



Debating residential subdivisions

Which actors, which forms, which uses?

Funding

Monday 9th

8.45

reception of participants and coffee

9.00 to 13.00

presentation of the PhD workshop and team work (including individual presentations)

13.00 to 14.00

lunch

14.00 to 18.30

team work / collective reflexion

=> 16.00 to 17.00

Claire Parin's intervention

Tuesday 10th

9.00 to 10.30

team work presentation

10.45 to 12.30

collective presentation and debate

12.30 to 13.00

synthesis

13.00 to 14.00

lunch

14.00 to 15.30

discussion about the publication

Funding

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Finding the suburban space in the early modern period : the example of the terroir of Marseille during the 17th century.

Master 2 Recherches comparatives en anthropologie, histoire et sociologie.

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Early modernists have ignored suburban spaces for a long time. During the 17th century, the city of Marseille knows a great urban growth. The urban center is extended from 66 to 197 hectares in 1666 (Puget, 2015) and the population increased from 30 000 to 65 000 inhabitants between 1600 and 1700. A big part of this growth is located in the terroir of the city. The word terroir qualifies the part of the territory of the city located out of her walls. Marseille has an original profile as her terroir stretches on 24 000 hectares and contains more than a quarter of the population at the end of the 17th century (Terrisse, 1971). Despite this importance, the terroir of Marseille has been forgotten by historians. The majority of studies only presents this area as a rural space (Emmanuelli, 1999 ; Rambert, 1934 ; Zysberg, 2007). However, the study of cartography, military and notarial sources is showing a picture more complex. Indeed, the residential forms we can observe and the links between the urban space and the terroir allow us to present the terroir of Marseille as an early modern suburban space.

The terroir is presenting different residential forms. The bastides, individual week-end houses for the urban bourgeoisie and aristocracy, seem to be the main model of space occupation and have been studied for their architectural richness (Aillaud, 2011; Chancel, 1993). The word « bastide » in the sources is used to qualified different realities. It can be a rich individual house with different buildings and dependences but also a simple individual farm. But the bastide model is far from being the only residential form present on this area. The study of cartography, is showing us the presence of some big villages center across the terroir, as Mazargues, Saint-Julien or La pomme that can be considered as a relay of urbanization. These areas are characterized by a dense group of houses and different activities. Then, the faubourgs close to the walls of the city seems to be characterized by adjoining houses and little properties along the roads.

This diversity of residential forms across the terroir is questioning the process of location of the population and her settlement. Comparing the cartography and the list of bastides in the military sources, we can notice that the high concentration of bastides is at a distance of the major villages centers of the terroir. This contrast is questioning the social composition of the different neighborhood of the terroir and the ability of being owner in the different spaces. The North of the terroir seems to be more broken up whereas the East has biggest properties which reveals the social condition of the owners but also the influence of the environment. Indeed, the presence of the main roads, the topography but also the type of the ground and the history of the different areas can explain these locations. Although the analyze of this distribution is revealing a gradient characteristic of the suburban spaces (Levy, Lussault, 2013). The study of the residential subdivision in the terroir of Marseille in the 17th century is highlighting the existence of a suburban space during the early modern period that have been ignore because of the split between rural and urban studies. This historical perspective is necessary to understand the contemporary urban basis of Marseille (Borruey, Chancel, 1985; Roncayolo, 1996) but also to understand the process of individual settlement in suburban areas.

