reverse the selective urban exodus and increase the strength and attractiveness of Antwerp, in 2002 the city established AG Vespa – the autonomous city company for real estate and city projects in Antwerp. The company had to be a powerful instrument to realise and execute the city's development policy. The city council and the board of the mayor and aldermen elaborate this policy and set out the main political lines. AG Vespa takes care of the programming of city projects and monitors the city projects supported by public-private cooperation or aimed at a commercial return. At the same time, the company handles the real estate transactions for the city, develops its own patrimony and manages the city properties. The funds management is also entrusted to this company.

AG Vespa also takes care of the execution of the local sites and premises policy. This policy focuses firstly on rolling fund purchases – including the acquisition and renovation of vacant and slum sites in deprived areas, along with the introduction of renovated premises to the sales or rental market. The company also promotes projects that aim to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the street image. Moreover, it is involved in strategic purchases – such as the acquisition or destination/redestination of strategic sites and premises to enable the desired development of certain parts of the city. It is not necessary for the company to generate an immediate financial return. The emphasis is more on making the most of the opportunities that enable or accelerate the development of a part of the city. Finally, since its creation, the autonomous city company has built up and renovated slum dwellings, selling them off as high-quality family dwellings.

In another initiative – the 'Schipperkwartier' (sailors' quarter) renovation and monitoring contract – the Housing Service has tried to improve housing quality in the well-defined Schipperkwartier area in Antwerp. Issues such as the quality of houses and the environment are tackled. Special attention is also paid to maintaining the current mix of occupants in this neighbourhood. Among its aims, the project seeks to: encourage a strategic city renewal process; improve the quality of housing; offer an additional instrument as part of the city's quality policy with respect to the private rental market; improve the street image; initiate a community integration project that provides for affordable housing in a multicultural neighbourhood and for a high-quality housing project with a broad social mix. The goal of the project is to renovate approximately 100 houses, 50% of which will be put on the private rental market at a socially acceptable price. It is likely that this target will be met.

The renovation and monitoring contract is an agreement between house owners in the neighbourhood and the city of Antwerp. If owners carry out renovation works to improve the quality of their property and if they put the property on the rental market at a socially acceptable price, the city will pay for 50% of the renovation costs. The budget for this project comes from the Urban Policy funds of the federal government. These funds are used to finance the wages of a project architect and the renovation costs for about 100 houses. The project is monitored daily by a project architect, who handles applications presented by owners, gives them advice before and during the building process, checks the houses and reports to the working group in charge of the Schipperkwartier housing policy. This working group is composed of members of various city services – such as those involved in monument care, city planning, social affairs, housing inspection and prostitution policy. It also considers the applications.

The success of the project can probably be explained by the fact that it fits into a broader town planning project for the Schipperkwartier area. This main project was initiated at the request of the occupants and after thorough analyses of the needs and potential of the neighbourhood, with considerable attention being paid to the occupants' participation. Because this project is embedded in a broader initiative, it is directly aimed at specific requests from the neighbourhood. Moreover, the desired number of approved applications for a renovation and monitoring contract is reached each year.

Local policies related to spatial segregation

City Neighbourhood Dialogue

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative is a neighbourhood-level mechanism for two-way (top-down and bottom-up) dialogue and consultation between citizens and management (city and district) in Antwerp. The initiative seeks to: channel communication from management to citizens and vice versa; broaden the basis for policy decisions or good governance without loss of time; examine the authority of districts and city management in terms of their dependence on higher powers; scale projects according to the particular target group and area (street, neighbourhood, district); and apply an optimal methodology and communication mix (oral and written). The general aim is to increase residents' involvement in local administration and to create a broader basis for policy decisions among the target group.

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative has allocated 13 teams comprising three persons each to the nine districts of Antwerp's decentralised administration. These teams are run by a five-person workforce. Local members of staff are responsible for the practical side of neighbourhood dialogue and the harmonisation of city services at neighbourhood level. Internal coordination is based on work and team meetings, intervision and management meetings.

Dialogue and consultation are organised with the 470,000 inhabitants of Antwerp's nine districts and 42 neighbourhoods. The City Neighbourhood Dialogue also organises external dialogue with actors in the neighbourhood – such as socio-cultural organisations, residents groups and city services. The initiative does not work with standard concepts, but is rather scaled down as follows: firstly, to address street, neighbourhood and district (geographic) issues; secondly, to identify the needs of the target group and stakeholders; and thirdly, to take into account preconditions such as time and budget. The project is based on two-way communication: on the one hand, it aims to inform citizen-stakeholders (residents, businesses, visitors) about policy decisions and implications (top-down); on the other hand, it seeks to gather the opinions of citizens and determine their significance for policy (bottom-up).

