

# HARNESSING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH URBAN INDICATORS: MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE IN FLEMISH CITIES.

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## ABSTRACT

*Knowledge about all kinds of domains of the urban life is constantly growing. In this paper we explain how we used the 'co-design approach' to harness all that knowledge into indicators about the quality of urban life. This harnessing process has three phases: 1) vision building process about the quality of urban life (on the basis of the concepts of liveability and sustainability), 2) selecting appropriate indicators and 3) data management. This co-design method has two innovative characteristics. First of all, the indicators were constructed on the basis of a normative vision. Secondly, those indicators were being developed with the participation of about two hundred experts, coming from city governments and other administrations, civil society (NGO's) and academic world. In sum, the Flemish city monitor is a measuring and learning instrument to be used in policy-debate.*

## KEYWORDS

Flemish city monitor – vision on urban liveability and sustainability – indicators about the quality of urban life – participatory design – evidence based policy learning

## 1. INDICATORS FOR HARNESSING URBAN KNOWLEDGE

Indicators are gaining ground, may be because knowledge about all kinds of domains of the urban society is constantly growing. Management and policy indicators are the most popular ones in Flemish local governments. It is only since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a complementary attention was paid towards **state analysis and monitoring**. From international comparisons we know that state monitoring has not developed sufficiently in Flemish cities and towns (Bouckaert, a.o., 2003). Latest years, foreign and international research result in comparable figures and indicators about European cities. That seems to

be the case in the 'Urban Audit' (EC, 2007), 'State of the English cities' (ODPM, 2006), 'De staat van de stad' (Kenniscentrum Grote Steden, 2003), study on demographical evolutions in European cities (Turok a.o., 2007), etc. A British research project on urban information systems concluded: 'There is a widening sea of data but, in comparison, a desert of information' (May, Mitchell, a.o., 1998).

We should be aware of the fact that there are different kinds of indicators for different purposes: management indicators (on input, process, performance, output, etc.), policy indicators (outcome, impact, distance to target, etc.) and state indicators (objective, subjective, etc.). Only in recent years Flemish city governments are taking their first steps in systematic information management. This evolution pays tribute to the popularity of the SWOT-analysis, the efforts of the Research Department of the Flemish Government (formerly known as 'Administration on Planning and Statistics) and the project on city monitoring itself (APS, 2004). Mapping out the external societal reality is clearly gaining ground. Driving forces in modernisation of city organisations not only need management and policy information, but also state information. The Antwerp city government e.g. is actually working with a scheme, which integrates the complementary information on management, policy and state processes (Deraedt a.o., 2006). In table 1 we also see that these complementary processes can be monitored by different kind of indicators, i.e. management, policy and state indicators. So, performance indicators serve as management tool and are used to improve the efficiency of the activities. Policy indicators rather focus on policy impact and the effectiveness of a policy. State indicators assess the actual state of the external society. This scheme shows the distinction between different kinds of indicators and is thus a basis for correct interpretation and debate on urban knowledge.

**Table 1:** SPMI-scheme and monitoring

Parts	1. State	2. Policy	3. Management
Core question to be answered	How do households, companies and visitors get along in the city ?	Do we supply the right services to households, companies and visitors in the city?	Do we supply services in the right way?
Main elements of the answer	State of the city's households, companies and visitors	Results of a city government	Results of departments of a city government
Object to be monitored	<b>State</b> of the city as a result of activities of many actors	<b>Effectiveness</b> in delivering services, also by customers	<b>Efficiency</b> in producing services
Indicators	<i>State indicators</i>	<i>Policy indicators</i>	<i>Management indicators</i>

Source: CSD (Ghent University) based on a scheme of the City Authority of Antwerp

