



Brussels Studies

La revue scientifique pour les recherches sur Bruxelles
/ Het wetenschappelijk tijdschrift voor onderzoek over
Brussel / The Journal of Research on Brussels
Fact Sheets | 2022

Brussels Studies: 15 years and 1,5 million downloads. Snapshots of a city and a local academic journal

Brussels Studies : 15 ans et 1,5 million de téléchargements. Instantanés d'une ville et d'une revue scientifique locale

Brussels Studies: 15 jaar en 1,5 miljoen downloads. Momentopnames van een stad en een lokaal wetenschappelijk tijdschrift

Tatiana Debroux and Margaux Hardy



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/6105>

DOI: 10.4000/brussels.6105

ISSN: 2031-0293

This article is a translation of:

Brussels Studies : 15 ans et 1,5 million de téléchargements. Instantanés d'une ville et d'une revue scientifique locale - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/6085> [fr]

Other translation(s):

Brussels Studies: 15 jaar en 1,5 miljoen downloads. Momentopnames van een stad en een lokaal wetenschappelijk tijdschrift - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/6098> [nl]

Publisher

Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles

Brought to you by Bibliothèques de l'Université Saint-Louis - Bruxelles



Electronic reference

Tatiana Debroux and Margaux Hardy, "Brussels Studies: 15 years and 1,5 million downloads. Snapshots of a city and a local academic journal", *Brussels Studies* [Online], Fact Sheets, no 169, Online since 15 May 2022, connection on 23 November 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/6105> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.6105>

This text was automatically generated on 13 May 2022.



Creative Commons - Attribution 4.0 International - CC BY 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Brussels Studies: 15 years and 1,5 million downloads. Snapshots of a city and a local academic journal

Brussels Studies : 15 ans et 1,5 million de téléchargements. Instantanés d'une ville et d'une revue scientifique locale

Brussels Studies: 15 jaar en 1,5 miljoen downloads. Momentopnames van een stad en een lokaal wetenschappelijk tijdschrift

Tatiana Debroux and Margaux Hardy

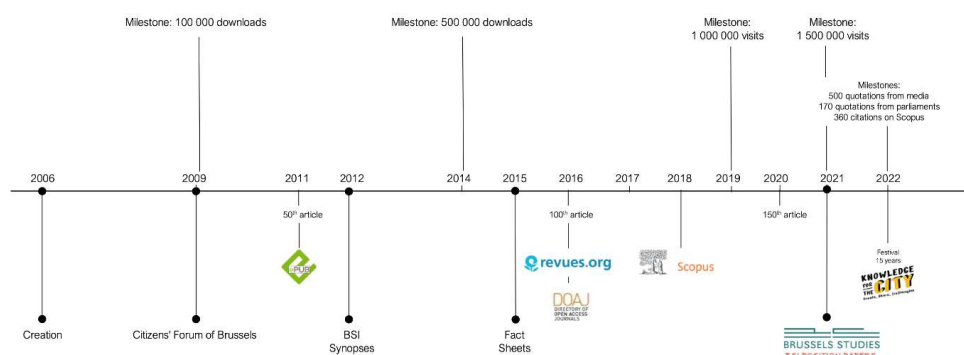
EDITOR'S NOTE

To see the figures in a better resolution, open the article online and click on “Original” below them.

- 1 In December 2021, Brussels Studies celebrated its 15th anniversary. While the editorial approach of the journal – which is to provide a trilingual platform of academic publications on and for Brussels to a wide readership – has remained unchanged since 2006, many adaptations have taken place over the years and with the 168 articles published so far. By means of a few brief facts and figures, we shall take a retrospective look at the journal's editorial ecosystem, the characteristics of the articles published and the impact they have had on debates and public action.

