

ANALYSING THE URBAN VISION IN GHENT AND LIEGE - ON GOOD INTENTIONS AND ITS DUBIOUS CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT: Cities have become more independent players in a global and competitive game to attract investors who, in their turn, have to generate economic growth, with the hope and expectation that this growth will trickle down to all layers of society. In order to be able to play this game, local government has embraced a shift towards new urban policies based upon a neoliberal model of capitalism, and accompanying new governmental structures such as public private partnerships. However, in reality this economic growth has generally not produced the expected positive outcome. On the contrary it has, in many cities, enhanced socio-economic and spatial dualisation. In this paper we seek to analyse this shift towards neoliberal policies and new governance approaches in two Belgian cities, Ghent and Liege in qualitative manner. The policy intention of local government is screened at two levels: through analysis of policy documents and through use of a model that can help visualising and comparing the different policy approaches.

KEYWORDS: Neoliberalism, globalisation, local governance, urban development projects, social and spatial polarisation, new urban policies, third way

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years urban areas have seen a renaissance both in economic as in spatial terms. Economic growth rates of urban areas are respectively higher than national averages. Cities have become nodes in a global network, condensing economic and decisional power, in a transition from the period of Fordism to a so called post political condition. Consequently, there has also been a shift in political power. The role of local government in this process is rather ambiguous. Local governance, rather than government, seems to embrace this shift towards new urban policies willingly, creating an attractive city for investors to stimulate economic growth which is said to be beneficiary for the whole community. However, in reality this growth has generally not produced the expected positive economic and social effects but, on the contrary, reinforced social and spatial dualisation processes. Although general economic indicators are positive the socio-economic situation of an important part of the population is declining in urban areas where low-skilled workers are numerous.

One can therefore hypothesise that local government reinforces this process of dualisation, be it deliberate or not, by focusing their policies on attracting the high tech service and financial sector. This is subsequently followed by measures to mitigate against the negative side effects, such as social exclusion, poverty, spatial dualisation etc. Since the intention of local governance is directed towards this current growth model, which is based on a neoliberalistic form of capitalism, it does not avoid such negative outcome but rather enhances it. Apparently, neoliberal policies and free market ideology are generally seen as the only model on which policies can be based.

This paper seeks to discuss research in which the intentions of local policy makers in two Belgian cities, Ghent and Liege, have been analysed in a qualitative manner. Firstly a desk top research was carried out whereby policy documents were screened on intention and discourse. Secondly a model was developed, based on a questionnaire, which describes the major shifts in policy making and scores accordingly. In this paper we will firstly summarise the current socio-spatial condition and the important transitions that cities have been undergoing in recent decades. In the second part of the paper we will discuss both strands of research.