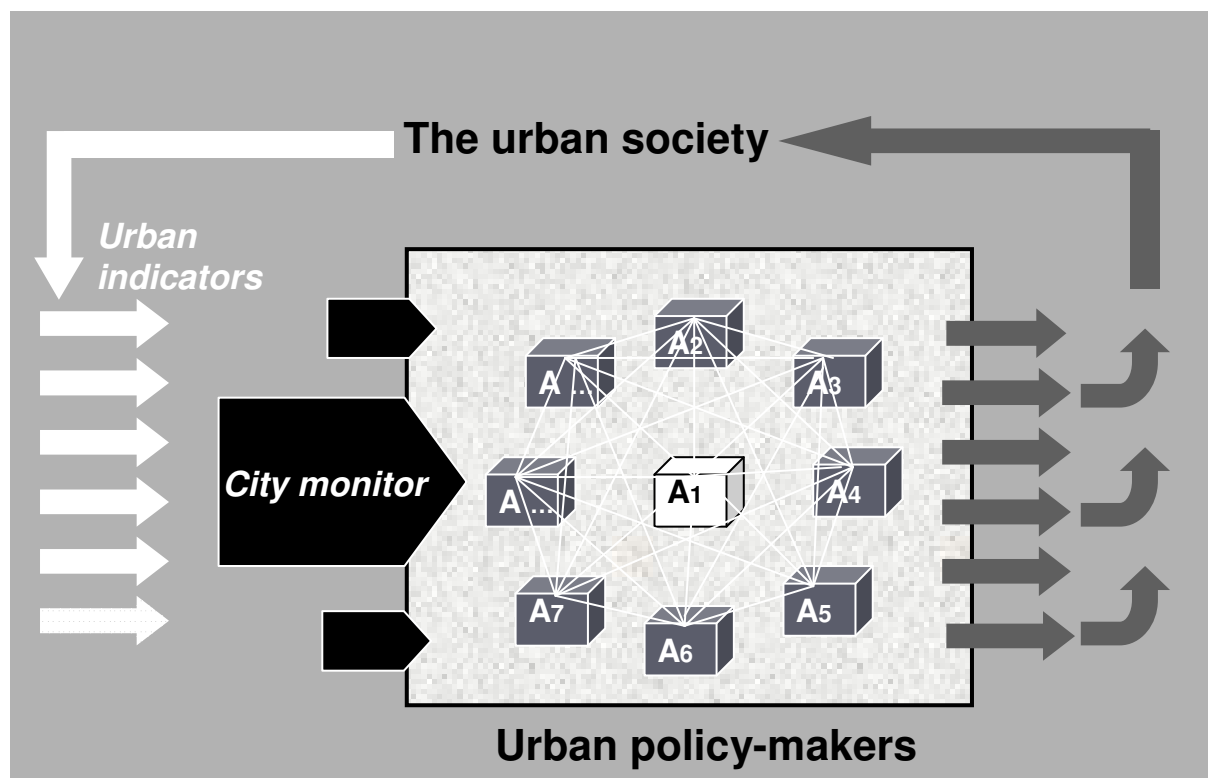
## 2. QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS FEED THE POLICY DEBATE

The Flemish city monitor is a policy instrument with a triple function: measuring, learning and communicating. The city monitor 2006 contains about 200 **state indicators**, describing the situation of the urban society in the Flemish Region. They are showing the evolutions of the urban actors and factors, which are relevant for a vision on the future of those Flemish cities. Each indicator itself contains data about objective or subjective aspects of urban life. According to data-experts they are on the top of the information pyramid, which is based on the processing of data (Hammond, 1995). By collecting data on phenomena in the urban society, the urban indicators are **measuring** the state of the city. They are a basis for a state analysis of the quality of life of urban citizens.

At the same time, the city monitor is an instrument for **policy learning**. Each indicator provides feedback on the evolution of a multitude of phenomena, which can be easily interpreted as positive or negative in relation to the quality of the urban daily life in Flemish cities. That kind of feedback makes it possible that a city, as a collection of urban actors, can learn about itself. Indicators are synthetic and representative reproductions of a bigger and more complex set of phenomena. In that sense they simplify the communication about urban problems and their evolutions. These indicators are the result of a process of participatory design, which make them reliable for communication to a broad public. In that sense the city monitor is **helping the communication** between local government and actors in the civil society. Measuring, learning and

communication are vital activities for urban policy-makers. In that sense, urban indicators play a key role in a policy to increase the quality of life for the Flemish urban citizens.

