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*Le bon endroit. Trouver des lieux pour la cocréation de logements temporaires à prix modéré grâce au projet pilote Solidary Mobile Housing*
*De juiste plek. Zoeken naar locaties voor de co-creatie van tijdelijke betaalbare woningen via het "Solidair Mobiel Wonen"-pilootproject*

**Aurelie De Smet, Burak Pak, Yves Schoonjans and Geraldine Bruyneel**

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

In order to see the figures in a better resolution, go to the article online and click on "Original" below it.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This research is an output of the joint co-create research project "Solidary Affordable Housing for the Houseless: A Mobile Model in the Brussels Capital Region" by the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, SAAMO Bruxelles, and CAW Brussel, funded by Innoviris (supervised by Prof. dr. Yves Schoonjans & Prof. dr. Burak Pak). It also includes findings from the research project "Proof of Concept for the Solidary Mobile Housing Co-Creation Model and the Realized Housing Prototype" by KU Leuven Faculty

of Architecture, funded by Innoviris (supervised by Prof. dr. Burak Pak & Prof. dr. Yves Schoonjans).

# 1. Introduction

1 Waiting spaces are built or unbuilt public or private sites that have been abandoned by the previous use(r) and are awaiting reallocation for a new use. [Faraone and Sarti, 2008; Studio Urban Catalyst, 2012; De Smet, 2013]. Either a new function has yet to be determined for these sites, or the realisation of an already defined future function has been delayed. The reasons behind the existence of waiting spaces can vary. They can be the result of fallout from lengthy planning processes, financial complications, or unexpected technical issues. However, these spaces always seem temporarily "out of use". During this idle time, these areas seem available and suitable for answering citizens' urgent unmet needs.

2 In this paper, we recount our experiences of finding a suitable location for the Solidary Mobile Housing Pilot Project. This venture was part of the Solidary Mobile Housing (SMH) project, an ongoing living lab project aimed at developing and testing a model for the co-creation of solidary living in mobile houses for homeless people on un(der)used urban spaces in the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR). Based on this experience and knowledge exchanges with key experts and field actors, we assess the possibilities and limitations of using un(der)used spaces to provide an immediate (although partial and short-term) answer to the current affordable housing crisis through the provision of temporary housing.

## 1.1. Temporary use of waiting spaces

3 In the first half of the 20$^{th}$ century, following the transformation from the industrial to the post-industrial era, cities in developed countries were confronted by leftover production spaces. The focus was initially on reintegrating these sites as quickly as possible in a planned and end-result oriented way. However, in the context of the economic recessions of the 1970s and early 2000s, researchers and practitioners became intrigued by the exciting activities and everyday practices taking place in urban waiting spaces, despite failing or stalling official redevelopment processes [Miessen and Cupers, 2002; Urban Unlimited *et al.*, 2004]. In search of cheaper or easier-to-realise solutions, the temporary use of un(der)used urban spaces became the subject of several publications in the fields of urbanism, urban planning, and urban management [Haydn and Temel, 2006; BBR, 2004, 2008 and 2012; Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2007]. Several authors studied and reported on how practices of temporary use can offer room for "informal" actors [Groth and Corijn, 2005] to experiment with alternative realities [aaa-PREPAV, 2007]. Interest too grew in how they could play a role in defining a more open, collaborative, responsive, and transversal approach to urban (re)development [Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007; Bishop and Williams, 2012; De Smet, 2013; De Smet and Van Reusel, 2017; Oswalt *et al.*, 2013]. It was also recognised that these un(der)used spaces could offer interesting opportunities for the bottom-up creation of collective spaces [Ferguson, 2014]. For this reason, in recent years, many cities began experimenting with the temporary use of waiting spaces as a tool for upgrading the city [Refill, 2018]. A great number of projects have emerged, with some actors seeing the

use of waiting spaces as an eminent opportunity to address unmet needs, such as the pressing demand for more and higher quality affordable housing.

## 1.2. The affordable housing crisis in the Brussels-Capital Region

4 The BCR faces severe social and economic challenges related to poverty and housing. The increasing number of households on the waiting list for social housing (48 804 in 2018) alone illustrates a lack of social housing where less than half (44,9 %) of the demand is currently met [Observatorium voor Gezondheid en Welzijn van Brussel-Hoofdstad, 2018]. Many BCR inhabitants are thus forced to turn to the private market, where rents are not adapted to their financial means [fonds.brussels, 2015]. Moreover, the overall number of homeless people has more than doubled (+ 142,2 %) between 2008 and 2018 [Quittelier and Bertrand, 2018: 23]. As a result, many citizens are living in unhealthy, overcrowded, and/or overly expensive housing, in homeless reception centres or on the streets. Due to a lack of alternatives, these people often feel they have little or no influence on their housing possibilities. As the housing market does not answer the needs of many inhabitants, the right to housing is currently not guaranteed within the BCR. In the context of the affordable housing crisis [Romainville, 2015], there is a clear need to develop alternative forms of housing that are better oriented to vulnerable people, especially those facing homelessness and housing insecurity.

5 In contrast with this qualitative and quantitative housing shortage, the BCR is simultaneously confronted by a considerable number of spaces waiting for redevelopment [GSSO, 2006; ADT/ATO, 2016]. These include large-scale sites – such as Weststation, Tour & Taxis and the canal zone – as well as many smaller areas dispersed across the Region. In a 2016 study, the BCR Territorial Development Agency identified several of these areas as suitable for temporary use until future projects are realised [ADT/ATO, 2016].

