

<b>Institution:</b> London Metropolitan University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Art and Design, History, Practice and Theory (32)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> A Good City Has Industry: Successfully Advocating Better Integration of Industrial Activities in Brussels		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2013–2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof. Mark Brearley Dr Jane Clossick	Professor of Urbanism Senior Lecturer in Urban Design	2013–present 2015–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013–2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

A consequence of research by the AAD Cities Research Group at London Met is a paradigm shift in how policymakers, urban developers and design practitioners in Brussels understand industry and the importance of integrating it into the urban fabric. In Brussels, the research made visible the opportunities for use-mix and intensification; raised awareness of the industrial economy and its challenges; provided public and private actors with strategies to make space for industrial activities; and facilitated the development of new approaches to integrating industrial accommodation within the city. It also provided methodological support to research and design projects by Architecture Workroom Brussels; helped to shape the strategic vision of Brussels state developer Citydev, who have subsequently developed 25 sites for industrial use, (retaining 1250 industrial jobs in Brussels); and informed the design of some of the most complex urban development sites in Brussels.

### 2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Retaining and intensifying industry in contemporary cities is an important priority for sustainable growth. The definition of industry includes: manufacturing, storage and distribution, waste management and recycling, wholesale markets. Industrial activity meets the expanding just-in-time needs of cities, without excessive trip generation and associated carbon emissions. Industry is an important component of a diversified economy that offers employment opportunities to suit all; is resilient to economic, technological or social shocks; and creates entrepreneurial endeavour generating enterprise valuable for the wider economy. However, prior to Brearley and Clossick's involvement, industrial uses in Brussels were frequently undervalued and brushed aside by policymakers, including the Belgian Secretary of State for Urbanism, who in 2013 publicly stated that the recycling centre and concrete factories in the north of Brussels should be replaced with offices and parks.

Since 2013, design-based research by Brearley and Clossick has explored how to reveal and promote the integration of industrial activities in European cities. A substantial part of the work has focused on industrial areas in Brussels, asking if and under which conditions (physical, economic, social and political) industrial uses can be intensified through the introduction of innovative types of

## Impact case study (REF3)

industrial accommodation; and how the political and cultural attitude towards industry in the city can be shifted. Brussels has a number of industrial sites threatened by redevelopment for other, higher-value uses, including Buda, Vilvoorde and Molenbeek. Brearley and Clossick engaged with these localities and with local, regional and national stakeholders, as well as with an extensive team of collaborators from AAD Cities and beyond (R1, R2), through **four concurrent action research strands**.

**Surveying and mapping** to reveal the geography of the industrial economy, past and present. A key innovation of this work was the adoption of an original ‘industrial audit’ methodology refined in London (R1), based on the collection of architectural, qualitative and quantitative data, and disseminated through graphic displays in publications and exhibitions (R3). In Brussels, Brearley and Clossick ran workshops with Departement Omgeving in collaboration with Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB) for the *A Good City Has Industry* project (R2, R4). The major insight was that by differentiating nuanced industrial/economic activities and making them visible to stakeholders, then policymakers, communities and designers can appreciate their civic and economic value.

**Envisioning** future scenarios for these localities through research by design: AAD Cities, led by Brearley and Clossick, delivered 18 five-day participatory workshops over five years as part of the Flemish Government’s TOP Noordrand initiative involving architects and planners (R1, S9). The briefs for the participants were formulated with stakeholders including AWB and Departement Omgeving. A key insight was that the intensification of industrial areas is achievable in economic, architectural and urban terms (R2) but that the value of such development is not necessarily apparent to property owners, developers and policymakers without showing them alternative scenarios through design.

**Engendering collaboration** between the agencies involved, especially cross-border between Brussels and Flanders. The introduction of new types of development requires public agencies to work in collaboration with each other and with property owners, developers, and businesses. Through his 2019 BSI-citydev.brussels Chair, Brearley facilitated two research by design workshops with Citydev, and delivered three university lectures and one inter-university lecture (R5). A key insight was that to collaborate, public agencies need to meet on neutral territory, such as the one afforded by the endeavour of *A Good City Has Industry* (R2), and be brought together by an external party with respected expertise, but without a political or geographic bias.

**Advocating** the ideas generated through surveying, mapping and envisioning to accelerate the retention and revalidation of industry in Brussels. The team focused on dissemination and persuasion through design research workshops; a video produced with AWB (R4); multiple meetings with stakeholders; a public lecture (R5); 30 further public talks in Brussels, Rotterdam and across Europe (including Berlin, Amsterdam, Moscow, Vienna, London) (R1). A key insight was that multiple modes of engagement work for advocacy: talks, exhibitions, publications. In particular, ‘walking and talking’ is an effective means of communication of the value of industrial activities. The key condition for its effectiveness is the neutrality of Brearley, Clossick and the AAD Cities team as outsiders.

This research has developed through a co-productive, design-based, and action-oriented methodology, and crucially, through the engagement of key stakeholders at all stages of the research—including policy makers, urban developers and design professionals from Brussels, Flanders and beyond. As a result, Brearley and Clossick’s work has reached and benefitted a wide audience.