***Scheme 1:*** Urban indicators within the relation between urban society and urban policy-makers



Source: CSD (Ghent University)

The objective of the city monitor is to provide better support for the strategic policy of all policy-makers who are involved in urban development (in scheme 1, those actors are indicated with A2, A3, etc.) The set of about 200 indicators is therefore designed to align the planning and policy programmes. In view of the fact that it is a learning instrument at the “strategic level”<sup>1</sup>, it is quite obvious that the city monitor is meant in the first place for **policy debates** about the main policy directions with multiple policy-makers. For this project, the ambitions of the city government are at the centre (in scheme 1, the city authority is indicated with A1). After all, the city authorities play a special role in the community of urban policy-makers: they are the legitimate representatives of public interest, of the previous, current and future generations of citizens in the city.

<sup>1</sup> The city monitor maintains a wide focus (across policy domains) and is geared towards the future (medium term: 5-10 years, and long term: 10-20 years).

The city monitor is located on the input side of the urban governance system (see policy field with urban policy-makers in scheme 1). The outputs (actions and services of the various actors) affect the reality of the urban society and their combined impact (the effects of all outputs) influences its state. Changes in the state of the urban society should be captured by one or more state indicators of the city monitor. Those indicators are subsequently a new input for the urban governance system and in particular for the city authority. The city monitor therefore measures the outcome of actions of many actors in the urban context. These actors can be situated at different levels outside the city, e.g. the impact of actions by the central governments, private companies, individual behaviour at household level, etc.

### **3. THE CO-DESIGN OF LIVEABILITY INDICATORS**

We used the co-design method to develop the liveability indicators for cities in the Flemish region. The main objective of this approach was to determine the vision on a liveable and sustainable Flemish city and the indicators to measure the quality of life in those Flemish cities. It took three phases to develop those indicators. (See scheme 2: Design of indicators) The participation of all stakeholders, the 13 major Flemish city organisations in the first place, was crucial in every phase.

***Scheme 2:** Participatory design of liveability indicators*

*(see annex 1)*

#### ***3.1 Unravelling concepts of liveability and sustainability***

To analyze the state and the progress of cities, an analytical framework can be useful. On the World Forum on measuring the progress of societies in Istanbul last year, the OECD supports governments to define their own concept of progress for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (OECD, 2007). The study on the state of the English cities e.g. draws on the concept of ‘city competitiveness’ (Hutchins, 2004). In New Zealand – to give another example – the 8 major cities are monitored on the basis of the concept of ‘the quality of life’ (Gatt, 2003). Our approach resembled the ‘10 principles of Bellagio’ that constitute guidelines for measuring sustainability, design of sustainability indicators, the interpretation of those indicators in the light of a vision on sustainability and the communication of trends, shown by the indicators. (Hardi, Zdan, 1997).

So, the Flemish city monitor is based on the concept of ‘sustainability’. Ever since the Bruntland report<sup>2</sup> and the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992), the concept of **sustainable development** has gained enormous global momentum. However, the concept also gives rise to many different interpretations. Our interpretation aligns with international literature and focuses on intra-generational and inter-generational justice. In other words, sustainability relates to the satisfaction of needs of current generations, i.e. of all people who are alive today - the poor as well as the rich, in the North and in the South alike. However, the generations to come are also entitled to quality of life and this means the carrying capacity of the earth must not be exceeded. In its translation by the world of politics, sustainability has been complemented by a strong emphasis on participation and the quality of government. In sustainability research, the aforementioned focus points are often<sup>3</sup> translated in economic, social, physical-ecological and institutional pillars or principles.

There are a lot of similarities between the concepts of **liveability** and sustainability, so e.g. both pay attention to needs, satisfaction of needs, justice or solidarity with the poor and quality of the living environment. At the same time there is a difference. Liveability stresses the short term, while sustainability counts for the long term. By using both concepts as a basis for this city monitor, we are taking into account most of the relevant aspects of the quality of urban life: needs satisfaction, social justice, quality of living environment. For all of those aspects we both look for the long and short term.

