Urban policy in Flanders

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The recognition of local authorities as the policy level closest to the citizen is an important pillar within the Flemish **integrated approach** to urban policy. In addition, the **concept of urbanity** is equally guiding. In the following presentation we take a closer look on how the Agency for Home Affairs and the Flanders' urban policy team support local governments in dealing with today's challenges, illustrated through two climate related cases.

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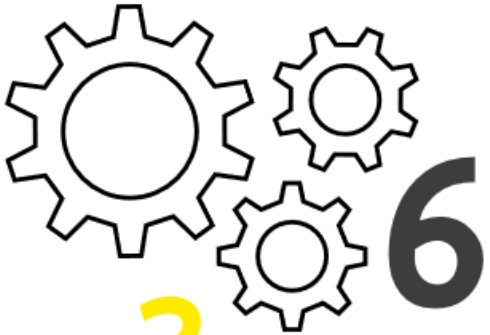
01 Urban Policy & Agency for Home Affairs

Agency for Home Affairs (in numbers)



6 Policy fields

3 ministers

15 websites

+5500 subscribers on external newsletters

392 employees

56% female

44% male

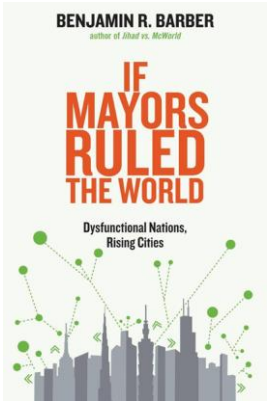
Multilevel governance as key factor

- Clear choice to integrate Urban Policy in Agency for Home Affairs
  → Specific attention to relations different government levels

- Structural multilevel governance

- Acknowledgement of each other's roles, responsibilities, opportunities

We're the level of government closest to the majority of the world's people. While nations talk, but too often drag their heels cities act."



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Why a specific 'Urban Policy'?

- Cities = places where new challenges occur first and strongest
  → Laboratory function + possible leverage

- Therefore cities most suited to offer answers to complex and interrelated challenges and transitions

BUT: in need for support: financial means, policy frameworks, knowledge sharing, capacity building, room for experiment,….

→ Role of the urban policy department = offer support through number of instruments

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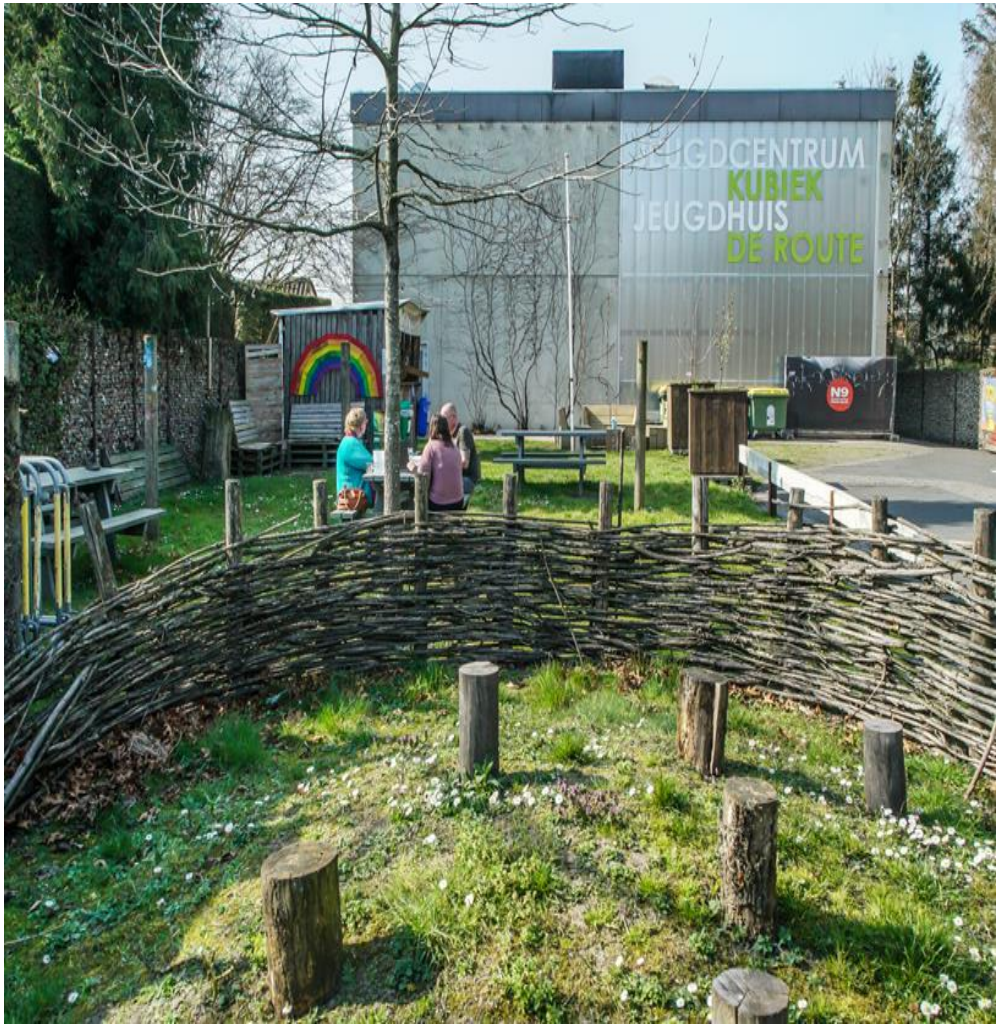
02 Urbanity