2 FROM GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNANCE

Neo-liberalism and cities

We live in the “*age of cities*” (Taylor, 2007, 2008). Cities have become in the current networked society the new nodes for political and social reconstruction. The reason for their growth is to be found in the transition from a Keynesian-Fordist approach to a post-Fordist or neoliberal economic system. This new economic organisation model is marked by intensified processes of economic globalisation, capital and labour mobility and welfare restructuring (DeFilippis, 2004). The economy thus becomes flexible, which in turn enhances geographical competition (Harvey, 1985). Every region or city has to compete with others in order to attract and keep investment. In this era of flexible globalisation, economic opportunities seem to be predominantly in urban areas, since they concentrate decision making institutions (both public and private). Therefore cities will continue to appeal to both a high and low skilled workforce, and will continue to grow. Not only is there a change in the number of people inhabiting urban areas, the current wave of globalisation has caused a significant change in the political economy, in which local governance coalitions gain power at the detriment over central government. The international economic system was once an inter-state system. This has changed in the last three decades as a result of privatization, deregulation, digitalization and the opening of national economies to foreign firms. The effects have brought with them a re-scaling of the ‘strategic actors’ who articulate the new economic system (Sassen 2001). What makes this period of globalisation particularly distinctive is the de-territorialisation; both firms and individuals are, due to technical innovation, able to act beyond the borders of nation-states. A reconfiguration of political power is already taking place from a centre of politics defined by states to more multi-layered governance, a complex system that involves sub-national regions, supra-national governance and multilateral agreements (Held, 2001, 26). Some scholars argue that the role of the state is diminishing and that power, once held by nation-states, is now flowing towards in opposing directions, towards supra-national and local governance (Ohmae 1996, a.o.). Others are of the opinion that the nation-state remains the formal entity where most of the lawmaking takes place, but which is complemented by other new informal instruments of governance such as public private partnerships and political forums and development agencies, which present themselves at every governmental scale. In any case, cities, or metropolitan areas do seem to take a prominent role in this process of re-scaling and de-territorialisation as socio-economic nodes in a complex system of spaces of places and accompanying flows (Castells, 1996). In order to compete and succeed in the interurban and interregional struggle multi layered, multi stakeholder urban regimes that directly negotiate with international businesses to ‘maximise the attractiveness of the local site as a lure for capitalist development’ (Harvey 1989) have been established, morphing local urban governmental structures into urban governance coalitions.

The question that arises is how to protect democratic values and give formality to these new institutional multi-layered, multi-stakeholder forms of ‘Governance-beyond-the-State’ (Swyngedouw 2005). The renewed relation between state and civil society actors, which not only indicates a transformation of the organisation of government as we have known it, could be potentially a virtue for the democratic process, giving a wider public possible access to participation. However, at the same time market driven actors overrule the principles of democracy in order to portray a strong sense of individualism capitalising on the current neoliberal state of economic affairs as well as to protect their interests as a local elite.

Knowledge economy and social exclusion

One might assign two important roles to the city: firstly a city generates economic growth through the process of innovation and new production (Taylor 2007) and secondly the city functions as an emancipation vehicle – a rise in social status often involves an upgrade in living conditions. (Reijndorp, 2007). The first role of generating economic growth has been evident in the era of knowledge based economy activity, although limitations have come to the fore in the recent crisis. The knowledge based sector has a growing demand for highly educated and technically skilled labour and the focus on these economic activities comes at an increasing cost for low educated workers. On the other hand, the very presence of these highly skilled workers and footloose companies has also resulted in a growing demand for low skilled labour to service this new elitist class and firms. However, this current low skilled labour force faces stronger competition, stronger demands for flexibility, insecurity and uncertainty (Beck, 2000). Much of this competition comes from a preference of employers to rely on an immigrant workforce who is willing to accept lower wages and higher levels of job insecurity. As a result the socio-economic position of these parts of the urban population is declining, whereas general growth indicators might be positive. Therefore, one can see that in metropolitan

areas that are well under-way in the transition process towards a knowledge economy, social inequalities have increased (Mollenkopf and Castells 1991, Sassen 1991). This mere fact endangers the second role of the city – the city as an emancipation vehicle. As a direct result of growing polarisation, a number of people are not able to break through the destructive circle of enduring exclusion, meaning they persistently lack a sufficient access to resources and are subjected to forms of institutional discrimination (Mingione, 2004).

In spatial terms we can see that in these parts of the city where low skilled workers are numerous, job opportunities have decreased and low skilled workers face the risk of being left out of the labour market without direct opportunity to re-engage. In combination with a redrawing of the welfare state, leaving low income groups no option but to look for housing via market mechanisms, thus ending up in the lower parts of the housing market, this has led to a further concentration of excluded groups in the same parts of the city. This spatial segregation reinforces the social exclusion mechanisms and becomes “a motor that drives social exclusion” (Hanhörster, 2001). This could eventually result in a patchwork of deprived neighbourhoods encircling the fortified enclaves of the urban elite: a series of regenerated, developed or renewed spaces with increasingly defined boundaries not only spatially but also economically, culturally and socially (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Could we, whilst having a growing economy, be creating areas in the urban field that are prone to become deprived no-go zones, where people are forced into informal labour, ruled by a mafia-like form of self regulating governance and where there is no outlook on entering the formal labour market, nor participation in civil city life; areas which are impossible to govern by regular means of democratic local government?