So, to end up with a city monitor, we first developed a vision for a liveable and sustainable Flemish city. We decided to combine the 4 regular sustainability principles with the activities that you can find in a city. These activities or activity domains are closely related both to policy domains and to the quality of urban life. As such, we interrelate activities with economic, social, physical-ecological and institutional principles on the one hand, and principles with activities on the other hand. This was done in the so-called **vision matrix**. The rows contain 8 activity domains, i.e. living, learning and education, working and enterprise, safety and protection, care and social welfare, culture and free time, transportation and mobility, nature and the environment. The columns contain the 4 major principles of sustainability. In the cells of the matrix, where the columns and rows cross, the concerns are indicated according to a principle in

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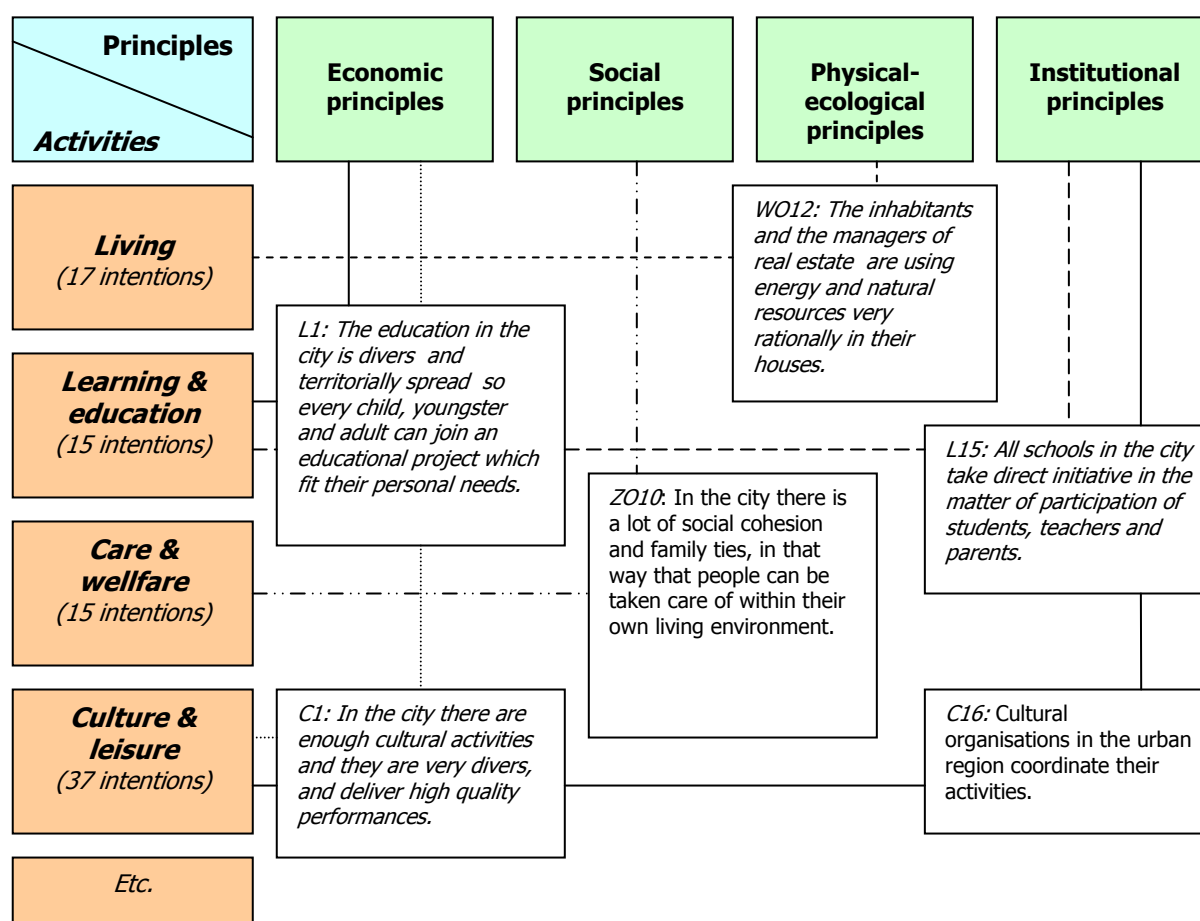
<sup>2</sup> WCED, *Our Common Future*, United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press, London, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> For example, at the UN CSD (United Nations - Commission for Sustainable Development), the German Wuppertal Institute and the International Centre for Integrative Studies (ICIS) in Maastricht.

an activity domain. These are called “intentions”: what should happen or be present in a liveable and sustainable city.

