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Challenges for nature in Brussels

SUMMARY OF THE NATURE REPORT | JUNE 2012



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CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY GLOBALLY, THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT



The aim of the Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) Programme is to assist local authorities in implementing the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). These are: 1) The conservation of biological diversity; 2) The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity; 3) The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

LAB is a global partnership between ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature). ICLEI is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organisations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. ICLEI is the largest international association of local governments as determined by budget, personnel or scale of operations with well over 1 000 cities, towns, counties, and their associations worldwide comprise a growing membership. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network – a democratic membership union with more than 1 000 government and NGO member organizations, and almost 11 000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries.

LAB assists and interacts with local authorities in a variety of ways. Technical support is provided in the form of ongoing communication as well as guidelines and review of relevant documentation, presentations etc. and through access to IUCN's extensive network of scientists. As participants in LAB, local authorities are provided various networking opportunities to share their challenges and successes, including regular international workshops. Profiling is also achieved at various international forums where the efforts of participating local authorities are exhibited and reported on. Increasingly, LAB is playing a critical role in global advocacy, providing a platform for local authorities to voice their input and to demonstrate the importance of their role in stemming the tide of global biodiversity loss.

For more information about Local Action for Biodiversity contact biodiversity@iclei.org or log onto the LAB website at www.cbc.iclei.org.

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INTRODUCTION



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The Report on the state of the natural environment in the Brussels-Capital Region is intended to provide an objective basis for directing policy and defining the regional strategy for natural development.

Using indicators and situational inventories, it provides an update on the state of the natural environment and of biodiversity in Brussels. It also evaluates the impact of current nature and biodiversity policies.

It is intended for political and administrative decision-makers and the other actors – who are numerous – whose activities affect nature conservation.

This document constitutes a summary of the report. It lists the ten major recommendations of the Nature Report for the years ahead, and contextualises the challenges that have been identified for the

natural environment in the Brussels-Capital Region.

It aims in particular to provide input for the work of those participating in the participatory process set up for the compilation of the future Regional Nature Plan, a document which will define the direction of, set out the overall planning for and integrate nature conservation policy in the Brussels-Capital Region. The Nature Plan will determine the main directions to be taken in this connection in the short, medium and long terms by the authorities and by private parties entrusted with a public service role in the territory of the Brussels Capital Region.



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1. BALANCE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE REINFORCEMENT OF THE GREEN NETWORK



The context

Brussels is a green city! This is thanks to the Forest of Soignes, some huge semi-natural sites, public and private parks and grounds, various green residential districts and numerous gardens and open spaces covered with vegetation within housing blocks. In parallel with its economic development as a city, Brussels has managed to conserve many treasures which make their natural heritage so rich today. The richest green spaces are the remnants of valleys and marshes and the relics of ancient forests or farmland. Wastelands and embankments or verges alongside transport infrastructure also contribute to the green character of Brussels, playing a bridging role or serving as a connecting corridor, or sometimes even as a reservoir that is essential to the proper functioning of the ecological network.

These different sites enable a rich biodiversity to develop: certain habitats and species found in our Region are even protected at European level.

In addition to their role in supporting biodiversity, the green spaces have numerous ecological functions and thus contribute to a healthy environment. In the city, their presence is particularly important for rainwater percolation, improving air quality and regulating the city's microclimate (shade, freshening the air, reducing wind speed, increasing atmospheric humidity).

Green spaces and nature in the city are also factors which prevent urban stress and allow people to 'escape' to an environment that is positive, pleasant and more stimulating to the senses with its smells and colours. The preservation and development of natural



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spaces in the urban setting thus make a significant contribution to the quality of life, well-being and health of those who live there. As such, they play an important role in society, in the preservation of the landscape and in urban planning. They help residents to feel a connection with their local area and provide a variety of opportunities for relaxation, recreation and discovery (walking, outdoor sports, playing, etc.).

In short, green spaces are urban facilities of the utmost importance! The people of Brussels attach particularly high social value to their green spaces and to the presence of nature in the city, manifested in rows of trees or the presence of birds, for example.

94% of the people of Brussels say that they are nature-lovers! By reducing urban stress and encouraging people to engage in physical activity outdoors, green spaces are thus precious allies for the physical and mental health of the city's inhabitants.



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The challenge

Commercial pressure on green spaces is growing, not least because of strong demographic growth. The current challenge is to develop and extend nature in the city and improve the quality of ecosystems and the benefits that the people of Brussels derive from them.

The first difficulties to be overcome relate on the one hand to the lack of priority given to green spaces compared with other possible forms of land use, and on the other hand to their very uneven distribution across the Region's territory. The issues affecting these spaces are therefore very different in the centre and on the periphery of the Region.

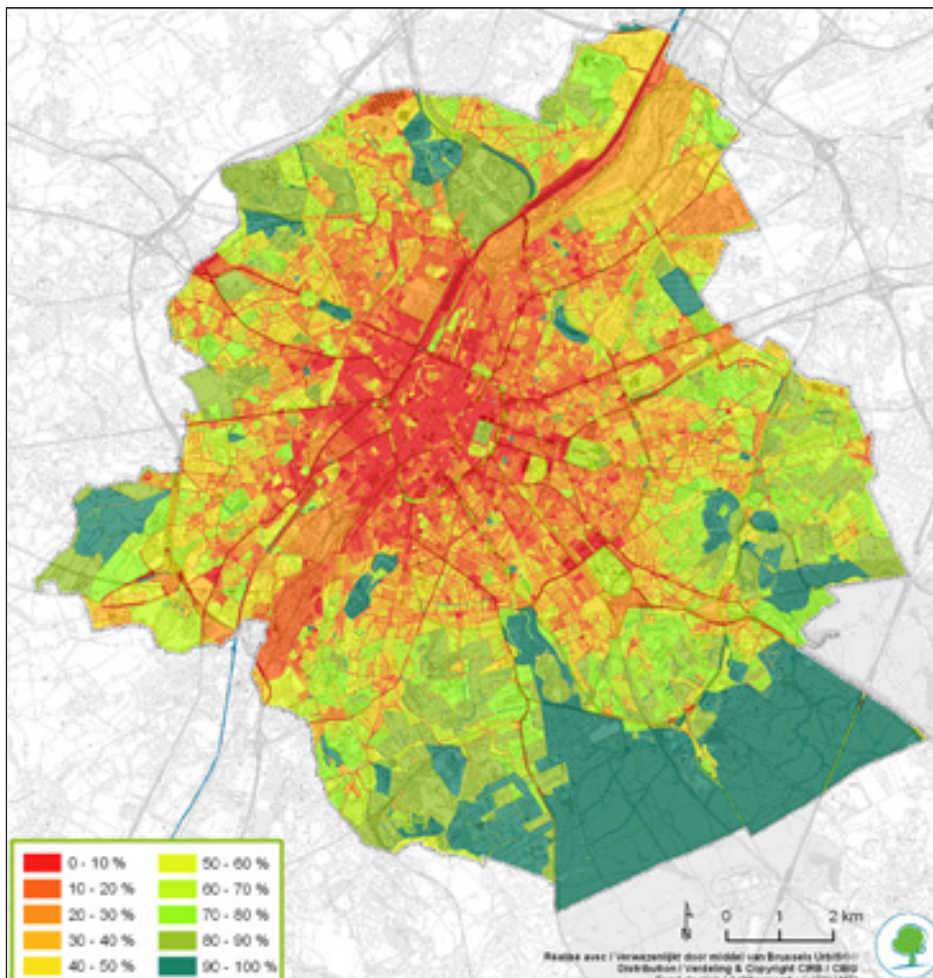


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QUANTITATIVE SUMMARY OF NON-BUILT GREEN SPACES IN THE BRUSSELS REGION