The journal and its development

Figure 1. Development of the journal Brussels Studies, 2006-2022

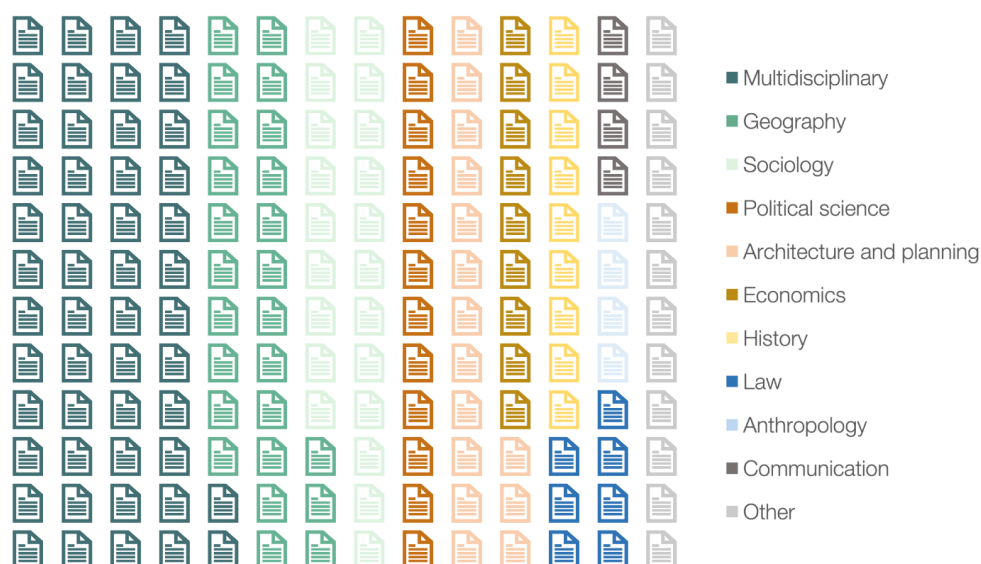


- 2 At the beginning of 2006, three figures from Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles¹ had the idea to create a new academic journal whose editorial line would be the publication of texts on Brussels, and whose principles would be those of interdisciplinarity, multilingualism and accessibility of content. In December of the same year, after a feasibility study and the establishment of an inter-university, interdisciplinary and international academic committee, the idea led to the publication of the very first issue of Brussels Studies, devoted to the central neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification and the future of their populations [Van Crielingen, 2006]. The new journal, financed by a grant from the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) and Innoviris (the BCR research administration), underwent its first major development in 2009 with the publication of thematic analyses, called synopses, which were widely discussed during the Citizens' Forum of Brussels. Intended to provide an overview of the state of knowledge on a theme, this collection was relaunched in 2012 in a longer format, in addition to the “regular” articles, and benefited from the inter-university and multidisciplinary teams resulting from the creation of the Brussels Studies Institute, the research platform on Brussels.
- 3 On the occasion of its 50th article [Moritz, 2011], Brussels Studies began its first technical and aesthetic transformation by launching a new website and the ePub publication format adapted to tablets and smartphones. These improvements contributed to a greater distribution of the journal among the Brussels readership, as the average number of visits per article increased significantly from then on (see figure 4). In 2016 and for its 10 years of existence, the milestone of the 100th article [Bilande *et al.*, 2016] coincided with a new development: the full recognition of the journal by the open access reference directory (Directory of Open Access Journals, DOAJ) and its integration into the academic electronic publishing platform OpenEdition, allowing better distribution and recognition in the academic world. In addition to the emphasis placed by the founders on the dissemination of research results outside academic circles, the choice to make Brussels Studies an academic journal in its own right was made from the start. The aim was to provide researchers with a publication tool which could be used in the context of the growing importance of publications in career evaluation. The integration of the journal into the powerful publication database Scopus (Elsevier) in 2018 was based on the same wish, although the different editorial teams have always been aware of the paradox of adhering to a globalised publication model while publishing work with a strong local foothold and impact².
- 4 In order to guarantee the activity of the journal and its principle of a double-blind³ evaluation of texts (one of the criteria defining an academic journal), Brussels Studies

represents a community which goes far beyond its editorial and academic committees. Since its launch, more than 400 experts in the subjects dealt with have volunteered to review the texts submitted to the editors. While some journals based on a discipline or a theme operate with a fairly constant group of reviewers, the multidisciplinary character of the Brussels journal entails an ongoing search for new reviewers, who are mainly – but not only – from the academic world.

