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Assessing age friendliness in Cities

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① Definition & background

1. The global impact of demographic change, with a wide range of housing and community needs emerging among those aged 50 and over (Biggs et al., 2000)
1. The policy goal of supporting people in their own homes for as long as possible – the idea of ‘ageing in place’ (Lui et al., 2009)

Age Friendly Cities



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① Definition & background

- The model of ‘age-friendly cities’ initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO)
- Developing age-friendly communities arose from a number of policy initiatives launched by the WHO 1990s -early-2000s
- ‘Global Age-friendly Cities’ project (2006). 33 cities around the world => CHECKLIST

Age Friendly Cities

① Definition & background

- AIM:**
- Developing supportive urban communities for older citizens
 - Encouraging 'active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO, 2007a: 12)

① Definition & background

Lui et al., (2009), different approaches on favourable environments for older citizens:

- **Physical/social environment:**
physical infrastructure & design
social aspects of the environment, i.e. formal and informal relationships, participation and inclusion
- **Top-down to bottom-up governance:**
empowering and involving older people as main actors in enhancing neighbourhoods
top-down approaches, such as the WHO's model of Global Age-friendly Cities, Active Ageing (EU)

② The value of a neighborhood



An age-friendly neighbourhood is one way to promote 'active ageing'



The value of a neighborhood

- Older people spend more time in their neighbourhood
- Older people usually have lived a long time in their neighbourhood
- Older adults are more attached to their neighbourhood
- Most older adults want to live as long as possible in their neighbourhood/familiar surroundings
- Social networks



The value of a neighborhood

- The 'psychological' environment
 - "home is where the heart is"
 - The 'physical' environment
 - The build environment
 - The 'social' environment
 - Neighbourhood as social environment
- Need for a multidimensional perspective



② Belgian Ageing Studies

- Survey of quality of life and living conditions of older people
- Representative sample in each municipality
- Stratified for age & gender
- Peer-research method
- Response rate: between 65 and 85%

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The 'psychological' environment

- Habitation
- Attachment
- Place identity

1

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The 'psychological' environment

- Leaving the house at night

Reason	Percentage
Never	36
Once a month or less	16.6
After 1 week or more	26
Once a week	13.4
After 1 week or more	27.9

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1

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The 'physical' environment

- Physical space
- Access
- Use of space
- Design

1

The 'physical' environment

% of older adults that experience problems in their neighbourhood	
Too much traffic	39,4
Not enough facilities	23,1
Too much noise	19,2
Neighbourhood is not pleasant	16,3
Degradation and pollution	7,3
Obstacles in the residence	7,3

The 'physical' environment

Facilities
Mobility
Use of it
Access



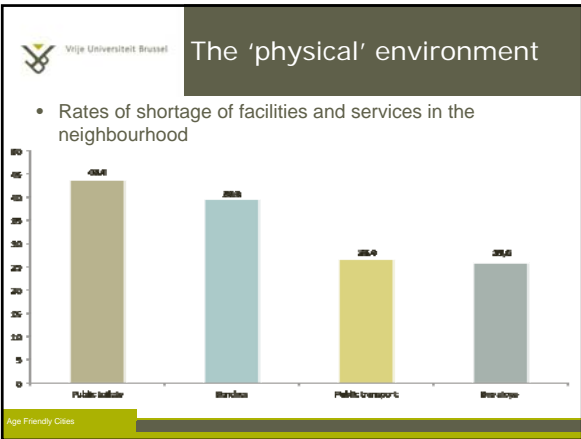
The 'physical' environment

- 24% of the 60 to 69 years experiences transport problems
- 39% of 80+ experiences transport problems
- Important to have adapted transport modes





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The 'social' environment

Residents (demography)
 Informal meetings
 Informal social networks
 Neighbours
 Family
 Friends,...





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The 'social' environment

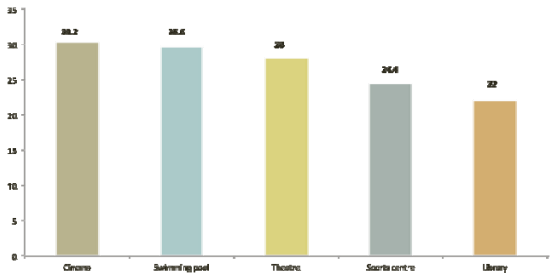
Facilities
 Formal networks




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The 'social' environment

- Insufficiently present in the neighbourhood



Facility	Percentage
Cinema	30.2
Swimming pool	28.6
Theatre	28
Sports centre	24.6
Library	22

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The 'social' environment

- Volunteering




Yes	16%
No	84%

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The 'social' environment

% of older adults that experience social problems in their neighbourhood	
Not enough friends/acquaintances/family	23,1
Only older adults	18,9
Bad mentality	5,4
Too much youngsters	4,5
Too much immigrants	4,3

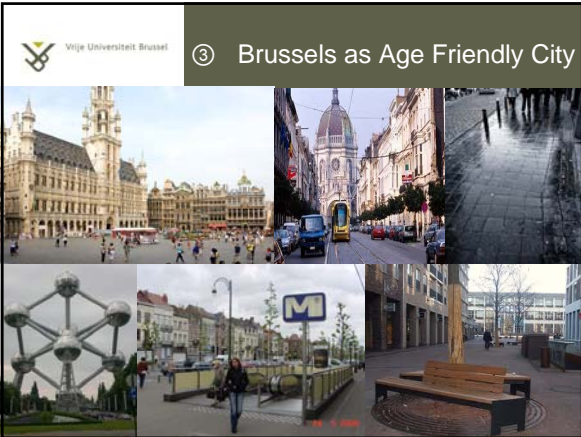
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The right to the city?

