



Centre for Research on Settlements and Urbanism

Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning

Journal homepage: <http://jssp.reviste.ubbcluj.ro>



Fordist Housing Behaviour in a Post-Fordist Context

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Keywords: *fordism, post-fordism, urban changes, young adults, housing behaviour, constraints, Belgian cities, Brussels*

ABSTRACT

As recent socio-demographic, economic and cultural changes affected and complicated the transition phase of youngsters to adulthood, it is particularly interesting to investigate in what way this affected their housing trajectories and changes the socio-spatial structure of cities. In the literature, two of such changes, gentrification and suburbanisation, are usually analysed separately. In this paper however, we explore these changes as alternatives for young adults and explain on what criteria youngsters may choose for one or the other in the case of the Brussels metropolitan area. The paper first details the spatial distribution of young adults and the households they live in. We then focus on the motivations and strategies young adults set up to approach their preferred place of living, taking the changing macro-social context into account. Our findings are young adults housing preferences didn't change that much compared to those of their parents and their place of living during their youth. Nevertheless, the changed context brought up new restrictions and difficulties, forcing specific groups of young adults to look for alternatives to their preferred place of living. Five new strategies emerge from this and explain the coexistence of gentrification and suburbanisation: *suburbanization in itself, living on a higher distance of the city centre, second-class (sub)urbanization, delay of independent living and postponement of ownership.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, Western countries have been confronted with a broad set of socio-demographic, economic and cultural changes. These changes came up with the transition from a fordist to a post-fordist society, but have been further expanded within this post-fordist society. As a result of those changes, the transition of youngsters to adulthood became more complicated in a sense that their transition processes to financial, familial and residential autonomy have become more diverse and more complex. Events such as leaving the parental home, graduating, entering the labour market, marriage, home-ownership etc. take place in a less linear and less predictable way for cohorts born after the mid-1960s – hence entering the labour and housing markets after 1980 [1], [2], [4]. Notwithstanding a generally higher

education level compared to their parents, young adults of the middle classes experience more problems in reaching this autonomy than the former generations [5], [6]. And for young adults from the lower social classes, gaining socio-economic and residential independency has become even more difficult, if not impossible [7], [8].

These transformations in youngsters' transition to adulthood coproduce changes in the socio-spatial structures of cities.

Whereas these transformations have been carefully looked at by sociologists and demographers, their spatial dimension is much less analyzed. Authors like Steinfürher, A., and Haase, A. (2007) mention the importance of the linkage between human processes and urban transformations, but the spatial imprints of contemporary changes in the transition to adulthood have been left largely unexplored [9].

With this article, we want to contribute to bridging this gap by exploring the spatial effects of the changing transitions of youngsters to adulthood after three decades of post-fordism.

More specifically, we wonder if there is something like an emergence of a post-fordist geography of young adults' households in Belgian cities?

To answer this question, we will shed light on how changes in youngster's life courses affect developments in central and suburban areas, as well as investigate the balance made by young adults between inner-city *versus* suburban residences under these changing conditions.

Accordingly, this article analyses dynamics of central neighbourhoods and suburban areas in an integrated way, while those elements are usually kept separate in literature [10].

The residential behaviour of young adults will be unravelled on the basis of the motivations they expressed for their choices, the constraints experienced by them and the strategies they set up to deal with those motivations and constraints.

The article builds on a two-sided hypothesis. On the one hand, it is expected that the new conditions affecting the transition to adulthood bring about a general reappraisal of the advantages of an inner city residence for young adults, hence fuelling gentrification or *re-urbanisation* processes in inner-city neighbourhoods [11].

On the other hand, since migration of young adults' households out of central cities toward the suburbs has not stopped, it likely produces new patterns of suburbanization.

Whereas suburbs are still attractive for young households, high housing prices and the characteristics of the housing stock inherited from decades of fordist suburbanization have made these zones less accessible.

The paper is divided in three parts. The first part briefly exposes the width of societal changes encapsulated by the fordist – post-fordist transition model in order to contextualize the spatial dimensions of this transition in the Belgian case.

In a second part, we detail the spatial distribution of young adults and their households in Belgian urban agglomerations.

This is done by setting up a household typology of young adults based on data of the socio-economic enquiry of 2001. The analysis focuses on the Brussels' case.

The third part explores the motivations and strategies young adults set up to approach their preferred place of living, taking the changing macro-social context into account.

This part is based on qualitative data resulting from street enquiries and semi-structured interviews that took place within the urban area of Brussels.

2. THEORY: FROM A FORDIST TO A POST-FORDIST SOCIETY: LET'S GO BACK TO THE CITY...OR NOT

2.1. Social changes

Belgium is a country in which fordist development has been both early and well regulated after World War II [12]. The gains of productivity improvement were divided between investment to secure further progress in productivity and wage increase. By channelling the former into mass production of sustainable consumer goods and the latter on their mass consumption, a virtual cycle was created to foster long term economic growth. Increasing suburbanization by an expanding middle class was the spatial expression of this growth model. Self-promoted owner-occupied housing was actively encouraged by the State. Stringent forms of spatial planning only appeared in the late 1960, and as a result owner occupation occurred on cheap land at the outskirts of the cities. In turn, this entailed auto mobility. Such a suburbanization process was impossible without a strong expansion of consumption credit and, at least for the middle and lower layers of the middle class, involving the women on the labour market in order to get a second income. This suburbanization became the spearhead of a new lifestyle and consumption pattern in which mechanization of household activities were very much welcomed.

The regulation of such a growth model, based on accumulation of sustainable consumer goods and involving long term consumption credit, in economic terms implied a full employment policy, job security and far-reaching social security in order to guarantee household incomes that could generate an increasing mass consumption. In socio-demographic terms, it was based on stable nuclear families, wanting to adopt the suburban lifestyle and able to invest and pay off their creditors within a generation's lifetime. In cultural terms, it implied the promotion of middle class, suburban, nuclear household centred, owner occupied housing model in which ownership is the ultimate goal [13]. Belgium was so successful in this that on the basis of the extension of middle and upper class suburbanization, it is probably the most American country in Europe [14].

This fordist accumulation regime came into crisis in the early 1970s. As much easy as it is to relate economic, socio-demographic and cultural dimensions to the fordist period, it is difficult to develop an explanatory framework for changes in these three dimensions in the transition to post-fordism and into the development of this new accumulation regime [15]. Nevertheless, empirical data certify deep changes. Some of these can be interpreted as a further deepening of some parts of the fordist dynamics, entailing disruption

of the fordist regulation logic; others appear as straightforward changes that relate to a new mode of economic growth and its regulation.

