

Research Projects Luce Beeckmans

1.

REFUFAM: From policy gaps to policy innovations: strengthening the well-being and integration pathways of refugee families

Funding Source:

BELSPO (Belgian Science Policy)

Call 2020-2021: Brain-Be 2.0 – Belgian Research Action through Interdisciplinary Networks (2018 -2023)

Period:

Duration of 48 months: 15/03/21 – 15/03/25

Team of promoters

Robin Vandevordt (lead), Ellen Desmet, Luce Beeckmans (UGent)

Dirk Geldof (Odisee University College)

Mathieu Berger (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the REFUFAM-project:

Project Partner and WP leader of WP3 'Integration Pathways' together with Mathieu Berger (Metrolab)

REFUFAM-team members at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent:

Recruitment ongoing

Project Abstract:

In the world of migration and integration governance, Belgium represents a strikingly complex case. Competences of migration (e.g. asylum and family reunification) and integration (e.g. education, work and housing) are divided between federal, regional and municipal governance levels, while support services are dispersed across a range of civil society organizations and state actors. Compared to neighbouring countries like the Netherlands, Germany or France, Belgium's lack of central coordination has created substantial 'policy gaps'. In the interstices between governments' competences, a wide variety of actors have stepped in providing all kinds of ad hoc support to refugees. However, we know surprisingly little about the effects of Belgium's complex institutional configuration, nor of the innovative potential that can be found in emerging support structures. This lack of knowledge is puzzling as integration continues to dominate public debates.

REFUFAM will therefore provide evidence-based recommendations on how government policies and support practices can be reformed to better facilitate refugees' overall integration process. Our interdisciplinary research design builds on three interlinked approaches, each drawing on a different set of methods: a legal-political approach to the institutional configuration of Belgium's of asylum and integration policies; a psychosocial approach to refugee family members' mental well-being; and a socio-spatial approach to

document their local integration pathways. This will enable us to identify Belgium's policy gaps, and trace their impact on refugee families' psychosocial well-being, and their integration pathways.

In analysing this multi-layered integration process, REFUFAM innovatively takes refugee families as its central analytic unit. Within the vast scholarly literature on refugees' integration, the role of family dynamics often remains out of view. Most studies on refugees road to 'work', for instance, focus exclusively on individuals, aggregated by nationality, education or legal status. Similarly, we have limited knowledge on how complex family dynamics shape individual refugees' aspirations in terms of finding a place to live, a job, or acquiring new educational degrees. Recent research, however, convincingly shows that refugees' family lives – including individuals' gendered and generational positions within their families – are crucial to understand this complex integration process. This project builds on this novel, emerging line of research, and applies it systematically to Belgium's peculiar policy context.

External website:

https://www.belspo.be/belspo/brain2-be/project_p3_en.stm

2.

ReROOT: Arrival infrastructures as sites of integration for recent newcomers

Funding Source:

HORIZON 2020: Research and Innovation Framework Programme.

Call: MIGRATION-04-2020: 'Inclusive and innovative practices for the integration of recently arrived migrants in local communities'.

Period:

Duration of 52 months 1/4/2021-1/10/2025

Team of promoters:

Coordination of ReROOT: Karel Arnaut (KUL), 12 Project Partners.

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the ReROOT-project:

Project Partner and WP leader of WP5 'Designing Mapping Toolkits and Platform Prototypes'

ReROOT-team members at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent:

Dounia Salamé (PhD)

Project Abstract:

Europe has been built and continues to be rebuilt at the convergence of innumerable migration trajectories. In the long run, the traces of migration processes are often effaced and sedimented into 'native' society. But many communities, civil society actors, public

authorities, small businesses, religious institutions, leisure organisations, etc. have records and living memories of these migration processes, or indeed, are actively engaged in forging the integration of relatively newly arrived migrants. These actors, we submit, produce and co-constitute living ‘arrival infrastructures’ throughout urban, suburban and rural communities in nine different pilot sites in Turkey, Greece, Hungary, France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Beyond the assumption that scaffolding and channeling of arrival and settlement processes comes through formal channels, agencies and programmes, ReROOT brings into view a wider constellation of actors, most notably previous generations of migrants who, together with ‘natives’ are co-creators of shops as information hubs, religious sites (churches or mosques), local labour offices, language classes, hairdressers, leisure clubs etc. ReROOT investigates the interactions, the transfers of knowledge and resources between first-comers and late-comers, the sedimented practices, organisations and provisions (whether private or public), as well as the transformations of all these through the recent, post-2015 arrival processes.