Scheme 3 illustrates how the vision matrix combines rows and columns. The vision matrix is of course not limited to these 6 examples. In total, about 175 intentions or objectives were formulated<sup>4</sup>, spread across the 8 activity domains and the 4 principles. These intentions are not, by any means, meant to be judged in their own right. The intentions must nearly always be seen in combination with other intentions from the relevant activity domain or principle. In many cases, combinations need to be made with (groups of) intentions from the other activity domains and/or principles.

**Scheme 3:** A diagram of the vision matrix using 6 examples



<sup>4</sup> BLOCK, T ; VAN ASSCHE, J ; VANDEWIELE, D ; DE RYNCK, F ; REYNAERT, H., (2008), The City Monitor for Liveable and Sustainable Flemish Cities. 2006 Edition. Urban Policy of the Flemish Government, 2008, published on the website of our centre: <http://www.cdo.ugent.be/publicatiesthema2.html>

Throughout the design of the vision matrix, we did not let ourselves be obstructed by operational details and obstructions regarding validity and data availability. We concentrated on sketching the general outline of a liveable and sustainable Flemish city in the future. Although it was not easy, it was never our intention to avoid reality. On the contrary, we wanted to investigate the uncertainty of the future and the complex, hybrid urban reality as well as possible. To do so, we could make use of the 18 preliminary studies which were developed at the heart of the Task Force for the Flemish Urban Policy. These preliminary studies led to the **white paper on urban policy** “The century of the city. On city republics and network cities”.<sup>5</sup> These studies about all essential activities in the city provide a good overview of the urban problems and potential in the Flanders Region.

Moreover, the city monitor is not a theoretically deductive product, but rather an inductive product designed by field experts. We wanted to give the city monitor a firm and practical support. The design process for the city monitor involved hundreds of “experts” on a continual basis. The first version of the vision matrix, in its early and unfinished status, was presented and discussed during 2002 at 21 expert meetings of different steering groups and separately in three major cities. The expert meetings were always organised per activity domain and were attended by an average of 15 experts from the major cities as well as the Flemish administration, the civil society and the academic world. In this way, hundreds of experts were consulted. This is referred to as **co-design**. During these meetings, intentions were added, fine-tuned and removed and this resulted in the current shape and content of the vision matrix. The aim was always to reach a consensus.

### *3.2. Selecting indicators for the Flemish vision on urban liveability*

The vision matrix is an indispensable document because it offers the normative framework for the choice of relevant indicators. The selection of indicators was performed once again with the experts in question. During a second series of expert meetings, we thought about how we could link indicators to the intentions in the vision matrix. We were strict and always looked for the **most desirable** or the best indicator to represent each cluster of intentions in the vision. In other words, we did not opt for a data-driven approach. Of course, not every indicator was accepted by everybody, but it was always accepted by a significant majority of the experts. Once the input from the many meetings and contacts had been

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<sup>5</sup> F. DE RYNCK (Ed.), White Paper on City Policy: De eeuw van de stad. Over stadsrepublieken en rastersteden (The century of the city. On city republics and screened cities), Urban Policy Project, Administration for Domestic Affairs, Ministry of the Flemish Community, 2003, 238 p.

processed, we had a long list with 640 “potential” indicators, each linked to elements from the vision matrix.

In accordance with the city monitor philosophy, it was decided to only include selectively chosen indicators in the city monitor which displayed evolutions of relevant phenomena at a strategic level in Flemish urban areas. On the basis of a **few selection criteria** (about relevance and interpretability) the draft indicators were selected to be part of the city monitor. The screening of all 640 indicators was a difficult task because the evaluation was often subject to different interpretations. We presented (the reasons for) our choice during several consultations with the commissioning parties and the 13 major cities. The final selection of indicators was made after this round of consultations.

### *3.3. Data management for city indicators*

In the end, about 200 indicators were selected for full development and data collection. An indicator data sheet has been filled in for all of them. The lack of data for up to one third of all indicators explains why we always looked for a good **second choice indicator** and also developed so-called ‘tracks’ which indicate how data could be assigned to the indicator in question at a later date. We do not drop them merely because we do not have the figures yet. Indeed, that would reduce our vision matrix and we would from that moment on fail to observe relevant phenomena for the quality of Flemish urban life.

