Urban Europe

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Part 4
Sustainable cities
The fourth theme is sustainability, in the broadest sense of the word, devoting attention to public health, social cohesion and the environment. In their examination of the social sustainability of European cities, Sako Musterd and Jan Nijman underline the role of government (national, local and European) in many aspects of the social sustainability of cities. This has been an issue where, up until now, European cities have fared exceptionally well in comparison to cities in the rest of the world. Two contributions focus on major public-health issues: Gemma Blok looks at the struggle against public drunkenness, and Coosje Dijkstra and her co-authors at the struggle against obesity and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, especially among city children. The importance of more physical exercise is also reflected in Marco te Brömmelstroet’s contribution on cycling in the city. However, his research is more about the cycling city than the cyclists as he considers the question: how can a cycling city be created and maintained?

One major point of concern is social cohesion in the city. Sako Musterd shows that socio-spatial segregation is growing in European metropoles, albeit slightly less in Amsterdam, and that changes in the role of government are leading to reduced mitigation of socio-economic differences. Jeroen Slot and Laure Michon look at the price of success and the future of Amsterdam amidst further growth and overexploitation. Who are the losers here? And what is the relationship between Amsterdam and the other municipalities in the conurbation? Examining the housing market, Arie van Wijngaarden reveals the limited access to the city for newcomers, while Jeroen van der Veer and Dick Schuiling explain the changing role of housing associations: there is a smaller social rented housing sector, but also less money for maintenance, renovation, and investments for social and environmental sustainability. The last issue in this section is spotlighted by Matthijs Hisschemöller in his contribution on a bottom-up energy transition and the role that neighbourhood initiatives can play here.