



# **CULTURAL PATTERNS AND DYNAMICS**

Research in 5 neighborhoods in Brussels

2020

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank all the participants in this study, who gave us their time and thus enabled us to carry out this research, in particular: the managers and operators of the socio-cultural institutions contacted, the participants in the activities, the inhabitants and passers-by of the neighborhoods, the members of the steering committee of the study. We would also like to thank the associations and institutions that provided us with logistical support in setting up the workshops for the restitution of the results, in particular: the Maison de la Création of Laeken, the commune of Molenbeek, the Athénée Royal Serge Creuz of Molenbeek (Sippelberg site) and the Foyer Vzw.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>A neighborhood with many facets</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Quantitative section .....	8
Qualitative study .....	11
<b>Synthesis from two branches of research</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Guidelines for policy actions</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Comparison with other EU cases</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>46</b>

## COLOPHON

---

### Authors

UGent: Jan Ferwerda - Mart Willekens - Jessy Siongers - John Lievens

ULiège: Elsa Mescoli - Marco Martiniello

### Date de réalisation

Septembre 2019 to Octobre 2020

### Contact

perspective.brussels: Elisa Donders ( [edonders@perspective.brussels](mailto:edonders@perspective.brussels)) - Veronica Pezzuti  
([vpezutti@perspective.brussels](mailto:vpezutti@perspective.brussels))

**Depot legal** D/2020/14.054/22

### Éditeur responsable

Gert Nys, Directeur général adjoint de perspective.brussels –

Rue de Namur 59 – 1000 Bruxelles

# INTRODUCTION

How do we approach and develop the city, based on the cultural practices of the people living in Brussels? What do these cultural practices mean? What drives people and what are the thresholds for participation? How does this translate into urban practice?

In October 2019, perspective.brussels launched a study on the cultural and leisure practices of the inhabitants of Brussels. The study focused more specifically on the inhabitants of five central neighborhoods of the Brussels Canal Zone, an area that is currently undergoing numerous socio-economic and spatial changes.

The study is the result of a collaboration between the University of Liège (CEDEM: Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations) and Ghent (CUDOS: Cultural Diversity: Opportunities and Socialization).

This synthesis combines the figures from the quantitative study (UGent) and the in-depth information from ethnography (ULiège) in order to provide comprehensive insights into the issues. After a brief presentation of the context and theoretical embedding, followed by the applied methods, we give an overview of the main points that emerge from this study. This is done by alternating discussions of quantitative and qualitative findings throughout the report.

## A NEIGHBORHOOD WITH MANY FACETS

The research perimeter is a region containing several facets that share a common historical development, but maintain their own peculiarities (Kesteloot et al., 1997). The region as we know it today has its origins in the second industrial revolution. During the 19th century, heavy industries settled in the northern suburbs of Brussels, triggering an influx of labor that was accommodated in local working-class neighborhoods. Initially, the wealth generated mainly flowed back to the city center and the south-eastern areas of Brussels, while the research perimeter itself was marked by poverty and suffered from the territorial stigma of a 'dangerous' district. Workers with higher and fixed wages moved away from the neighborhood when the development of transport routes and the car industry made commuting an option.

The recently arrived migrants, namely: Turkish and Moroccan communities, found it difficult to find their way to the often fragmented (and western-oriented) social and leisure facilities in the area. A large proportion of these newcomers who settled in this zone between 1950 and 1960 never had the opportunity to improve their situation through paid employment: the economic crisis of the 1970s last century put an end to the industrial era in this zone at a rapid pace. The more affluent workers had already left and for those who stayed a somewhat rundown, neglected neighborhood was left behind, again characterized by severe poverty, unemployment and crime. This is the first facet of the research perimeter as it is still often portrayed in national and international media: the 'poor zone' that outsiders should avoid (Devroe & Ponsaers, 2016; Wiard & Pereira, 2019).