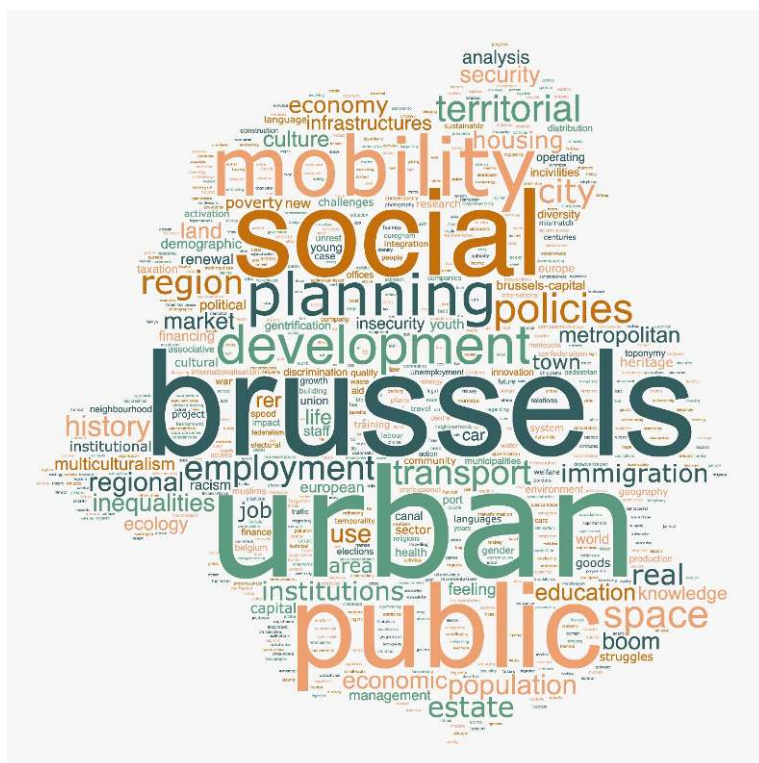
The articles and their authors

Figure 2. Main discipline of the authors of the published articles



- 5 The multidisciplinary character of Brussels Studies is evident when we count the articles according to the main discipline of the authors⁴ (unidisciplinary or multidisciplinary, depending on the authors involved – see figure 2). As the subject of the journal is an urban area, it is not surprising to see two of the dominant disciplines in urban studies, namely geography (25 articles) and sociology (21)⁵. Political science, economics and the disciplines of architecture and planning each have more than 10 publications to date. The “Other” category includes a very small number of texts from the engineering sciences, art history, criminology and health sciences. Finally, with 50 out of the 168 published articles, the “multidisciplinary” category reflects the increasing interdisciplinarity of many research projects on Brussels.

Figure 3. Word cloud based on the titles and keywords of the 168 published articles



The word cloud was created with <https://www.nuagesdemots.fr/>. The more frequent a word is, the greater its size. The colours are only used to improve the readability of the cloud.