6 In this context, a variety of experimental initiatives have recently emerged that focus on temporary mobile/modular housing for vulnerable target groups [De Smet *et al.*, 2018a]. These fit within a tradition of temporary use projects in Brussels, and are taking place alongside existing or new temporary use initiatives centred on gardening (e.g. by Le début des haricots), culture and youth (e.g. by CityMine(d) and Toestand), collective living (e.g. by 123 Logements and FéBUL) or a mix of functions (e.g. by Communa), and more commercial initiatives such as vacancy management and pop-up businesses (e.g. by Lancelot or Entrakt) [De Smet, 2013].

## 1.3. Aims, methods, and research questions

7 This paper opens with a description of our experience in the context of finding a suitable temporary use location for the SMH Pilot Project. We then evaluate the methods and tools used, and the outcomes and challenges encountered over the course of this venture.

8 Based on knowledge exchanges with key experts[1] and field actors[2], we will also draw some general conclusions about the possibilities and limitations of using Brussels' un(der)used spaces to provide an immediate response the pressing affordable housing crisis. A series of questions confronted us: What are the conditions for using urban waiting spaces for temporary housing projects for vulnerable target groups? Which

legal and/or administrative thresholds are such projects encountering with respect to finding and gaining access to temporary use locations? Which actors can or should be involved?

# 2. The Solidary Mobile Housing (SMH) case

9 The SMH Pilot Project was initiated by SAAMO Brussel, a non-profit organisation focusing on community building; the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture; and Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk (CAW), a non-profit organisation providing individual support on general wellbeing. The initial assumptions behind SMH were drawn from SAAMO's previous experience with providing temporary housing for people in precarious situations; KU Leuven's ongoing research on participatory and inclusive design, temporary use of waiting spaces and alternative urban projects; and CAW's know-how on the guidance of homeless citizens.

10 The four main goals of the SMH project are to (1) develop a housing co-creation process focused on empowering the various stakeholders; (2) design a qualitative and affordable mobile and adaptable housing typology that can accommodate individual housing preferences as well as provide collective spaces; (3) elaborate methods and tools for strengthening small-scale solidarity networks, both between the participants and with the surrounding neighbourhood and (4) involve vulnerable citizens in discussions about the temporary use of urban waiting spaces.

11 To realise these aims, from 2017 until today, several partners have been working closely together in the SMH Living Lab.

## 2.1. Presentation of the SMH Living Lab

12 The stakeholders included in the SMH Living Lab are:

- eight future inhabitants: homeless people from the BCR who lost control over their housing situation;
- community workers from SAAMO Brussel;
- social workers from CAW Brussel;
- architect-researchers, lecturers, and students from the Faculty of Architecture of KU Leuven
- local and sub-local authorities (municipal administrations, social welfare services, the BCR's Housing and Urban Planning departments, and Service for Environment and Energy);
- several professionals within the BCR from offices and organisations including w-o-l-k-e, BC architects, Casablanco, Atelier Groot Eiland, and Sociale Innovatie;
- surrounding inhabitants and neighbourhood organisations.

13 From the outset of the project, these partners have been working together to co-create the SMH Model (as a housing co-creation method incorporating social guidance and skill-building methods and tools, a service-learning methodology, and preliminary financial and legal strategies as well as a modular and circular construction system) and, in parallel, co-realise the SMH Pilot Project. (Figures 1a and 1b).

