

## **Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?**

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Learning from self-sufficient housing experiences in Brussels

- **Format:**

Written paper / verbal presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

Author: Anna Ternon

Co-author: Gérald Ledent

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Université Catholique de Louvain

- **Abstract (300 words):**

Housing production in Brussels seems inappropriate regarding the needs of the population in terms of numbers and changes in social habits. This production is mainly due to traditional developers from both the public and private sectors. Those developers are external actors, usually with no direct contacts with the future inhabitants.

The first default of this housing production is its insufficient amount considering the demographic boom in Brussels. While 6000 new housing units should be produced per year, with 20% social housing, the actual production is around 4000 for the last few years. Consequently, this shortage triggers an ever-increasing social gap (rising housing prices and insufficient social housing).

The second flaw of the traditional production is its lack of consideration for the households' evolution and diversity. The traditional nuclear family is no longer a standard since about half of the population are one-person households.

Since traditional housing developers do not seem to cater for the housing needs in Brussels, a study of innovative self-produced housing is set forth. Those operations are initiated by internal actors who are future inhabitants, for the most part, of the project. The goal of this paper is to bring to light the way and the kind of housing they produce. Three alternative case studies are analysed: an administrative building transformed into a collective and inclusive, yet precarious, housing; a collectively built housing and a self-managed community. Those new forms of self-produced collective housing display a high innovation potential.

Those innovative typologies display a series of differences from traditional housing developments. The individual dwelling is no longer the key element as it was the case in traditional housing. Instead, communal spaces become the basis feature in the composition. Those support a community life directed both internally and externally towards the city. Moreover, the individual spaces become smaller since they are replaced by community spaces. Learning from those innovative developments is a key issue regarding the current inadequacies in housing production.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

- Anna Teron is an architectural and urbanism graduated from Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium and la Salle University, Mexico. She is a researcher at the Université catholique de Louvain in Brussels. Her main topic is the conditions and potentialities of innovative self-produced housing in Brussels.

Teron is teaching assistant of the urban design studio at the Université catholique de Louvain in Louvain-la-Neuve.

Teron's practicing experience includes design and project management of schools and housing at Vanthournout architecture office.

- Gérald Ledent is an architectural engineer graduated from Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium and Oklahoma State University, USA. He holds a Ph.D. in architecture with a thesis named "Potentiels Relationnels". Through a study of collective modernist housing in Brussels, this work explores the relations between spatial and social structures. Over 10 000 housing units are analyzed, bringing to light the recurrence of a finite number of spatial properties in all human dwellings. Ledent's research interests focus on the relation between architecture and social relationships, housing typologies as well as research by design.

Ledent is associate professor at the Université catholique de Louvain in Brussels where he teaches in various studios.

Ledent's practicing experience includes design and project management at Charles Vandenhove as an associated partner. He has an extensive experience in the fields of public buildings and collective housing developments in Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

Gerald Ledent is also the co-founder of KIS studio (Keep It Simple studio), an architecture office that aims to avoid any unnecessary complexity to focus on the essentials.