Concept urbanity (stedelijkheid)



The concept describes characteristics of living together in cities based on the 5 D's (in Dutch):

- Density (dichtheid)
- Diversity (diversiteit)
- Sustainability (duurzaamheid)
- Democracy (democratie)
- Digitalization (digitalisering)

+ Sixth D: Services (dienstverlening)

→ related to idea of proximity, as a way of strengthening the relations between cities, governments and the people in cities

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Some of our instruments

- Urban renewal: investments, but “more than bricks”
- Neighbourhood improvement contracts
- Smart Cities with focus on open data, mobility and climate
- Cybersecurity

→ Common denominators:

- Integrated approach
- Place based, social-spatial
- Sustainability (in its 3 forms: social, ecology, economical)
- Cooperation between # levels on equal footing
- Mutually reinforcing

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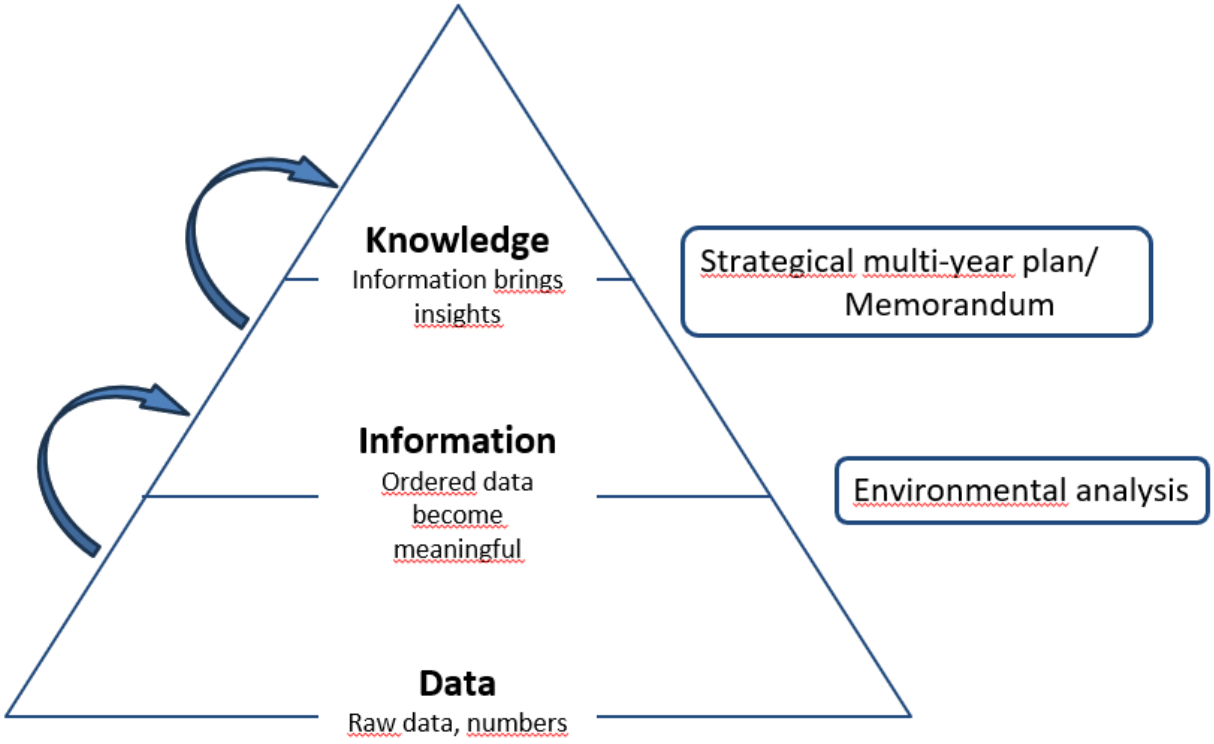
03 Casestudy Municipality-City Monitor