However, this image is too one-sided. The research perimeter is also known as a creative hub where various cultural institutions and alternative forms of culture thrive since the 1970s. Currently there is a high density of cultural and social initiatives and a strong influx of the creative sector (design, fashion, art, film, etc.) that is relatively well integrated within the region. Molenbeek, for example, was the Capital of Culture in 2014 (with financial support from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and the French Community Commission COCOF), highlighting socio-cultural institutions and civic initiatives (Chemetoff, & Maillard, 2014). According to Rouyet (2014), three processes have enabled this area to become a fertile zone for these type of institutions. First, low housing prices and open spaces in abandoned industrial areas provided opportunities for new cultural institutions. An example of this is the Vaartkapoen (VK), a concert hall and community center that in the 1990s and 2000s was able to program relatively well-known names in an old garage hall. Secondly, many pre-existing cultural institutions, such as the Kaaitheater, found accommodation in old, abandoned industrial buildings that were bought up and/or renovated by the Flemish Community. Thirdly, in comparison with other European cities, the vacancy of this type of building has lasted exceptionally long in Brussels because private initiatives lagged behind. As a result, many initiatives and institutions have been able to establish themselves over a long period of time, strengthening their operation and firmly anchoring themselves in the neighborhood. Many of these centers and initiatives still exist today and give the neighborhood an exciting dynamic and creative image.

These two developments, which followed the heyday of urban industry and give the research perimeter its specific character, do not apply exclusively to Brussels. Many European cities have gone through similar processes, and (urban) sociologists and geographers point out the dangers of gentrification processes, with cities such as London, Paris and New York as notorious examples (Carpenter & Lees, 1995). Neighborhoods with an 'edgy' character and cheap housing prices are becoming attractive for new residents with a higher socio-economic position and small start-up companies that focus mainly on services, culture, knowledge and digitalization. This transition then attracts a new leisure and trade offer that focuses primarily on these more affluent residents, thus adapting the neighborhood to the needs of this group. This gentrification process has only partially developed in Brussels, which means that both

aspects of the region are more closely intertwined. Nevertheless, it is difficult to speak here of a natural symbiosis between these two social environments.

Social differences and/or intercultural gaps sometimes make it difficult to shape interactions between population groups. There are plenty of social groups that shape the region. On the northern side, for example, there is a large group of Flemish commuters who work in the companies and government agencies located in this region. The influx of tourists and inhabitants of Brussels from other regions who are attracted to the historical heritage, the water and the more hidden leisure activities also increasingly determine the streetscape of the research perimeter (Chemetoff & Maillard, 2014).

For the local population there are significant barriers to participate in the cultural and associative offer. From a Bourdieusian perspective, we can identify a number of structural barriers that obstruct cultural participation. These types of activities are intertwined in complex processes of social stratification (Bourdieu, 1979). When social or cultural facilities are offered in a city or region without supporting measures, it is mainly the groups with sufficient cultural, economic and social capital that find their way to these facilities independently. For those groups that do not have these forms of capital, there are a number of structural obstacles to overcome (Van Steen & Lievens, 2011; Willekens & Lievens, 2016).

A shortage of economic capital is a fairly concrete financial threshold. A shortage of social capital indicates the absence of a social network that can guide or accompany people in the socio-cultural offer. A shortage of cultural capital is the most abstract but often also the most persistent threshold. It concerns the acquired knowledge, capacities and dispositions of a person (including both knowledge acquired in training and worldviews, preferences and tastes acquired through informal networks). When such competencies and dispositions are not present, or when they are different to those recognized in the mainstream population, there will be little personal interest in participating in cultural leisure activities or not even being aware of the cultural offer. Furthermore, this might lead to a feeling of exclusion (I would not feel at home, that is nothing for me,...). Specifically for newcomers, a number of concrete barriers can be added, such as a language barrier or the feeling that the offer is not attuned to what they see as a valuable (or legitimate) culture.

These social and cultural obstacles can lead to boundaries between inhabitants of the city. In Brussels, these forms of segregation are sometimes less visible, but not completely absent. Research in the larger region of Brussels shows that there is a relatively large group of inhabitants who are confronted with difficult living conditions and who experience thresholds to participate in the sociocultural offer. On the other hand, there is a younger, cosmopolitan-oriented group of cultural omnivores who are attracted to the alternative cultural offerings and intercultural aura of the neighborhood (Cicchelli et al., 2016; Hanquinet et al., 2012).