Socio-demographic changes are commonly presented under the “second demographic transition” paradigm. The second transition points to a general weakening of the nuclear family as an institution [16]. The process has led to a sharp rise in divorce and a diversification of household structures. During the last five decades, the number of divorces within the Belgian population rose from 7% in 1960 to 65% in 2009 (table 1). This leads to a further decline in fertility (from

2.6 in 1961 to 1.9 in 2008). Moreover, the second transition involves a shift in the age of leaving the parental home and new attitudes towards birth control, abortion and sexual behaviour.

These changes lead to a large increase in the share of small-sized non-family households (the share of singles grew from 17% in 1960 to 33% in 2004; the number of one-parent families from 5% in 1960 to 13% in 2004) (table 1) and a simultaneous decreasing importance of the type of family household which was the main vehicle of suburbanisation during post-war decades [17].

Table 1. Indicators showing the evolution from a fordist to a post-fordist society.

Indicators	Early '60s	Early '70s	Early '80s	Early '00s	Between 2004-2010
Socio-demographic:					
Divorces (%)	7	9	21	46	65
Fertility	2.6	2.2	1.5	1.7	1.9
Singles (%)	1	19	22	32	33
One parent families (%)	5	5	6	12	13
Cultural:					
Number of highly educated (%)	-	-	12	12	30
Economic:					
Employees in tertiary sector (%)	28	-	-	75	77

Sources: ADSEI 1960-2010; Studiedienst Vlaamse Regering 1960, Federaal Planbureau, 1960-2006.

Parallel to these socio-demographic changes, fundamental cultural and economic restructurings took place.

Cultural changes result amongst others of the increased education level of young adults. In 1987, 12% of the people of 15 years and older had a diploma of advanced studies. In 2010, this share rose to 30%. Culturally, it led towards the construction of a new experimental identification model in which youngsters have to create their own personality. Lifestyles have been reshaped by rising individualism [18]. Not the household, but the individual is considered as the economic unit of production and consumption [19].

Economic changes lead to a general liberalisation and privatisation of the labour market and a sharp rise of the service sector going from 28% in 1960 to 77% in 2006 [20]. Especially the urban regions benefit from those changes, due to a dense network of specialised services and a good accessibility.

Nevertheless, the increased flexibility, the weakness of social institutions and the crisis of the welfare state resulted in a growth of the number of precarious employment contracts and vulnerable positions on the labour market. This deepened the already existing social polarisation.

To compete with other regions, policy institutions are pressed to create an attractive political, social and fiscal framework by offering competing spaces,

a good infrastructure and a high qualitative housing stock at the urban scale. The latter results however in rising housing prices, leading in turn to further socio-spatial exclusion of incumbent and poorer inhabitants in gentrifying areas.

2.2. Spatial restructurings

In the 20th century, urbanisation has mostly developed through spatial de-concentration of people and activities, fuelling growth in suburban areas. This process of suburbanisation has been particularly outspoken in Belgium. The process lost a bit of its strength during the 1990s, but it recovered again since the turn of the century, be it under new circumstances. Although the fact that literature generally focuses on the urban processes that go together with post-fordism, the suburbanisation process may thus not be neglected.

Nevertheless, within the post-fordist story, different works have brought to the fore processes of rejuvenation in central urban neighbourhoods, often going hand in hand with dynamics of gentrification [21]. In this respect, an analysis of the 2001 census data on Belgian cities has brought out a particular cluster strongly associated with an inner-city residence, i.e. young adults, highly educated and living alone. Since this cluster was not relevant in 1991, this finding strongly suggests that the attractiveness of inner urban

areas as a place to live for young adults has been significantly raised during the 1990s. Besides economic advantages, particular reasons for their urban interest are related to the increased provision of multiple-use commercial and cultural facilities, the easy accessibility of high quality cultural events and the animation of community life and interactions [22].

The arrival of these new classes leads to new spatial dynamics. A typical Belgian process can be described as *rental gentrification* [23].

Young, high educated persons with a large cultural capital but (still) limited financial means establish in deprived neighbourhoods and bring about residential renovation. In cities like Brussels where the housing market mechanism is generally based on private renting (less than 10% of the housing stock consists of public housing) and where there is a complete lack of regulations on rent levels once a tenant leaves and a new lease is contracted, there is hardly a limit on rent increases.

This makes it very easy to upgrade the quality and pricing of their housing to meet the rising demand to housing by middle class youngsters or other newcomers [24]. Next to the increasing housing prices, the coming of new household types goes hand in hand with changes in the local supply of retail and services.

This all affects the living conditions and housing possibilities of the original, generally poorer inhabitants of the inner city. As a consequence, the latter are forced to look for alternative housing. The renovation process of central urban neighbourhoods goes thus hand in hand with social exclusion of the original vulnerable population groups of these areas.

According to Markusen, gentrification is in large part the result of the breakdown of the patriarchal household [25].

Thus, where Fordism was spatially translated by massive suburbanization of the middle class, post-fordist processes are linked to a renewed interest in the inner city by new household types [26]. As the longer the more households belong to one of those *new* household type, this declares the increasing interest in cities.

Authors like Mulder wonder if the tendency of households to stay in the city or to migrate to the city also grew during the last decade.

According to her it is particularly the period during which a household can be considered as a "new" household type which has increased. "*The combination of a decrease in the age at leaving home and an increase in the age at first childbirth had resulted in a lengthening of the period spent in an independent household without children. The proportion never ending up in a 'traditional' family is probably also growing. As a result, there is a growing number of people with a longer-term perspective on a childless period in the life course*" [27].

3. DISCUSSION: THE BRUSSELS' STORY

3.1. Brussels, pleased to meet you

With about 1,120,000 inhabitants within the Brussels Capital Region and another 700,000 inhabitants in the suburban areas in the provinces of Flemish or Walloon Brabant, Brussels is relatively small compared to other West-European cities. Nevertheless, its historical development combined with its status as the capital of Belgium and headquarters of major EU institutions make of the urban area an interesting case study.

From the 19th century onwards, the city centre is characterized by a remarkable socio-spatial contrast between the eastern and the western part. It was the bourgeoisie who settled down on the higher up and wooded eastern slopes of the Zenne river whereas the poorest inhabitants were located in the low-lying swampy western plane. Later on, in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the existing east-west contrast was further accentuated by the expansion of the residential areas in south eastern direction while industrial developments and the related working-class neighbourhoods were located in the west. In the second half of the 20th century, the residential character was further encouraged by the presence of the university and the coming of the core institutions of the European Union which led to an influx of high-skilled employees and high-income expatriates. At the same time, the worker areas in the west were attractive for worker migrants, first coming from Southern Europe, later from Turkey and Morocco and during the last decade completed with foreigners of other development countries. As there are in general the poorer migrants who came and live in these working-class areas, the socio-economic status of these neighbourhoods has always been low, even problematic. The inhabitants have to deal with a low education level, a high unemployment rate and problematic housing conditions, in a context of rising social inequalities.