Economic growth and Urban Development Project

The question then is how to deal with the negative relation between post-Fordist approach and social exclusion. Is it sufficient to ‘correct’ over-all globally serving strategies locally by social welfare? We think not, especially when acknowledging that the “progress of neoliberalisation has [...] been increasingly impelled through mechanisms of uneven geographical developments” (Harvey, 2005). This means a search for the appropriate (geographical) intervention level for public authorities and how this intervention can be nourished by private resources while nevertheless gaining control over possible negative side effects – such as socio-economic exclusion, segregation, and gentrification (Sassen, 2006). One should however be careful when evaluating the increasing social inequalities under neoliberalism and not confuse their status of side effects with the very *raison d’être* of neoliberal practices (Harvey 2005). Uneven development is endemic to the neoliberal regime, creating a logic in which social and spatial inequalities are mutually reinforcing. When trying to counter this unevenness, public authorities are often not willing to radically change the accumulation regime. Instead, the dual relation between space and society is used in order to soften inequality by targeting its spatial dimension (Cassiers and Kesteloot, 2009). On the one hand cities eager to participate in the interurban competition, target specific attractive parts of the city through urban renewal projects, in order to attract (international) businesses and to be able to cater for the highly paid professional class that comes with it, rather than focusing on the city as a whole. Concepts like the Creative City, the Competitive City and the Sustainable City are created to brand the image of the city, whereby marketing tools replace the proper names of politics (Swyngedouw 2005). On the other hand cities leave a more universalistic, managerial strategy of social redistribution and tend towards place targeted and group targeted social services. The main logic behind these policies, put into place by governance coalitions, is the assumption that *There Is No Alternative*, (Marcuse and Van Kempen, 2000). It is believed that making the city attractive for investors in order to stimulate economic growth will benefit the urban community as a whole. However, in reality this growth has generally not produced the expected positive economic and social effects, but on the contrary reinforced social and spatial dualisation processes. These in turn are targeted by special policies, focussing on economic inclusion and social cohesion.

Urban development policies have been criticized by many authors (Peck, 2005, Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998, Swyngedouw et al, 2002, a.o.) for being implemented along neoliberal lines. It is argued that these policies exacerbate socio-spatial inequalities and social exclusion, create logics in which places not people need to be integrated and mainly serve the interests of the elitist class.

Although mostly agreeing with these critical notes, other authors believe that these localist approaches bear in themselves a seed of a new regulatory system. They claim that an exploration of local regulations may lead to a social innovation, which gives a broader spectrum to inequality and needs of the poor than simply their consumption level. It raises their empowerment and consciousness and puts exclusion in societal

context and makes excluded instigators of their own future (Moulaert, 2000). This is known as the neo-communitarian school, which puts a focus on the third economic sector (social economy), social cohesion and grass root mobilization (Gerometta et al. 2005)

3 URBAN POLICIES IN GHENT AND LIEGE

The form and degree of neoliberalisation – and its generated inequalities – differs in any particular instance (Harvey, 2005). It can be recognised that the combination of neoliberal ideas, state reformation to improve competitive position in the global market and struggle between ruling classes to implement their own ideas are forces that effect local forms of urban governance to create “a good business climate” and attract the “right” type of capital, (Harvey, 2005) However, contextual conditions, institutional arrangements and the interplay between internal and external forces play an important role on a more local level. Most importantly, one should analyse whether the generation of social inequalities is not treated “as a mere and in some cases unfortunate byproduct” but as “part of the genius of neoliberal theory” (Harvey, 2005). Therefore it is important to study the local context and the present and past arrangements in order to explain the actual neoliberal policy making in a city. However, it is possible to go a step further to try and discover if local arrangements may create new conditions for future urban development through the use of the neo-communitarian school of thought. It is often argued that global conditions as set by the neoliberal capitalist regulation outweigh the role that local policy makers can actually play. There is no alternative, but to play the game and fight for the city’s position in the global competition for attracting companies and capital. We, however, believe that although the global regulation is extremely limiting there is still room for local arrangements that counter the negative consequences of neoliberal accumulation, such as exclusion, segregation and dualisation, and may even turn them into an inclusive, socially cohesive and integrated urban project . Our main question therefore is: Can a local actor make this difference?