Suburban place-making: 'place distinctiveness' as manifestation of political-economic coalitions (case: Antwerp, c.1860-c.1940)

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This PhD research is concerned with place-making in the urban periphery of Antwerp during the peri-urban phase and the role of political economic elites in processes of (sub)urbanisation. By the middle of the 19th century, the city of Antwerp was so cluttered and densely populated, that suburbanisation outside its original city walls became an important socio-spatial phenomenon. Between 1859 and 1864 a new fortification ring was built around the city (the Brialmont bulwark), dramatically increasing the urban territory. As a consequence, the surrounding villages of Antwerp were for the first time confronted with the physical expansion of the city, with the new outer fortifications (the Brialmont fortresses) literally crossing their territories. Since most traditional urban history research – for Antwerp and other cities – has almost exclusively focussed on city centres, place-making processes in the suburban periphery are up until now ill studied and not well understood. We therefore want to develop a theoretically founded historical perspective on how these nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century suburbs were being made during the important transitional phase from no longer being rural to almost being suburban. This period is denominated in literature as the 'periurban phase', and is for Antwerp to be situated between c. 1860-c. 1940.

Although 'place' is a much-used word in our day-to-day language, the concept is, from a theoretical point of view, much more elusive. Ever since the so-called 'spatial turn', space and place have become highly debated concepts within the social sciences. Here, we will develop a social constructivist approach to place and study the impact of political economic processes on suburban place-making processes. The political and economic stakes are after all high in the suburbanisation process, with different political economic actors competing against each other. Two concepts are central in this PhD: place distinctiveness and growth coalitions. The first concept, place distinctiveness, focuses on the discursive selection that is made by political economic elites in order to single-out or boost a specific place. Place distinctiveness is important and matters, because it is through the discursive mobilization of such constructs that political economic elites try to stamp their vision on the respective places that are being built. Place distinctiveness, as a discursive construct, becomes then a stake in the struggle between political economic actors. Secondly, we want to study if these political economic actors organised in a way resembling growth coalitions (Logan & Molotch 1987).

Questioning (1) how the discourse on place impacted on the development of the urban periphery of Antwerp during the periurban period; (2) researching the actors involved in these place-making processes; and (3) analysing the materialisation of place distinctiveness in the pre-WWII built environment in the suburban belt of Antwerp, is what this research project is about.

Funding



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Updating low-density suburbs: questions of infrastructures

Deadlocks and capacities in the quartier of Pont de l'Arc, Aix-en-Provence, France

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Since their appearance, suburban residential subdivisions raise some questions about infrastructures. The hierarchical and tree-like system of roads irrigating suburbs favors private cars and the development of inelastic mono-functional zones (Mangin, 2004; Secchi, 2010). For its morphological constitution the inhabitants are mostly "addicted to car" (Dupuy, 2010). It presents a particular difficult challenge of social inclusion, vulnerability and access to mobility for no car population (Cass, Shove, & Urry, 2005), as well as the traffic congestion makes drivers nervous or stressed (Hennessy & Wiesenthal, 1999). Because of the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and of the agricultural land consumption, suburban infrastructures touch also on the environmental question (Lupi & Mustered, 2006; Modarres & Kirby, 2010). As a result of dispersion, suburban way of life is generally hunger for resources and demands expensive infrastructures for communication, transports and energy (Walks, 2012).

In order to these issues, nowadays it's generally accepted that a policy of infrastructures encouraged urban spread (Wiel, 2009) and that a dense, compact and mixed used city could rebalance modes of transport (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999), energy and environmental transition (Haentjeans, 2010) and social-spatial inequalities (Hillman, 2010). In keeping with these arguments, the French law ALUR of 2015 orders to limit the urban spread and to densify the already urbanized areas in particular around existing infrastructures and public transport hub. But the network of roads, parking lots, sewers and water lines was not always designed for further transformations bringing more peoples and more cars. In low density suburbs, the actual capacity of the infrastructures "cannot support the dense development that urbanization would require." (Leinberger, 2008, p. 74). Densification processes will necessarily demand for new infrastructures or for the upgrading of the existing network. Shall the infrastructures constitute the starting point for urban renewal? Or will they represent the conflict zone between inhabitants, planners and developers?

