

# **Understanding the Origins of the Urban Sprawl in Flanders (Belgium) and Recent Attempts to Counter it**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper the author reviews the causes of urban sprawl and its effects on changed urban patterns in the Flemish region of Belgium. Based primarily on literature review, professional observations and practice, the paper discusses phenomena of ribbon development along national roads and islands of investment and development created in the Flemish suburbia. It is argued that the housing policies and subsidies implemented to encourage suburban developments lead to the drift away of the elite and the middle class from the city centre resulting in the degradation of the inner city core. Once the mobility issues, high fuel costs, traffic jams emerged as pressing concerns for the suburban population and crime in the city centre, immigrant ghettos and heritage degradation for the inner city residents. The government decided to take steps to reverse the process which is being implemented now, with new models of community organization, taxation and design options.