	AREA (HA)	% OF THE REGION'S TOTAL AREA
VEGETATION	8713.9	54%
OPEN ENVIRONMENTS	1572.2	9.7%
CLOSED ENVIRONMENTS	7141.8	44.3%

Source: Based on Van de Voorde et al. 2010



Source: Based on Van de Voorde et al. 2010

Good practice example – a project: the route of the Senne (City of Brussels)

In connection with the Sustainable Neighbourhood Contracts scheme, the former bed of the Senne which passes right through the housing blocks of the Masui district in the City of Brussels will be converted into an urban park by Brussels Environment, thus creating a soft mobility corridor with ecological value. The Senne Park will give local residents a pleasant green space, and a place for unwinding and meeting friends that will reinforce social bonds. It will provide a 'breathing space' and a peaceful spot in a district adversely affected by the infrastructure that hems it in.

2. PRESERVE AND DEVELOP SITES OF HIGH BIOLOGICAL VALUE AND HERITAGE SPECIES



The context

The wealth of Brussels' natural heritage derives from its diversity of geomorphological and urban structures (valleys, wetlands, old trees, old buildings). However, urbanisation is highly disruptive to plant and animal communities.

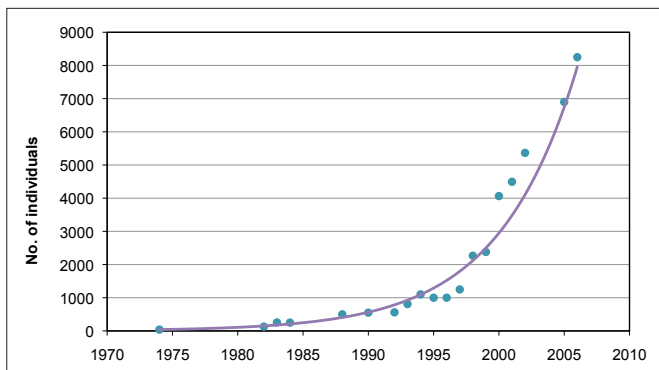
The most drastic declines in species and natural habitats were recorded during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or during the post-war period, at a time of major industrial and economic developments and growing urbanisation.

The majority of the sites of high biological value today enjoy protected status. The adoption of the new ordinance on nature

conservation ensures that almost 14% of the Region's territory is protected.

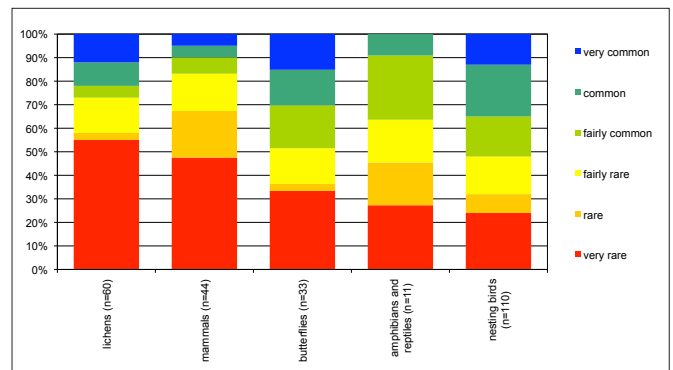
However, large-scale housing development projects are again threatening numerous wasteland sites and remnants of rural landscapes of high biological value. Open spaces are generally being valued less and exposed to greater threats. They are also increasingly scarce.

Numerous species are also in a precarious situation, mainly due to the increasing scarcity of their habitats and the deterioration of the quality of their environment.



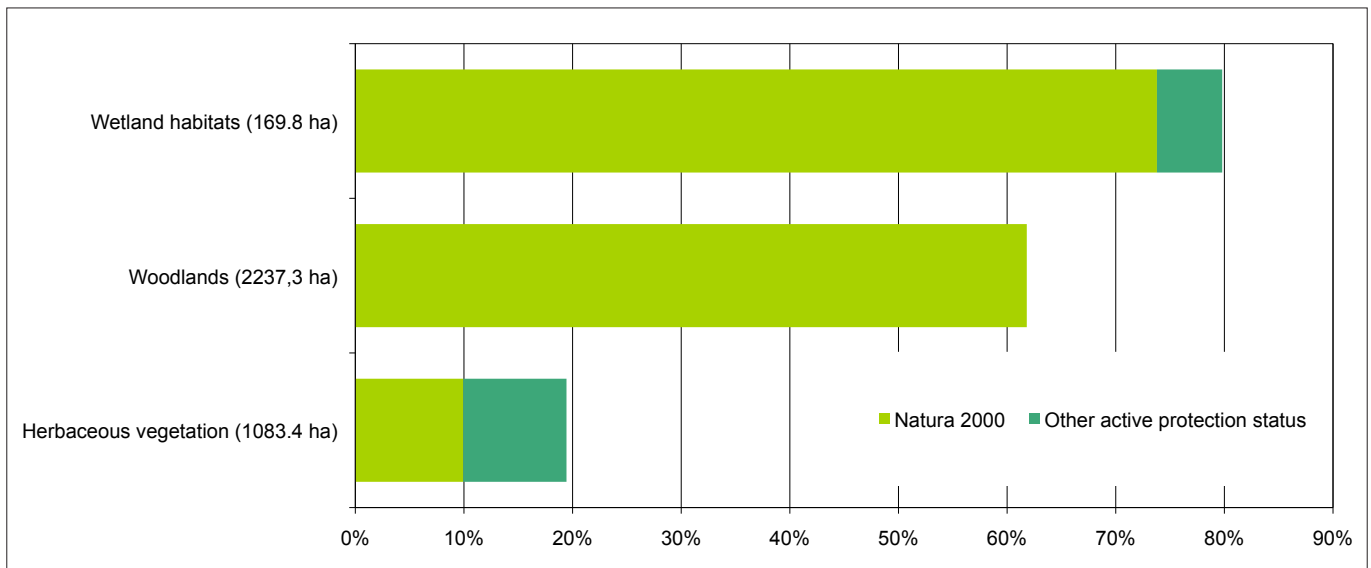
Changes in the number of rose-ringed parakeets and Alexandrine parakeets