The first city monitor was published in 2004. On the basis of the feedback of some expert meetings in 2005, it became clear that some themes and domains were not so well equipped with indicators, e.g. entrepreneurship and the social welfare theme. In 2006 a new edition was produced and all available data were actualized. A new and comparable survey (as the one held in 2004) was performed of a representative sample of the population from the 13 major Flemish cities. At the end of that year all new data were processed into the indicators. During 2007 and 2008 new indicators will be developed in the field of ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘social care’. In march 2009 a third edition of this city monitor is presented on a conference.<sup>6</sup>

## **4. THE IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT FOR CITY INDICATORS**

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<sup>6</sup> Bral, L. e.a., Stadsmonitor 2008. Een monitor voor leefbare en duurzame Vlaamse steden, (City monitor 2008, A monitor on liveable and sustainable Flemish cities), een uitgave van het Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur van de Vlaamse overheid, Brussel, D/2009/3241/014, p304

In the second part of this paper we pay attention to the implementation context of this rather strategic instrument within the city organisation. We look more specifically to the attitude of politicians and civil servants to whom we have presented a selection of urban sustainability indicators for their home town. And we reflect on the first signs we received about the recent use of the instrument at the level of the city authorities.

#### **4.1 Lessons from the implementation context of the city monitor**

During the development of the city monitor we also investigated the **administrative and policy context** for working with such a city monitor (Vallet and De Rynck, 2005). This implementation research results in the observation that the use of city monitoring depends to a great extent on the nature, intensity and focus of the attitude of the (local) authorities with regard to the state of the city society. This research concluded that, above all, the effects of changing leadership, the impact of organisational changes and the signals of supra-local governments can lead to a general change of attitude towards the use of indicators on the state and the progress of the city. This means that a certain attitude towards external state of the reality (in the city or in the wider world) is not stable: it can evolve towards more openness or towards a more internal focus and it can differ in the different departments and sectors.

The results of these investigations draw on the understanding of how city authorities function in relation to other urban actors. So, the **role of a city authority within a system of urban governance** depends to a great extent on the nature, intensity and focus of the attitude of the urban government people with regard to the importance of the external urban society. That attitude is strongly influenced by the leadership within the city authority, organisational changes and signals from supra-local governments. At this moment we think that the attitude of leading political people and civil servants is also a crucial factor in a favourable climate for a thorough policy on urban liveability and sustainability. So, to be clear, indicators won't do the job on their own. Urban policy-makers should rely on new evidence presented by all those indicators. And we are strongly convinced that the attitude of urban government people can be a barrier to use different forms of knowledge arising from all those indicators. This theses needs further investigation. This kind of research is crucial in the implementation of these city indicators in order to increase the quality of life of the citizens in the Flemish cities.

#### **4.2 Is the governmental attitude in favour of urban quality of life?**

By the end of 2006 new city governments were elected. Already in the beginning of 2007 the new city authorities invited the researchers to present the results of the second edition of the city monitor. There was a big interest in the indicators, because a first sign of a trend could be seen. That is, of course, much more interesting for government people than a mere zero measurement situation. While presenting the city monitor 2006 we have gained some insights about the attitude of the policy people regarding the indicators and their use. At those occasions, city politicians and leading civil servants were asking their first question: “Is the city monitor a policy instrument to be used for **benchmarking**?” Our answer was a very clear “No”. The aim of the city monitor is to provide reliable figures regarding the evolutions of the quality of life in each city as feedback to the policy debate and the related planning process. Those figures supplement the state indicators, which form the basis of an state analysis of the social reality which is specific for each city. This prompted a second question from the city policy makers: “Why then are you presenting the indicators of all 13 cities in one chart?” We can only conclude that this is a good question, because it is related to the learning process in the cities. Comparisons between cities can be very instructive, but no single city can be considered as the benchmark!

Some indicators also reveal the less attractive aspects of urban life, such as financial poverty or long-term unemployment. Furthermore, the policy makers from the cities expressed their **fear** of making those figures public. Their response was very direct: “You are here to provide ammunition for the opposition!” As researchers, we responded with the greatest respect for the electoral context of the politicians. We made it clear to them that we took into consideration the uncertainties of the six-yearly elections by informing them in first position about the new figures for all indicators. In this way, they are the first to obtain reliable figures about the situation in the city, and are suitably prepared to take on the accountability debate with all urban actors. By handling the fears of the city policy makers in a respectful way, we learn them to deal with figures about the quality of urban life in a mature manner.