## Impact case study (REF3)

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

---

- R1. Clossick, Jane, and Mark Brearley, *A Good City Has Industry: Audit, Reveal and Promote*, AAD Practice Research Portfolios (London: London Metropolitan University, 2020). <[https://issuu.com/arts\\_londonmet/docs/a\\_good\\_city\\_has\\_industry](https://issuu.com/arts_londonmet/docs/a_good_city_has_industry)>. Submitted to REF2.
- R2. Clossick, Jane, and Mark Brearley, *Promoting Industry in Brussels*, AAD Practice Research Portfolios (London: London Metropolitan University, 2020). Submitted to REF2.
- R3. Clossick, Jane, and Mark Brearley, *A Good City Has Industry: Methods and Findings for the Old Kent Road*, exhibition, Asylum Chapel (28 June 2016), Livesey Exchange (23 June 2017) and Shaping Southwark Hustings (14 April 2018). <[www.research.londonmet.ac.uk/cities](http://www.research.londonmet.ac.uk/cities)>.
- R4. Architecture Workroom Brussels, *Atelier Brussels—The Productive Metropolis*, online video recording. <<https://vimeo.com/164552744>>.
- R5. Brearley, Mark, *A Good City Has Everything*, lecture, Brussels Studies Institute—BSI-citydev.brussels Chair Inaugural Lecture, Brussels (18 February 2019). : <<https://vimeo.com/318700667>>.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

---

Across Europe, economic and urban trends underline the need to reaffirm the place of industry in our urban areas. In Brussels and Flanders, the research has demonstrated that industrial activities are an important part of contemporary urban life, and has contributed to creating a paradigm shift in how policymakers, urban developers and design practitioners understand industry and the importance of integrating it into the urban fabric; resulting in: accelerating new approaches to urban planning and real estate development; transferring methodologies for research and development and encouraging experimentation in urban and architectural design.

#### 1) Accelerating new approaches to urban planning and real estate development.

Engagement with the research accelerated public agencies and urban developers in Brussels and Flanders towards changing their programmes and strategies. Brearley and Clossick's extensive participation in debates as politically neutral outsiders—framing justifications, documenting industrial sites, and exploring design scenarios for their future transformation—helped public entities such as the **Brussels Bouwmeester** (the chief architect's office) to “raise awareness that a good city has industry (...), that industry belongs to the city” (S1). Kristiaan Borret, chief architect, said the work was particularly helpful in making the issue visible to policymakers, planners and designers, for instance through the IABR architecture biennale held in Rotterdam in 2016, so as to gain support towards the development of real projects (S1, S2 pp.5-6). An opinion echoed by **Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB)**, who said that the *Atelier Brussels: The Productive Metropolis* (where Brearley was *Atelier Meister*) “accelerated the urban policy conviction that keeping economic activities within the urban fabric is a crucial component of preparing cities for a sustainable future” (S5), and has put Brussels at the forefront of thinking in Europe about how to approach the industrial economy: “Brussels has now taken a leading position in innovation, in urban planning and development ... research contributed to accelerating the changes and putting these ideas on the agenda of the right stakeholders” (S5). In Flanders, Brearley and Clossick's contribution helped the regional planning office **Departement Omgeving** “to show local authorities why and how to integrate the productive economy in the city” and to encourage policymakers to support regeneration plans that make space for industrial accommodation (S3). In these cases, the research has strongly contributed to making the ‘productive city’ a central concern in the urban policy, planning and architecture discourses of Brussels and Flanders.

## Impact case study (REF3)

This contribution led to two consequences: (a) in 2017, informed by his conversations with Brearley and his exposure to the Productive Metropolis workshop series in 2014-2016, Borret launched the first in a series of design competitions celebrating the integration of productive activities in Brussels (S1). As a result, the approach to urban design in the north of the city, particularly around the Port of Brussels region, has shifted away from relocating industrial activities outside the city, towards retaining them. This includes for example, the Material Village (which won the Steel Construction Awards 2018 in the category 'industrial buildings' and featured on the cover of *Architectural Review*) which was developed by Citydev and occupied by MPRO—a material/logistics hub which supplies the Brussels construction industry (S5 and S8). A consequence of this has been retention of at least an additional 1250 jobs within the city borders rather than being lost or re-distributed (S5, S2). (b) Following Brearley's efforts as the BSI-citydev.brussels Chair in 2019, **Citydev**, public development agency and landowner, have shifted their attitude, recognising that hybrid developments mixing industry and other activities are desirable. They have taken 25 such projects forward since 2013 (S2); and have initiated a collaboration with the Port of Brussels to facilitate the development of integrated logistics and manufacturing at scale. "The accumulation of theoretical exercises can fuel real projects", explained Benjamin Cadranel, CEO of Citydev. "We are about to launch Phase Two of Greenbizz, which is in [the Port], [with the] ideas that were developed in the workshops [with Brearley]" (S4).