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative develops proposals through communication campaigns that it considers desirable and feasible. An optimal communication mix of campaigns and channels is sought, encompassing oral, written and electronic forms. The proposal is discussed with the relevant service and submitted to the competent authorities, which must approve it. The authorities decide on whether communication should take place and whether dialogue is desirable. Approved communication is organised by the City Neighbourhood Dialogue.

The following case illustrates how this mechanism works in practice. The district of Antwerp took the decision to launch a communication campaign in the streets Mercatorstraat, Pelikaanstraat and Simonstraat. The draft plan was first discussed with representatives of the Jewish community and gold store traders as part of a separate focus group dialogue. The entire neighbourhood was then invited to attend a public hearing. The competent portfolio holders in the district administration and a representative of Belgian National Railways (*Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Belges/Nationale Maatschappij der Belgische Spoorwegen*, SNCB/NMBS) gave a presentation explaining the draft plan, before the meeting was opened up to questions from the floor. The next steps in the project were also outlined. After the building permit was issued, City Neighbourhood Dialogue organised an information meeting for all stakeholders to explain the final project plan. The project timetable was announced and agreements made to minimise disruption during the work. A report of the meeting was published in the city authority's newspaper *De Antwerpenaar*. Due to the large scale of the project and its division into phases, each household received a newsletter to keep residents informed of progress; the newsletter was also published online. The project is part of a broader urban development programme centred on the area around the central railway station (Gemeentestraat, Astridplein, Kievitplein, Van Immerseelstraat, HST route). City Neighbourhood Dialogue works with other city services to communicate the projects in this programme. Communication channels include exhibitions and a newsletter.

As the City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative is responsible for policy that is supported by citizens, the critical success factors are as follows:

- the willingness of government, administrative services and residents to enter into dialogue and communicate with each other;
- clarity regarding the role of stakeholders;
- time for made-to-scale work and a labour-intensive approach.

Regarding the question of representativeness and reach, there is a contradiction between: on the one hand, the administration wishing to communicate with all citizens, which leads to mass communication rather than target group oriented communication, which in turn obstructs the transmission of the message; and, on the other hand, the fact that just 10%–20% of the population are willing or able to participate in dialogue activities according to international research.

The City Neighbourhood Dialogue's function has been stabilised since the evaluation and adjustment of the working model for city neighbourhood dialogue in 2004. Improvements have been introduced in the following areas:

- the service has been embedded in the district administrations;
- work agreements have been outlined with the relevant city units;
- the mission has been made clearer to the district administrations;
- the nature and extent of City Neighbourhood Dialogue has been clearly defined; moreover, resident groups have been given a place in the structurally organised neighbourhood forums.

Neighbourhood Action Service

The Neighbourhood Action Service is part of Antwerp city's social affairs operations. In association with other city services – including culture, sports and integration, along with a few subsidised private organisations, the most important of which is one aimed at building a society – the Neighbourhood Action Service pursues a policy seeking to promote social cohesion.

The service was recently assigned the task of coordinating the efforts of these external partners, although the service is first and foremost a doer. Six departments of the Neighbourhood Action Service are active in the neighbourhoods every day, as follows.

- Opsinoren offers residents various opportunities to improve life in their neighbourhoods. The initiative supports volunteers involved in a range of activities – for example, those who help to keep the city clean, fund street parties, assist in shutting off streets to traffic so that children can play safely, and encourage clubs and associations to play their part in keeping the city clean.
- Some 50 neighbourhood supervisors help to create the conditions for coexistence by maintaining a daily presence on the streets and through a willingness to listen to residents. They encourage a culture whereby residents feel responsible for where they live.
- Three meeting centres provide low-threshold meeting opportunities for residents. The meeting centres welcome all visitors and offer neighbourhood residents a varied programme in association with local clubs and associations. In the coming years, more meeting centres will be established: the objective is to have 15 centres in the whole city.

- The city square development department offers children and young adults opportunities to take part in sports and games at various squares.
- Four canvassing programmes have been introduced to accompany large infrastructure works in the city, with the aim of improving life in the neighbourhoods, together with clubs, associations and resident groups.
- Seven projects have been launched in different neighbourhoods to improve community relations.
- The Neighbourhood Action Service works throughout the city, although special attention is reserved for neighbourhoods experiencing coexistence issues, sometimes due to large infrastructure works. These are typically neighbourhoods characterised by extensive ethno-cultural diversity and with large numbers of people in poverty. The projects, city square development, neighbourhood supervision, meeting centres and canvassing programmes are concentrated in Antwerp North, the area around the main railway station, Schipperskwartier and the parts of the city built in the 1800s (Deurne West, Kiel, Oud-Berchem, Oud-Borgerhout and Zuid).