Source: Based on AVES (counted in nocturnal tree roosts)



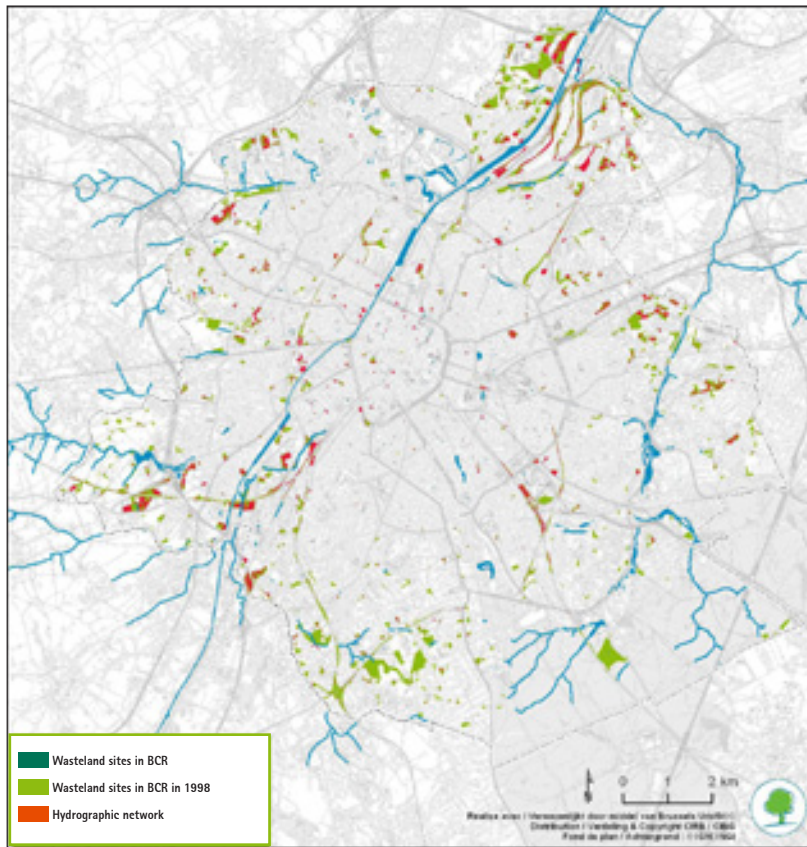
Frequency of species in different specific groups in the Brussels-Capital Region

Source: Species database (January 2011)

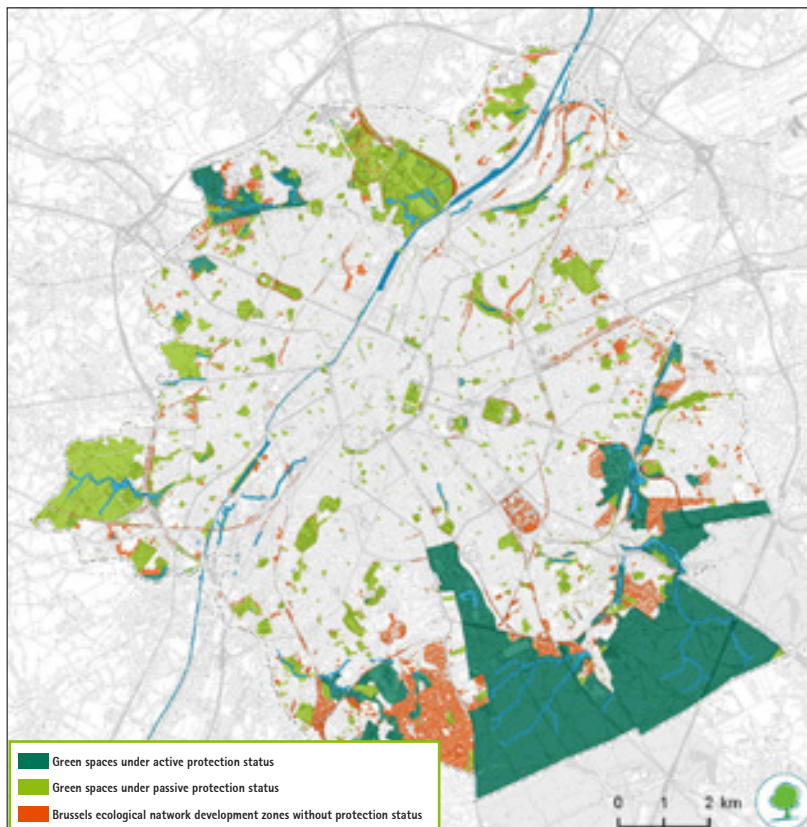


Protection of habitats of European and regional value in the Brussels-Capital Region

Protected areas database (June 2012)



Disappearance of wastelands in the Brussels-Capital Region



Protection of green spaces in the Brussels-Capital Region

The challenge

The issues facing green spaces differ in the centre and on the periphery of the Region. Within the outer ringroad, the challenge is to conserve these spaces and to develop their biological and landscape characteristics.

- Sensitive areas need active protection status in order to ensure a good state of conservation. There is a need for rapid reinforcement of the protection status of the wastelands and open spaces of high biological value. The specific decrees on the protection of urban biotopes and landscape elements stipulated in Article 66 of the ordinance of 1 March 2012 on nature conservation are a useful tool in this respect.
- All the Region's protected areas (natural and forest reserves, Natura 2000 zones) need to benefit from management measures relating to conservation goals approved by the Government. For the next few years, priority attention needs to be given to adopting the decrees that designate and define the conservation goals for the reserves and Natura 2000 sites and to finalising and implementing management plans. For the sites under the Region's responsibility, the implementation of these management plans should not cause any problems, as certain measures have already been applied there for many years: the diversification of the landscape structure, controlling the enrichment of environments, controlling recolonisation of open environments by shrubs, maintaining the access of sunlight to watercourses and waterbodies, ensuring that embankments have a gentle gradient, using alternatives to pesticides, protecting woodland soils and retaining dead wood, prioritising native plants, managing invasive exotic species, etc.
- The application of good management practices needs to be intensified, in particular at the sites recently acquired by Brussels Environment, on municipal land and on large private estates.
- With regard to invasive exotic species, action plans seem to be needed in order to control the scale of this phenomenon more effectively, if not reduce it. Keeping control of pets is another point for attention for the positive development of certain animal populations in the city, such as birds, the red squirrel, the hedgehog, micromammals, etc..
- The most vulnerable species need to be managed on an adapted and coordinated basis across the entire territory of the Region, if not further afield. It would be useful to formalise the studies that have already been conducted in the form of action plans and to start implementing them on the ground.