At meetings about the city monitor, local politicians and civil servants time and again ask for **operational indicators**. We recognise this very legitimate request for management information about measuring performances, which arises from a search towards greater efficiency of the administrative services. In that regard, the city policy makers also ask for indicators for policy results. As part of the quest for a good administration, it is important to know whether the services provided by the city government are delivering the desired results for the target groups. The city monitor does not provide an answer to those frequently

occurring questions, because it requests attention for additional information about the external reality of the urban daily life.

Those experiences give insight into the attitude of policy people in Flemish city governments. Leading urban policy people tend to focus on internal issues within the own city organisation or want to compare themselves with other city organisations and its functioning. There is little sign of an open attitude towards urban society, and relevant stakeholders. Such an openness is certainly not considered to be relevant for a good government of the city. It is clear that a lot of **policy teaching** about the use of this kind indicators is needed, even more about the need for an open attitude towards the external reality of the citizens' daily life. Nowadays, there is a general SMART attitude<sup>7</sup> towards indicators for management and policy objectives. To use strategic state indicators another more open attitude is needed. It is necessary to have an open mind towards the relation between the evolution of a phenomenon in the urban daily life and the responsibility of all stakeholders. A lot of policy teaching about the use of the city monitor still remains to be done. The policy teaching should focus on the relevance of an external orientation, because it is important to look at the urban reality situation together with all the actors concerned. In our opinion, that is a very significant moment in the learning process at the policy level and therefore also for a strategic policy towards urban sustainability. The collective nature of that learning process helps orient all the actors concerned in the same direction.

### **4.3 Does the first use of city monitor increase the quality of urban life?**

After the publication of the first edition, the learning process about the situation in the Flemish cities was facilitated by a **broad and open communication**.<sup>8</sup> The results of the city monitor were also presented separately - often more than once - in each Flemish city to politicians, civil servants, civil society organisations and/or citizens. The indicators, with their tables and charts, were edited to be clear and accessible for all stakeholders. Not just politicians and civil servants but also civil society organisations and interested citizens must be able to consult the indicators. Such openness can enhance the learning processes of the stakeholders regarding urban daily life and related city policy issues. Such learning processes lie at the foundation of a strategic policy towards urban sustainability.

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<sup>7</sup> SMART = Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic & sensitive, Time bound & cost effective

<sup>8</sup> All information has been published, not only in book form but also on a website that is freely accessible to all ([www.thuisindestad.be](http://www.thuisindestad.be)).

Whether city governments are handling the indicators in a mature and responsible manner still remains a question. In several cities, we see a lot of positive evolutions for many of the indicators. The monitor has perhaps found acceptance more easily at council meetings and top official circles, because there are many positive evolutions to be seen in many cities and for many of the indicators. The rather negative trends can at that point be attributed to previous legislatures. May be, due to the fact that the indicators show a positive city image, the **expectations are rising** regarding the functioning of the instrument. The city governments involved want to broaden the measuring tool to include target groups and districts, as well as to deepen it to include additional analyses of the relationship between specific indicators or the causes of certain evolutions. At this point we warn of unrealistic expectations and argue in favour of a “lean and mean” instrument for the policy debate about crucial choices for the liveability and sustainability of the city. On the other hand, we feel that those expectations are also opportunities for using the indicators more often. And might create more chances for policy learning about the quality of citizens’ lives in Flemish cities.