Although it is a challenge to match the specific needs of these groups, it is precisely this complexity that often gives urban regions a creative dynamic. For example, many initiatives can be found in the Research perimeter that explicitly focus on building bridges between the different population groups, such as the initiatives of the regional integration center Foyer or the Platform Kanal, a citizens' initiative that focuses on an inclusive cultural and leisure offer in the Research perimeter, tailored to the different residents. Established cultural organizations such as the VK and the House of Cultures and Social Cohesion explicitly include inclusiveness and interculturalism as a key objective in their public activities and in the development of their cultural offerings.

With this research project we wanted to bring more clarity to the complex canvas. In doing so, we are not focusing on the entire Research perimeter, but on five specific neighborhoods, namely: Historic Molenbeek, Harbor districts, Old-Laken East, Weststation and the North district.

Before we discuss the results of this research, we briefly present the methodology in the next section.

**FIGURE 1: MAP OF THE PERIMETER. 5 NEIGHBORHOODS.**



# METHODOLOGY

The context and the ambitions of the research project call for a well-considered research design. In particular, a qualitative and quantitative research section has been set up. Via the qualitative part, ethnographic techniques were used to carefully map out the socio-cultural offer in the Brussels Research perimeter and to study the experiences and needs of the institutions and those of the participants. In addition, through survey research we examined the formal and informal cultural practices of the inhabitants and passing visitors of the Brussels Research perimeter, as well as the possible barriers they experience to participate in local socio-cultural initiatives. We explain both methods in more detail below.

## QUANTITATIVE SECTION

Through the quantitative part of the research, we wanted to question a representative sample of residents and other people who use the facilities of the neighborhoods in the research area about their cultural practices and the obstacles and needs they experience in this area. This resulted in 637 survey responses gathered among random passers-by on the street, complemented by 141 pupil-responses gathered by means of an online survey.

A broad conceptualisation of cultural practices was used. Therefore a broad but also detailed list of leisure activities was presented to the respondents in which we gauged their active as well as receptive cultural practices, their participation in arts and heritage as well as in more everyday forms of culture, social and associative life, media use and recreational activities. We also focus, given the multi-diverse composition of the neighborhoods, on a diverse set of cultural practices, and asked about activities both in informal contexts (e.g. with friends or family) and in formal contexts (e.g. in associations or clubs).

Two methods were used: a passer-by survey and a school survey. The passer-by survey was designed to collect information from adults. The data-collection was done via face-to-face street surveys in public places (streets, parks, ...) within the five neighborhoods and were digitally registered via tablets. Both inhabitants and passers-by were questioned. Minors were reached via two specific channels: one being a specific question for parents -who participated in the passer-by regarding the leisure activities of their kids (minus 12) and via digitally shared school surveys (young people between 12 and 17 years of age).

Two methods were used: a passer-by survey and a school survey. The passer-by survey was designed to collect information from adults. The data-collection was done via face-to-face street surveys in public places (streets, parks, ...) within the five neighborhoods and were digitally registered via tablets. Both inhabitants and passers-by were questioned. Minors were reached via two specific channels: one being a specific question for parents -who participated in the passer-by regarding the leisure activities of their kids (minus 12) and via digitally shared school surveys (young people between 12 and 17 years of age).

### **Passer-by survey**

The questionnaire of the streetsurvey was designed in four languages: Arabic, French, Dutch and English and conducted by a multilingual team of interviewers. Because the interviews were conducted with passers-by in public places and also in neighborhoods with many profiles that are more difficult to reach and -sometimes reluctant to participate (people in poverty, with migration background, language barriers,...), extra care was taken with regard to the set-up:



- > A careful **selection of public places**, taking into account the spatial distribution and the public we expected to meet there (e.g. seniors at markets, mothers at school gates, ...).
- > **Matching**: the interviews were conducted by a pool of interviewers that was composed to mimic the image of the neighborhood via language, gender and origin. All interviewers lived or studied in Brussels, interviewers worked as part of a team and in each team a language proficiency of Dutch, French and Arabic, was present, next to an overall understanding of English.
- > **Modelling the setting**: a more inviting setting was created e.g. by offering coffee and tea or by fixing the location of the interviewers strategically. At the schools we sometimes provided drawing materials to animate the children while parents filled in the questionnaire.
- > **Use of incentives**: Respondents received a 5-euro voucher -that could be used in multiple stores (including supermarkets)- in exchange for their cooperation.

