

The Impact of Lifestyles on Housing in Flanders

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I. INTRODUCTION

This research deals with lifestyle factors as one of the triggers of housing migration and preferences (Feijten et al., 2008) and is related to the current societal debates on individualization, gentrification and polarization. The central hypothesis is that people have different lifestyles according to their residential environment. The aim is to introduce (data about) societal themes as segregation, safety and socio-spatial inequalities in the housing policy discourses.

II. METHODS AND RESULTS

A. Literature review

The concept of lifestyle has different roots and a wide range of meanings and uses (Cathelat, 1993; Heijs et al., 2009; Thorkild, 2006; Bell and Hollows, 2006). Lifestyles are indefinite with regard to the elements they cover, varying from behavior, to behavioral domains and to factors that influence behavior (Heijs et al., 2009). This research focuses on elements related to dwelling, covering behavior as well as influencing factors, clustered within four themes: economic status, openness, safety and ecology, assuming that these determine the housing choices nowadays in Flanders (Pisman, 2009).

B. Global lifestyle survey and case study

Since there are no data on lifestyle aspects available, the study involves a quantitative research methodology employing a structured questionnaire on lifestyle-aspects related to residential choice with a total sample of over 2000 residents. Within two urban and two suburban neighborhoods in the Ghent Region a representative sample is questioned on their

lifestyles and field analysis is conducted to analyze the morphological and functional pattern of the neighborhoods.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The interim findings suggest that urban and suburban residents have different lifestyles, leading to a social-spatial inequality and significant polarization between the urban centre and the suburban fringe. These differences were found to be more obvious for the behavior of the residents and less for the influencing factors (value patterns, attitudes). Economic status and safety seem to be important drivers.

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