To answer to these questions, we will focus on the quartier of Pont de l'Arc in Aix-en-Provence. Actually concerned by important projects of equipments (faculty, medical center, etc.) and of densification of residential subdivision, its mobility network is already saturated. The design of the infrastructures is not adapted for multimodal mobility and it creates a poor quality system of public space. As well, the impacts on territories of some "external elements", such as highways and railways which are governed by private companies or by national services, are hardly controlled by local actors.

Hence if the economic logic of urban renovation demands firstly new equipments or houses for financing the upgrading of infrastructures, residents are worried about the congestion of the road network led by this intensification of uses; this could easily compromise the environmental quality of their quartier and the land value of their plot. In this context that mobilize mainly private actors on private lands, we will also consider the potential of infrastructure design giving directions for future works and "fixing point of services, access and structure" (Allen, 1999) by public actions on public space.

PARTICIPATORY SOCIETAL COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS TO RETROFIT RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS

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Residential subdivisions remain the preferred living environment for the majority of Belgians. But, this lowdensity, uniform and car-dependent mode of living comes at a high societal cost. In Flanders there is an ongoing debate on how to reduce these costs. In spite of this debate, the subdivision of open land continues. The hypothesis, put forward by this proposal, is that, in order for the debate to have impact, it needs to become more concrete, by (1) departing from everyday practices and by (2) making the costs and benefits of alternative scenarios explicit.

A societal cost benefit analysis (SCBA) is a method to analyze the societal costs and the societal benefits of (spatial) scenarios. The aim of the proposal is to develop a model for a 'participatory SCBA' that can support a collective of residents, local authorities and local organizations to co-produce alternative futures for their residential subdivisions and compare their costs and benefits. This participatory SCBA will be tested in two residential subdivisions, most likely one in Diepenbeek and one in Hasselt.

The research will result in a theoretical and operational framework on the use of a participatory SCBA, and in concrete actions plans to reduce the societal costs of the two residential subdivisions.

Funding



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Social housing in the French suburban: from history to contemporary dynamics

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Today the suburban is considered to be a territory of homeowners, a land of private property, the individual private plot providing the dominant scale of reasoning, of design and development. The pavilion single family home has become the archetypical symbol of homeownership. However, historically in France the pavilion home has been a model used by employers for the housing of the working classes as early as the mid-19th century. Furthermore, in the early 20th century, the pavilion home also served as a model for state housing, being diffused through social housing schemes of the time. What of the social housing past, can we trace in this contemporary territory of private homeownership that is the French suburban?

Drawing from this historical context, this communication will be focusing on alternative actors of contemporary suburban dynamics in France, and more specifically actors implicated in social housing creation within the context of pavilion dominated neighborhoods. Such actors remain marginal to the overall debate on residential subdivisions, however they constitute an interesting counter-example to the private sector (such as real-estate and construction professionals, homeowners, etc.). Traditional state housing bodies (known as social landlords) that are interested in alternative, small scale and/or diffused social housing schemes are such alternative actors. Citizen associations recognized by the French state as eligible social micro-landlords are others. Real-estate agents of social purpose (identified as such by law) also mobilize the private housing sector for the housing of underprivileged populations. A number of these alternative actors are part of the Federation of Associations and Actors for the Promotion and Insertion through Housing (FAPIL), whose annual reports provide an important information source for analysis.

Furthermore, these small scale social housing projects challenge the prevailing owner-occupied housing model of the suburban, therefore opening the possibilities for new uses and dynamics in these neighborhoods. Actions of social character, in a constituted residential neighborhood, often initiate dynamics of solidarity and citizen participation. The different socio-economic background of tenants additionally touches upon issues of social diversity (social diversity being an important focus of recent legislative efforts that seek to promote diffused social housing policies).

Through examining these alternative actors of the suburban, and the change in uses and dynamics that they propose, new prospects are revealed in the debate concerning residential subdivisions. By presenting their strengths, and most importantly by interrogating the difficulties of their operations, the limitations of their policies and the reasons such actors remain marginal, this communication hopes to provide fertile ground for the debate on the future of the suburban.