These methods led to the creation of a representative sample of 637 respondents reflecting the diversity of the research perimeter (see Table 1).

Almost half of the respondents (49.2%) are inhabitants of the perimeter; the remaining group can be divided into frequent passers-by (35.9%, visit the perimeter 4 times or more per month) and occasional passers-by (14.9%; less than 4 times per month).

**TABLE 1 : SAMPLE AND POPULATION DATA (IF AVAILABLE), PERCENTAGES (N=637)**

	Sample (%)	Population (%) <sup>a</sup>
<b>Gender</b>		
Man	46,9	48,2
Woman	53,1	51,8
<b>Age</b>		
18-29 years	25,5	25,7
30-44 years	34,6	33,1
45-64 years	30,8	29,7
65 and older	9,1	11,5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<i>First registered nationality<sup>b</sup></i>	
Exclusively Belgian background	20,7	29,5
Moroccan nationality ( with or without) Belgian nationality.	42,0	31,1
Nationality other than Moroccan (combined or not with Belgian nationality)	37,3	39,4

<sup>a</sup> Source: BISA (Brussels Institute of Statistics and Analysis) and Statbel (General Directorate of Statistics - Statistics Belgium) (National Register).

<sup>b</sup> Underestimation of persons with a migration background (especially for persons with a Moroccan background), among other things because since 1991, one automatically obtains Belgian nationality at birth if at least one parent is born, raised and resident in Belgium.

## School inquiry

The questionnaire that was developed for the passer-by survey also formed the basis for the school survey. If possible, both questionnaires were kept the same to allow for comparisons, but some changes were necessary to make the questionnaire more attuned to young people. We did this by, for example, also paying attention to cultural participation at school, youth culture (e.g. interests in music, dance, gaming and dealing with culture/leisure on social media) and the identity of young people within their social networks.

Initially, this school survey was planned to be conducted in the schools themselves in class by the use of tablets. Because schools closed in mid-March due to the COVID-19 measures, we had to replace the original set-up of written classroom surveys with online surveys. This was not feasible for many schools and had a major impact on this part of the research. In the perimeter, we found only three secondary schools willing to distribute the surveys digitally to their students: two French-speaking schools with a mixed educational offer (general, technical and vocational), and one Dutch-speaking school offering technical and art education. These schools are respectively located in - or near- the neighborhoods: West Station, Old Laeken East and Historic Molenbeek.

The questionnaires were sent via the online learning platforms (e.g. Smartschool) in the schools, or via the e-mail addresses of the pupils that the schools had collected. The surveys were sent to all pupils. This was the most appropriate procedure given the circumstances. After a first invitation to participate, two reminders were sent. Although the collaboration with the schools went smoothly, this method resulted in fewer surveys than hoped for. In total, we registered 141 usable surveys: 79 fully completed and 62 partially completed questionnaires, which were completed for more than half. Thus, we can hardly speak of a representative sample. For example, 70% of pupils are females and enrolled in general secondary education. The self-selection of the digital survey creates biases in the results.

The fact that some of the pupils were not reached through the survey calls for caution in the interpretation of the research results. Nevertheless, the results can be used to make comparisons between young people (12 to 18 years old) and adults (18+). In addition, the surveys still provides insight into the cultural experience of a large number of young people within the neighborhoods of the study, although we should bear in mind that this group consist of an overrepresentation of more avid cultural participators.

## QUALITATIVE STUDY

The qualitative study of the cultural offer and participation conducted by the researchers of the CEDEM was based on a series of research tools, including:

- > explorations of the neighborhoods ;
- > semi-directive interviews with stakeholders (the people responsible of the cultural institutions involved in the study and some members of the staff);
- > participant observations of the organized activities; semi-directive interviews with participants;
- > collection of visual data (photos and videos taken by the researchers or received from participants, and maps completed by the interviewed participants).