Alongside large-scale monitoring of the state of conservation of species and habitats, it is recommended that a management monitoring system should be developed in order to ensure that the measures applied really will enable the defined goals to be achieved.

Good practice example – a project: the Engeland Plateau (Uccle)

The Engeland Plateau creates a natural link between Verrewinkel Wood and the nature reserves of Kinsendael and Kriekenput. Following the PRAS, two housing developments will be built on the edge of the site. Fortunately, a large proportion of the land is subject to measures for the protection and development of the associations of plant species which have returned naturally (oak groves).

3. MAKE MORE SPACE FOR NATURE IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICTS

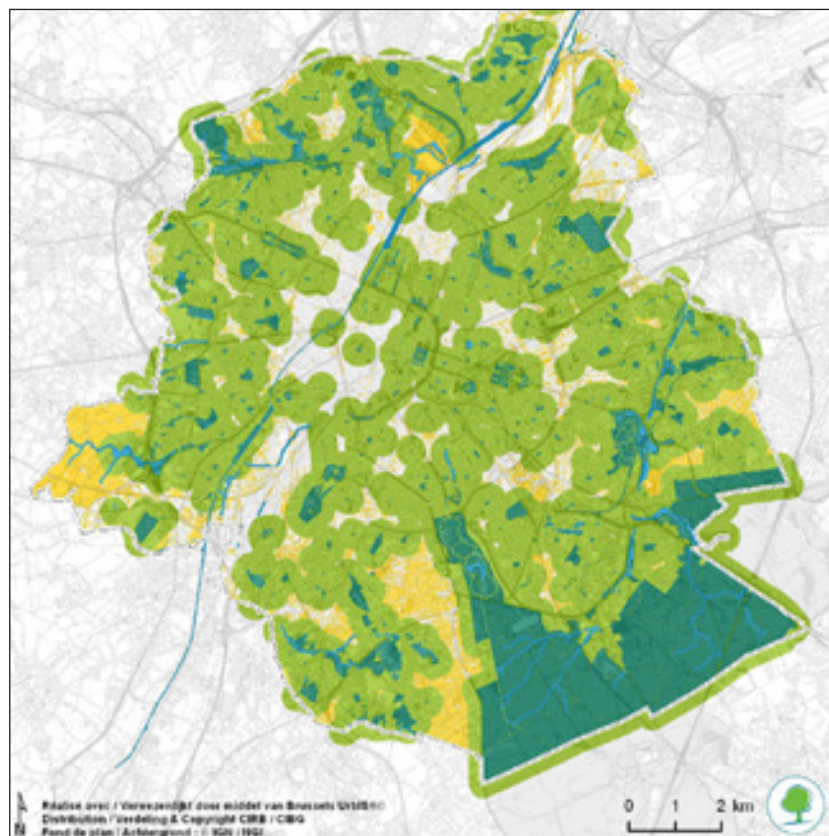
The context

Vegetation covers 54% of the Region's territory, largely thanks to the Forest of Soignes and the presence of numerous private gardens. However, the spatial distribution of green spaces and their accessibility varies greatly: the centre has little greenery, while the periphery forms a genuine green belt around the city.

The areas with the greatest lack of green spaces are those located around the canal, and this is something which contributes to the social polarisation of the city.

According to the Government programme for the 2009-2014 term: *"Every inhabitant of Brussels must be able to benefit from a green space near to where he or she lives"*. Increasing the accessibility of local green spaces would have a positive social impact and help relieve the pressure on the spaces which are currently most frequented (See point 7).

71% of the people of Brussels believe that "Brussels is a green city with plenty of quality green spaces". However, views vary greatly from one district to another.



- Accessible green spaces
- accessible green spaces (+ 300m)
- non-built spaces (vegetation)

Green spaces accessible in the Brussels-Capital Region

Source : Based on BRAT 2009 - based on the Unitary Green Objects of 1997

The challenges

Given the current shortage of green spaces in the centre and inner suburbs, the primary challenge is to increase the range of green spaces accessible to the public and the presence of nature in the city centre.

This improvement will also help reduce social polarisation in the city. It is especially important given that the expected population increase will entail increased demand from the inhabitants of these districts and increased recreational pressure on existing spaces.

To achieve these goals, a vigorous and innovative policy needs to be introduced for the reclassification of public space. As well as developing and opening to the public new squares, parks and gardens with little or no hard surfacing, encouragement must be given to the introduction of greenery on façades and roofs, the growing of flowers on balconies and the presence of wild grasses, especially in the areas with the greatest shortage of green spaces.

In addition, a few architectural adaptations would promote the presence of wildlife in the city centre, such as martins and black redstarts as well as various insects, including bees and butterflies.

Good practice example – an achievement: Parc de la Rosée (Anderlecht)

Again in connection with a Neighbourhood Contract, the Parc de la Rosée has taken the place of old factories. The participatory approach has ensured diversity of planted vegetation as well as all the other facilities. Sporting activities take place side by side with workshops on the park's flowers and plants. The park has become the district's 'peaceful spot', despite being full of life and human diversity.



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4. REINFORCE THE COHERENCE OF THE ECOLOGICAL NETWORK



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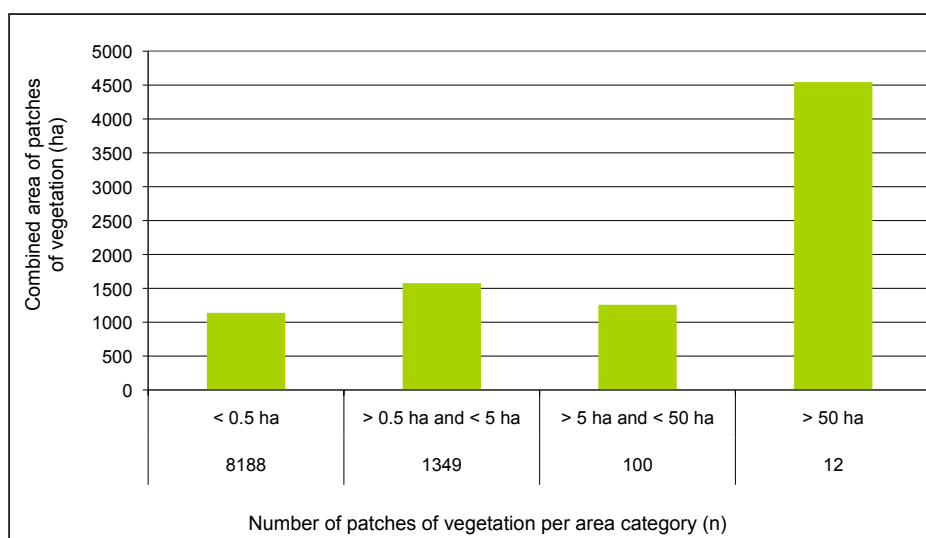
The context

At present, the proper functioning of ecosystems and their capacity to host biodiversity are limited by various interruptions and barriers between sites and the lack of corridors and sites playing a bridging role.