How to improve urban and architectural quality in small peri-urban towns of the Ile de France by collective housing's?

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Gradually, densification has been regarded in public policies as an optimal urban planning model, which asked French communes to strengthen their legislation. At the same time, the peri-urban was the object of critical speeches. However peri-urban is increasingly seen as a mature territory, and its perception has changed, especially because researches like the BIMBY program shown that peri-urban areas can be densifiable.

We study another type of densification than the BIMBY, which focused on the densification of individual habitat by individual housing. We are interested in the densification of the Parisian peri-urban, especially of its local centralities — the towns — by the construction of collective housing.

Even if peri-urban is mostly seen as the place of the individual housing, a significant part of collective housing remains, and new buildings are built, influenced by the laws SRU and ALUR, and by the SDRIF. We have identified 130 buildings (more than 2800 apartments) in nearly 250 municipalities in the Parisian peri-urban built between 2009 and 2013. We analyzed their architecture, the transformations of the neighborhoods, but also how the governance managed to realize these constructions, breaking with the traditional way of building in these towns. Last but not least, we interrogated almost one hundred inhabitants of these new buildings to understand why they chose to live – and if they chose to live – in an apartment of a peri-urban commune.

In peri-urban communes of the Ile-de-France region, densification by collective housing remains complicated (high cost, lack of engineering, local protests). Moreover, densification is not always conducive to architectural and urban quality: the resulting constructions are reflected in a new architectural standard, pastiching, which often flouts its inscription in a local urban and landscape project. Despite these difficulties, which will be explained, we will also show densification achievements in the peri-urban area that have led to an improvement in the quality of life in these towns. We will indeed try to demonstrate the conditions of a high quality densification in the parisian péri-urban.

Funding



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Marketing of life styles

Emergence of the myth of “ideal home” and the gated community sprawl in suburban

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Many cosmopolitan cities like İstanbul have low-income, over-crowded townships on the one hand, and far less densely populated affluent areas on the other. Municipality's objective is that by densifying - that is, developing vacant land and allowing for stands to be sub-divided - the number of people living in more sparsely populated areas can be increased. This is a way of giving more people access to land which is already serviced (by transport networks and bulk infrastructure) and increasing the efficiency of the city. However, in the last decades suburban residential areas marked by “gated communities” have developed on the margins of cities the world over - İstanbul included. In İstanbul, such communities are distinct from the slum (gecekondu) areas of the 1960s-1980s, occupied by Anatolian immigrants on the outskirts of the city. The gecekondu (“slum” or “shanty”) arose through illegal construction and occupation. After 1995, however, gated communities erected on the margins of İstanbul have been occupied by upper-middle-class residents (Bozdoğan, 1997; Keyder, 2000; Low, 2003). In simplest terms, gated communities are becoming privatized suburban housing settlements for citizens who seek a safe, higher standard of living than the one afforded by the inner city proper. Within the scope of this study, the concept of gated communities will be explained as increasing interest on suburban retrofitting has occurred especially in the literature on the big cities in the world related to the globalization process. İstanbul Metropolitan Area has indicated the impacts of globalization process not only with the changes on capital and business areas, but also with the new housing trends on residential subdivisions. This research examine the global myth of the ‘ideal home’ appeared, facilitating the emergence of gated communities beginning in the 1980s and continuing today in mostly suburban areas. It argues that, during the last decades, life style marketing through the global myth of the ‘ideal home’ has been used as a tool to attract people of a middle socio-economic class for global consuming. Furthermore, it is discussed that life style marketing is an important factor to consider when analyzing the ‘global’ culture of consumption and the emergence and proliferation of gated communities. In the light of literature review and location-based experiential learning methods, the research composes a ‘suburban living’ definition in İstanbul and built my basic research questions on examining the role and transformation of middle-class İstanbulites in seeking an explanation for the growing urban reality:

- What are the economic, social and cultural processes bring out this kind of settlements?
- Who choose living around here, and why and how?
- What kind of social and spatial consequences will fraught with these settlements?