A total number of 21 participant observation activities were carried out within the initiatives organized by the cultural institutions contacted (various workshops, theatre performances, courses, various events within the institutions and in the public space, etc.), as well as 20 neighborhood exploration activities. In total, 34 resource persons were interviewed and 19 participants were involved in formal interviews or relatively structured discussions, while others were interviewed informally during observations. Overall, we can count approximately 150 participants in the qualitative phase of the research, including any person with whom the researchers were able to exchange, formally or informally, thus gathering the information and data mobilized in the analysis. Visual materials are also part of this data.

These materials have multiple functions. First, they allow us to go back to the ethnographic situation, by identifying the elements that were present and noted down through writing, or those that have been missed during initial observation. Secondly, they provide us with further opportunities to discuss the results of this study, since these materials could be used to illustrate the situations observed through other means than the written and spoken words, so as to accompany the verbal with the visual, through images, and with sound, reproducing the contents of certain activities. Similarly, the use of maps of the neighborhoods during the interviews with participants enabled the interviewee to note the cultural places that he or she frequented. The idea was to propose maps of the neighborhoods, in which the interviewee could note the cultural places that he or she frequented. More specifically, the maps allow the visualization of the movements in the neighborhood of the person concerned, in view of his or her cultural interests. The reading of these cards was done on the basis of notes written by the interviewee himself/herself or by the researcher during the interview, and on the basis of the oral description recorded during the compilation of the map.

The combination of different but complementary methodological tools made it possible to deal appropriately with the issues raised by each ethnographic encounter. The recorded semi-directive interviews were considered (and proved to be) appropriate for interviewing the heads of the cultural institutions, as they are fairly familiar with this type of approach and because they act as official representatives of part of the cultural offer in the area. Similarly, this tool has been used with highly committed participants, that acted not only as participants in the activities, but also, in several cases, as promoters of some smaller cultural initiatives in the neighborhoods. For these reasons, it was possible to agree and carry out more structured interviews, in which interviewees were also asked to complete a map visually describing their cultural activities. At the same time, participant observation in a series of initiatives organized in the area made it possible to collect additional data on the cultural participation of a more diverse panel of participants, ranging from the most to the least regular. Within these observations, as well as through the explorations of the area, the researchers were able to take or collect photos and videos whose content is integrated and offers support to the study.

The lockdown of the population in Belgium, initiated on 18 March 2020 to combat the spread of Covid-19, did not negatively impact the ethnography, which was already well advanced at that time, but it certainly had an impact on certain activities. In particular, some of the planned appointments were cancelled and, above all, no more cultural activities could take place, which prevented the continuation of the participant observations and contact with other participants. Consequently, the methodologies were adapted to the new context in order to collect additional data and complete the ethnographic approach. More specifically, the researchers organized interviews by videoconference with resource persons who were available and supportive of this discussion modality. Others, instead, were unable to give the researchers time, also because of other priorities emerging from the situation, which particularly affects the cultural sector and its workers. Considering this aspect also made it possible to turn to materials available online that were integrated into the analysis (documentaries, Facebook pages, websites). In addition, the research participants who had already been met were asked again to give a short feedback on the current situation. Specifically, the researchers sent an email asking whether certain activities had been maintained and in what form, whether the public was soliciting the cultural institution during the lockdown, and what plans were being considered for reopening.

Following the fieldwork, the preliminary results of the study were presented and discussed with inhabitants and resource persons who had not previously been met in three workshops organised respectively in Laeken, Molenbeek and in a secondary school located within the studied area. In total, about 45 people participated. The discussions focused on some of the participation figures collected through the quantitative survey, as well as on the definition of “cultural initiative” for the inhabitants and associations working in the area, the methods of communication, the contents, possible conflicts and tensions and finally the recommendations resulting from the study. The discussions held confirmed the findings of the study, but also made it possible to make certain clarifications and nuances that were incorporated into the analysis.