In order to analyse if local policy makers can make the difference, we first analysed whether they had the initial intention to make this difference and, to what degree do they agree with the “there is no alternative” discourse? Also, do they try to counter negative effects of neoliberal regulation, or do they try to formulate alternative approaches?

In order to study this, we started with an analysis of policy documents. We screened them for policy intentions and discourse. Extracting these intentions from the documents, we analysed their conformity with existing neoliberal arrangements, as observed in literature. We also screened their ability to deal with the undesired effects of neoliberal governance or even to oppose to these arrangements.

Ghent

In the last decades of the 20th century Ghent, the second largest city in Flanders and in Belgium with a current population of 235.000 saw a decline of its urban population until the 1980’s. People who could afford it preferred the leafy suburban areas to the densely populated run-down inner-city neighbourhoods. This process of sub-urbanisation had two important consequences for the city of Ghent; on one hand, the tax income for the municipality decreased as a result of wealthy people leaving the city boundaries and on the other hand, the people who stayed within the city boundaries did not have sufficient funds to undertake improvements to their homes. As a consequence the inner-city housing stock started to deteriorate and its population to suffer from greater levels of deprivation.

At the end of the 1980’s the poor living conditions in Belgian cities were widely recognised as highly problematic and action was needed. A first programme to tackle those issues was the ‘Act on Regeneration areas’ sponsored by the Flemish federal government, followed in 1996 by the ‘Sociaal Impulsfonds’ (SIF). The objective was ‘to make cities more attractive for people who want to live and work in them, as well as tackling poverty’. In 1999 the federal ‘Grootstedenbeleid’ came into being, a fund which subsidises programmes aimed at improvements to deprived neighbourhoods in the larger cities of Belgium. In 2001 Gent managed to secure a € 10.4 million grant from the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRO) which was raised to €36 million through co-financing of several other institutions. The funding has been spent on area specific projects, such as Oxygen for Brugse Poort, Ledenberg Lives, Bridges to Rabot. These are all deprived areas where money has been injected into specific projects that were indicated in masterplanning exercises that were undertaken for each area. The City of Ghent’s aim was to give the local population and NGO’s working in the area an important say in the planning and design process.

The 'mission statement' of the newly elected local government in 2001 stated a clear objective; 'to continue to improve living and working conditions within the city... which we know will take tremendous physical and financial efforts'. The council opted for an integrated approach of investment and action plans based on public participation. Therefore, the Council introduced a key role for its Management team, which together with the Mayor and Aldermen, formulated a mission statement, strategic goals and proposed a shift towards project based and area specific working. The local government sees for itself a clear role as facilitator to make the stated vision possible. A shift from government to governance can be seen as Ghent Council does not only rely on its own departments but more and more on partnerships with both other public institutions as well as the private sector. Public private partnerships are not only used as a mechanism to delegate the implementation of (urban) policies but also to inform and guide policymakers. An example of the latter is Ghent, City in Motion, a partnership whereby private actors are also invited to shape labour policies.