Figure 1a. SMH Model

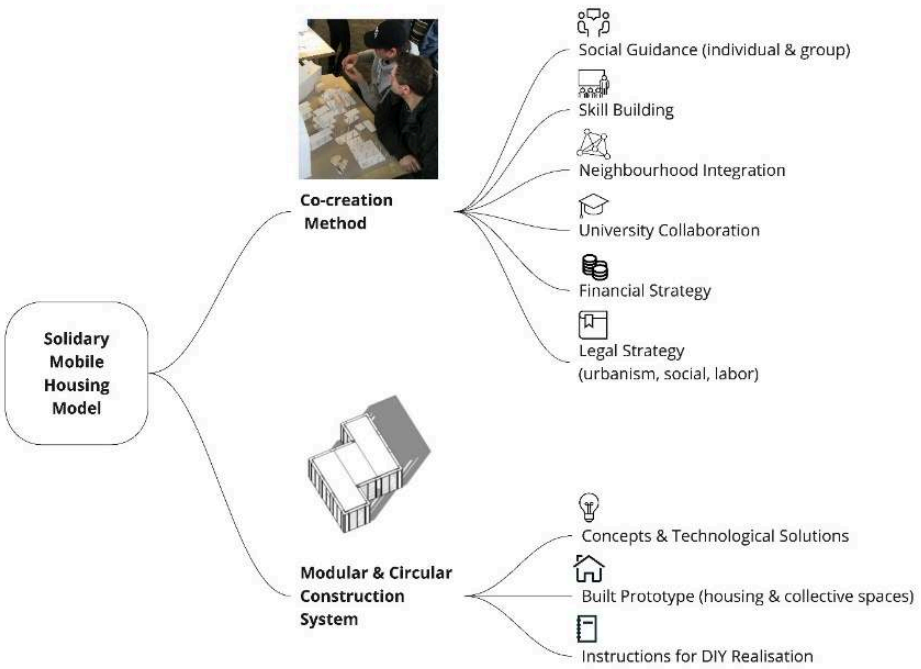


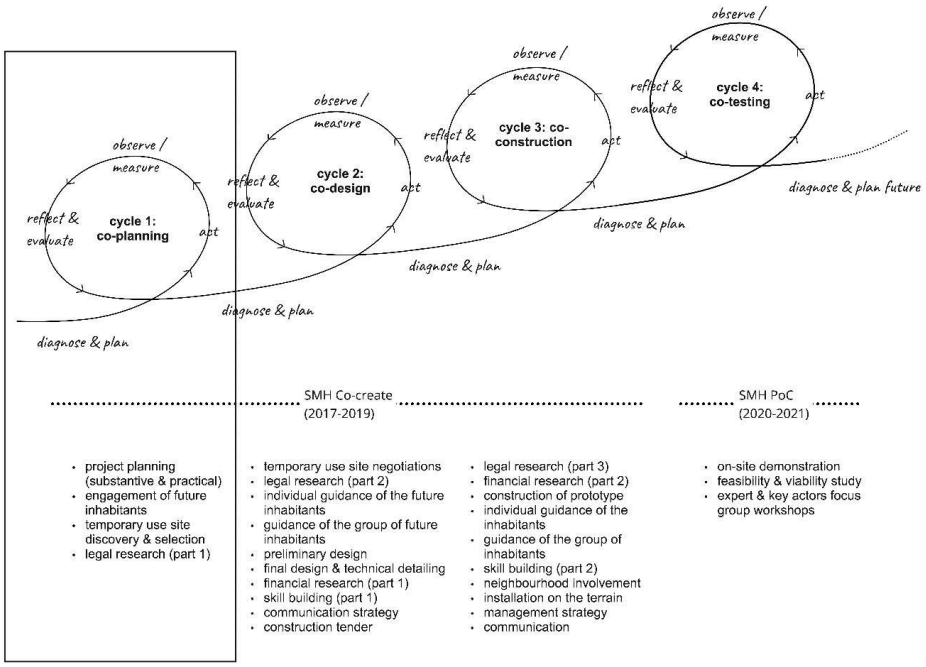

Figure 1b. SMH Pilot Project

Photos: Aurelie De Smet

14 Since the future inhabitants are homeless citizens, the notion of solidarity is central to the project. To promote social interaction and mutual help and support at different spatial scales and social strata, the SMH Pilot Project includes indoor and outdoor collective spaces to enable meaningful encounters between inhabitants, other project partners, and the neighbourhood.

15 The methodology employed in the SMH Living Lab consists of participatory action research [Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005]. Between 2017 and 2021, four main action research cycles took place, each with specific goals to be realised through smaller steps (Figure 2). The focus of this paper is on the location-finding process, which mainly took place in the first cycle: the co-planning phase.

**Figure 2. Schematic representation of the four big participatory action research cycles of the SMH project (2017-21)**




Schematic from Muir, 2017, adapted by the authors

16 To actively involve homeless end users in the SMH Living Lab, a future inhabitant engagement process was initiated at the start of the project (see Appendix 1 for a more detailed explanation). As a result, after a few months, a group of eight future inhabitants joined the project as full-fledged collaborators. Several participatory activities were organised during each cycle to facilitate their involvement in each step of the co-creation of their own houses. The openness of the action research approach enabled us to use different methods and tools adapted to the specific needs and wishes of the participants, and the particular goals of each of the research and development process stages, including semi-structured interviews, online surveys, photo-elicitation, timelining, collective site visits and study trips, co-design and construction workshops, participatory mapping, focus groups, co-design and co-construction workshops, and inclusive brainstorming and evaluation sessions. Throughout the project, the SMH Living Lab took different forms toward the goal of co-creating a learning environment

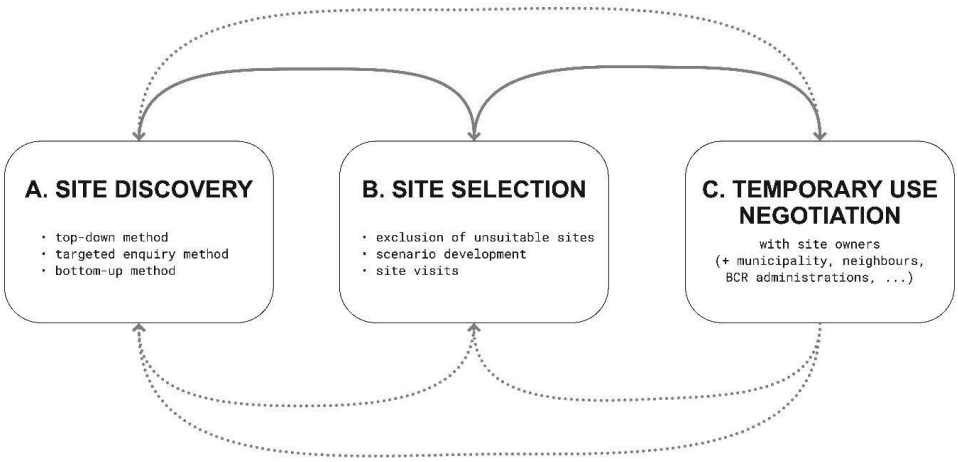
with all the partners, including the homeless future inhabitants, a stakeholder group that is usually not consulted and generally has little to say about their own housing situation.