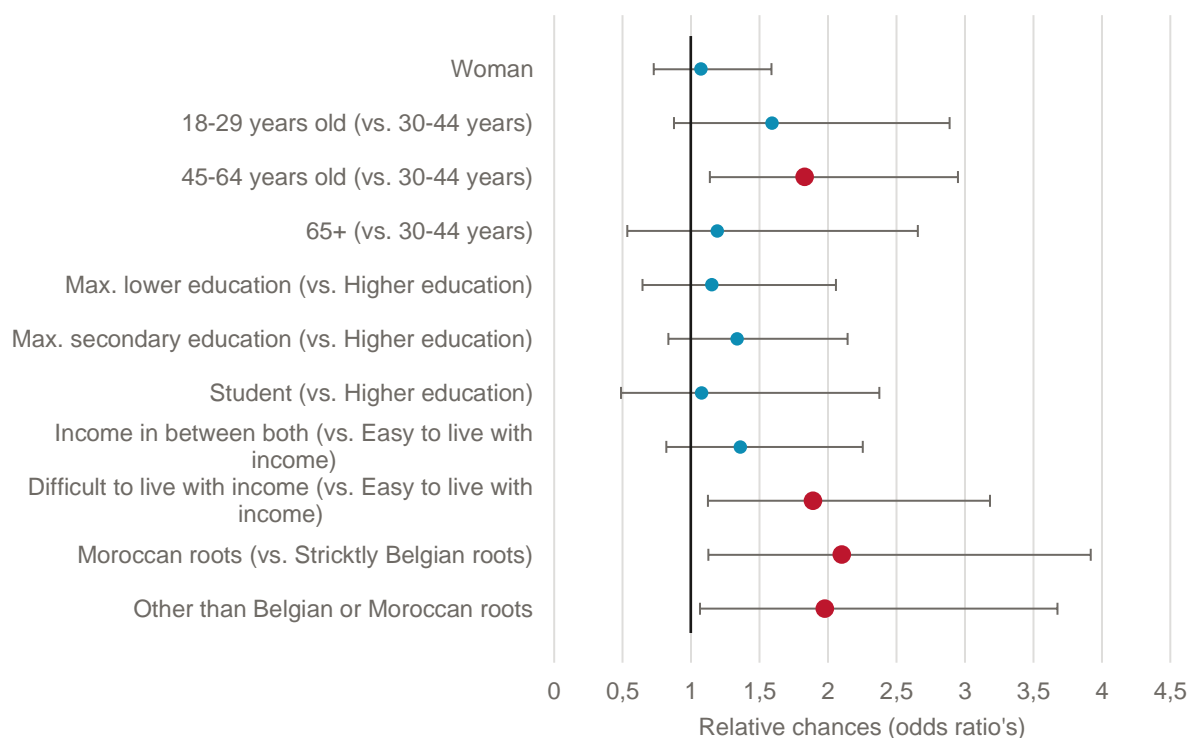
# SYNTHESIS FROM TWO BRANCHES OF RESEARCH

Although they rely on different methodologies – quantitative tools to collect and analyse data for CuDOS, qualitative ones for CEDEM –, the two research streams led to common or complementary results.

This part is devoted to convey the key results from this research. The quantitative part generated numbers that indicate differences between, for example, those who consume culture and those who do not. These social divides and correspondences however do not make up the whole story. By adding the results from the qualitative part -signaled by the use of italic- to the quantitative results we evoke a conversation between the two branches of research and try to get a grip on the dynamics of cultural life in a diverse neighborhood. Finally, each item is complemented by visual material and quotes straight out of the research report.

1. There exists a **need for culture and information** in the different neighborhoods. Respectively 23% and 28% explicitly do not find the present cultural offer and communication sufficient. The demand for more culture and information is far stronger than the demand for a larger commercial offer. These needs also tend to be larger for people who have lower levels of income, indicating that leisure, culture and the communication about leisure and cultural opportunities in the area are more pronounced for those living in precarious circumstances. These needs are interlinked.

**FIGURE 2: SOCIAL DIFFERENCES AND THE NEED FOR AN EXPANDED CULTURAL OFFER: RELATIVE PROBABILITIES<sup>1</sup> (ODDS RATIOS WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS)**



Red points and axes not intersecting the 1-axis indicate statistically significant differences, right of the 1-axis means a greater relative probability than the reference group, left of the 1-axis means a smaller relative probability.