Besides this inner city east-west contrast, Brussels is also polarized in a concentric way due to massive suburbanization processes. These processes have their origin in the 19th century when the Catholic bourgeoisie started leaving the unpleasant, unhealthy and working-class central neighbourhoods, but the bulk of the process only came after the Second World War and more specifically since the 1960s when rising income levels in a context of strong economic growth and (financial) support by the government gave the opportunity to a large fraction of the middle class to settle down in new residential suburbs. This way, Brussels evolved to an urban area where the poorest inhabitants are located in the inner city while the middle and higher social classes live in the residential suburban ring around the city.

In sum, one could state that during the last two centuries, Brussels changed from a rather small (nationalistic) capital city into an urban area with important international and cosmopolitan characteristics [28]. Nevertheless, this evolution went together with a growing socio-spatial polarization, both within the core city and between the city and its suburbs.

3.2. Young adults, where do they live within this post-fordist context?

As the data of the former paragraph show that Belgium has been affected by numerous social changes since the 1960s, we should ask ourselves in what way these changes might have affected a city like Brussels? To analyse the spatial effects, we analyse on the housing behaviour of *young adults* living in and around the capital city. The reason for focusing on this group is that it is by far the *most mobile population group* and this both on the residential, social, economic as cultural level.

Young adults are defined as being the age group between 18 and 34 years old. The minimum age (18 years) corresponds to the age of legal majority and to the end of compulsory attendance of school. It can thus be considered as the theoretical limit of youth. The maximum age (34 years) was selected arbitrarily but with the knowledge that this age is far above the

Belgian average age of a first marriage (28 years and 6 months for woman and 31 years and 1 months for men, [29]) as well as the age of getting a first child (28 years and 2 months for woman, [30]).

The spatial imprints of the housing behaviour of young adults are well summarized on figure 1.

This map is the result of a household typology that was set up for the five main urban areas of Belgium. The data set origins of the socio-economic enquiry of 2001 and is based on nine different household types in which the young adults live.

Next, these types were split up into three age groups, namely the 18 to 24 years old, the 25 to 29 years old and the 30 to 34 years old (table 1). By selecting these household types, at least 90% (or 5,526 persons) of the young adults living in one of the five main urban areas were taken into account.

Based on these 27 variables, eight different neighbourhood types were identified, which all have typical spatial, demographic and socio-economic characteristics. A description of each type is found in table 2 while their spatial distribution is shown on figure 1.

To facilitate the description below, we named each type according to its spatial characteristics. Within the context of this article, only the results of the Brussels urban area will be shown. For the results of the other urban areas, we refer to [31].

Table 2. Variables included in the household typology.

Category of parents and couple	Age 18 - 24	Age 25 - 29	Age 30 - 34
<i>Living with their parents</i>			
1. Student	13.4	0.3	0.0
2. Unemployed	2.5	0.9	0.3
3. Employed	7.0	4.4	1.9
4. Living alone	4.6	8.5	7.9
<i>Couple, without children</i>			
5. Cohabiting couple without children	1.8	3.7	2.3
6. Married couple without children	1.2	3.0	2.5
<i>Couple, with children</i>			
7. Cohabiting couple with children	0.7	1.7	2.7
8. Married couple with children	1.1	5.0	11.5
9. Single parent with children	0.4	1.0	1.8

When mapping the results of the household typology, a first significant result is that the spatial distribution of household types also reveals some clear socio-economic divisions within the city (fig. 1).

This is quite remarkable as, except for the working situation of the youngsters living with their parents, all the variables involved are purely demographic and do not refer directly to socio-economic differences. First of all, there is a clear difference in household structure between the suburbs

and the inner city (figures 1 and table 3). The *traditional periphery* (types 1 to 3) houses mainly classical middle and higher social class families. The area is characterized by a high share of highly educated (38% compared to a 32% for the sum of all neighbourhoods) married couples with children, generally owner of their house (60 to 70% compared to a total average of 50%). Besides, these neighbourhoods also count a numerous students or employed young adults who are still living with their parents.

The inner city on the contrary, counts a much more differentiated household structure (types 5 to 8).

What strikes the most is the large amount of singles (31% compared to 21% for the whole urban area) and compared to the suburbs, a higher share of one parent families (almost 4% compared to 3% for the

whole urban area). Furthermore, the additional variables indicate an important share of migrant families (an average of 37% compared to 24% for the total urban area) and not surprisingly, a preponderance of tenants (63% compared to 48% for the Brussels urban area).

Table 3. Overview of the household types, resulting from the household typology.

Neighbourhood type (% young adults)	Description neighbourhood type (overrepresentation compared to the total of 18 tot 34 years old)	Additional illustrative data		
		% highly educated	% tenants	% non Belgians
1 Recent suburban area (11.9)	Couples older than 25 years old, with or without children	37.3	36.5	10.0
2 Older suburban area (15.3)	Couples older than 30, with children			
	Employed youngsters older than 24, living with their parents	36.9	24.2	9.9
3 Suburban mixed type (10.0)	Students living with their parents			
	Employed youngsters, younger than 29, living with their parents	39.9	23.1	15.1
4 Suburban working class area(15.7)	Single mothers with children			
	Couples with children	28.8	44.2	14.0
	Employed youngsters, living with their parents			
5 Gentrification area (10.0)	Singles			
	Cohabiting couples without children	41.9	72.2	45.7
6 Sub-gentrification area (9.0)	Couples without children, older than 25			
	Couples with children, older than 30	41.6	56.5	26.4
	Married couples with children, younger than 29			
7 Tension zones (10.1)	Single mothers with children	27.5	64.9	33.4
	Singles			
	Cohabiting couples without children			
	Married couples with children younger than 29			
8 Urban working class area (18.0)	Unemployed youngsters, living with their parents	14.5	60.0	41.0
	Single mothers with children			
Total		32.5	47.7	26.2

Source: Socio-economic enquiry, 2001.

Within the city centre, the east-west contrast mentioned before also comes to the forth. The highly educated, wealthier young adults are located in the residential south eastern part of the city (types 5 and 6), while the low educated, unemployed young adults, often of foreign origin are concentrated in the former working-class areas in the western part of the city (type 8). Nevertheless, both the periphery as the inner city are more differentiated than that. As table 3 and figure 1 show, the suburbs are further subdivided in four neighbourhood types of which three of them only slightly differ from each other, namely the *recent suburban areas* (type 1), the *older suburban areas* (type 2) and the *suburban mixed type* (type 3). The

following paragraph will shortly discuss its mutual dissimilarities, but during the following analyses, these three types will be summarized together as the (traditional) *suburbs*. Considering the traditional suburban types, the internal differences are the most explicit between the *recent suburban areas* (type 1) and the *suburban mixed type* (type 3). Both spatially as regards to its household composition, the *older suburban areas* (type 2) can be interpreted as a transition zone between the two first types.