The Neighbourhood Action Service is currently working on a social cohesion policy plan. The strategic goal of this plan is to ensure that residents, organisations and government in Antwerp have the skills and tools to develop and maintain social cohesion in an urban environment. This is translated into three operational goals. Accordingly, the residents, organisations and government should have the skills and tools to: firstly, organise meetings that stimulate social cohesion; secondly, create networks that encourage such social cohesion; and thirdly, assume and make possible active citizenship.

The social cohesion policy is mainly funded by the Flemish and federal governments. The whole social cohesion policy area was integrated into urban priority objectives, which were translated into various projects, actions and indicators that were due to be completed by the end of the last legislature at the end of 2006.

The current social cohesion policy is not yet sufficiently focused on the interplay with and between the many actors involved in coexistence issues. In the future, the service will intensify its coordination of the city's social cohesion policy and its steering of external partners that work to fulfil this policy. The social cohesion policy is evaluated by the city on the basis of indicators (see above). The higher government, which provides some of the funding, conducts its own evaluation, using experts from other cities.

City Integral Safety Service

Antwerp city's safety policy is entrusted to various players, particularly the police service, which has a legally defined remit, and the City Integral Safety Service.

The police policy regarding neighbourhood safety has two main objectives: tackling crime and adopting an integrated approach to local safety. This policy is based on the principles of community policing, as stipulated under the Local and Federal Police (Organisation) Act of 7 December 1998. In relation to the first objective – tackling crime – a key aim is to tackle high-priority crime in Antwerp, particularly neighbourhoods with significant levels of crime. This aspect of policing is mainly reactive, but a more proactive approach is also being employed. The main goal is to tackle the types of crime that are considered a priority for Antwerp and covered in the National and the Federal Governmental Safety Plan. Legally speaking, the priorities are set by the Local Safety Council, which consists of the mayor, the public prosecutor, the chief of police and the regional federal police commissioner. Although the chief of police directs and monitors police policy based on crime statistics, the Local Safety Council evaluates this approach.

As outlined, the second main objective in this respect is adopting an integrated approach to local safety. High-crime neighbourhoods are often, albeit not always, areas that are challenged by problems such as poverty, nuisance behaviour,

integration problems and social deprivation. These aspects are important factors in the integrative or joint approach developed for these neighbourhoods. It is important to communicate with the people who live in these areas to help them become more self-reliant and involve them in a joint approach. The police service takes part in several community initiatives to communicate social or safety problems, together with the city of Antwerp. This increases the potential for success in a joint approach. For the police service, increased community orientation represents a new challenge.

The city of Antwerp's Integral Safety Service has also placed 'neighbourhood directors' in various neighbourhoods as part of the Neighbourhood Direction project. Their job is to develop actions and campaigns that promote a positive perception of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood director initiates dialogue with the neighbourhood associations and official bodies to identify solutions to nuisance and quality-of-life problems. The Neighbourhood Direction initiative comprises three central tenets, as follows:

- the neighbourhood – the project is active in neighbourhoods that were identified based on analysis of nuisance behaviour;
- addressing different sources of nuisance – such as social and physical forms of nuisance, coexistence problems, safety issues and the feeling of being unsafe;
- networking – the neighbourhood directors bring together the array of services, projects, neighbourhood associations and initiatives to create a platform for information sharing and harmonisation between all stakeholders. That is also the great strength of the project – namely, that all actions and campaigns are conducted by different city and non-city projects, services and organisations in association with each other or on a complementary basis. As such, all actors contribute to improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood.

In addition, Antwerp currently has 13 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in public spaces (De Coninckplein, Grote Markt, Meir). In association with the Diamond High Council, another 14 cameras were recently installed in the Diamond neighbourhood. The city also recently decided to procure another 50 cameras for installation in Antwerp North and Borgerhout, to complement the traditional presence of the police and others groups such as neighbourhood watch. These will be installed in locations identified on the basis of criminality and nuisance analyses and in close consultation with the police service and neighbourhood watch agents who are familiar with the area. The cameras serve the following purposes: firstly, they prevent and record criminality and nuisance behaviour; secondly, they improve the detection and investigation of criminal acts and infringements to administrative law; thirdly, they increase the likelihood of offenders being identified and caught; fourthly, they optimise the performance of the police service on the ground; and fifthly, they optimise the city's range of prevention measures.