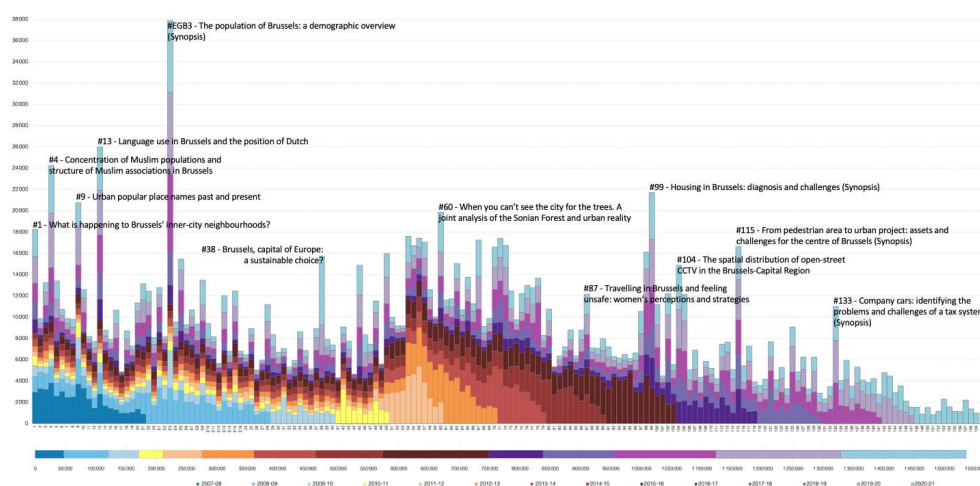
- 6 Another way of understanding the diversity of the articles is to analyse the themes rather than the disciplines (Figure 3). The articles published in Brussels Studies cover several major themes (employment, mobility, politics, housing, education, culture, etc.), often dealt with by the authors by means of a dynamic approach (history, development). Several social and urbanistic phenomena (inequalities, immigration, renewal, etc.) are also frequently recurring themes, reflecting the main socio-spatial issues facing the Brussels region. The low representation of themes associated with environmental and public health issues is striking, given their current importance. It should be noted, however, that authors of articles in the environmental and health sciences tend to favour specialised international journals rather than local or generalist publications. The increase in the number of citizen science initiatives – in particular regarding issues of biodiversity and air quality – could change the situation, as the pressure for accessible and understandable feedback for citizens and co-researchers is growing.
- 7 The 168 articles in the different collections on the website (General Collection, Synopses and Fact Sheets – the latter presenting research results succinctly using graphics) were written by 277 different authors. Most of them come from universities in Brussels (Université libre de Bruxelles: 34 %; Vrije Universiteit Brussel: 17 %; Université Saint-Louis - Bruxelles: 13 %), from Belgian universities with a campus in BCR (Université Catholique de Louvain: 8 %; Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: 5 %) as well as from the public sector (11 % of the published authors conduct research in regional institutions or administrations).

- 8 As for the languages in which the texts were submitted, French dominates with 129 articles out of 168, followed by English with 21 articles (often preferred in the case of inter-community collaboration and by researchers attached to Dutch-language universities) and then Dutch (18 articles, i.e. a little less than 11 %).

Reader profile and reading practices

- 9 The prevalence of French in article submissions is in keeping with the Jane Corrigan2022-04-27T21:17:00JClanguage choice of the journal's subscribers, who receive the issues directly via a monthly newsletter: 70 % have subscribed to the French version (20 % to the Dutch version, 10 % to the English version). However, when we look at which of the three available language versions is actually accessed, the distribution becomes more balanced: 45 % of the articles are read in French, 32 % in Dutch and 23 % in English, which confirms the importance of translation for the Brussels Studies readership.
- 10 In 2016, readers of the journal were invited to fill in a questionnaire designed to identify their profiles and their reading habits with respect to the articles. The results of the questionnaire showed that the typical reader was a resident of Brussels (73 % of 355 respondents) who worked (74 %) mainly in higher education and research (17 %), public administration and management (16 %) and social work (10 %). These last two figures indicate that the journal's ambition to promote the intervention of research results in the public debate is – at least partially – achieved through its readership.

Figure 4. Number of views of published articles according to academic year (with indication of most read articles)



Each stick represents an article. The stacking of colours indicates the number of views per academic year (the colour at the base represents the year of publication). The series ends with the 162nd issue, which was the last article of the 2020-21 academic year.

- 11 While some articles are immediately successful at the time of their publication due to their subject or their topicality, the access statistics also underline the good long-term visibility of the texts, which continue to be downloaded well after their publication. Figure 4 shows this, as well as the articles with the highest number of downloads. There

is a clear interest in issues regarding population and living conditions (synopses on population [Deboosere *et al.*, 2009] and housing [Dessouroux *et al.*, 2016]), the community (language use [Janssens, 2008], the structuring of Muslim associations [Torrekens, 2007]), the urban environment (toponymy [Steffens, 2007] and the coexistence of the city and its forest [Roland, 2012]), as these articles each total more than 20 000 downloads. In total, the texts were accessed more than 1,5 million times, which, in relation to the number of articles published, amounts to an average of 9 000 downloads per text.