17 The hypothesis behind the SMH Model is that, by taking part in every step of the housing co-creation process, homeless people not only regain control of their housing track but also on their whole life. To support this, the SMH Model includes intensive individual and group guidance, which, among other goals, aims to help participants transition to a more permanent housing solution while also allowing for the possibility of moving with the project from one site to another, if desired.

## 2.2. Description of the SMH approach to the discovery, selection, and negotiation of a temporary use site

18 The ambition was to locate SMH on sites that would fit the collectively determined criteria. Therefore, we needed to develop a co-creative method for: (1) identifying potential locations (site discovery); (2) selecting a suitable location (site selection); and (3) negotiating a temporary use agreement with the site owner.

Figure 3. SMH Pilot Project location process




19 These three aspects had to be developed simultaneously and in interaction (Figure 3). In what follows, we discuss each of these steps in more detail.

### 2.2.1. The site discovery process and the definition of site selection criteria

20 To discover potential locations for the Solidary Mobile Housing and collective space(s), we combined three methods. As one of the project's goals was to align with the BCR's current urban planning aims and strategies, we started with a "top down" approach, in which we obtained a list of potential sites from the Regional Planning Agency, perspective.brussels. This approach was combined with a "targeted enquiry", in which we invited institutional landowners like social housing companies, the Regional Development Agency, and the 19 municipalities to participate in our project by making un(der)used sites owned by them available to us. We contacted them through phone calls, face-to-face meetings, and/or written requests (letters). Finally, we

complemented this with a “bottom-up” approach executed by the project partners. This involved roaming the city to identify un(der)used sites, contacting field actors within our own networks, and scanning (social) media reports for location opportunities. Combining these three approaches yielded a longlist of approximately 200 “possible” sites.

21 To select one or more suitable locations from this longlist, we then needed to define a set of socio-spatial suitability criteria. To determine these, we studied criteria in the literature on affordable housing location methods [Ackerson, 2013; Aldrich and Crook, 2013; Jennings, 2012; Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, 2017]. This review revealed a significant number of – sometimes contradictory – approaches for determining the suitability of sites. For example, in their analysis of siting explanations, Aldrich and Crook [2013] note that besides technocratic reasons and political choices, social vulnerability and social capital also played an important role in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer siting after Hurricane Katrina. Another case study, that of the Affordable Housing Location Model developed by the Iowa City Planning and Community Development Department, the city attorney's office, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County puts a lot of stress on gauging elementary school diversity, as living conditions associated with poverty are seen as a barrier to student learning [Ackerson, 2013]. Another tool for place-based urban revitalisation strategies, the neighbourhood distress score, includes public safety variables in addition to housing, education, employment, poverty, and income levels [Jennings, 2012]. Finally, the Housing Suitability Model (HSM), developed by the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, and the GeoPlan Center, recognises that objectives can conflict with each other. As a result, the Shimberg Center points out that thoughtful siting of affordable housing requires more than just a consideration of land costs, and advocates that a multiplicity of criteria should be considered to find locations where affordable housing objectives would reinforce each other [2017]. This literature review made it clear to us that it would be impossible to develop an optimal (general and prescriptive) set of location selection criteria. Instead, a case-based, satisficing[3] solution was to be determined, one in which the search for alternatives was carried out until particular suitability and acceptability thresholds, determined in consultation with the future users, were met. Our next step was to organise a series of collaborative reflection sessions with all the project partners. In this way, we co-defined three types of location criteria for SMH: exclusion, ranking, and soft criteria (Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of collectively defined socio-spatial site selection criteria for SMH

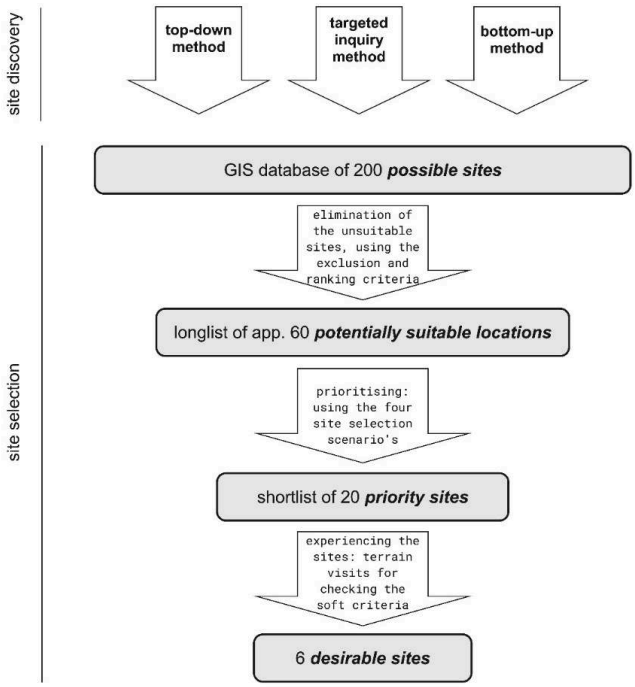
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **exclusion criteria** | absolute and determining (one cannot get around these) | quantitative | • pollution level (in our case we decided to allow category 1 and 2 sites, according to the soil condition inventory by the BCR Service for Environment and Energy; in some cases, category 3 sites may also be considered depending on the restrictions imposed in the inventory)<br>• flood risk (in our case we decided to only allow sites without risk, according to the flood hazard maps by BCR Service for Environment and Energy)<br>• land use category (in our case we decided only "housing" and "mixed use" areas, as defined in the BCR's Land Use Map, are suitable, as only for these can a building permit for a housing project be obtained) |
| **ranking criteria** | practical and satisficing[3] (one needs to find a balance between these) | quantitative<br><br>qualitative | • accessibility by public transport<br>• access to public green spaces<br>• proximity to facilities (shops, healthcare, and social services)<br>• socio-economic context (income level, unemployment, ethnic diversity)<br>• density of the area (inhabitants per $km^2$)<br>• surface of the site (minimum 500$m^2$ for 8 housing units)<br>• availability term<br>• anticipated level of cooperation from the municipality<br>• inclusion in an urban redevelopment scheme (e.g. a "neighbourhood contract" or "leverage zone") |
| **soft criteria** | relative and difficult to quantify<br>(one has to address those in the design) | qualitative | • liveliness/tranquillity of the site and its surroundings<br>• privacy/openness (towards public space and surrounding constructions)<br>• noise level<br>• spatial configuration of the terrain |