The intention of this paper is to analyze the processes of transformation of the gated community sprawl in suburban, in an effort to understand the changes in terms of spatial, socio-cultural and economic. The analysis has focused on the outcomes as a result of expansion of the gated communities forming the privileged living spaces of upper-middle classes until recently by including the middle-classes in its target group, and about this type of housing the changing boundaries of the middle-class identity will be discussed here through old and new examples. The arguments are formed by the observations, interview results and literature reviews. Through all the research process, newspaper reports, mainstream and media-originated advertisements produced on this subject are taken into consideration.

MOMENTS OF SUBLATION: An approach to stimulate collective action

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This paper discusses the challenge of creating opportunities to introduce more diversity in the context of a residential subdivision in Flanders. The post-war residential subdivision is homogeneous in many aspects: in cultural and demographic way, concerning housing types, program and public space. Its production is based upon a housing model that focalizes upon the nuclear family, private ownership and individual initiative. Incremental modification through the introduction of more diverse housing types, program and public space is considered as one of the strategies to adapt these neighbourhoods to contemporary societal demands. However, within its deeply rooted cultural and economic construct establishing meaningful relations between home and community appear difficult and easily trigger conflict. Although being homogeneous and resistant towards diversity, the residential subdivision is not static. In an un-revolutional way, people constantly produce and reproduce their living environment through everyday practices. We hypothesize that it is necessary to connect to these practices to introduce more diversity, addressing contemporary societal evolutions such as for example more smaller households or the need for flexible workspaces close to home. In this article, we explore Henri Lefebvre's use of the concept of 'sublation' to analyse and unveil possibilities latent in the everyday production of space.

This concept is based upon a dialectic thinking that denotes contradictions and interactions between meanings, uses and technical knowledge assigned to a place that maybe seem coherent and homogeneous at the surface. In his opinion, when a contradiction sublates, a transformation process occurs in which differences in meanings, uses and/or expertise are negotiated. It denotes the moment where contradictions are embraced and lead to a collective (re)action, to a project that opens possibilities for more diversity. His insights, we use to set up a collective process together with inhabitants, local organisations and authorities in the case of a neighbourhood in Flanders. We start from a thorough mapping analysis of contradictions and conflicts within daily practices of building, gardening, working and relaxing. Thereupon, we engage with actors involved and set up participatory workshops as 'moments of sublation' to discuss and decide upon a series of actions. In this paper, we will first reach a careful understanding of three contradictions linked to concrete places in the neighbourhood: (1) the street as a place to play and meet versus the place for individual car mobility, (2) the idea of privacy and tranquillity on the private plot versus the idea of individual freedom to build as you please, (3) the park as cultural heritage versus the park as local food and gardening hub. Second, we describe the concrete actions that result from the workshops and analyse their socio-spatial impact. We end with a discussion on how Lefebvre's concept stimulates this participatory process of collective actions and if it leads to more diversity.

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UNFOLDING RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS' PATTERNS.

Co-mapping and discussing personal and collective patterns of dwelling with the actors of a residential subdivision in Belgium toward the collective prototype of possible retrofitting alternatives.

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The single-family house is still today one of the most common choice of housing in Flanders. The detached single-family house represents approximately the 42% of the total amount of single family houses (De Decker et al., 2010). Characterized by low density, lack of services and sharing practices, by car dependency and by an aging population, the typical Flemish residential subdivision is facing major challenges, increasingly raising questions about the future of this dwelling model. Although the need for change seems urgent and evident, a diffused resistance exists against the implementation of alternative options. Between the multiple reasons preventing the development of more sustainable dwelling models, the personal and sociocultural meaning of home (Bervoets & Heynen, 2013 and Wright, 1991) together with a lack of wide spread, inspiring examples of diversified housing alternatives and dwelling practices contribute to this opposition. (Bervoets and Heynen, 2013).