Impact

- 12 The impact of the articles is not only measured by their access figures or their citations in other journals. Another way to understand it – still in a quantified manner – is to take an inventory of the quotations in the general press (more than 500 in 15 years) or in the reports of the Belgian parliamentary sessions (170 quotations to date). The joint observation of these two modes of dissemination and use allows us to sketch out an analysis of the way in which public action feeds on the results of research, in particular when it is mentioned in the press. Among the texts which met with such a fate and were notably the subject of parliamentary questions or debates are, for example, several articles and synopses on education and youth [Wayens *et al.*, 2013; Sacco *et al.*, 2016; Veinstein and Sirdey, 2016; Wayens *et al.*, 2016], daily mobility [De Witte and Macharis, 2010; Hubert *et al.*, 2013; Gilow, 2015] and housing [Bernard and Lemaire, 2015; Dessouroux *et al.*, 2016].
- 13 In addition to these texts, the editorial committee also receives original stories from authors, as well as reactions from readers who wish to begin a dialogue with the authors. They illustrate how the texts can influence debates in Brussels and have a true local impact (and not just a theoretical one, based on access figures or use in intra-university debates). A recent example concerns an article questioning the principles of water pricing in the Brussels-Capital Region [May *et al.*, 2021]. As part of a research project on water vulnerability⁶, the authors studied and questioned the pricing system in effect. The publication of their results in the journal allowed the government to agree on a change in pricing and eventually adopt the model proposed in the article. Other feedback received by the editors indicates that the information published in the journal is used by consultancies, the public sector and the non-profit sector in Brussels in their daily work, just as the editors note the increasing use of the publications in student work and research reports, which is an indication of the key role played by the journal in Brussels research.
- 14 Brussels Studies is in fact exceptional, in that it makes Brussels one of the few cities in the world with an academic journal dedicated to it. Its existence relies on the renewed support of the Region as well as on that of a dense academic community [Vaesen and Wayens, 2014], which has adopted the journal as one of the channels for the dissemination and promotion of its research results. The successive developments which Brussels Studies has experienced over the past fifteen years reflect the will to maintain the academic rigour necessary for the research community, while regularly adapting its form and formats to the needs and realities of Brussels.
- 15 The Covid-19 health, economic and social crisis has only reinforced the need for accurate analyses of living and working conditions in Brussels. In order to give more

weight to the voice of researchers who take a position on contemporary issues in the city, the editorial team launched a parallel publication project in 2021 called the BSI Position Papers, which are opinion articles published in a blog which complements the main website of the journal. By reviewing the initiatives put in place for the emergency reception of homeless people during the confinements and the issues associated with the development of the North Metro with respect to the challenges facing the Region, the first texts published [Keymeulen *et al.*, 2021; Fontaine *et al.*, 2022] reflect the ambitions of this new collection. Let us hope that researchers and their partners in the field will take advantage of this new collection in future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliography cited (all publications can be found at brusselsstudies.be)

- BERNARD, N. and LEMAIRE, V., 2022. La régionalisation du « bonus logement » : vers une politique adaptée au contexte bruxellois ? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 83, 26/01/2015. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1251>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1251>
- BILANDE, A., DAL, C., DAMAY, L., DELMOTTE, F., NEUWELS, J., SCHAUT, C. and WIBRIN, A.-L., 2016. Tivoli, quartier durable : une nouvelle manière de faire la ville à Bruxelles ? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 100, 13/06/2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1354>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1354>
- DE WITTE, A. and MACHARIS, C., 2010. Commuting to Brussels: how attractive is “free” public transport? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 7, 19/04/2010. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/755>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.755>
- DEBOOSERE, P., EGGERICKX, T., VAN HECKE, E. and WAYENS, B., 2022. The population of Brussels: a demographic overview. In: Brussels Studies, CFB synopses, no 3, 12/01/2009. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/898>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.898>
- DESSOUROUX, C., BENSLIMAN, R., BERNARD, N., DE LAET, S., DEMONTY, F., MARISSAL, P. and SURKYN, J., 2016. Le logement à Bruxelles : diagnostic et enjeux. In: Brussels Studies, Synopses, no 99, published online on 06/06/2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1346>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1346>
- FONTAINE, M., HUBERT, M., DROBRUSZKES, F., KĘBŁOWSKI, W., KESTELOOT, C. and LACONTE, P., 2022. Un avenir meilleur sans le Métro Nord. In: BSI Position Papers, no 2, 19/04/2022. Available at: <https://bsiposition.hypotheses.org/389>
- GILOW, M., 2015. Déplacements des femmes et sentiment d’insécurité à Bruxelles : perceptions et stratégies. In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 87, 01/06/2015. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1274>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1274>
- HUBERT, M., LEBRUN, K., HUYNEN, P. and DOBRUSZKES, F., 2013. La mobilité quotidienne à Bruxelles : défis, outils et chantiers prioritaires. In: Brussels Studies, Synopses, no 71,