The vision statement of the City of Ghent has been translated into five strategic goals, of which the first one states that Ghent endeavours to become an international centre for innovation, creativity and knowledge. In order to accomplish this goal the Department of Economy's main aim is to 'create sustainable economic growth and quality work for everybody.' The department hopes to achieve this through a balanced approach of attracting, on one hand, new (knowledge based) companies and, on the other hand, educating its citizens to integrate more people in the labour market. Ghent, being known for its university, likes to capitalise on this and emphasise the importance of attracting knowledge based industries which will be concentrated around the main transport hub of the city, the main central station Ghent Sint Pieters. The city is also partner, together with a number of private actors and the university, in the establishment of Ghent Bio-energy Valley., to underline the city's ambition to become one of the innovative leaders of renewable energy.

Although the City of Ghent aims to create a positive climate for investors, it also realises that a balanced society contributes towards this positive climate. Therefore the local government states in its main strategic goals that in addition to a flourishing economy Ghent also needs to focus on a sustainable, solidary and open society. The local government realises that social policies are needed to counteract the excesses of the free market economy, which is emphasised within the mission statement. Remediation policies such as enlarging the labour market are seen as an essential condition for a healthy and sustainable economy and therefore society. Hence the department of Economy has formulated a number of such remediation policies, such as Job house, Latent Talent and Jobkanaal, which are related to employment possibilities.

Ghent demonstrates through its policy documents that it has the intention to economically position itself firmly in a (inter)national context, hereby strongly focusing on knowledge based services. However, it also presents itself as a government that is fully aware of the social and economic difficulties that some people might face and has numerous policies in place in order to tackle these problems.

Liège

The city of Liège is situated in the Walloon region and is the fourth largest Belgian city with a population of 190.000 inhabitants. The city can be described as a case of an industrial city in decline. Situated on the Walloon coal and iron ore belt Liège had been one of the leading cities in the industrial era, and was at his top in the early 20th century. From the 1950's onwards, this traditional industry had to close down, since it was no longer able to compete with low wage countries. Liège entered a long period of depression, dependent on redistribution measures and state subvention for keeping a dying industry alive throughout the Fordist-Keynesian economic system.

The shift away from this Fordist-Keynesian regime to a flexible, neo-liberal regime, which brought cities (again) to the foreground of the political-economic spectrum, has given a new momentum to Liège. Examples like Manchester showed that reconversion was possible. The city of Liège, priding itself with a long and rich history that started long before the industrial age, was willing to hook up with these new dynamics. In 2003 the city wrote its first Urban Development project (2003-2010), in which the objectives were 1) to ameliorate the quality of life in the city, 2) to render the city's attractiveness, 3) to diminish social fractions, 4) to create new jobs, and 5) to attract new inhabitants. The lines developed in this Project tie on to the neoliberal approach, thinking in terms of making the city attractive for new investors and inhabitants. However, it did not so much make the shift to a more governance-like approach.

In 2007 a new Urban Development Plan was written (2007-2015). The objectives stayed more or less the same (adding an ecologic and durable touch), but its approach becomes more multi-layered and involved

a great number of stakeholders. Whereas the previous version inscribed the proposed actions vertically, along with the structure of the city's administration, the new Project definitely thinks in terms of transversal actions and measures, involving different public services at the same time. It also searches for partnerships with private companies and with non-governmental organisations for concretising actions.

So, from the 2000's onwards, the city of Liège took up an active role in enhancing its own development. It created a cell for welcoming (foreign) investors (hitherto economic development had been the affair of an intercommunal at the provincial level). Further, a strategic cell for urban development, which conducts the Urban Development Project, has been set up. The city of Liège also became an active partner in the Euregio Maastricht – Aachen – Hasselt – Heerlen – Liège (before only the provinces and regions were represented in the executive board). All this indicates a shifting of political powers from higher governmental levels to the city level. This has also been accompanied by a search for more means that would allow these regeneration policies. The creating of the federal urban policy, generated new incomes for Belgian cities (Liège for example, received 13 mio € in the period 2005-2007) The city also solicited the European FEDER and ESF and was granted in 2008 a fund of about 100 mio € for developing its museum quarter, the surrounding of the HST-station and the renovation of the opera.