22 Because the project had just started, future user engagement was still in progress at that point. Therefore, the CAW and SAAMO social and community workers involved in the project were asked to bring in the end-user perspective based on their extensive experience working on housing issues with this target group.

### 2.2.2. The site selection process

23 Next, to filter for the most suitable sites for the project, together with a group of students from the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture[4], we developed a step-by-step, broad-to-narrow site selection method (Figure 4).

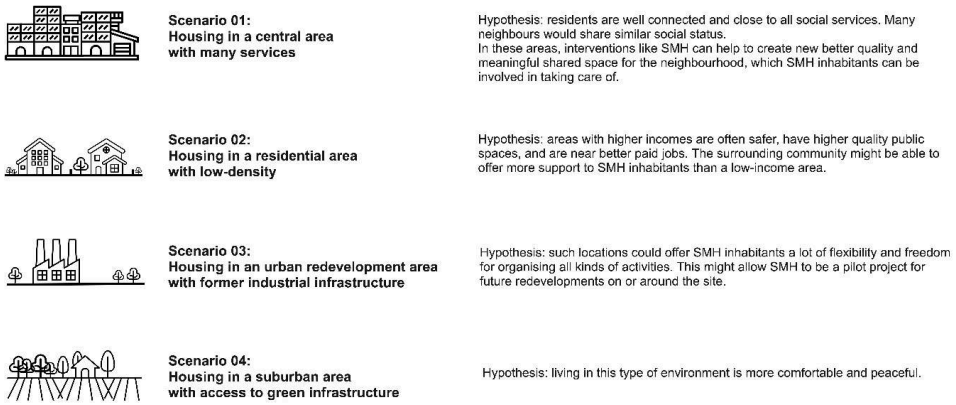
Figure 4. SMH step-by-step, broad-to-narrow site selection method




24 The first step involved applying the exclusion criteria to discard unsuitable sites. Sites that were polluted, at risk for flooding or characterised by a land use category for which a housing project could not be approved were thus eliminated, resulting in a list of approximately 60 "potentially suitable" locations. As this number was still too extensive, we needed to find a way to further filter and prioritise the sites using the ranking criteria.

25 As our literature review had taught us that we needed to use a case-based rather than a general and prescriptive method for site selection, we decided to adopt a scenario-based approach as the second step of the "broad-to-narrow" method. Working with KU Leuven architecture students, we first organised a partner workshop to develop a range of possible site selection scenarios drawn from our literature study of affordable housing location methods (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Possible site selection scenarios for the SMH Pilot Project




26 Next, we developed a survey for questioning potential future inhabitants in reception centres for homeless people as a means of getting direct feedback from them on the four scenarios. The survey consisted of three games[5] that were conceived to trigger a conversation to better understand future users' preferences. This tool was first tested by architecture students in a CAW-managed reception centre (Figure 6a, b and c). It was then optimised and handed over to SAAMO and CAW employees, who took it to six other BCR facilities for homeless people[6].

Figure 6. Photos of the potential future users survey developed with KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture students, SAAMO, and CAW

Photos: Aurelie De Smet

27 We then organised another partner workshop to collectively discuss the survey results. After this meeting, the students created a specific weighted site selection criterium scoring system for each scenario. This allowed us to further filter the remaining sites in a qualitative and systematic way. Using these scores, the top three sites for each scenario were selected. Additionally, by offsetting areas of pedestrian accessibility (5 minutes on foot) to supporting facilities such as shops, healthcare and social services, public green spaces, and public transport hubs, we created a "favourable areas" map. Based on this analysis, poorly served areas were re-evaluated. This process resulted in a shortlist of 16 "priority" sites. However, to increase our chances of identifying the best possible location, we also continued the "targeted enquiry" and/or "bottom-up" site discovery, repeating the filtering process described above for each newly discovered place. As a result, four more potentially suitable locations were added to the students' shortlist of priority sites.

28 Finally, as the third step in the "wide-to-narrow" site selection process, the suitability of the locations on the resulting shortlist of 20 "priority" sites was checked through collective visits. In this step, we focused on soft criteria. As the future inhabitant engagement process was completed around that period, eight future SMH inhabitants also joined these site visits on two out of three occasions. This allowed all the project partners to gather first-hand information on each other's ideas and feelings about the selected locations. Based on this, some sites were removed from the list, while others were put on a "to be investigated further" list[7]. This step led to a reduced shortlist of approximately six "desirable" sites.

Figure 7. SMH site visit 20.06.2017

Photos: Aurelie De Smet

29 As the final site selection would depend on the outcome of negotiations with the site owners, launching these discussions was the next step in the process.