In addition to the fragmentation of habitats in the Region's green belt, physical barriers such as transport infrastructure (busy roads, railway lines) and fences are also obstacles. On the other

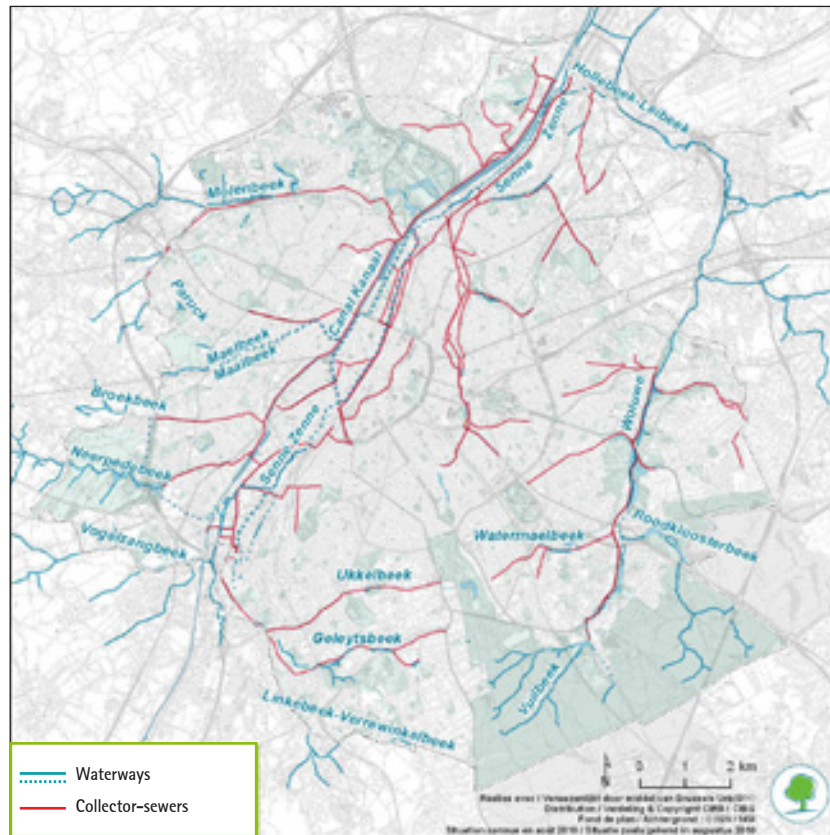
hand, the distances that need to be crossed to join the green spaces together are often short, offering plenty of possibilities for measures (on a small scale) to reduce fragmentation.

Brussels' waterways have also suffered from fragmentation, due to being culverted. This prevents the development of aquatic life and creates insurmountable barriers for numerous species, such as the amur bitterling (Natura 2000 species).

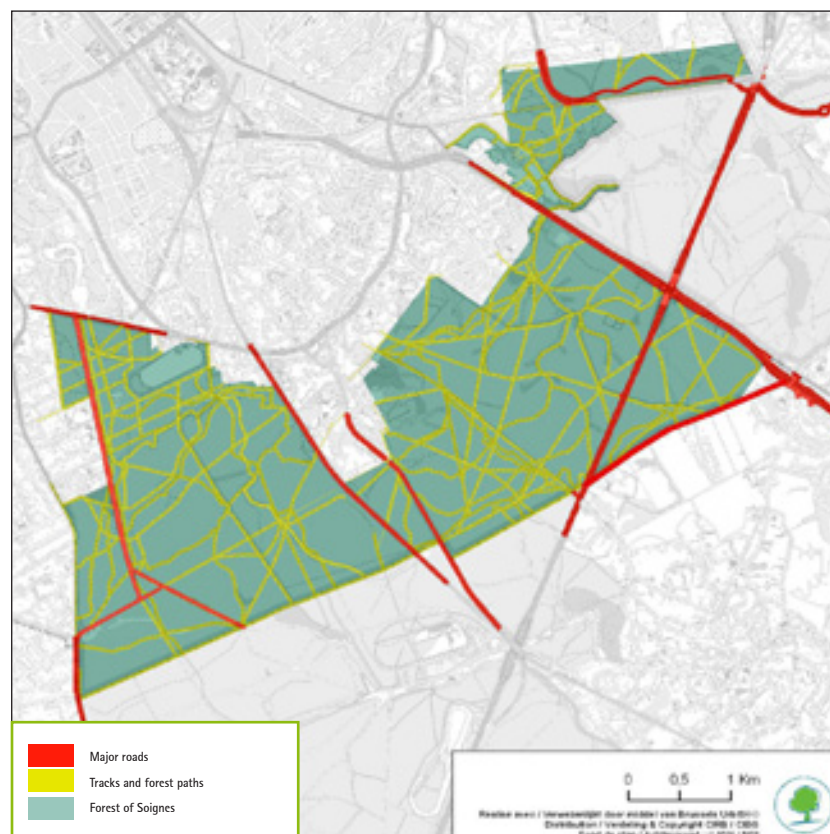


Fragmentation of green spaces in the Brussels-Capital Region

Source: Based on Van de Voorde *et al.* (2010)



Waterways and collector-sewers in the Brussels-Capital Region



Fragmentation of the Forest of Soignes by roads in the Brussels-Capital Region



The challenges

Re-establishing proper connectivity between and within the different zones and making it possible for species to move from one zone to another according to their needs (looking for food, breeding, migrating, etc.) is a key challenge in the urban setting.

Ecological corridors therefore need to be established or improved, in particular between the Natura 2000 sites. Connectivity could make use of existing facilities such as public parks and the Green Trail, the implementation of the Blue Network, private green spaces in residential districts and the open spaces within housing blocks, wasteland sites and the green spaces associated with roads and other transport infrastructure.