Municipality-City Monitor



➔Policy based on facts (instead of intuition),
consistently collecting, analysing and using data

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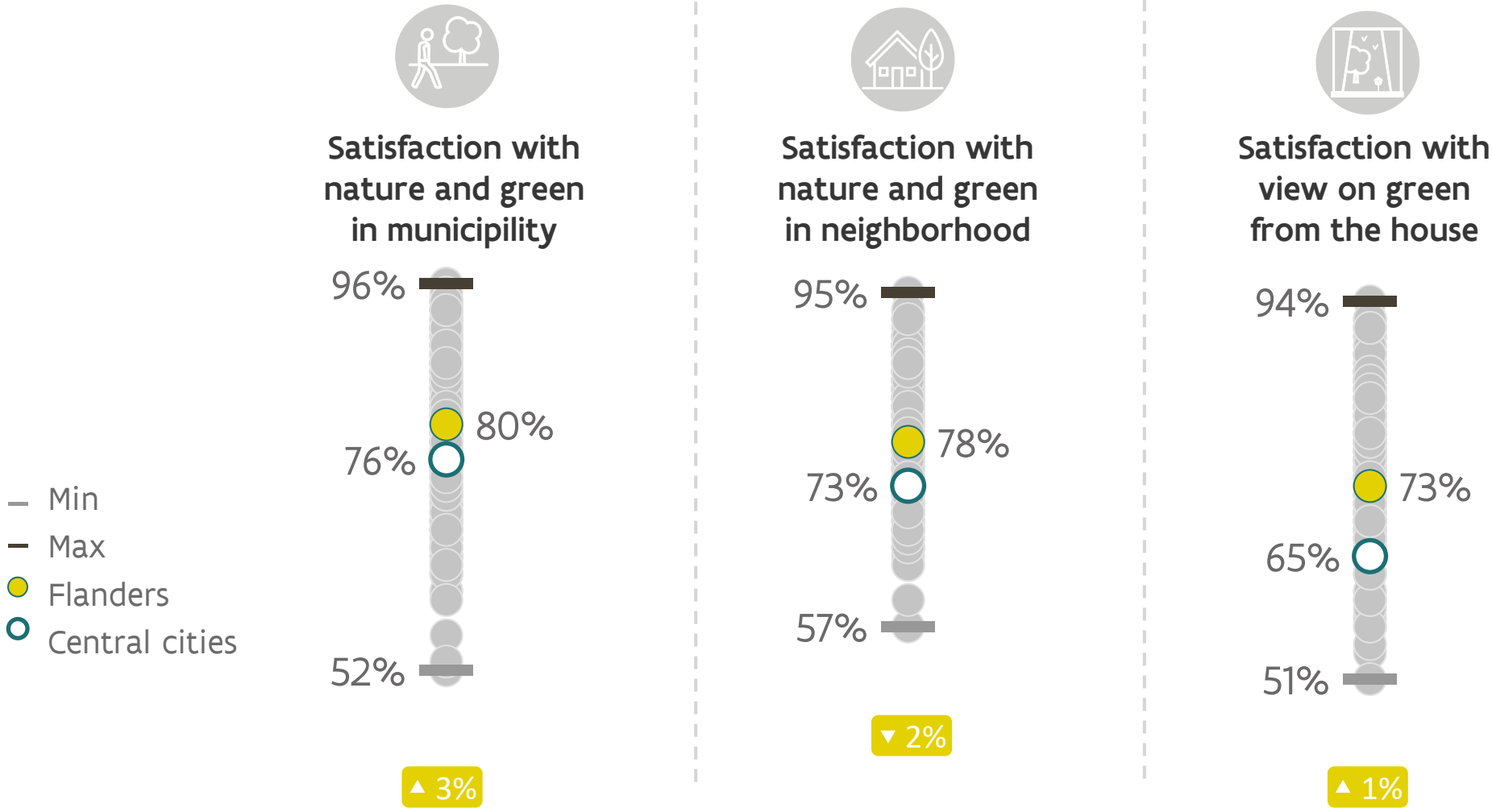
Results from the 2024 launch event