### 2.2.3. Negotiation of a temporary use agreement

30 The goal of the negotiations with the owners was to obtain an agreement for the temporary use of one of the desirable sites. In this context, a site ID card was drawn up for each of the six sites that were still "in the running". These cards included all the relevant information gathered about the sites to that point, including the address, an aerial view and site photos, data on the available surface and eventual amenities, ownership information, data on the history and future plans, some neighbourhood information, and a site evaluation from the perspective of our project (Figure 8). These cards were regularly updated.

Figure 8. Example of a site ID card


31 Since the negotiations did not immediately provide an opportunity in the short term, the "targeted enquiry" and "bottom-up" site discovery were continued with all the project partners, including the future inhabitants. The filtering described above was repeated for any newly discovered sites. If a site turned out to be both suitable and desirable, it was added to the shortlist, and negotiations were started with the owner. Informal time limits were placed on negotiations for a specific site; if they did not yield results in a reasonable amount of time, the site was removed from the list.

### 2.2.4. Result: the SMH site in Jette

32 After several months of temporary use negotiations, we finally reached an agreement with the Jette municipality for the use of a site within the newly started urban redevelopment project, the "Magritte Neighbourhood Contract", which would be freely available to us for three years. This also led to our project's inclusion in this urban redevelopment scheme. The one constraint was that the municipal site would only become available the following year. However, we were able to close an agreement for the use of an adjacent plot owned by a cultural organisation for the interim period.

## 3. Conclusions

33 Based on the experiences described above and knowledge exchanges with key experts and field actors, we can now draw some conclusions about the methods and tools used, and the outcomes and challenges encountered in the context of the SMH Pilot Project. Moreover, we can also make some more general observations about the possibilities and limitations of using Brussels' un(der)used spaces to provide an immediate

(although partial and short-term) answer to the current affordable housing crisis through the provision of temporary housing on urban waiting spaces with and for vulnerable people.

## 3.1. Findings from the SMH location process

34 With respect to the overall site discovery and selection process, we are convinced that a mixed method approach, co-defining the selection criteria, scenario development, along with surveys and workshops, were satisficing, inclusive, and effective methods for meeting the needs and demands of the different project partners. For example, we noticed how future inhabitants started to develop place attachment even before the pilot project construction began. Although the SMH Model involves providing temporary housing on urban waiting spaces, this model by no means aims to hide away homeless people in a forgotten corner of the city. On the contrary, during the site discovery and selection process, we noticed how, in the context of SMH, waiting spaces are transformed into spaces of negotiation where people can claim their right to the city and move toward reaching their potential and achieving their aspirations. This became obvious during collective site visits, which allowed all the involved actors, including the future inhabitants, to engage in discussions on socio-spatial inclusion and the right to housing. Furthermore, the inclusion of the SMH Pilot Project in the Magritte Neighbourhood Contract later provided an interesting entry point for involvement in local networks.

35 Concerning the different site discovery methods, our experience with each of the three methods revealed constraints as well as benefits. The “top-down” approach, although rigorous and verifiable, has the downside of bringing no contact with the site owners until after the selection process. It was unclear from the start whether the owners would indeed be open to temporary use. Moreover, the efficiency of this approach depended on the quality and reliability of the available information (especially whether it was up to date). In contrast, the “targeted enquiry” allowed us to contact many people and present the project to them. A major drawback of this method was that it took a lot of time. The success of this approach ultimately depended on whether the “right” person could be identified within the institution or company, which was not always evident. Finally, the “bottom-up” approach, while offering the possibility of yielding very “hot off the press” information, required substantial time and effort, as we had to figure out everything ourselves, including finding answers to such questions as who is the owner? What is the term of vacancy? Are there any other projects already planned for the site? Furthermore, regarding the final site selection process, we clearly noticed the importance of physically visiting a site as opposed to exploring it virtually via digital maps or Google Street View.

36 Finally, we experienced that in practice the difficulty did not so much lie in finding and selecting a suitable temporary use location for the pilot project, but instead in getting an actual agreement for the temporary use of the desirable site. After we identified sites as suitable for temporary housing, we often found the owners unwilling to make them available for our project, despite support by two public agencies[8], and follow-up and management offered by two non-profit organisations and a university. As we will discuss below, the lack of a clear legal framework for temporary housing, which led to much uncertainty, was the main reason for this reticence to participate. The idea that

the redevelopment of the terrain would be able to start within the next two years, which often turned out to be an overly optimistic timeline, further complicated the next steps. One of the takeaways is that it probably would have been better to start negotiating with site owners earlier in the process. However, since we started with a very longlist of possible sites, this earlier engagement would have been quite complex. In the future, we plan to work toward negotiating more structural (formal and long-term) agreements for the temporary use of un(der)used sites owned for example by social housing companies, the Regional Development Agency, the Brussels Vicariate, and/or private project developers.

## 3.2. General conclusion

37 We can conclude that one of the first conditions for using Brussels' waiting spaces for temporary housing for vulnerable groups would be facilitating site discovery and selection. Although each of the 19 municipalities of the BCR is supposed to have an up-to-date list of vacant properties on their territory, most of them lack this information. No actual database of un(der)used urban spaces, not even of public terrains, is available. This makes finding suitable sites for temporary housing a very time- and energy-consuming activity.