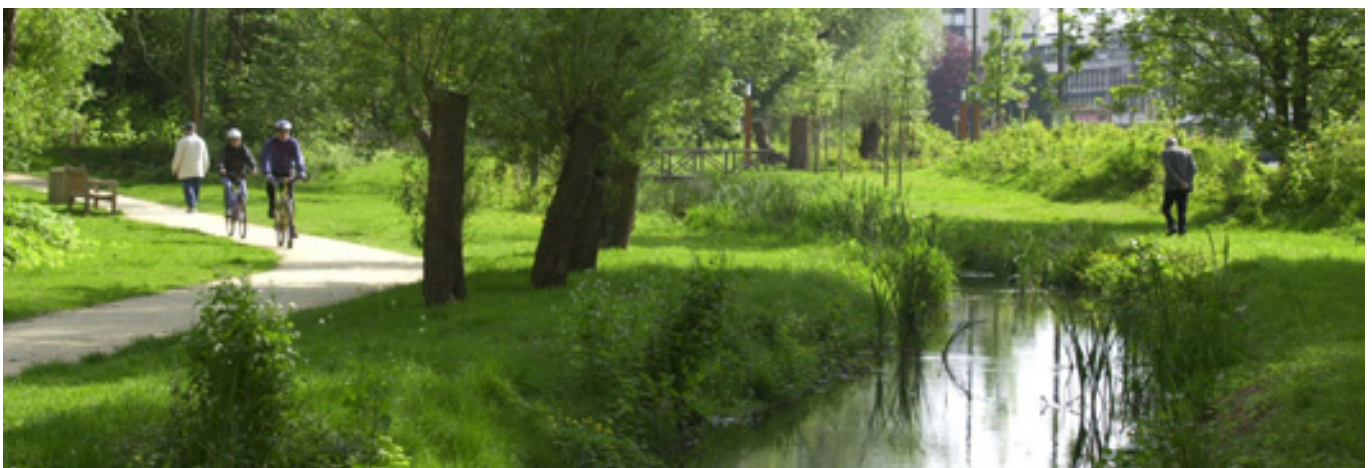
Where there are extensive tracts of natural land, the construction of appropriately sized wildlife crossings over the busiest roads is a necessary to these measures.

Nature knows no administrative boundaries, so collaboration between the local and regional authorities on either side of the regional boundaries would be beneficial, as would the development of a metropolitan vision.

The new nature conservation ordinance gives the Region the possibility of establishing a proactive land ownership policy. The development of such a tool is highly desirable, as it would give the authorities the control they need to consolidate the network.

Good practice example – an achievement: the opening up of the Woluwe (Woluwe Valley)

The River Woluwe, which was culverted between Rue de la Station and Moulin de Lindekemaele during the construction of Boulevard de la Woluwe, has been exposed again. It has replaced a wasteland site with ordinary tree cover with a mixture of trees and wetlands, and restored the supply of the large lake in Parc Malou and given back to the Struybeek Valley its wetland status. The new riverside walk is a nature discovery path with something new to offer all the time as different species come into flower.



5. ENCOURAGE ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT



The context

The quality of management of the various blue and green spaces in Brussels, from the most natural to the most urbanised, is very important for the development of biodiversity. For the development zones and link zones in the ecological network, it is important to go beyond merely protecting environments against urbanisation (areas of green space in the PRAS), and invest in maintaining or even restoring their ecological characteristics. Numerous actors are involved in this: everyone can contribute to the development of the ecological network by multiplying nature-friendly sites and zones which play a bridging role.

The challenges

In addition to being granted an appropriate land use status that enables the natural environment to be integrated into the city more effectively, the green space areas need to be the subject of rules encouraging their active ecological management, if only for a transitional period in the case of the wastelands.

Knowledge of differentiated management is accumulating in the Brussels-Capital Region, and its implementation is increasingly widespread. However, the model function of the Region's green spaces in this respect needs further reinforcement.

The adoption of good practices also needs to be intensified at local level, whether spaces are managed by the authorities (the municipalities, public welfare centres and church fabric committees, transport infrastructure managers), or by private parties (companies and individuals). The application of these techniques, especially mowing techniques and alternatives to pesticides in the struggle against unwanted species, is an important issue for the development of the ecological network.

It would be useful to draw up a list of obstacles and levers for the wider application of the principles of ecological management and the systematic adoption of management plans for large properties.

Actors also need to be helped to implement good practices. Specific instructions in standard sets of specifications intended for public operators would represent a step in the right direction here.

The integration of biodiversity in the Green Neighbourhoods project and the support measures for the ecological development of gardens within housing blocks in partnership with Natagora represent two very promising courses of action.

At present, a management plan for railway embankments is under preparation in partnership with Infrabel, and contacts have been made with Brussels Mobility for more environmentally friendly management of rows of trees and the areas alongside roads.



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Good practice example – an achievement: the Pavé de Liedekerke (St Josse)

Located within a housing block on the former route of a river, the Pavé de Liedekerke is a large playground developed with the participation of local residents. Although the ground is very stony and covered with sand and rolled gravel for safety reasons, it is completely permeable, and extensive plant biomass is to be found in the crowns of native trees which are adapted to the soil conditions. All the biodiversity is in the treetops, enabling the park-keepers/activity leaders to organise activities relating to insect galls right in the city centre.

6. ENSURE AN INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY



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The context

Efforts to promote nature will only bear fruit if they are part of an integrated environmental management policy. In addition to the appropriateness and quality of management, the value of sites is determined to a great extent by external factors such as:

- pressure on water levels: percolation zones being rendered impermeable, the routing of fresh water into collector sewers, drainage, pumping;
- the quality of incoming water: collection of wastewater remains patchy in places, there are shortcomings in the recovery and treatment of runoff water from roads, and collector sewers overflow into nature zones during heavy rainfall;
- organic matter input: garden waste, dog excrement, bird feed, fertiliser from adjacent sites;
- incoming propagules of invasive exotic species.

Very often, the managers of the sites concerned fail to control these aspects. Solutions therefore involve initial awareness-raising followed by the implementation of specific policies, sometimes at other levels and/or by means of partnerships.

The challenges

The adoption and then the rapid and appropriate implementation of the Water Management Plan, and especially the section on the development of the Blue Network, are vital for the biological quality of green spaces in Brussels.

Other problems relating to soil quality, air and climate quality, noise and light pollution, and the management of waste likely

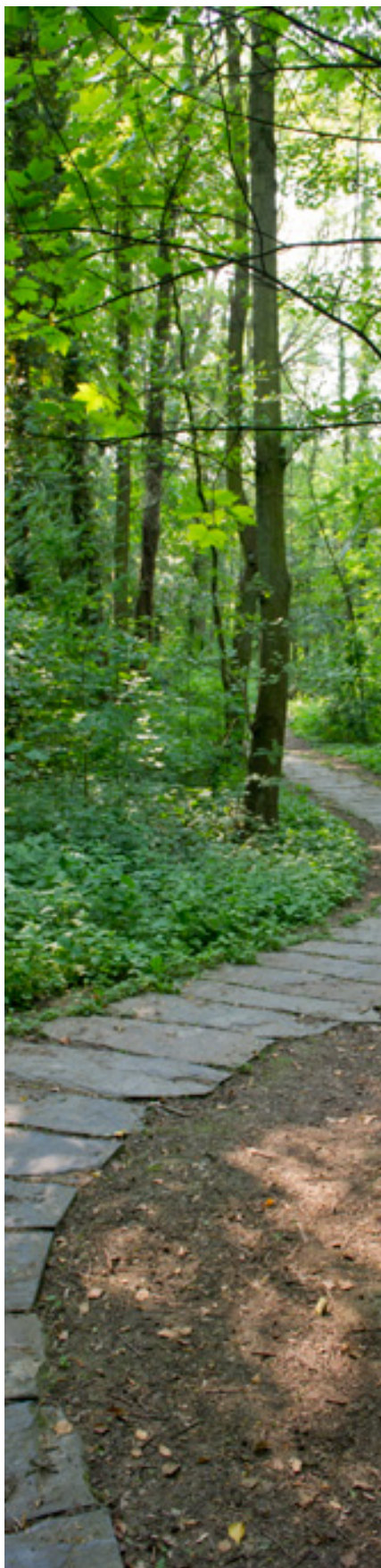
to impact biodiversity, are also economic or public health problems, and are addressed in the context of specific policies. The synergies between these policies and those on nature conservation need to be reinforced so that the planned measures will also benefit wildlife and plant life.