<sup>1</sup> Odds ratios fluctuate around the value 1 depending on whether the category is associated with a higher or lower probability than the reference category of having a positive answer to the dependent variable (here: need for a more extensive cultural offer). Here, for example, we note an odds ratio of 1.9 for people who have more difficulty making ends meet. This means that compared to the people who make a living easily (reference group), people who have more difficulty making ends meet are almost twice as likely to need a more extensive cultural offer (compared to not) and controlled for the other characteristics. Note that with odds below 1 it is better to reverse the equation. An odds ratio of e.g. 0.5 would then mean that compared to the people who have difficulty making ends meet (reference group) are 2 times (=1/0.5) less likely to express a need for a more extensive cultural offer and this controlled for the other characteristics.

*The cultural infrastructures and their offer in the area need to take into account the life conditions and priorities of the residents of the neighborhood, as well as the precariousness of several situations, as it is expressed through interviews and observations. Because of the socio-economic reality wherein the cultural institutions operate, the latter often have an inclination towards social sensitivity. This echoes a central theme in the study, namely that culture – and art – is not only conceived in aesthetic terms, but also developed as a tool to reach social aims, including learning and socialization processes. In this way, beyond mere entertainment, cultural activities are meaningful for individuals and contribute to their well-being as well as to provide them with means to actively participate in the context where they live.*

Quotes:

*« [n]otre mission c'est d'abord de voir quels sont les besoins de ces populations et de construire avec eux des activités qui sont demandées par les gens eux-mêmes, et qui puissent avoir une importance au niveau de la cohésion sociale, [...] et de l'inclusion » (RP3, entretien, 20/11/2019).*

*« il y aura une communion de valeurs, d'esprit, pour se dire on ne fait pas de l'art pour de l'art » (RP32, entretien, 23/4/2020).*

*« c'est ce qui nous permet d'être en lien étroit avec les habitants, qui viennent les trouver pour des questions très pragmatiques [...] qui ne viennent pas nécessairement interpeller des centres culturels pour venir faire de la peinture [...], c'est d'autres préoccupations » (RP20, entretien, 18/2/2020).*

2. In most of the neighborhoods, most attention is claimed by a few cultural institutions. Knowing a cultural organization however is not a guarantee for a visit but nonetheless increases its likelihood. The scope of recognition depends on the visibility of the organization (for example KANAL: known by more than 60% in North district), but it is also the result of the degree of embeddedness in the social fabric of the neighborhood (like Maison des cultures et de la cohésion social in Historical Molenbeek: known by 50%). Some organizations focus on specializations such as dance and theatre or focus on a specific segment of the population (for example kids) and therefore do not reach such a broadly shared cognition.



**TABLE 2: KNOWLEDGE OF AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE DISTRICT (BASED ON PHOTOS): PERCENTAGES**

	Known by (%)	Visited by %
<b>Historic Molenbeek (N= 181)*</b>		
L'Epicerie	16,0	6,1
Huis van Culturen en Sociale Samenhang / Maison des Cultures et de la Cohesion'	50,3	31,5
MIMA	39,2	16,0
La Fonderie	33,2	14,4
Rive Gauche	18,8	9,4
KANAL Centre Pompidou	47,5	28,2
<b>North district (N= 109)</b>		
CréACtions	20,2	6,4
Centre Pole Nord	46,8	26,6
Kaaitheater	22,9	3,7
KANAL Centre Pompidou	62,4	6,4
ABC (arts basic for children)	15,6	26,6
<b>Old-Laeken East (N= 172)</b>		
Maison de la Creation	47,1	8,2
Nekkersdal	54,1	9,4
Bibliotheek van Laken	74,4	14,9
L'Horizon	12,2	1,3
Théâtre les Coeurs de Bois	7,0	0,5
<b>Harbour district (N= 71)</b>		
Parckfarm	29,6	29,7
Centre Communautaire Maritime CCM	45,1	33,7
Allee du Kaai	28,2	52,3
Magasin 4	23,9	4,7
Kaaitheater	32,4	1,7
<b>Weststation (N= 95)</b>		
D'Broej – Centrum West	6,3	1,1
La J	7,4	5,3
Ultima Vez	16,8	4,2
Raffinerie	12,6	5,3
Recyclart	14,7	5,3
Vaartkapoen (VK)	5,3	2,1