Recent suburban areas are mainly located at the outskirts of the urban area and has the highest share of young adults (37% compared to 23 and 24% for the other two types). It is the young adults in their late

thirties who count the largest share of the total population (9%). More than 30% of the young adults living in these neighbourhoods is part of a couple with children of which 20% is married (fig. 3). The education level is high (33% is highly educated) while the number of tenants is rather low (37%), though remarkable higher compared to the number of tenants living in an older suburban type or a suburban mixed type (respectively 24 and 23%). It are thus in particular the youngest middle class families who end up in the outer belts of the urban area. The suburban mixed type on the contrary, is mainly located in the first belt around the city. These neighbourhoods are typified by the presence of *older* families with children (about 20%). Besides, they house an important share of young adults (students (27%) or employed (23%)) still living with their parents. As far as the transitional *older suburban type* concerns, it is characterized by a preponderance of traditional families with children (almost 30%) and in a lesser degree of young adults still living with their parents (student (19%) or employed (21%)). Compared to the recent suburban areas, the number of 25 to 35 years old is a bit lower (12% compared to 15%), while the age group of 45 to 55 years old is better represented in this neighbourhood type (15% compared to 13%).

These areas mainly seem to house rather stable households of an older age and with more traditional household structures.

The fourth type, namely *suburban working class areas* (type 4) differs from the other three types, both considering its household composition as when looking at its socio-economic status. Almost 30% of the households consist of couples with children and there is an important share of employed youngsters living with their parents (15%).

Compared to the other suburban types, the number of singles (13%) and single parent families (4%) is high. Furthermore, as only 29% of the young adults living in this type is highly qualified and almost half of them (44%) are still renting, the social position of the inhabitants is generally weaker compared to their suburban counterparts.

Young adults belonging to this type do live in the suburbs, but rather in impoverished, former industrial areas. They are amongst others located near the canal Antwerp-Brussels-Charleroi which crosses the urban area from the north-north east to the south-south west.

Besides, this type is found in the south of the urban area, near former east-west oriented industrial sites along the Zenne valley. Having a look at the central neighbourhoods, the household typology brings out a particular cluster of inner city neighbourhoods strongly associated with residence of highly educated (42%) young adults living alone (50%).

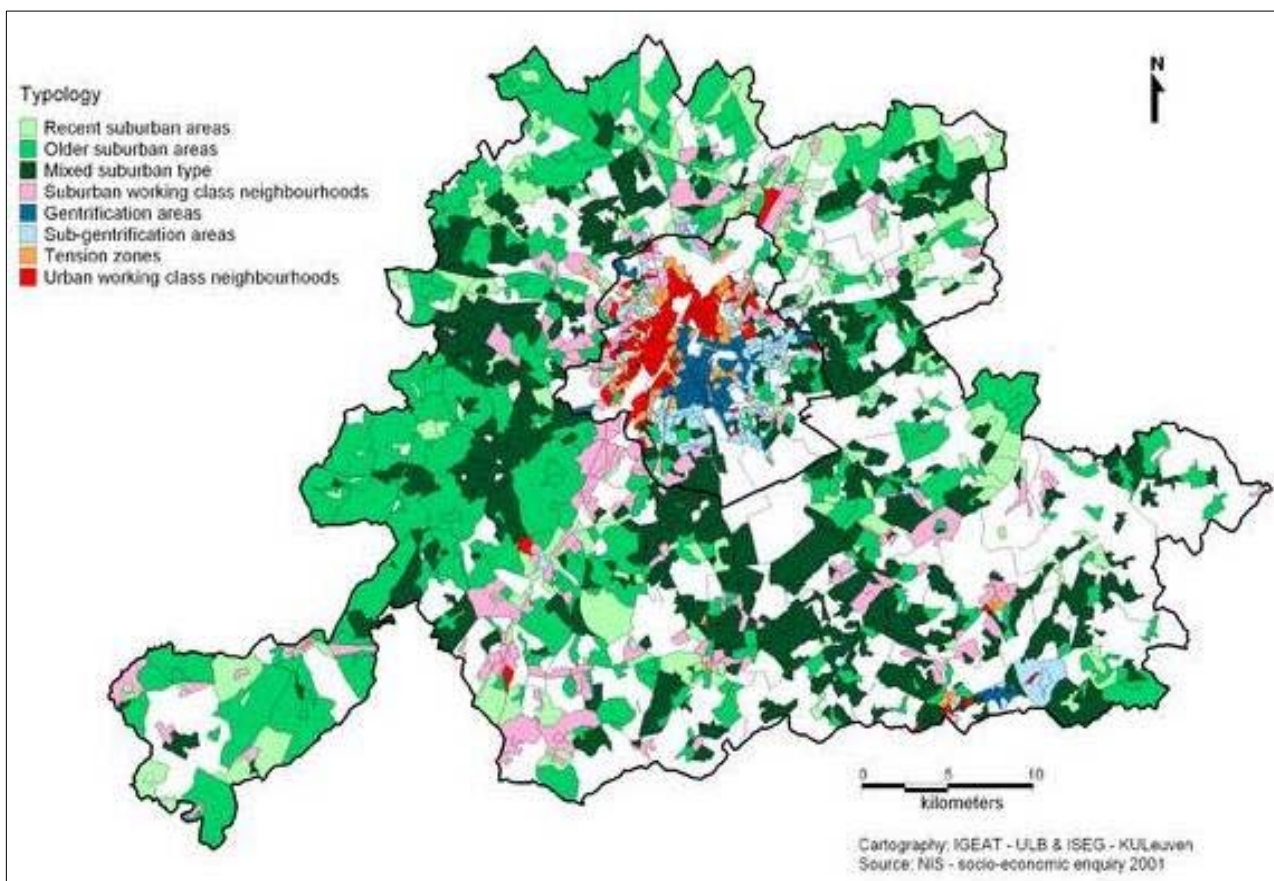


Fig. 1. Results of the household typology for the urban area of Brussels.