Liège focuses mostly on regaining its international position. It has the ambition of being a major pole within the Euregio, especially as a city of culture. The HST-station, designed by Calatrava, underlines this ambition, as does the new museum 'le Grand Curtius' and the renovation of the opera. The local authorities hope sincerely that this new cultural image will create a climate that will attract new inhabitants on the one hand and investors on the other hand, thus generating a new dynamic that will re-itinerate huge unemployment and poverty figures.

However recent figures show that Liège's population is slowly increasing and more business activities are registered, dualisation does not seem to be halted. Unemployment figures keep high, as is the number of people dependent on financial aids. The city of Liège therefore pays much attention to measures that fight social exclusion. On the one hand, this is done by promoting workfare policies, such as extra schooling and professional integration mechanisms. But on the other hand, Liège gives a lot of attention to measures which also tackle the reasons for exclusion, like fighting discrimination, promoting diversity, engaging in public participation...

One can thus conclude that on the one hand Liège has eagerly followed the neoliberal turn and the accompanying shifts like governance and welfare restructuring, since it offered opportunities to take its destiny in its own hands. However, this mainly regards the international promotion of the city. Considering social policies, the city still largely follows a more classical route towards social inclusion.

4 MODELLING POLICY INTENTIONS

We wanted, however, to go further than the descriptive. We therefore developed a model through which we could visualise qualitative information and which also enabled us to compare the positions of different cities to each other. This model is based on a questionnaire that describes the major shifts in policy making as observed in literature. This questionnaire was sent out to key policy-makers and political figures in the relevant fields. Most of the questions are based on the matrix of actually existing neoliberalism described by Brenner and Theodore (2002). We have chosen their model of analysis as our starting point for three different motivations: their analysis of neoliberalism as a process, as neoliberalisation, and not as (one out of many) stabilised institutional model; their observation that, because neoliberalisation is both path-dependent and contextually embedded, the most appropriate way to look at it is through a process of "creative destruction" – rather than a mere state-becomes-market analysis – and the most significant focus point the "actually existing neoliberalism"; and finally, due to their acknowledgement of cities as key arena's for neoliberalisation, the specific focus of their model on urban development. However, we have used Brenner and Theodore's model with certain reserves, while we have also extended their model with additional tools for analysis. The main reservation we have with the matrix as it is presented by Brenner and Theodore is that it is firmly based on ideological content. We wanted to present a model which is more ideologically neutral and starts from the process of policy making itself, therefore we had to strip it from its Marxian-Hegelian dialectic ordering. Second, we wanted also to go beyond the descriptive and corrective interpretation of Brenner and Theodore which only focuses on the processes of neoliberalisation. We wanted to extend the matrix with an analysis of policies which might not only compensate the weaknesses of the

neoliberal hegemonic discourse, but may also provide alternative paths for future developments. We based additions to the matrix on the White paper – City Republics and Grid Cities (2005). This book proposes several routes towards a more inclusive, participative and integrated form of urban development. By inserting these ideas into the questionnaire, we are also able to see whether cities are willing to generate alternative policies.

The questionnaire was elaborated along the following lines. Every question refers to the processes as described by Brenner and Theodore or the Witboek. Some questions are presented as likert¹ categories. They measure to which degree the intentions as expressed in the policy documents accord with a given postulate. Other questions reverse this system. The question itself has a general content, while the shift is described within the five possible answers, which then describe different possible phases. It is possible to analyse these seventy-six questions each individually, as they all reveal crucial information on the positioning of city's policies. However, since we seek to compare the different answers of cities to the described processes, comparing the questionnaire question by question does not take us any further than the qualitative descriptive we were already been able to make after the analysis of the policy documents. So, we scored each question from one to five, thus valuing the importance a city assigns to a certain issue. Then we grouped the questions in more general dimensions on several axes. In total we withheld twelve axes of (possible) policy intentions:

- a shift from universalistic policy measures to a more project-like approach;
- a trend to counter urban sprawl and attract new (middle class) inhabitants;
- a trend towards international imaging and manifestation;
- a trend to advance the economic aspect of urban development;
- a shift from welfare to workfare policies;
- a withdrawing of public authorities;
- a trend to create urban development coalitions;
- a trend to a more integral policy making;
- a trend to participatory democracy;
- a tendency to social inclusive policies;
- a tendency to social cohesive policies; and
- a tendency to glocal strategies.