ReROOT is dedicated to analyse, diagnose and learn lessons from past and recent transformations of arrival and integration processes, with the explicit goal of fostering sustainable, evidence-based integration practices, policies and public imaginaries. ReROOT is dedicated to unpack – with the help of migrants and a wide range of stakeholders – the nexus of migratory mobility and societal transformation in order to further inclusive and redistributive integration processes. Most importantly, ReROOT situates its impact in the transfer of knowledge, methods and analytical tools and reflexive methods to civil society and public service stakeholders. To that end, ReROOT develops and tests mapping toolkits and platform prototypes for policy makers and civil society – for them to continue the work ReROOT can only begin to do.

External website:

<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004704>

3.

Housing for Refugee Inclusion: exploring inclusive housing design and housing governance models.

Funding Source:

FWO-project (Research Foundation Flanders)

Period:

Duration of 48 months: 1/1/2021-31/12/2024

Team of promoters:

Viviana d'Auria (KUL) & Luce Beeckmans (UGent)

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the FWO-project:

Supervisor

Team members at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent:

Heleen Verheyden (joint PhD), Tasneem Nagi (joint PhD)

Project Abstract:

Scholarship on urban diversity has emphasized housing's critical role for the social inclusion and mobility of refugees. However the most common concept and related policy instrument at the nexus of housing and diversity, 'social mix', is said to perform poorly in strengthening social inclusion. Moreover, inter-disciplinary frameworks reflecting a multi-dimensional understanding of housing are still lacking. This research project aims to develop innovative housing models for refugees that fill this gap by simultaneously fostering a sense of belonging and becoming pathways for social inclusion. It therefore views the housing of refugees not as a separate question but embeds it in the broader housing question of cities. This objective will be achieved by adopting a double perspective rooted in architectural design and in housing governance, corresponding with two interrelated PhD tracks, and in the context of a double innovation. Firstly, the models in question will be developed in two superdiverse arrival neighbourhoods in Brussels and Ghent. Secondly, they will transcend the current discontinuities in refugees' accommodation trajectories. Additionally, the project will critically review current housing practices for refugee inclusion in Europe. Supported by a steering committee of well-established scholars from relevant disciplines, it will also work towards the construction of an inter-disciplinary framework to reconceptualize housing as an emancipatory domain for refugees.

4.

Action-Research: Infrastructural needs' analysis and stakeholder mapping of the refugees' Open Arts Centre Globe Aroma.

Funding Source:

Globe Aroma, financed by the King Baudouin Foundation

Period:

1/03/2020-31/1/2021

Team of promoters:

U/A is a temporary collaboration between UGent and the Action-Research Collective for Hospitality, promoted by Luce Beeckmans (UGent) and Viviana d'Auria (Action-Research Collective for Hospitality, Brussels/KUL)

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the project:

Project coordinator

Team at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent:

Dounia Salamé, Heleen Verheyden en Tasneem Nagi

Project Abstract (NL):

U/A wil een begeleidings- en participatietraject opzetten om het Kunsthuis Globe Aroma in Brussel te ondersteunen in haar zoektocht naar een nieuwe infrastructuur. Centrale aandacht in dit begeleidings- en participatietraject zal gaan naar de (infrastructurele) noden van de gebruikers en bezoekers. Het traject zal tevens gericht zijn op de realisatie van een sterke (infrastructurele) inbedding in, en samenwerking met, het Brusselse netwerk van partners, bestaande aankomstinfrastructuren en andere stedelijke actoren.

External website:

<http://www.globearoma.be/projecten/>

5.

Urban Agency III: Towards a more sustainable integration of disciplines in urban studies.

Funding Source:

Scientific Research Network FWO (Research Foundation Flanders) with Antwerp University as head institution.

Period:

Start April 2021, period of 5 years

UGent - Stadsacademie team (Fourth Flemish research unit):

Thomas Block, Charlotte Prové, Michiel Dehaene, Luce Beeckmans, Peter Vanden Abeele, Griet Roets, Evelyne Deceur, Simon Allemeersch.

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within network:

Member of the UGent - Stadsacademie team (Fourth Flemish research unit)

Project Abstract:

Over the past decade, there is a remarkable upsurge of strategic interest in the field of urban studies in universities in Europe and beyond. Fueled by ‘urban age’ discourses¹, which tirelessly repeat claims that today more than half of the world's population lives within cities and that mayors will save the world from climate change, environmental degradation, intercultural conflicts and rampant social inequalities², university leaders are considering ‘urban studies institutes’ as a must have strategic asset to position themselves in local and global networks of knowledge production. Indeed, the past decade has seen an impressive rise of interdisciplinary platforms for urban studies research at universities, more often than not with strong support and even on the instigation of university leadership.

These institutes and centers are mostly conceived as platforms which gather and bring into dialogue a broad variety of disciplines, ranging from urban sociology, political sciences, history, geography, demography and transport economy to architecture, urban planning and engineering to environmental and health sciences.