**2) Transferring methodologies for Research and Development.** The capacity of public agencies and urban developers to understand and articulate the need for industrial accommodation in urban areas has been increased by the adoption of research methodologies based on the work of Brearley and Clossick. Stakeholders mentioned two methods above others: the innovative 'audit' method (R1, S9) developed to study the relationship between industrial activities and urban space—adopted in Brussels by collaborators (Citydev, Departement Omgeving and Architecture Workroom Brussels), which revealed remarkable economic and civic diversity; and the use of 'walking and talking' as a method of enquiry. In Brussels, over the period 2013–2020, these methodologies have been widely adopted both by the investigative unit **AWB** (S5) and public agency **Departement Omgeving** (S3), in particular following their collaboration with Brearley in the Atelier Productive Metropolis and the Flemish Government's TOP Noordrand initiatives respectively. These agencies have successfully utilised both the audit methodology and the walking and talking approach to persuade decision-makers of the value of understanding the city through an industrial lens, and of the potential of promoting urban developments that accommodate industrial activities rather than pushing them to the outskirts of cities or beyond.

Such engagement has relied on Brearley and Clossick's position as outsiders who can present challenging concepts apolitically, as Roeland Dudal, AWB, noted: "[Brearley] sometimes has provocative ideas, which he presents in such a way as you feel immediately comfortable with them, because they come from his interest and from a conversation with those concerned. It's not: 'I know everything and you must listen to me', it is: 'I'm listening, but why didn't you imagine *this*?' [This] has had a huge influence on the way people work together" (S5). Jan Zaman, Departement Omgeving, explained: "The connection between the research methods and the capacity to persuade [stakeholders] has been another important learning point from our collaboration". (S3). Dudal spoke specifically about the impact of the audit methodology: "The mapping that was tested in Old Kent Road [in London] has been imported by AWB" and Departement Omgeving. It "is a tool of urban economic policy: what kind of economic activities are happening where, a more fine-grained reading of urban activities... where a lot of the urban economic activities are taking place within the urban fabric, but outside the traditional zoning for industrial activities" (S5).

**3) Encouraging experimentation in urban and architectural design.** An important question for urban developers working toward the inclusion of industrial activities in Brussels and Flemish cities is how to enable the successful coexistence of productive uses with residential and commercial ones in practice. Brearley and Clossick's investigation of the history and present conditions of industrial sites in Belgium, together with a deep understanding of industrial processes and economies, have encouraged landowners and developers to experiment with designing and building innovative structures. In detail: (a) in the Buda area, after a study visit to London hosted by Brearley and Clossick in 2015, the **Van Assche family** redeveloped their ex-industrial building into an innovative co-working, industrial and workshop space 'Firma'. The site would otherwise have been redeveloped as residential and the industrial workspace would have been lost (S6, S7). Fifty small businesses can rent desk space and industrial space in a unique facility in that region of Brussels. The start-up cost for these small businesses is reduced as a result of this innovative approach to redeveloping the space; (c) following Brearley, Clossick and collaborators' mapping of relevant stakeholders and sites in the Brussels region, and supported by their advocacy efforts, the **Brussels Bouwmeester** has persuaded landowners and developers to realise mixed residential/industrial schemes that included either industry or logistics at the ground floor (S1); (c) in 2020, **Citydev** is proceeding with five ambitious mixed industrial and residential developments in the Molenbeek and Anderlecht areas, the first two of which, NovaCity and CityCampus, are under construction (S4). As Zaman explained, as a result of changing economic and environmental priorities, methodologies such as those created by Brearley and Clossick, are enabling policymakers to envision sustainability programmes such as Flanders' aim of 'zero net land take' by 2040 including a stop to greenfield developments (S3).

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

---

- S1. Mr Kristiaan Borret (Bouwmeester/Maître Architecte), testimonial, 14 February 2021.
- S2. Bouwmeester/Maître Architecte, *Brussels Productive City* (Brussels: Perspective Brussels, 2018), <[https://issuu.com/perspective10/docs/181121\\_final\\_pour\\_internet](https://issuu.com/perspective10/docs/181121_final_pour_internet)>
- S3. Mr Jan Zaman (Departement Omgeving), testimonial, 15 February 2021.
- S4. Mr Benjamin Cadranel (Citydev), testimonial, 14 October 2020.
- S5. Mr Roeland Dudal (Architecture Workroom Brussels), testimonial, 3 December 2020.
- S6. Mr Wim van Assche, interview by Architecture Workroom Brussels (AWB), 27 October 2020. (retained by the HEI because it is unsuitable for PDF format)
- S7. About Firma, <<http://www.workatfirma.be/about-2>>.
- S8. Material Flows, 'Construction materials recycling and logistics hub' <<https://www.lafargeholcim-foundation.org/projects/material-flows>>.
- S9. Jan Zaman, Report on workshops for Departement Omgeving <<https://research.londonmet.ac.uk/cities/urban-economy-workshops-report/>>