Each of these dimensions is thus constituted as a mean of several questions representing smaller trends. We scaled these dimensions by projecting the mean of the scores on the different questions, to an axis. These axes are then presented as a web graph (see figure 1).

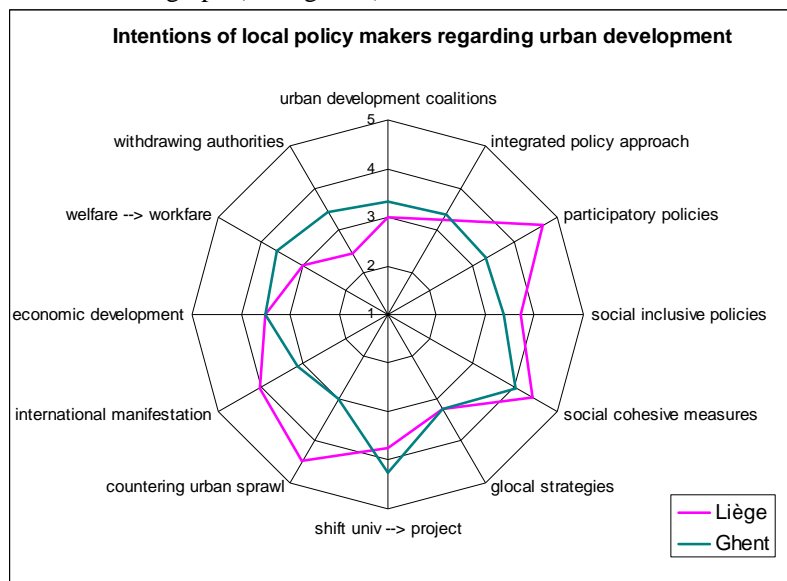


Figure 1

¹ Likert categories are a five-point scale, specifying the level of relevance of a question. For example: extremely important – important – rather important – little important – not important at all

On this web graph we grouped the dimensions in such a way that each half of the graph brings in two extra dimensions, namely the neoliberal shift as described by Brenner and Theodore on the one hand and the alternative pathways as laid out by the White Paper. In the figure, the axes at the left side are dimensions of this neoliberal shift: a withdrawing of public authorities, a shift from welfare to workfare policies, a preference for an economic approach to urban development, a international promotion policy and a policy for attracting (middle class) newcomers to the city. The axes on the right-hand side represent strategies for a more outbalanced urban development: an integrated policy approach, a participatory democracy, socially inclusive measures, as well as socially cohesive measures and finally a policy which tries to find a global strategy as an answer on the globalisation processes. Both dimensions in the middle are described in literature as part of the neoliberal strategies, but the White Paper assigns innovative capacities to them, depending on how they are dealt with. So, if a city has high scores on the different axes at the left side of the graph, it is further advanced in the shift towards neoliberal policy making. High scores on the axes on the right side of the graph indicate that a city placing more effort in providing with alternatives.

In the figure we have done this for our two case studies in Belgium, Ghent and Liège. The figure clearly indicates that –concerning policy intentions- Liège gives much more attention to social issues such as inclusion and cohesion. This difference in political priorities can be ascribed to the different level of social problems in both cities. The unemployment rates for example are respectively around 10% for Ghent and around 30% for Liège. Furthermore, the graph makes it easily detectable that Liège is focussing on international imaging and branding as its main strategy. It also raises the issue of countering urban sprawl much more than Ghent does. On the other hand, we see that Ghent puts much more emphasis on the axes concerning governance measures. The Flanders region has had an urban policy since 2000, whereas the Walloon region is considering only now whether it should have one. As a consequence, governance-like policy approaches, concomitant to urban development policies, have been followed by Flemish cities in an earlier stage.