Good practice example – a project: the Canal-Midi vegetable gardens

Under the Sustainable Neighbourhood Contracts scheme, the Canal-Midi Sustainable Neighbourhood flagship project in Anderlecht involves the mass creation of 3,000 m² of urban vegetable gardens. The social goal of this initiative is to enable local people to look after and manage common spaces where they can grow their own vegetables and meet together. These vegetable gardens and a new community restaurant should play an important role in improving local people's eating habits.

Moreover, some of the vegetable gardens must be operated professionally and their production commercialised. Finally, the large-scale creation of vegetable gardens within the area provides an opportunity to do advance work on the cleaning up of particularly contaminated plots of land. The project thus also enables part of the Cureghem district to be restored to more positive environmental conditions.

7. BALANCE ACCESSIBILITY AND NATURAL CHARACTER



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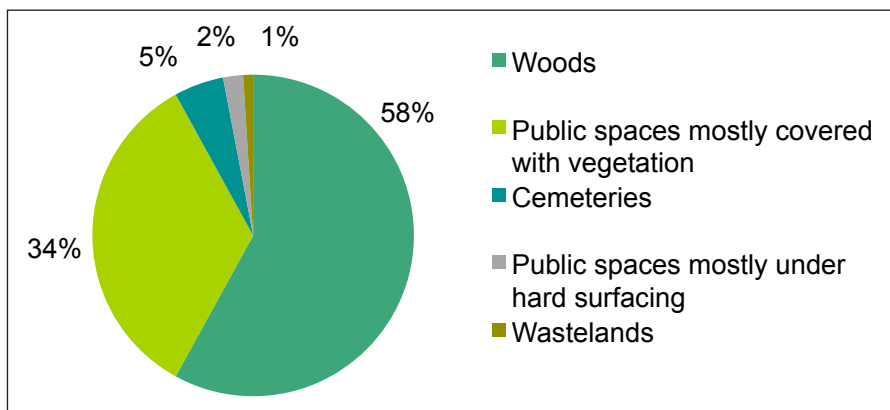
The context

The link between the people of Brussels and nature is vital to the well-being of all, essential to the development of children and necessary to ensure the population's support for conservation and biodiversity development policies.

The green spaces are the subject of numerous divergent social and recreational expectations on the part of local people, yet just under 35% of the green spaces which are covered with vegetation are fully accessible to the public. The inaccessibility of certain wastelands to the public, particularly within the inner ringroad, where the population is dense and green spaces tend to be rarer, is particularly regrettable (see point 3).

However, intense use of sensitive natural spaces can cause damage to soils and vegetation and disturb and frighten wildlife. The effects of these disturbances are all the greater when they take place far from the footpaths, whether caused by walkers or pets (such as dogs) that have been allowed to stray.

Semi-natural spaces are very important leisure spaces. Their large size makes them suitable for activities which enable people to escape from the city atmosphere. In some cities, users call for the vegetation to be natural in character.



Green and recreational spaces accessible to the public in the Brussels-Capital Region
Source: Based on BRAT 2009 – based on the Unitary Green Objects of 1997



Welcoming the public and guiding their movements in the Forest of Soignes in accordance with the draft Structural Plan



The challenges

The link between the people of Brussels and the natural environment needs to be reinforced. Developing the Green Network, opening new sites to the public and improving the accessibility of public natural spaces while preserving the most fragile zones from damage represents a sizeable challenge.

Under certain conditions, maintaining the biological value of semi-natural urban sites is compatible with the presence of the public: well-defined paths, the conservation or introduction of natural barriers such as rocks, dense thickets and fallen tree

trunks help ensure that the public keep to the paths properly. They also contribute to the diversification of the landscape that the public regard as desirable.

To enable the public to stay in touch with a wilder natural environment, it is recommended that access should be opened to certain sites, such as former wastelands, by means of slight adaptations that will enable the spontaneous character of the vegetation to be preserved.

Good practice example – an achievement: the Green Trail

In order to enable the public to discover urban nature, Brussels Environment has created a trail over 60 km in length. It consists of vegetation-lined tracks linking the different green spaces. The Green Trail travels all round the Region. Combined here and there with local walks, it provides new visibility to spaces which have not always been well-known to the public. The route features various information panels, and a handy guide containing maps, photos and descriptions of the landscapes through which users pass is published by Brussels Environment and distributed free of charge. In 2010, a special edition also appeared containing information and illustrations relating to the biodiversity in the green spaces through which the Trail passes.



8. HARMONISE AND EXPAND INITIATIVES TO INFORM, EDUCATE AND RAISE THE AWARENESS OF THE PUBLIC



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The context

Despite the love of nature expressed by the people of Brussels, various surveys have shown that their knowledge about nature is limited. The value of natural species is often underestimated. Observance of the rules on the sustainable use of green spaces and adoption of behaviour appropriate to the development of biodiversity are not yet systematic.

In particular, various environmental infringements are regularly recorded by forest wardens: straying from the footpaths, damaging trees, the soil and wildlife, fly-tipping, lighting fires, and so on. With a view to raising awareness, forest wardens initially issue warnings.

Numerous awareness-raising initiatives aimed at forestalling such behaviour, which could benefit from regional support,

are also organised by various competent parties, including numerous volunteers. This diversity makes communication in this area very rich, but it also reduces the clarity of the messages.

The challenge

Various studies have shown that the challenges associated with natural development in Brussels can only be addressed by means of appropriate public education, including learning behaviour that is respectful of and favourable to the development of nature in the city, and possibly the increased involvement of citizens in management.

The establishment of an overall, integrated strategy would help boost the impact of the messages put out by different sources.

Good practice example – an achievement: the Environment Festival

Every June, Brussels Environment organises the Environment Festival around a specific theme. The public are invited to Parc du Cinquantenaire where they can find information, meet actors involved in the theme, try out activities and so on. This very relaxed and light-hearted occasion raises awareness among nearly 15,000 people per year.