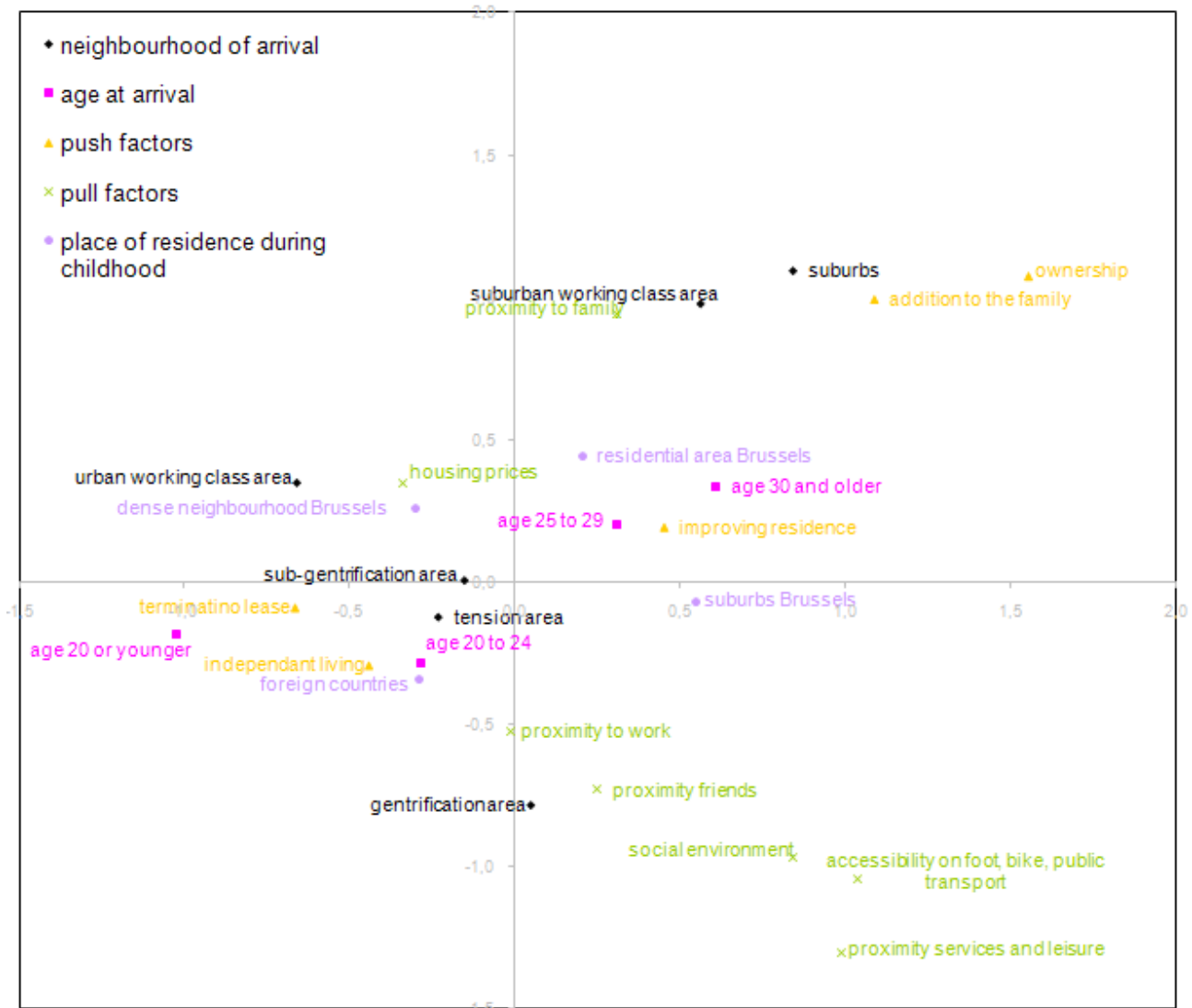


Fig. 2. Motives for choosing a certain place of residence.

These neighbourhoods can be described as a *gentrification area* and flow over in the so-called *sub-gentrification areas*. Spatially, this type is strongly concentrated in the more residential south eastern part of the inner city. Their concentration in the inner city indicates that autonomously living singles (and in a lesser degree couples without children (17%)) have a strong preference for an central urban living environment. This because of the presence of education facilities, a higher supply on the labour market and a large offer of cultural activities. Next to the gentrifiers, the city centre is occupied by a second important neighbourhood type described as *urban working class areas*. Young adults belonging to this type are concentrated in the densely built 19th century worker belts. Just as the gentrification areas, the group features a large share of foreigners (41%), often this time coming from development countries. As marriage is still a very common habit in non Western cultures, this declares the high number of married couples with children (23%). Besides, this neighbourhood type is

characterized by the highest share of unemployed persons still living with their parents (6% compared to an average of 4% for the total urban area). Gentrifiers and poor urban youngsters *meet* each other in the *tension zones*. Because of the intermediate position of this type, these neighbourhoods house a mixture of couples with (21%) or without children (16%), one parent families (5%) and singles (almost 30%). Due to the presence of both lower and higher social classes, these neighbourhoods probably have to contend with a strong pressure on the housing market. As housing prices are a bit lower here, wealthier couples are able to buy and renovate a house. As a result of these renovation processes, the areas have become unaffordable for the poorer households whereby they got socially excluded and are forced to move to less qualitative and more deprived areas within or outside the urban area of Brussels (for instance to worker areas nearby former coal basins and steel mills). Tension zone are also located at the outer edge of the poor urban youngsters zone. This appearance reflects the overflow

of migrants into former lower middle class areas which can be the result of the social exclusion processes that take place in the working class areas, amongst others due to gentrification. Nevertheless it may also be an indication of upwardly mobile families looking for improved housing conditions outside the most segregated working-class neighbourhoods.

Mapping the results show that, without taking into account socio-economic variables, there is a correspondence between the typology of young households on the one hand and the historical socio-spatial structures on the other hand. The geography of young adults forms clearly a reproduction of the historical socio-spatial structures of cities. But conversely, the appearance of tension zones, suburban mixed types and the presence of young suburban families in the outer belt of the urban area show that those socio-spatial structures are in turn influenced by the behaviour of young adults.

3.3. Reasons for moving

3.3.1. Introduction

Yet, the former analysis doesn't give direct information about the motivations and strategies that lie beneath the choice of a certain place of living. Do young adults have the same housing preferences as their parents and will they generally opt for a suburban living environment or do they consider the city as an equal place of living? Taking into account the motivations and restrictions young adults have to deal with nowadays, how do we have to interpret these gentrification and suburbanisation processes and how will they evolve in the near future?

The data used to answer these questions derive from a series of street enquiries and in-depth interviews conducted with young adults between 18 and 34 years old, living in the urban area of Brussels.

The neighbourhoods where the field work was done were selected so that all types of the household typology would be represented in the sample.

The selection of the respondents of the enquiry occurred arbitrary by accosting people on the street, in and around bars or cultural centres or on other public places. In sum, 1,262 young adults were questioned. Those who were willing to leave their contact addresses were called again one year later to ask for their cooperation for the in-depth interviews.