Nevertheless, a smooth implementation of the city monitor in order to stimulate the policy learning processes on the state of the city itself can certainly not be expected in short term. Based on statements made at the Congress on Local Politics, in 2007 dedicated to the city monitor<sup>9</sup>, we can deduce that the city governments are only **just starting to use this monitor, or parts of it**, such as the vision matrix as a logical framework, specific goals from the vision, specific indicators, the indicators without data, etc. The examples from Genk, Kortrijk, Antwerp and Ghent show a very large diversity in how different products of the city monitor are being put into practice. In Genk, the vision matrix is being used as a framework for long-range policy planning. According to Francine Quanten, Director of Social and Economic Affairs, Policy Planning and Communication of Genk City Government, “The matrix of the city monitor serves as overall logical framework for the renewed process of long-range policy planning”. In Kortrijk also, the city government wants to encourage the implementation of the city monitor to promote the interdepartmental and integrated handling of files. Geert Hillaert, Town Clerk of Kortrijk, confirmed that the city monitor has helped shape the approach by which the city government would like to “break loose” from the existing structures. In Antwerp, the city monitor is being used to expose the blind spots in the data collection process. In Ghent, the vision matrix is one of the three sources for the strategic state analysis at the urban level. The goals resulting from the vision matrix are being used to test the development of all topics in that urban state analysis. These examples may indicate that some

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<sup>9</sup> Steden op koers?, 8<sup>ste</sup> Congres voor Provinciale en Lokale Politiek, 27 maart 2007, Gent.

Flemish cities are starting to use (bits and parts of) the city monitor, and that the participatory designed vision on liveable and sustainable cities can have several functions within city organisations.

Within the framework of the City Fund, a central funding scheme for local projects on urban renewal, policy agreements are signed between the city authorities and the Flemish Government. All those local projects should contribute to urban liveability and thus to the improvement of the quality of urban life. In a few interviews was mentioned that indicators from the city monitor were used in most of the **multi-level meetings** on the preparation for new policy agreements. There, civil servants from central and local level learned about the liveability and sustainability of Flemish cities. In those meetings, intentions of the vision on sustainable cities are recognized as an element in the accountability debate between central and local government levels.

## 5. FEET ON THE GROUND (BY WAY OF CONCLUSION)

Still, we do not want to keep up appearances. Even after the launch of the city monitor edition 2006, we found that only few local services and sectors were showing much state orientation, that they were not all eagerly waiting for information systems such as the city monitor, that local actors were not (yet) that strongly inclined to take a collective look at this state of the city, that the data management continued to be geared more towards the operational policy and not so much towards external input, that the required skills to start working with such instruments were often missing, that the compartmentalised manner of thinking and working still prevailed, etc. Moreover, some major cities lack the capacity to deal with the numerical data in a mature manner. Instead of using the city monitor to start an open debate, authorities sometimes choose to keep the figures quiet. The fear of negative evaluation continues to exist. So, all these elements do not provide a good climate for a strategic policy about liveable and sustainable Flemish cities. At the same time, we see a lot of **internal policy learning** is going on within city organisations, and may be this can give new stimulus to the debate on the quality of urban life in the Flanders Region.

Whatever may be the case, the city monitor is here to stay ... It is a well known instrument for the Flemish urban policy. While finishing the second edition of the city monitor we did see already the first signs of an instrumental use of bits and pieces of the policy instrument itself. Its generic character constitutes no problem for an application in a specific city. The participatory and communicative approach fostered the eventual policy learning, mostly within the boundaries of the city government. On the other hand research pointed out

that the effects of changing leadership, the impact of organisational changes and the signals of supra-local governments are more important factor in the use of indicators and the possible policy learning. Later, it became clear that a lot of misunderstanding and actual fear characterizes the attitude of the urban policy people towards the use of state indicators. So, a lot of **policy teaching** on sustainability indicators is still needed. We are convinced that the third edition of the city monitor will produce new opportunities for policy teaching about the need of an overall strategy towards increasing quality of life in Flemish cities.

And there is hope for more policy teaching coming from the international horizon. In the OECD-organisation the global project on 'measuring progress' is gaining momentum. Worldwide, this organisation is spreading the message 'to start with vision building on societal progress and to look for societal support for whatever vision on progress you want to achieve'. This means that vision formulation is a means of harnessing knowledge, because it enables a societal consensus on what indicators are important to be measured if we want to know whether the quality of life in our communities (local and national) is increasing. As we have seen, in the case of the Flemish city monitor, the vision matrix is used for different purposes, such as a framework for long term policy planning, as a coordination instrument for interdepartmental handling of files, as a source for strategic state analysis at urban level, etc. And these first signs of using a participatory designed vision on urban liveability and sustainability lead us to agree with OECD: '**measuring progress is making progress**'.

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ANNEX 1

**FIGURE 2: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF URBAN SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS**