- 'The right to the city': two main rights
 - To *appropriate* urban space; the right to 'full and complete usage' of the city.
 - The right to *participate* centrally in decision-making surrounding the production of urban space.

(Purcell, 2003, commenting on Lefebvre)

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City of Brussels: Main results of the study

- Few married people
- Many divorcees
- Many never married older adults
- Large differences in income


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City of Brussels: Main results of the study

- Neighbourhood:
 - Average length of residence is low
 - Problems:
 - degeneration
 - lack of public toilets and sidewalks
 - lack of post office and theater
 - too much traffic & noise


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City of Brussels: Main results of the study

- 80 % enjoys living in the neighbourhood
- 60 % feels concerned
- 60 % has daily contacts with the neighbours


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City of Brussels: Main results of the study

- 42 % never leaves the house during the evening
- 51 % fears being hassled on the streets
- Fear of crime is not higher than in the rest of Flanders
- Feelings of loneliness similar to Flanders

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City of Brussels: Main results of the study

- Low participation in associational life
- Elderly association => high potential
- High participation in voluntary associations
=> extremely high potential

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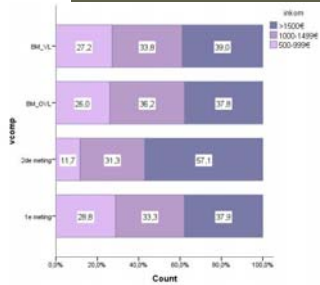
City of Brussels: Follow up

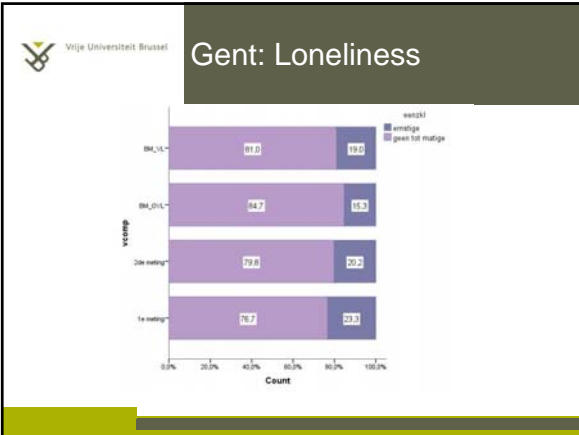
- Assistance social policy plan
- Age friendly city label
- Qualitative research Turkish and Italian population
=> first generation

City of Gent:

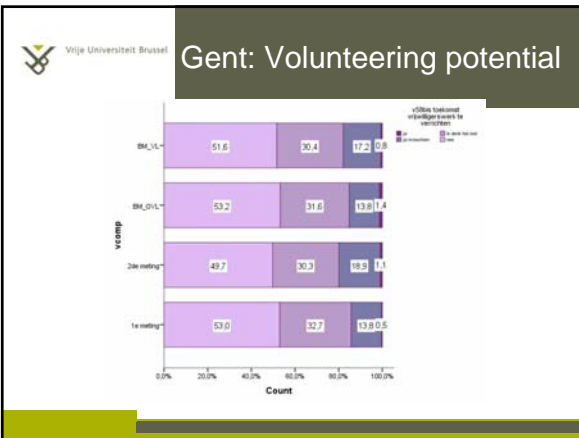
- Research 2006 & 2011
- Strong involvement of policy makers in evidence based policy
- Increase the involvement of citizens

Gent: Income









Assesment of age friendliness: BAS

- Assessing quality of life and living conditions of senior citizens
- Tool for evidence-based policy on the **local level**
- Tool for supporting the process of creating inclusive, **age-friendly** communities and promoting **active ageing**

Aim of the research program

- Research as a tool for **empowerment**
- Monitoring **local challenges**, progress and trends
- **Benchmark**
- Monitoring the **impact of local policy plans**

Peer research

- The main research methodology is a participatory methodology consisting of an action plan:

⇒ 'Peer research'

Peer research

- This methodology embraces older people as:

Research group

Essential partner of the project



Working with a 'peer research system'

- Generates a 'sense of ownership'
- Visibility of research and involvement of older people at the local level
- Involving older people in active participation
- Developing participatory policy (stakeholders)
-

Working with a 'peer research system'

- Stimulates political participation and consciousness among senior citizens
- Opportunities to change and transform the conditions of all age groups