On the surface, the rationale thereof is clear. First, integrated and interdisciplinary

research is at the order of the day in other fields as well, environmental studies being only the most prominent example. Secondly, these institutes and research centers are designed to tackle environmental, social and cultural problems which escape the confines of the nation state and which require an integrated and interdisciplinary approach.

Thirdly, such interdisciplinary platforms take shape in a context in which cities and urban actors reposition themselves relative to the nation state and to international political and institutional networks and in which universities reposition themselves as partners in emerging knowledge alliances with progressive cities and city networks. Last but not least, this seems to happen with an eye at gaining a competitive edge on other knowledge producing institutions.

However, while the broader context is clear, questions remain with regard to the local differences and specificities of the institutions and research centers involved. Depending on the local institutional context and other historical contingencies the disciplines and expertise involved vary strongly, as do the specific research approaches and priorities which materialize in collaborative projects. At present, an overview of these differences is totally lacking, as we have hardly a view on the 'institutional landscape' of urban studies – even in Europe only. By implication, and even more importantly, we are totally in the dark with respect to the consequences of the specific institutional characteristics for the thematic choices, the research questions and the conceptual and methodological approaches of the researchers involved. What exactly is the relationship between the institutional environment on the one hand, and the nature of the research on the other? What works and what does not?

Building on in-depth interdisciplinary research on the relationship between urban theory and urban history (see the USI FWO-WOG 'Urban Agency II: The Historical Fabrication of the City as an Object of Study') this project will examine the relationship between the institutional embedding of urban studies and the orientation, nature and performativity of the research involved. The program will (1) chart the differences and analyze the origins thereof, (2) examine the consequences of the institutional factors, and (3) identify good practices and develop scientific propositions and recommendations for policy makers.

External website:

<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004704>

6.

Urban Diversity beyond 'Social Mix': alternative concepts and methods to design micropublic spaces of encounter in Flanders' midsized cities.

Funding Source:

Senior postdoctoral research fellowship funded by FWO (Research Foundation Flanders)

For her postdoc, Luce Beeckmans has set-up an interdisciplinary and interuniversity framework and works with a triple affiliation:

- Ghent University, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning [head institution]
- Antwerp University, Urban Studies Centre

- KULeuven University, Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre

Period:

1/10/2019-30/9/2022

Project Abstract:

Migration has been dominating the news over the last years. Yet, while migration has a profound impact on cities, as most migrants eventually settle in cities, the spatial dimension of migration is still an underexplored topic. However, if we want to avoid further social polarisation and inequality, one of the main challenges cities face today is exactly finding innovative ways to spatially deal with their increased diversity.

This research project starts from the observation that we lack today an adequate vocabulary to speak about urban diversity in spatial terms. One exception is perhaps the concept of 'social mix'. However, the current application of 'social mix' in urban planning and urban policy, predominantly by creating a housing mix, is for many reasons problematic. First, because there is little evidence that there is any real effect of 'social mix' for those supposed to benefit from it, i.e. the poor. Second, because it entails a very limited understanding of the different dimensions of urban diversity in the 21st century. While it has a focus on class, it does not comprise notions of ethnicity, culture, religion, etc.

To break out the current impasse, also in Flanders, the central hypothesis of this research project is that instead of forcefully applying 'social mix' in housing, where people rather seek intimacy than enforced interaction, it is more important that people from different backgrounds get the opportunity to meet and that these encounters get 'infrastructured', that they get spatially accommodated for. This really implies an important paradigm shift in the spatial thinking about urban diversity from housing to alternative arenas, which are called here, following Ash Amin, 'micropublic spaces of encounter'. Hence, while this research project is in line with recent advances in sociology and geography, a real innovation is that it will study how we can strengthen the spatial aspects of these alternative arenas, as a crucial element in attaining meaningful encounters in these arenas is partly dependent on their spatial qualities.

In order to develop more effective concepts and methods to spatially deal with urban diversity in urban planning and policy, and this ultimately to come to more inclusive cities, this interdisciplinary research project will apply a mixed method approach consisting of a combination of qualitative, quantitative and more experimental research methods, and this on a maximum of three case studies in a variation of mid-sized cities in Flanders.

7.

Action-Research: Development of a solidary housing platform for recognized refugees.

Funding Source:

The Flemish Refugee Action ('Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen') financed by the King Baudouin Foundation.

Period:

1/9/2018-31/12/2020

Team

HEIM is a temporary collaboration between UGent (Luce Beeckmans) and Endeavour (Jonas De Maeyer, Jan Denoo, Maarten Desmet).

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the project:

Coordinator

Project Abstract (NL):

HEIM heeft het onderzoekstraject naar een inclusieve werking rond huisvesting voor vluchtelingen als kwetsbare huurders aangevat als een cocreatief proces met Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (VWV) en haar partners. Daarbij beoogden we uiteindelijk te komen tot een inclusieve werking die VWV rond huisvesting kan opnemen in samenwerking met andere actoren.