4/5 satisfied with nature and green in municipality and neighborhood

Almost 1/2 visits nature and green every month



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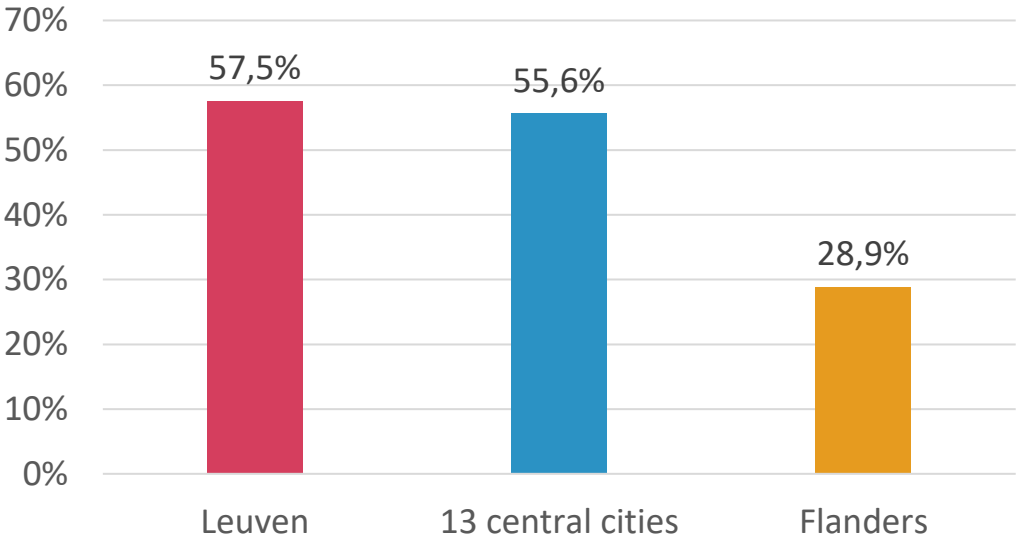
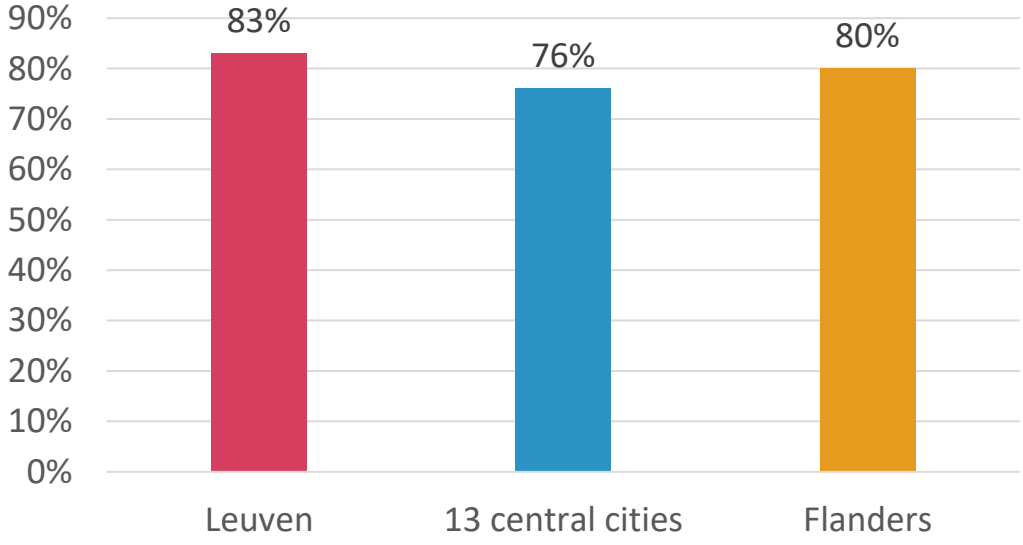
Louvain - Built-up area