That way, 55 interviews were taken, spread out over the city centre and the suburbs. To enlarge the last sample, some additional respondents were contacted, starting by acquaintances of the researchers and further enlarged by the snowball effect. Finally, 68 respondents were willing to participate in the in-depth interview.

An overview of the number of respondents according to the neighbourhood type they live in is given in table 3. In sum, half of the respondents of the enquiries and interviews are living in the city centre with the highest number for the gentrification areas.

A quarter of the respondents of the enquiries and almost 40% of the respondents of the interviews are living in the suburbs of which the majority is living in one of the traditional suburban types.

With a share of almost 20%, the number of respondents with an unknown neighbourhood is not negligible but as the analyses are done in a qualitative way and as still more than 1,000 respondents can be taken into account, the results will bring up to some revealing conclusions.

Table 4. Number of enquiries and interviews according to neighbourhood type.

Neighbourhood type	Street enquiries		In-depth interviews	
	number of respondents (absolute values)	share of respondents (%)	number of respondents (absolute values)	share of respondents (%)
Recent suburban areas	64	5		
Older suburban areas	103	8	23	34
Mixed suburban type	43	3		
Suburban working class areas	101	8	2	3
sub-total : Suburbs	311	25	25	37
Gentrification areas	296	23	14	21
Sub-gentrification areas	60	5	4	6
Tension zones	174	14	12	18
Urban working class areas	183	15	5	7
sub-total : Inner city neighbourhoods	713	56	35	52
Neighbourhood unknown	238	19	8	12
Total	1,262	100	68	100

Nevertheless, by interpreting the results, one should be aware of the fact that the sample shows an distortion to higher educated young adults (table 5). At least 67% of the questioned young adults did some advanced studies, compared to 40% for all young adults living in the Brussels area. At the same time, there is an

underrepresentation of low educated people with only 6% young adults having a diploma of the lower secondary school while this share is about 16% for the Brussels urban area. Thus, the conclusions that will be made at the end are generally biased towards middle class young adults living outside the parental home.

Table 5. Education level of the respondents of the enquiry and of all persons between 18 and 34 years old of the urban area of Brussels.

Education level	Enquiry		Socio-economic enquiry 2001
	number	(%)	(%)
No answer	67	-	-
Lower secondary	65	5.5	16.3
Higher secondary	247	20.8	27.9
professional	59	5.0	9.5
Advanced education, short type	317	26.7	-
Advanced education, long type or university	431	36.3	-
Post-university	49	4.1	-
Total advanced education	797	67.2	40.0
Other professional education	18	-	-
Others	11	0.9	-

To find an answer on the question why young adults opt for a certain neighbourhood, the data set of the enquiries is analyzed by means of a multiple correspondence analyses (MCA), for this technique allows us to condense a vast ensemble of relations between rows and columns in a few principal dimensions. The rows in our dataset correspond to the places of arrival after a movement (e.g. first place of residence after leaving the parental home). Respondents were asked to list all their successive places of residence, starting with parental de-cohabitation. These places were coded according to our neighbourhood typology. As there was very limited differentiation between the answers of the three traditional suburban types, these are taken together as one type and summarized as the *suburbs*.

For each new place of residence, young adult's motivations for moving were coded in one of the following types: push factors to leave a former dwelling, pull factors of the new place of living, the age of arrival and the place of living during childhood.

As the first two dimensions brought out by the MCA represent almost 70% of the total inertia, only the results of these two dimensions will be discussed in the following paragraph.

3.3.2. Results

The results of the first two dimensions of the MCA are best shown by graph (figure 2). More

important than the units of the two axes, are the distances of each point to the centre of the graph (representing the average situation) and the distances between row cells and column cells. The further a point is located from the centre of the graph, the more atypical is its situation. Besides, the closer two points are located to each other, the more they are similar to each other.

Plotting the first two dimensions shows first of all that the age plays an important role in the choice of the place of residence. At an early age, minimizing the distance to work is often top priority. As most of the respondents found their job in the city, this is a first explanation why young adults choose for an urban living environment.

A second reason for preferring an urban place of living is linked to the advantages the city brings with. It not only reduces commuter traffic in time and distance, but it also offers a range of advantages like the availability of services and recreation facilities. Besides, people enjoy an extensive network of public transport which may postpone the purchase of a (second) car.

Finally, lots of respondents have created a strong circle of friends during their studies. To maintain these relationships once they entered the labour market, young adults prefer to live nearby the place where they stayed during their education period. Compared to the older generations, this period of urban living prolonged with one or two

years and seems to end on average around the age of 26 years old (age on which the migration balance of the inner city of Brussels turns into negative values, period 2005-2007).

Nevertheless, when getting older, the nature of migration triggers. Where the first migration movements are strongly linked to the proximity of work and a general preference for an urban living environment, the following movements are rather argued by the household career on the one hand or the housing career on the other hand. Once people are getting older and have created some familial and professional stability, middle class young adults seem to exchange this post-fordist behaviour for a fordist life style. since the beginning of the 1990s, the period of creating this stability prolonged on average with one or two years

In their search for a new place of residence, they don't look for urban advantages anymore. Priority goes rather out to ownership, improvement of the housing quality, looking for a suitable place for children to grow up and if possible looking for a place of residence near the family. Housing trajectories of young adults are thus still closely related to the fordist migration pattern of their parents.

Besides gentrifiers, young adults who might prefer an urban living environment (even on a later age) are on the one hand youngsters who grew up in the city and prefer to keep on living nearby their family. On the other hand, the city centre is housed by less wealthy persons or households who (for that reason) are blocked in the cheapest central worker areas. Those vulnerable population classes get but few chances on the housing market. Forced migrations because of termination lease are no exception and the most important criteria in their search for a new place to live is its financial affordability.

3.3.3. An eventful journey: looking for alternatives

At first sight, it seems that middle class young adults seem to succeed in reconstructing their housing career the way they want to. After graduating, they spend another few years in the inner city to enjoy the rich life of the city and to build up a professional and familial career.

Once they want to settle down and think about getting children, lots of them exchange the central neighbourhoods for the suburbs.

Nevertheless, a closer look to the story behind the trajectories indicates that setting up a housing career these days is quite an eventful journey. Most of the young adults that were interviewed, experience several tensions by setting up their housing career and most of them had to do one or more concessions to approach their preferred place of residence.

The way young adults deal with the experienced constraints, differs one to another but in general, five different strategies can be distinguished, namely *suburbanization in itself, settlement on a longer distance from the city centre, second class (sub)urbanization, postponement of ownership and delay or interruption of independent living.*

The first two strategies namely *suburbanization in itself* and *settlement on a longer distance from the city centre* are, as the descriptions already mention, suburban of nature. In general, the suburbs are characterized by residential courses that are still strongly influenced by the social referents of the fordist period.