18/09/2013. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1184>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1184>

JANSSENS, R., 2008. Taalgebruik in Brussel en de plaats van het Nederlands. In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 13, 07/01/2008. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/515>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.515>

KEYMEULEN, F., REA, A., ROSA, E. and STRIANO, M., 2021. Une stratégie pour mettre fin au sans-abrisme à Bruxelles. In: BSI Position Papers, no 1. 14/06/2021. Available at: <https://bsiposition.hypotheses.org/165>

MAY, X., BACQUAERT, P., DECROLY, J.-M., DE GUIRAN, L., DELIGNE, C., LANNOY, P. and MARZIALI, V., 2021. Pourquoi ne pas en finir avec la tarification progressive de l'eau à Bruxelles ? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 156, 09/05/2021. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/5494>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.5494>

MORITZ, B., 2011. Concevoir et aménager les espaces publics à Bruxelles », In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 50, 21/06/2011. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1036>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1036>

ROLAND, L. C., 2012. Quand les arbres cachent la ville. Pour une analyse conjointe de la forêt de Soignes et du fait urbain. In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 60, 02/07/2012. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1098>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1098>

SACCO, M., SMITS, W., K. D., SPRUYT, B. and D'ANDRIMONT, C., 2016. Jeunesses bruxelloises : entre diversité et précarité. In: Brussels Studies, Synopses, no 98, 25/04/2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1339>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1339>

STEFFENS, S., 2007. La toponymie populaire urbaine hier et aujourd'hui. In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 9, 01/10/2007. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/441>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.441>

TORREKENS, C., 2007. Concentration des populations musulmanes et structuration de l'associatif musulman à Bruxelles. In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 4, 05/03/2007. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/369>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.369>

VAN CRIEKENGEN, M., 2006. Que deviennent les quartiers centraux à Bruxelles ? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 1, 12/12/2006. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/293>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.293>

VAESEN, J. and WAYENS, B., 2014. L'enseignement supérieur et Bruxelles. In: Brussels Studies, Synopses, no 76, 23/04/2014. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1214>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1214>

VEINSTEIN, M. and SIRDEY, I., 2016. La formation qualifiante : une transition vers l'emploi pour les jeunes chercheurs d'emploi bruxellois peu scolarisés ? In: Brussels Studies, General Collection, no 96, 29/02/2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1324>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1324>

WAYENS BENJAMIN, JANSSENS RUDI, and VAESEN JOOST, 2013. L'enseignement à Bruxelles : une gestion de crise complexe. In: Brussels Studies, Synopses, no 70, 29/08/2013. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1181>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1181>

WAYENS, B., DELVAUX, B., MARISSAL, P., VERMEULEN, S., BENOIT, Q. and RUDI, J., 2016. Besoin en enseignants en Région bruxelloise à l'horizon 2020. In: Brussels Studies, Fact Sheets, no 101, 20/06/2016. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1378>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.1378>

NOTES

1. Nicolas Bernard (jurist), Michel Hubert (sociologist) and Jean-Paul Lambert (economist).
 2. The organisation of the conference *Publish locally (and don't perish!)* on 17 March 2022, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the journal, was based precisely on this observation. Recordings of the presentations are available on YouTube / Brussels Academy / Knowledge for the City - Publish locally #1 to #12 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zYpxDcu5lE)
 3. "Double-blind" means that authors and reviewers do not have access to each other's identity during the editorial process.
 4. This discipline is defined according to the author's degree or main teaching load.
 5. It should also be noted that these two disciplines have always been well represented in the successive editorial committees, which may reinforce their presence, not through a selection bias, but thanks to the personal research connections of the journal's administrators, who are more inclined to submit a text.
 6. <https://msh.ulb.ac.be/fr/team/lieu/projet-hyper> (accessed on 28/03/2022)
-