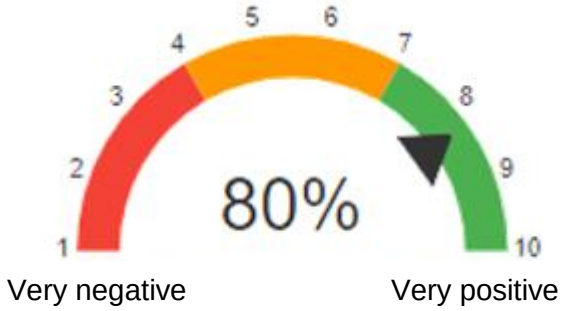


Satisfaction with nature and green in the city

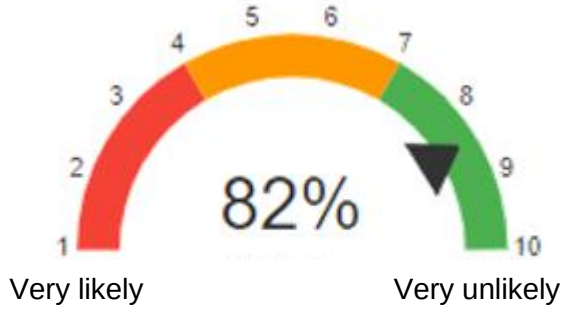


Workshops to stimulate data-driven policymaking

In general, how do you feel about the Municipality-City Monitor?



How likely is it that you would recommend the Municipality-City Monitor to a colleague?



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04 Casestudy
100 Cities Platform

Case Study 2 – 100 Neighbourhoods Platform

What? **Connecting platform** between local governments, experts, higher governments

- Placebased + specific attention for neighbourhood level
- Process and content related support
- Multilevel governance
- Laboratory function (pioneers) + possible leverage; room for experiment
- Knowledge dissemination & exchange of experiences

- LEKP-program as starting point
- Mix small, medium sized and big cities & municipalities
- Searching for systemic solutions
- Support 10 pioneering neighbourhoods/local governments

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100 Neighbourhoods Platform – Discussion themes

- **Support mechanisms**
  - Link with other Flemish policy initiatives
  - Individual vs collective support
- Room for **experiment**
  - Innovation: technical, social, financial, legal matters
- **Integrated neighbourhood approach**
  - Efficiency gains in collective approach
  - Bottom up (starting from specificities local vs general top down)
  - Infrastructure works: combine!
- **Governance**:
  - From experiment to upscaling
  - Capacity building
  - Translation local → general lessons

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