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9. SIMPLIFY STATUSES AND CLARIFY RESPONSIBILITIES

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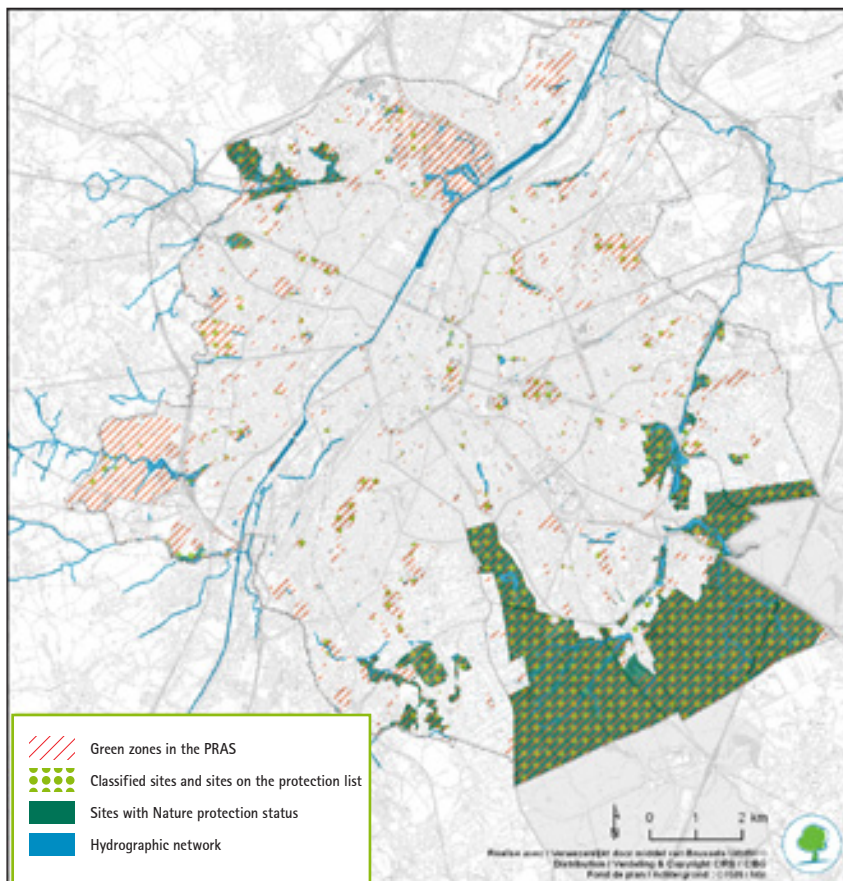
The context

For a long time, the only protection for green spaces outside the green zones was under the legislation on the heritage. Thanks to this policy, many sites were protected against urbanisation.

Today, with the development of nature conservation policy, a single site will often have several protection statuses of varying suitability. This multiplication of statuses and parties responsible for protecting and managing a site demonstrates the importance attributed to green spaces in the city. Sometimes, though, it can be detrimental to a clear definition of priorities and lead to a watering-down of responsibilities and resources, or even give rise to conflict over which options should be favoured.

The Brussels-Capital Region also has an impressive list of site managers: regional authorities, municipalities, private managers, nature conservation bodies, etc. Although this diversity can be a source of great richness, it can cause a lack of consistency in the management of certain spaces, as well as a dispersal of resources.

In the Brussels Region today, 44 Natura 2000 stations and nature reserves are also wholly or partly classified as protected sites.



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Sites protected under various statuses in the Brussels-Capital Region

The challenge

For the sake of greater efficiency and effectiveness in the future, the opportunities and potential for rationalisation of protection statuses for green spaces need to be explored.

To reduce the problems resulting from the Region's institutional complexity and the multiplicity of managers of green spaces, and lay stress on effective management, priority must be given to creating synergies between the different actors and consolidating partnerships.

Good practice example – an achievement: Zavelenberg (Berchem-Ste-Agathe)

Shielded from the ambitions of the developers, this rural landscape which is classified as a protected site and as a nature reserve has been the subject since the 90s of careful management of the seep areas and wetlands, and of grazing in the meadows. Adapted tracks have been improved to allow the public access; surprisingly, the site has had a roe deer living on it for nearly two years. Partridges can also be seen.



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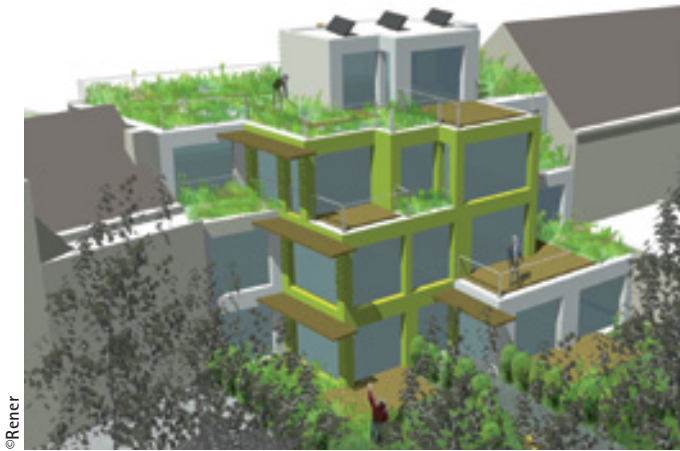


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10. INTEGRATE BIODIVERSITY INTO PLANS AND PROJECTS AND PROJECTS



The context

Greater integration of nature into the city also means taking nature into account more effectively right from the point at which plans and projects are being designed.

When plans and/or projects relating to street furniture or facilities are being drawn up, it is still all too rare for the potential impacts on nature to be taken into account before work begins.

The challenge

To ensure better integration of biodiversity in plans and projects, there is a need to reinforce training, awareness-raising and the provision of guidance for all urban development actors (planners, urban developers, promoters, architects, etc.).

There is also a need for clear project evaluation procedures. The new ordinance on nature conservation represents a great step forward in this respect, but there are still gaps, and additional efforts need to be made:

- to provide better training for administration personnel handling permit applications;
- to carry out appropriate impact assessments in advance of procedures.

It would also be useful to consider a compensation system that would make it possible to preserve the integrity of the ecological network when the mitigating measures associated with plans or projects are inadequate.

Good practice example – a project : the Parc Dubrucq Ligne 28 (Molenbeek)

Under a Neighbourhood Contract, former industrial wasteland sites alongside metro line 28 between Belgica and Pannenhuis will be developed as a park with a linear walk and play equipment. Significant vegetation will be conserved on the embankments, which will remain inaccessible for recreation activities and will hence favour natural biodiversity. The park will also be part of a series of new public green spaces linking Place Emile Bockstael with the Tour Et Taxis site.







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