ABSTRACTS

Brussels Studies recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. While its editorial approach – which is to provide a trilingual platform of academic publications on and for Brussels to a wide readership – has remained unchanged since 2006, many adaptations have taken place over the years and with the 168 articles published so far. The journal has thus succeeded in reaching a varied readership over the years, from the academic world, administrations and public authorities, as well as from the non-profit sector. *Brussels Studies* is in fact exceptional, in that it makes Brussels one of the few cities in the world with a scientific journal dedicated to it. By means of a few brief facts and figures, this fact sheet takes a retrospective look at the journal's editorial ecosystem, the characteristics of the articles published and the impact they have had on debates and public action.

Brussels Studies a récemment fêté ses 15 ans. Si son projet éditorial – offrir à un public large une plateforme trilingue de publications scientifiques sur et pour Bruxelles – demeure inchangé depuis 2006, de nombreuses adaptations ont pris place au fil des années et des 168 articles publiés à ce jour. La revue a ainsi réussi à rencontrer un lectorat varié au fil des ans venant à la fois du monde académique, des administrations et pouvoirs publics ou encore du milieu associatif. *Brussels Studies* constitue de fait un exemple assez exceptionnel, faisant de Bruxelles l'une de rares villes au monde disposant d'une revue scientifique qui lui est dédiée. À travers quelques faits et figures synthétiques, cette *fact sheet* offre un regard rétrospectif sur l'écosystème éditorial de la revue, les caractéristiques des textes publiés et l'impact qu'ils ont pu avoir sur les débats et l'action publique.

Onlangs mocht *Brussels Studies* vijftien kaarsjes uitblazen. De opzet is nog altijd dezelfde als in 2006, namelijk een drietalig platform met wetenschappelijke publicaties over en voor Brussel aanreiken voor een breed publiek. Inmiddels werden 168 artikels gepubliceerd, maar in loop der jaren werden uiteraard heel wat aanpassingen doorgevoerd. Op die manier is het tijdschrift er mettertijd in geslaagd om een gevarieerd lezerspubliek aan te trekken uit de academische

wereld, overheidsinstellingen en het verenigingsleven. *Brussels Studies* is in feite een vrij uitzonderlijk voorbeeld, in die zin dat Brussel als een van de weinige steden ter wereld over een wetenschappelijk tijdschrift beschikt dat enkel en alleen over de stad gaat. Aan de hand van enkele samenvattende figuren en feiten blijkt deze *fact sheet* terug op het redactionele ecosysteem van het tijdschrift, de kenmerken van de gepubliceerde teksten en de impact die ze hadden op debatten en het overheidsoptreden.

INDEX

Keywords: public action, research and development, region, Brussels society

Trefwoorden overheidsoptreden, onderzoek en ontwikkeling, gewest, Brusselse samenleving

Mots-clés: action publique, recherche et développement, région, société bruxelloise

Subjects: 5. éducation – enseignement – formation

AUTHORS

TATIANA DEBROUX

Tatiana Debroux holds a doctorate in geography. Her research and teaching activities are divided between the Cosmopolis urban studies laboratory at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) and Institut de Gestion de l'Environnement et d'Aménagement du Territoire (IGEAT) at Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Since 2020, she has been editor-in-chief of the journal *Brussels Studies* at Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur Brussels (IRIB), Université Saint-Louis (USL-B).
tdebroux[at]brusselsstudies.be

MARGAUX HARDY

Trained as a journalist, Margaux Hardy works as sub-editor of *Brussels Studies* and is the academic coordinator of the Institut de recherches interuniversitaires sur Bruxelles (IRIB) at Université Saint-Louis (USL-B).
margaux.hardy[at]brusselsstudies.be