Het eerste deel van het traject omvatte diverse stappen in het scherpstellen van de uitdaging en het ontwikkelen van een concept. Sleutelvragen waren daarbij: wat zijn de meest prominente uitdagingen in het woontraject van vluchtelingen? Welke actoren bevinden zich in dit domein en welke rol nemen zij op? Na een uitgebreid onderzoek met onder andere een inventarisatie van wooninitiatieven werden diverse scenario's voor een initiatief ontwikkeld. Deze scenario's werden in een publieke workshop met diverse praktijkpartners besproken om vervolgens een voorkeursscenario te kiezen; het Solidair Woonplatform.

Het tweede deel van het traject stond in het teken van het uitwerken van het Solidair Woonplatform en de daarbijhorende communicatiestrategie. Er werd gestart met een verdere verdieping van het platform aan de hand van diverse focusgroepen. Op basis van deze extra informatie werd een pitch en een dummy van het platform ontwikkeld. Dit materiaal vormde de basis voor verdere gesprekken tussen mogelijke partners van het Solidair Woonplatform om zo het platform, de campagne, het organisatiemodel en het financieringsmodel achter het platform uit te werken.

Reference:

<https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8685805>

8.

Mapping the Invisible City. Spatial Manifestations of sub-Saharan African Diaspora in the mid-size city in Europe (the case of Belgium).

Funding Source:

Junior postdoctoral research fellowship funded by FWO (Research Foundation Flanders)

For her postdoc, Luce Beeckmans has set-up an interdisciplinary and interuniversity framework and works with a triple affiliation:

- Ghent University, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning [head institution]

- Antwerp University, Urban Studies Centre
- KULeuven University, Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre

Period:

1/10/2015-31/9/2019 (including extension for 2 maternity leaves)

Project Abstract:

While migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is omni-present in the media with hundreds of migrants arriving weekly in ramshackle boats on Lampedusa, the presence of African migrants in European cities seems almost invisible. This research proposal aims at visualizing the 'invisible' spaces that are occupied by sub-Saharan African migrants in secondary or 'mid-sized cities' in Belgium. The focus is on the places that are inhabited or daily used by African migrants, such as the house, church or shop. Since African migrants mostly occupy existing buildings in the city, this research will show how they have transformed and appropriated these buildings. This will be done through a detailed study of the outside and inside of the buildings, in which attention will be given to both the physical aspects and the use of the buildings. To better understand how African migrants use and transform buildings in Belgian cities, we will also look at comparable practices in their countries of origin, but also in other European countries where they have families or economic contacts. This research will also show the location of the buildings in the city to see if the settlement patterns of sub-Saharan African migrants differ from more established immigrant groups, such as Turkish or Moroccan people. Finally, we will examine to what extent African migrants have, outside any government intervention, contributed to the renewal of the city, by occupying and upgrading dilapidated buildings.

9.

Urban landscapes of colonial/post-colonial health care. Towards a spatial mapping of the performance of hospital infrastructure in Kinshasa, Mbandaka and Kisangani (DR Congo) from past to present (1920-2014).

Funding Source:

FWO-project (Research Foundation Flanders)

Period:

1/1/2016-31/12/2020

Team of promoters:

Johan Lagae (supervisor, UGent), Luce Beeckmans (co-supervisor, UGent), Koen Stroeken (co-supervisor, UGent) and Jacob Sabakinu Kivilu (Département d'Histoire, Université de Kinshasa)

Role of Luce Beeckmans (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent) within the FWO-project:

Co-Supervisor

Team members at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, UGent:
Simon De Nys-Ketels (PhD), Kristien Geenen (postdoc)

Project Abstract:

A substantial literature already exists on the intricate relationship between medical science and colonialism: scholars have looked at the historical development of medical science as well as the way in which medicine was entangled in colonial policies. Yet little attention has been given so far to the physical infrastructure of health care, even though during colonial times impressive hospital complexes have been built that, notwithstanding their often dilapidated state, still constitute a crucial part of the present day health care infrastructure for a large part of the Congolese population. This research proposes to investigate a select number of such hospital sites in three particular cities in the DR Congo: Kinshasa, Mbandaka and Kisangani. First, it will trace the origin of their typology, linking them to a “shared culture” among European colonial powers in the field of building design, urban planning and medical science. Secondly, it will investigate the “spatial governmentalities” active on these sites, scrutinizing how over time African socio-cultural practices of dealing with sickness and death conflicted with an infrastructural accommodation based on a typology imported from the mother country. To understand this tension, we argue that these hospital sites should not be understood as isolated enclaves, but rather as complex heterotopic infrastructures that, from their very inception, interacted in profound ways with their surrounding urban environment.