The ideal of marriage, procreation and the ideal of home-ownership are still very widespread within the inhabitants in these zones. Such families are but seldom willing to make concessions on the housing or property type, so if concessions have to be made, it will be on the location of the residence. The following lady told for example that she and her husband actually preferred an urban environment, but as the offer of single family dwellings within the city is rather low compared to the suburbs and therefore prices are impossibly high (fig. 3), they move to the suburbs.

"We choose Meise (municipality located in the first suburban belt) because of its location. Actually, we wanted to stay in Brussels, but we didn't find anything affordable. Where we lived before, there were very nice residences, but those were too expensive.

So we expanded our region in northern direction along the A12 and in eastern direction, almost till Leuven. Going so far wasn't interesting because of the distance to Brussels, but in that case the housing prices are decreasing. The further you go from Brussels, the lower the price so we had to compromise a bit" (woman, 32 years old, Wolvertem (Meise), owner, university, couple with children).

Other families have a suburban housing preference anyhow, but preferably as close to the city as possible. As housing prices are the highest in the first belt and decreasing by the distance to the inner city (fig. 3), lots of young families end up one or two municipalities further than preferred because housing prices are a bit lower here.

This strategy is what we summarize as 'settlement on a longer distance from the city.

Spatially, this process is mostly related to the *recent suburban areas* which are mainly found at the outskirts of the urban area.

"I think that lots of young adults are leaving Meise and Wolvertem because of the housing prices. Many friends of my move to Londerzeel and Merchtem which is just one municipality further. Nevertheless, prices are also rising over there, so then they move to Opwijk, that's again a municipality further" (man, 31

years old, Meise, higher secondary education, private rent, couple with child).

Young adults who prefer a suburban place of living, but refuse to give up on a certain location or on the distance to the city centre, seek their way in what we describe as *second class suburbanization*. For that reason, some of them will make concessions on the type or quality of the dwelling, the size or presence of a garden, etc:

"We were forced to make some concessions concerning the size of the dwelling. It is a row house on a very limited ground, no terrace, no garden. Those are concessions but we realized that if we wanted to live in this neighbourhood, we were forced to make one or another concession. If you don't want to make concessions considering the size of the dwelling, you have to heighten up the price but that is much more difficult. We had a certain amount which we couldn't exceed so then the choice is limited" (man, 30 years old, higher education short type, owner, couple without children).

Others, often less wealthier people, will move to less attractive impoverished areas, marked by deindustrialisation. On they are most related to the "suburban working-class areas". Furthermore, this *second class suburbanization process* also has an urban equivalent. Higher or middle class young adults like the person of the following quote, who prefer an urban

living environment, might end up in less attractive tension zones or working class areas instead of the preferred but much more expensive gentrification or sub-gentrification areas (fig. 3).

"When we were looking to buy a house, we realized that the prizes in our preferred neighbourhoods were unaffordable. So we're living in Anderlecht now, where houses are reasonably priced and which is still close to the city centre" (woman, age unknown, higher education short type, owner, couple without children).

Postponement of ownership is a strategy which is often applied in central neighbourhoods, though within the sample, there are some exceptions of young adults renting in the suburbs. Especially neighbourhoods liable to gentrification are characterized by a strong rotation of the young adults within the private rental market.

If, initially this establishment can be a choice *to live its youth*, its prolongation within the framework of the private rental market can be the result of space blockings related to the real estate prices downtown and in the suburbs.

Thus, becoming owner being impossible or implying too large sacrifices (purchase in the remote periphery ...), these young adults become captive of areas where they live a pleasant but forced transition phase.

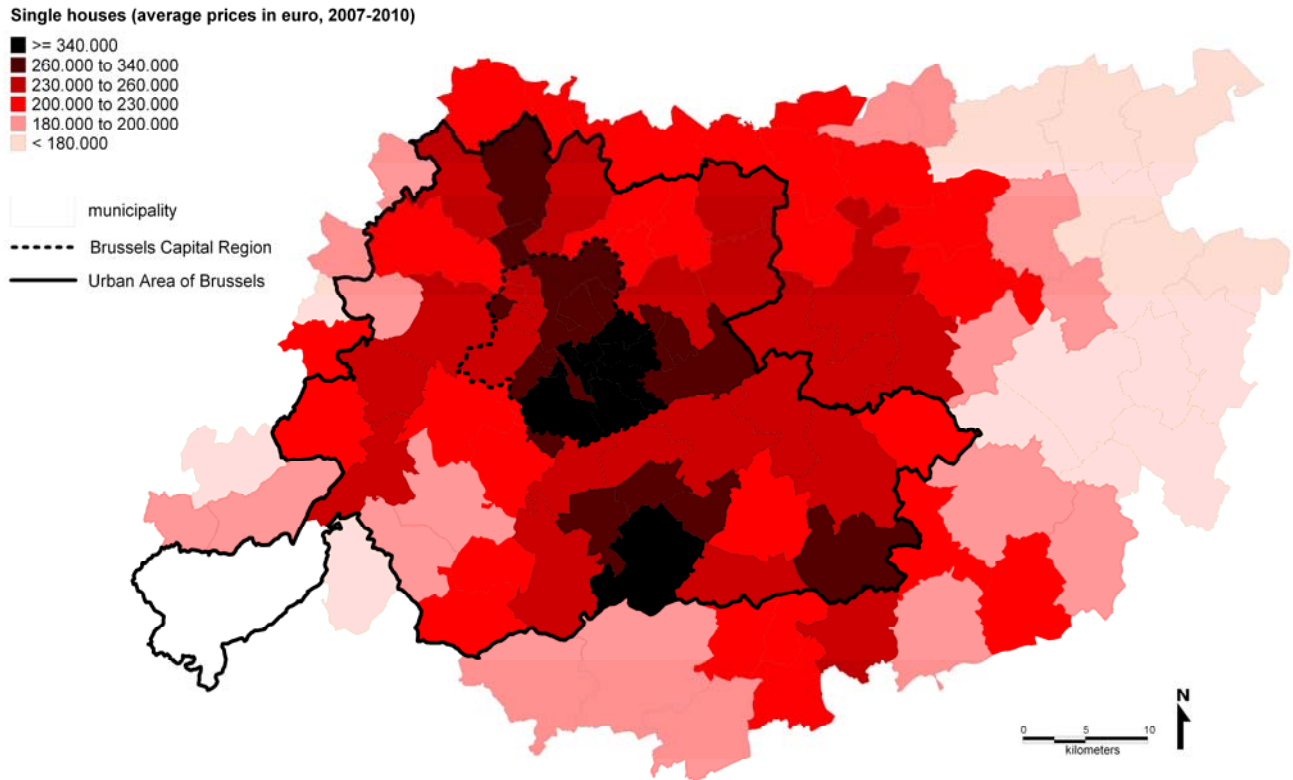


Fig. 3. Average prices (in euro) of single dwellings (period 2007-2010).