Baser and Morgan (2008) suggest that every human system has within it the potential to develop its own capacity, in spite of that, people normally suffer from a “system blindness” that is the inability to understand how a system works preventing the operationalization of capacity building. In order to solve this issue, Baser and Morgan (2008) introduce Complex Adaptive System thinking, that encourages people to try to understand and visualize the system that they are part of, overcoming in this way dysfunctional patterns while encouraging them to think in a more creative and collective way about the potentiality of the systems in which they operate.

Considering residential subdivisions as systems that therefore have within them the potential to develop their own capacities can provide new opportunities to experiment with the operationalization of spatial capacity building in the context of retrofitting of residential suburbs. In this paper the collaborative unfolding of residential subdivisions' patters, personal (individual dwelling practices) and collective (shared dwelling practices) is presented as a participatory approach to empower the actors of a residential subdivision to become aware of the contextual dwelling dynamics while opening up new pathways for alternative retrofitting possibilities by collectively mapping, discussing and re-working the patterns. Starting from the existing capacity and interest of people in residential subdivisions to design their own dwelling environment (De Decker, 2008), this paper will question: What role can patterns have to both let contextual residential subdivisions' issues emerge while developing the capacity of people to (design) rework the personal and collective patterns of dwelling toward more sustainable alternatives?

The unfolding of patterns will be presented through the analysis of an existing, on-going case study of a residential subdivision in the municipality of Lanaken (B), where actors (inhabitants, architects and municipality) are engaged and interviewed through the use of probes (Brandt et al., 2008) enabling the visualization, discussion and modification of personal and collective patterns of dwelling.

Making inhabitants and professionals able to consider biodiversity and green framework in the suburban densification process.

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Nowadays, 80% of french people want to live in individual suburban houses, which are a low density housing form and become the main factor of urban sprawl, threatening natural and agrucultural areas which are important to protect. To make this possible, new laws attempt to stop the urban sprawl by a densification of the existing urban tissu. Suburban housing areas, with their low density, are specifically exposed to this densification. But this process might also have negative consequenses like the progressive disparition of suburban gardens and their ecological and social benefits.

The aim is to find a strategy to allow a densification without losing the ecological qualities provided by the garden. This is what we try to define in this PhD, by experimenting the conception of a new tool that could share new skills to the inhabitants and projects' conceptors, and by creating a negotiation space to think about densification.

The tool we are creating is an ecological indicator, easy to use for architects and inhabitants, to analyse the biodiversity of their projects in suburban gardens. This biodiversity indicator could be a good way to introduce an ecological thinking even in small architectural projects which currently do not consider biodiversity conservation, unlike larger architectural projects. Its application in the study might identify the optimal situations between density and biodiversity preservation and the resulting urban forms.

We are currently working with the inhabitants of a french housing estate to think about the futur of their neighbourhood. We are making simulations of different densification scenarios and are analysing their consequences. This study allows to quantify the artificialization of the ground, the loss of vegetation and changes in the garden morphology which will may impact its social usage.

This work had also been a support of inhabitants reflexion to define respectful densification rules which are important for their quality of life. This negotiation procedure seems necessary to allow the collective usage of the indicator and taking green framework into account in private gardens, to converge individual and common interests. The data extracted by this indicator might enrich a data base of suburban gardens' biodiversity at a larger scale, facilitating the choices of decision-makers for urban planning.

This approach, expermented in the PhD, should allow us to find an equilibrium between densification in suburban areas and perservation of garden qualities in order to obtain a more sustainable city.

Funding



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What is the response of the Bimby project from residents of an ex-urban residential development of the 1960s?