38 Furthermore, as mentioned above, getting access to temporary use locations for housing was another critical threshold we encountered. Other actors share this experience. Although the BCR seems to support temporary use, including for housing – as the "Modular Housing Call" launched by the BCR State Secretary for Housing in 2018 infers – a clear operational framework is currently lacking. As a result, project organisers are, for the most part, operating in a legal grey zone. This seriously complicates the negotiation of agreements with site owners. Furthermore, it also inevitably has repercussions on the end users, as there is much confusion, for example, about the types of contracts to be made, the legal responsibilities of the involved parties, and the possibility for the inhabitants to officially register their residence on the sites.

39 During the SMH location-finding process, we also learned that our assumption that public owners would be more willing than private owners to open their sites for temporary use was incorrect. In our experience, public owners seemed to favour more "easygoing" (trendy, low risk, and even monetisable) types of use rather than socially oriented temporary housing projects. This might be a consequence of the delicate nature of this specific type of temporary use. In general, all site owners seemed wary that temporary housing residents might be hard to remove when they want to reclaim their terrain for other uses or development.

40 In conclusion, our research shows how temporary housing projects on urban waiting spaces can indeed offer room for "informal" actors to experiment with alternative solutions to current socio-spatial challenges. For however long the affordable housing crisis continues, it definitely seems worthwhile to further explore how temporary housing for vulnerable target groups could be structurally embedded in urban redevelopment schemes and how site owners could be motivated and better supported to make their un(der)used properties available for such projects.

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## APPENDIXES

**Appendix 1**

To actively involve homeless end users in the SMH Living Lab from the start, a future inhabitant engagement process was set up as soon as the Solidary Mobile Housing Co-creation project was approved.

The first step taken in this process was the drafting of a working text on how to form an inhabitant group by SAAMO and CAW. This text was then passed along to several stakeholders in the homeless sector (such as experts and professionals from various homeless organisations). This was followed by a series of group and/or individual reflection/feedback moments, based on which the text was adjusted several times. The inhabitant engagement criteria that were finally established through this collaborative process are: (1) the motivation(s) for joining the project (openness to guidance and interest in the training and collective and solidarity aspects of the project); (2) the individual capacities of the candidate (ability to participate in a three-year research and experimentation process); and (3) the composition of the group (diversity).

Furthermore, during consultations on the working text, the intake procedure to be followed was also discussed with stakeholders in the homeless sector. As a result, the following process was collectively agreed upon: in a first step, the project was presented to the users of several homeless organisations in Brussels. During this introduction, the project was thoroughly explained to and discussed with potentially interested candidates. To this aim, the project timeline was detailed as much as possible to ensure candidates would get a clear view on the planned steps and timing. An interactive potential user enquiry, developed in collaboration with students, researchers, and teachers in the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, was then used to facilitate dialogue on the potential candidates' housing aspirations and needs. Next, a brief reflection period was scheduled, during which time interested homeless people could submit their candidacy. After that, individual meetings were organised, in which the candidates' motivations for joining the project were discussed, and candidacy was confirmed.

The future inhabitant engagement process ended as soon as eight candidates were engaged.

**Appendix 2**

The members of the SMH Advisory Board are:

- Frederik Serroen, Brussels Bouwmeester Maitre Architecte team member
- Nicole Mondelaers, formerly working at La Strada
- Nicolas Bernard, UCLouvain professor, specialised in legal issues relating to temporary use of waiting spaces
- Yves Van De Casteele, housing advisor at perspective.brussels

- Pascal De Decker, KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture professor, specialised in social and affordable housing issues
- Leen Hellinckx, Odisee senior lecturer, specialised in practice-oriented research on social work
- Caroline Henrotay, engineer project manager at the Brussels Institute for Environmental Management
- Michaël de Bouw, expert at Buildwise

## NOTES

**1.** The knowledge exchange between experts primarily took place within the framework of the SMH Advisory Board (see Appendix 2), the members of which came together four times over the course of four years (2017-2020).

**2.** The knowledge exchange with the field actors occurred in several meetings. Amongst others, a focus group workshop was organised in the spring of 2021 with Habitat et Participation, Brusselse Bond voor het Recht op Wonen, and the five Brussels temporary housing projects, approved in the framework of the 2018 "Modular Housing Call" launched by the Brussels-Capital Region State Secretary for Housing, Céline Frémault (which are: Project Module by Infirmières de Rue; Home4Less, by L'Ilot; the Modulo by AIS St-Gilles and Diogènes; Woonbox by SAAMO Brussel; and Solidary Mobile Housing by SAAMO Brussel, the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and CAW Brussel).

**3.** Contraction of the adjectives "satisfying" and "sufficing", used to describe a decision-making strategy in which a choice is made that allows satisfaction at a specified level of need, without the need to be fully optimal [Simon, 1956].

**4.** This approach was elaborated in the framework of the elective course "Urban Projects, Collective Spaces & Local Identities", organized at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and coordinated by Burak Pak, Aurelie De Smet, Yves Schoonjans, Geraldine Bruyneel, Tineke Van Heesvelde, and Dieter Van Den Broeck.

**5.** Using housing environment visualisation, the first game investigated user preferences for the immediate surroundings of the housing units. The second game used icons for investigating desired amenities on the levels of individual housing, community, and the larger neighbourhood. The third game used a large-scale map of the BCR for investigating location preferences.

**6.** The facilities are: De Schutting and Puerto, two services for assisted living; Albatros, a reception centre for everyone; Talita, a reception centre for women; the Salvation Army in Bodegem, a reception house for men; and Woonbegeleiding, an assisted living service for young people.