"When we wanted to leave Leuven to move closer to family, we already considered to buy

something because, renting ... on a certain moment, it is a waste of money. So I already started searching for

a house at that moment and I kept on looking during the three years we live here” (woman, 26 years old, Vlezenbeek (Sint-Pieters-Leeuw), higher education short type, private rent, couple without children).

Finally, a last strategy or alternative is what we call *delay or interruption of independent living*. This strategy has several faces and takes place both in the suburbs as in the city centre. In the suburbs, it is a typical strategy of young adults who grew up in the very residential *suburban mixed type*. It considers young adults, mostly singles, who want to avoid the financial and practical difficulties which go together with independent living and rather prefer the residential and luxurious dwelling of the parents.

“The main reason for keep on living with my parents is financial and second, my parents also supported to stay at home. They said it is better to save first in expectation of buying something within a few years. Besides, I would only be there to sleep, to eat and to clean so then there would be no leisure time left” (man, 24 years old, Dilbeek, professional education, living with his parents, single).

Within the city centre, the *urban working class areas* are characterized by an important share of young adults who are still living with their parents as well. Nevertheless, compared to its suburban counterpart, these neighbourhoods count a large share of unemployed young adults. The reason of keep on living in the parental home is therefore not one of a strategic choice, but rather one of an absolute necessity. Due to the difficulties they experience on the labour market and the high housing prices elsewhere in Brussels (fig. 3), they lack the financial means to supply in their own housing. Even if they finally manage to leave the parental home, they are often forced to look for housing in similar neighbourhoods. Lots of young adults who grew up in these neighbourhoods are thus also blocked up there at a later age.

Breaking up a relationship or the combination of being a single and falling into a situation of unemployment or uncertainty on the labour market might force young adults to interrupt their independent living and move in with their parents again. Usually, it is a short term solution. Once the respective person is put back on the rail, (s)he will leave the parental home and continue his/her independent housing career.

“And then suddenly, my partner said that he didn't want to move out. As I had a interim contract at that time and it could be ended from one day to another, I didn't want to rent something on my own. So I went living with my mother again” (woman, Lebbeke, university, owner, LAT relation).

4. CONCLUSIONS

During the last 30 years, the development of a flexible economy and the introduction of a post-modernist life style with an emphasis on individualism

has a strong influence on the labour market and the continued existence of relationships and family formation. Those restructuring also have a spatial effect. Especially at a younger age, young adults who build up their housing career during post-Fordism rather seem to have an urban housing preference and the average period of urban living has prolonged with a couple of years. Nevertheless, renting is often considered as a necessary but adverse stage in the housing trajectory.

Within the same (uncertain and unstable) context, the house means a kind of shelter for young adults. This can be deduced from the fact that due to increasing problems on entering the labour market and the development of new ideologies that made the housing trajectories of young adults more complex and longer, the purchase of a dwelling is still the ultimate goal for young adults of all social classes. Ownership is regarded as a way of improving their housing conditions.

Nevertheless, the second demographic transition led to a strong increase of the number of vulnerable household types as single person households and one parent families for whom the access to owner-occupied property is financially very difficult or even impossible.

During their search for private property both in the city centre as in the suburbs, young adults are confronted more than ever to a range of spatial constraints. Thus, to meet these difficulties, they need to look for alternatives and set up some new strategies to comply with their wishes. It seems that, during post-Fordism, suburbanization keeps on going on, be it under new circumstances due to the constraints they experience by chasing their ultimate dream of living. Based on this study, we distinguish five residential strategies that bring about a specific type of suburbanization.

A first strategy is the *suburbanization process in itself*. It concerns young adults who actually prefer a urban living environment, but as their priority goes out in finding a single family dwelling with a private garden, they are forced to exchange the city for the suburbs in order to escape the prohibitive prices within the city centre.

A second strategy concerns the *settlement on a higher distance of the city centre* to escape the incredible high housing prices of the inner belts. Young adults are forced to move one or two municipalities further than the one they prefer. This however, can bring along organisational and financial difficulties, especially regarding commuter traffic. By the establishment on a higher distance of town, commuting increases in time and may force the household to buy a second car.

A third strategy can be defined as *second-class (sub)urbanisation* and can take two shapes. First, people choose for a (sub)urban housing place but due to

financial limitations, they end up in rather impoverished and unattractive neighbourhoods characterized by lost industrial activities. Secondly, young adults go and live in the municipality or neighbourhood they prefer, but lose to size or quality of the dwelling (smaller garden, less bedrooms ...).

The fourth strategy can be described as *postponement of ownership*. It considers young adults who settle down in the neighbourhoods or municipality they prefer, but who opt for a rented house in expectation of ownership. Nevertheless, those who aren't capable to buy a house later on, will be left behind within the rental market.

The fifth strategy in conclusion, is what we call *delay or interruption of independent living* and encloses two opposite profiles of young adults. In the suburbs, it considers young adults who grew up in a residential environment and who opt freely to continue living with their parents to avoid the difficulties of living independently. In the city centre on the contrary, it considers rather low educated, unemployed young adults, often of foreign origin who keep on living with their parents. The problems they experience on the labour markets also reflects in a lack of possibilities on the housing market. Due to insufficient financial means, some of them are forced to keep on living with their parents.

The independent housing trajectory might also be interrupted temporarily, for instance during periods of unemployment or after breaking up a relationship.

The fact that middle class young adults generally have to make some concessions in their way of finding a place to live, brings along some important social consequences. On the one hand, it raises the demand within the cheaper housing market but without an increase of the supply. This leads to a general increase of the real estate prices as a result of which ownership by the middle and lower social classes is very difficult and almost impossible.

On the other hand, the lowest social classes are not only confronted with social exclusion on the sale market, but also with an increasing pressure on the rental market. Those groups do not only have problems on entering the sale market, but on entering the housing market in general. Therefore, low educated young adults with a weak position on the labour market are often forced to keep on living with their parents. Those who choose to leave the parental home anyhow, are often obliged to leave town and to settle down in deprived neighbourhoods outside the urban area.

In general, the article shows that the housing behaviour of young adults is still largely affected by the long existing spatial effects of social processes as there is the classical suburbanization process. Nevertheless, due to new conditions during their transition to adulthood, the housing trajectories seem to affect the urban space.

They bring about new structures within the urban structure and this both in the city centre (gentrification) as in the suburbs by setting up new types of suburbanization. There where Fordism went together with the rise of the classical suburbanization processes, it seems that there effectively is something like a post-fordist geography of young adults' households.

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