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This article questions the response from residents of the Bimby (Build in my backyard) project in Cernay-la-Ville and more specifically within the co-ownership of the Cottages. This development has been identified by Martine Berger (2004) as representative of the first phase of peri-urbanization in the south / south-east quadrant of the Paris Region. This kind of development of the 1960's is shown as an anti-model by the promoters of the densification (Poulot et al., 2016). Does the BIMBY project mark a trend towards endogenous urbanism? How did the actors seize it? The article is an excerpt from a thesis devoted to the evolution of ex-urban development projects of the 1960s-1970s in France and Quebec¹.

The aim of the Bimby project is to transform the residential fabric by creating a space for negotiation between collective and individual interests. Concretely, individual meetings with architects are proposed to the inhabitants to consider possibilities of densification of their plot. At the Cottages the initiative came from the co-ownership trustee in parallel with the consultations of the Bimby project which concerned the whole commune. The bearers of the Bimby project rely on studies that show, on the one hand, that significant densification can be achieved in residential neighborhoods without modifying their suburban character (Fouchier 1998) and on the other hand, that the owners of single-family houses can be key players in densification (Miet 2012, Touati 2012, Sabatier and Fordin 2012). The Bimby project assumes that the reluctance to densification can be overcome by involving the owners and advising them on the improvements to be made on their plot.

The Regional Natural Park of the Upper Chevreuse Valley has joined the Bimby research project by offering a special grant to municipalities in its area wishing to engage in this type of approach when developing their Local plan of urbanization (PLU). The Bimby project joins the recommendations of the Regional Natural Park in favor of an "endogenous urbanism" formalized by the architect-urban planner, Charles-Antoine de Ferrières, trained at the Ecole polytechnique of Lausanne and director of the Regional Natural Park of Upper Chevreuse Valley in Yvelines, from 1982 to 2008. Endogenous urbanism is defined as "the art of building within the urban fabric". Three municipalities, those of Cernay-la-Ville, Tremblay-sur-Mauldre and Essarts-le-Roise are involved in the process and have offered free consultations of architects to their inhabitants and integrate the elements into the PLU.

This article presents the responses from inhabitants of the Bimby project in Cernay-la-Ville and more particularly in the co-ownership of the Cottages by a survey of 20 people made in 2013-2014. We will first show what are the issues of densification in Cernay and those related to the co-ownership of Cottages. Then we will present the results of our investigation on the response of the Bimby project according to the actors.

¹ Ex-urban ways of living and the ideology of "leisure society". A France-Quebec analysis. Thesis supported the 26/01/2018

Viby Sjælland: The void of the once liveable town centre

Urbanist and action researcher, Planning Studies (Plan, By og Proces), Department of Humans and Technology

Viby Sjælland is a railway town with around 4650 inhabitants and is located in the southern part of the municipality of Roskilde, Eastern Denmark. Distance to Copenhagen: 50 km. The railway station has been the main motivator for a considerable urban expansion with the zoning of many new residential subdivisions in the 1960's and 1970's. Since then the town has had a weak population growth. Though, a decrease of local businesses and commercial life over the last decades means that Viby now is primarily a satellite town where many of the inhabitants commute to work in Roskilde and Copenhagen. Similarly the population is slowly aging. A trend, that has raised a special planning concern to attract more young families to settle down in the town.

As much of the urban functions and commercial activities that used to define the town centre has declined considerably over the last decades it is very conceivable to view the current urban spaces as being underused showing a potential for being re-appropriated for new uses to cater current everyday needs of the inhabitants. In a capacity building perspective this leads to a concern on how changes in the urban structure, space, facilities and activities can open up for more diversity of inhabitants – especially focusing on youth. Current population overweight of elderly people that moved to the town in the 1970'ties when the urban expansion with detached housing boomed. Thus major concerns in the project are: How can we maintain the notion of an urban centre when local retail life cannot fill out all the retail square meters anymore? What notions of the good urban life does the inhabitants themselves have and how can this be linked to a re-thinking and alternative uses of urban space?

Funding



Project Partners

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