**7.** During the following action research cycle, the co-design phase, the opportunities and risks of the sites on this list were explored in more depth with all the partners through participatory research-by-design [De Smet *et al.*, 2018b; 2021].

**8.** Innoviris, in the context of their Co-create program and the Brussels Housing Cabinet 2018-2021, in the context of their Call for Modular Housing Projects.

## ABSTRACTS

In recent years, many cities have begun experimenting with the temporary use of “waiting spaces” as a tool for upgrading the city. A variety of temporary initiatives have emerged. Some civil society organisations see this as an opportunity to address the pressing demand for more and higher quality affordable housing. But how does this work in practice? This paper describes and evaluates the location-finding process developed for the Solidary Mobile Housing Pilot Project, part of an ongoing participatory action research project for the co-creation of temporary housing on urban waiting spaces with and for homeless people. Based on this experience and knowledge exchanges with key experts and field actors, we are assessing the possibilities and limitations of using un(der)used spaces to provide an immediate (although partial and short-term) answer to the current affordable housing crisis through the provision of temporary housing with and for vulnerable people in the Brussels-Capital Region.

Ces dernières années, nombre de villes ont commencé à expérimenter l’usage temporaire d’« espaces en attente » comme moyen d’améliorer la ville. Diverses initiatives ponctuelles ont vu le jour. Certaines organisations de la société civile y voient une occasion de faire face à la nécessité urgente de disposer de logements à prix modéré plus nombreux et de meilleure qualité. Mais comment cela se passe-t-il en pratique ? Le présent article décrit et évalue le processus de recherche de lieux mis au point pour le projet pilote Solidary Mobile Housing ; celui-ci s’inscrit dans le cadre d’un projet de recherche-action participative en cours visant à cocréer avec les sans-abri des logements temporaires qui leur soient destinés dans les espaces urbains en attente. À partir de cette expérience et d’échanges de connaissances avec des spécialistes de premier plan et des acteurs de terrain, il s’agit d’examiner les possibilités et les limites de l’utilisation d’espaces inoccupés ou sous-exploités pour apporter une réponse immédiate (bien que partielle et à court terme) à la crise actuelle en matière de logements abordables en assurant la mise à disposition de logements temporaires, pour les personnes vulnérables et avec leur concours, dans la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.

Sinds een aantal jaar experimenteren heel wat steden met het tijdelijk gebruik van “pauzelandschappen” om de stad op te waarderen, wat leidde tot diverse tijdelijke initiatieven. Bepaalde maatschappelijke organisaties zien hierin een kans om de dringende vraag naar meer en kwaliteitsvollere betaalbare woningen aan te pakken. Maar hoe werkt dat in de praktijk? In dit artikel beschrijven en evalueren we het proces van het vinden van een locatie in het kader van het “Solidair Mobiel Wonen”-pilootproject, dat deel uitmaakt van een participatief actieonderzoeksproject rond de co-creatie van tijdelijke woningen voor thuislozen in stedelijke pauzelandschappen. Op basis van deze ervaring en de kennisuitwisseling met wetenschappelijke en terreinexperts bekijken we de mogelijkheden en beperkingen van het gebruik van on(der)gebruikte ruimten als snelle – maar weliswaar slechts gedeeltelijke – oplossing voor het huidige tekort aan betaalbare woningen door de co-creatie van tijdelijke huisvesting met en voor kwetsbare mensen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest.

## INDEX

**Subjects:** 7. aménagement du territoire – logement – mobilité
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**Keywords:** housing, municipalities, poverty, town planning, urban planning
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**Mots-clés:** logement, communes, pauvreté, urbanisme, planification urbaine

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Aurelie is fascinated by the influence people have on their environment and vice versa. Another common thread in her work is the interaction between “theory” and “practice”. Aurelie recently co-authored the book *Experiential Learning in Architectural Education: Design-build and Live Projects*, published with Routledge. Currently Aurelie is employed at the KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture as Service-learning coordinator. She also regularly participates in projects as an expert on “temporary use”, “transitional urban planning”, “socio-spatial resilience”, and “co-creation”.
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Burak is the founder of Altering Practices for Urban Inclusion Research Group. He supervised the Solidary Mobile Housing Project and served as researcher and professor at KU Leuven F.A. for 14 years. Co-creation is central to his critical practice integrating social design, education, and research. He supervised Networked Practices for Placemaking (EC-Creative Europe) and Incubators of Public Spaces (JPI-Urban Europe). He recently co-authored *Community-Engaged Learning: The Case of Altering Practices for Urban Inclusion.*
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Yves Schoonjans (Full professor, KU Leuven) conducts research in the domain of recent architectural/urban history and theory. The different research projects investigate how people and buildings relate to each other, how space is appropriated and local identities are formed in the social environment of urban life, tested out through real life and hands-on projects. Galán Fernandez, I., Schoonjans, Y. and Gantois, G., 2022. The regenerative force of depopulated settlements. Reclaiming rural heritage in Jánovas. In: *ANUARI d'Arquitectura i Societat*, 52-85
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Geraldine Bruyneel works for SAAMO Brussel, an NPO that focuses on empowering of vulnerable groups whilst working on fundamental rights, amongst others the right to decent housing. Geraldine’s main interest lies in helping to build innovative solutions to socially relevant problems by combining know-how from different fields and sharing the knowledge built through these projects. Currently, she is taking up the role of project coordinator of the Solidary Mobile Housing project.
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