Although footage is monitored on a 24-hour basis by police offices, the Integral Safety Service is responsible for organisational matters – such as coordinating the actions of all those involved, including the police, the public prosecutor and assistance services, and closely evaluating the impact of CCTV.

Safe City Plan

The purpose of the Safe City Plan is to make Antwerp a safer place. The plan initially met with strong resistance from a number of civil organisations and neighbourhood working groups. While Antwerp has become a safer place according to the figures, Antwerp's residents still continue to experience a strong feeling of lack of safety, with 20% of the population reporting that they always or often feel unsafe. The Safe City Plan is a small step in reducing this feeling of lack of safety. It works on two levels: firstly on the basis of an area-specific 'hotspot-based' approach; and secondly, according to a target group oriented 'hotshot-based' approach ('hotshots' are a varied group of well-defined offenders and risk groups).

Police Diversity Unit

Finally, according to expert opinion, the local police service has been working on improving its image since 2002. The service's reputation of being discriminating and racist in its actions continues to persist in problematic neighbourhoods, particularly among migrants. As a result, the Diversity Unit was set up in the police service to maintain contacts and develop relationships with the various communities. This unit works in partnership with the city's Integration Service. In the event of intercultural conflicts, the unit is notified so that colleagues at the local police service can be given assistance on cultural differences. If conflicts arise between the local police and migrant communities, the Integration Service's intercultural mediators are called in. These assume the role of a neutral urban actor between the police service and the communities. They mediate and defuse conflicts, so that parties can get back to discussing things around the table rather than on the street. It is believed that the police service still needs to invest in its own service to guarantee equal treatment for all citizens. The police service must not only have a more diverse composition, it must also employ a better selection procedure to recruit committed officers. Ongoing training and positive experiences are necessary to avoid prejudices among police officers. This is also needed to detect and act on social problems in the various neighbourhoods.

Key challenges and lessons for CLIP

Antwerp is the largest city in Flanders, with about 470,044 inhabitants in 2006. Some 13% of the city's population consists of foreigners, of whom 8% are non-EU nationals. Moreover, around 26.6% of Antwerp's inhabitants have a migration background, mostly originating from a non-EU country. Moroccans constitute the largest group of foreigners in Antwerp, followed by the Dutch, Turks, Poles, people from former Yugoslavia, Indians, Congolese, Russians and western Europeans. The city also has an indigenous Jewish community comprising approximately 15,000 persons.

The city's economy is dominated by a large services sector. It also has an important diamond centre and is home to Europe's second largest port. Both of these sectors provide thousands of jobs to workers. At 15.9%, the unemployment rate in the city is higher than the overall average for Flanders. Almost a quarter of unemployed persons have a non-EU migration background, many of them originating from the Maghreb region in North Africa and Turkey. The number of persons receiving welfare benefit is also higher among non-EU nationals.

Antwerp's municipal housing policy aims to sustain and even increase the diversity within the city. This diversity pertains not so much to ethnicity, but rather to age, socioeconomic status, family status, level of professional qualification and other aspects of diversity. A priority target of Antwerp's housing policy is to attract young families with two salaries and young children to the city. It also aims to increase the city's housing supply and improve the present housing stock. The city applies the concept of liveability in its approach, referring to the physical aspects of the housing stock, as well as to social aspects such as neighbourhoods being a place of safe and peaceful coexistence. Finally, the city policy seeks to reduce social segregation by achieving a favourable social mix in every neighbourhood. This objective refers primarily to social criteria and less so to ethnic or migration related criteria.

Main challenges

- Serious concerns are arising that inhabitants in some neighbourhoods cannot speak or understand Dutch sufficiently.
- Groups of residents with a migrant background are unevenly distributed in the city's neighbourhoods. For instance, residents from non-European countries make up over 40% of Antwerp North's population and the majority of inhabitants in Kiel and Oud-Borgerhout.
- Among the city's key objectives is to attract young, dual-income families with children, in order to improve social diversity in the city.

Main policies and measures

- The city's policy aims to encourage inhabitants of the neighbourhoods to become involved in projects and measures. This policy proved to be an important factor for the success of measures – both in terms of improving the housing stock through renovations, as well as with regard to social measures.
- To enhance the liveability of neighbourhoods, the allocation of social housing is, among other things, to be based on the prospective inhabitant's willingness to learn Dutch in accordance with Flemish legislation.
- Coexistence and social cohesion are being promoted through projects such as the City Neighbourhood Dialogue initiative.
- A multitude of projects have been introduced that aim to reach several goals simultaneously, namely: increasing the housing stock; facilitating access for vulnerable groups; attracting families to the city; rehabilitating deprived neighbourhoods; creating links among the inhabitants; and stimulating social cohesion.

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