In general, we can see that concerning the neoliberal policy approach, Ghent focuses more on those axes associated with its own role as public authority; withdrawing authorities; shifting from welfare to workfare, building urban coalitions. Liège on the other hand gives much more attention to its development as a city, its international place and its population evolution. Concerning the approaches that stretch more outbalanced development strategies, Ghent also thinks more in terms of its own role, focusing on integrated policy measures in combination with a shift to work with projects rather than having a more universalistic social policy on the one hand and coalition building on the other hand. Liège emphasises ‘traditional’ inclusion mechanisms more, which can be associated with a long socialist tradition.

5 CONCLUSIONS

We live in interesting times for local urban policy makers. Their cities become ever more independent players, entering a game that is ever more global and competitive. This sets their frame of action and the rules of the game, which are in the current economic model based upon the neoliberal system. In order to be able to stay in the economic race and even compete with other cities, they have no other option than to play by the rules set by this neoliberalistic frame, which involves creating an attractive place where investors are willing to settle hoping that this generates other development. It is now believed that government can not play the game on its own and is therefore in a constant search for partners to build a network of public and private bodies, as well as for a strategy in order to steer the development.

One can easily say that this game forces cities to become entrepreneurial, leaving them no alternative than inducing a neoliberal governance structure. However, one can also argue that the restructuring of power relation between cities and states also offers new opportunities for a more outbalanced development. Policy makers can search for complementarities with other cities and regions. They can search for development opportunities based on their city’s own resources. They can build coalitions including all layers of the population, shifting to a participatory democracy.

Along with the importance of the local context, the city’s own history and settings, this implies that the role of local actors constituting and steering urban coalitions is of great importance. Analysing the policy documents of two Belgian cities, Ghent and Liège, we can see enormous differences in the way local policy makers adapt to these schemes of neoliberal policies and governance approaches. Ghent has a tradition of

integrated planning, building urban coalitions, and so on. Therefore, its policy focuses much on its own role in the urban development. It rather tries to play a facilitating role than to develop policies itself. However, the urban coalitions are not purely orientated towards economic development. They put a strong emphasis on social and spatial inclusion. Liège, on the other hand, is still trying to overcome long years of decline, and is therefore more eager to apply the grand scale urban project methods. They leave much space for private development and large-scale urban projects. In a certain way, the city lacks good planning instruments and urban visionary for steering its development. But consequently, the city also feels an urge for focusing on compensatory social inclusive and cohesive measures.

We developed a model through which we can visualise these policy approaches. We think this model is a tool to present a qualitative analysis in a graphical way. It makes the interpretation of a descriptive analysis more legible. However, we should be aware of a few shortcomings. First, and most importantly, scoring the different questions and projecting them on axes, does not quantify the answers. It still is a qualitative piece of research, but represented in a graphical way. So it does not reveal an absolute positioning of the cities regarding the different shifts or trends. It is our opinion that it is almost impossible to construct a questionnaire that allows for an absolute interpretation of shifts and trends. To do so, one would have to compile an exhaustive list of all the small and differing changes in policy approaches. Even if one was successful in doing so, scaling all these questions on to an axis, may call for a weighing of the different questions since some might represent a major issue for a certain dimension while others are of less importance. This weighing seems to be an impossible task. So, the model does not allow for an absolute interpretation of the shift. However, it does allow us to compare different cities with each other in relative terms. The answers to the different questions reveal the importance a city gives to a certain trend. We can thus compare this valuing of the different dimensions.

Second, the model is not complete yet. We may still need to refine the way of scoring the answers and their scaling to the different axes. We might also try to use different axes.

Third, this model still starts from our interpretation of the policy intentions. In a second phase, we will ask the policy makers themselves to fill in the questionnaire.

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