*The most effective way of involving residents of the neighborhoods in cultural activities is what the interviewees among the representatives of cultural institutions define as “**proximity communication**”. It is crucial to inform residents about cultural initiatives through direct and personal communication, almost by going door-to-door. Such process requires deep knowledge of and long-term connection with the area. In addition, mouth-to-mouth communication among participants and neighborhood relations foster the involvement of new people. Moreover, the engagement in one institution may facilitate the engagement in neighboring institutions contradicting the idea of competition among institutions (although it may be present in some cases, for example when there is limited availability of funds or when organizations do not communicate with each other), and rather encouraging the creation of **collaborations and partnerships**.*

Quotes :

« [...] on essaie aussi d'avoir les gens du quartier, alors on doit les sensibiliser, on doit faire du porte à porte » (RP23, entretien, 21/2/2020)

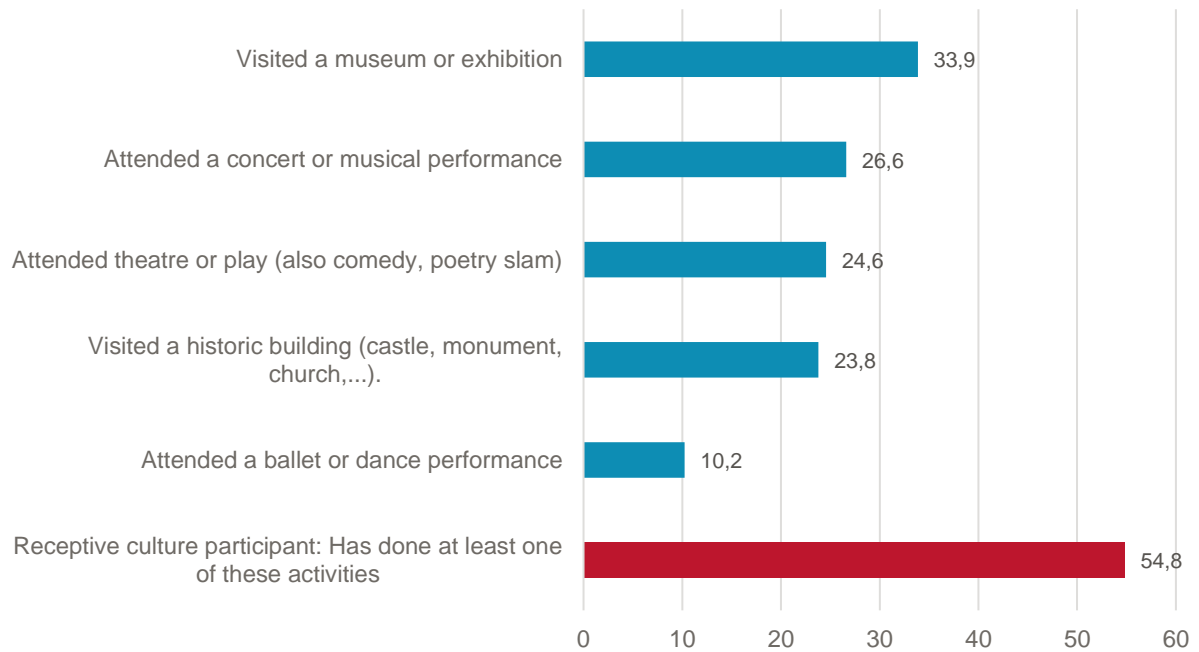
« l'important c'est le contact, il faut être en contact avec les gens. C'est pas via des bêtes flyers ou Facebook qu'on arrive à nouer une relation de confiance qui fait que les gens voudront venir » (RP21, RP22, entretien, 21/02/2020).

« La confiance qui s'est installée, ça c'est super important. Parce que les gens du quartier sont méfiants. Et donc il faut instaurer une confiance » (RP9, entretien, 17/12/2019).

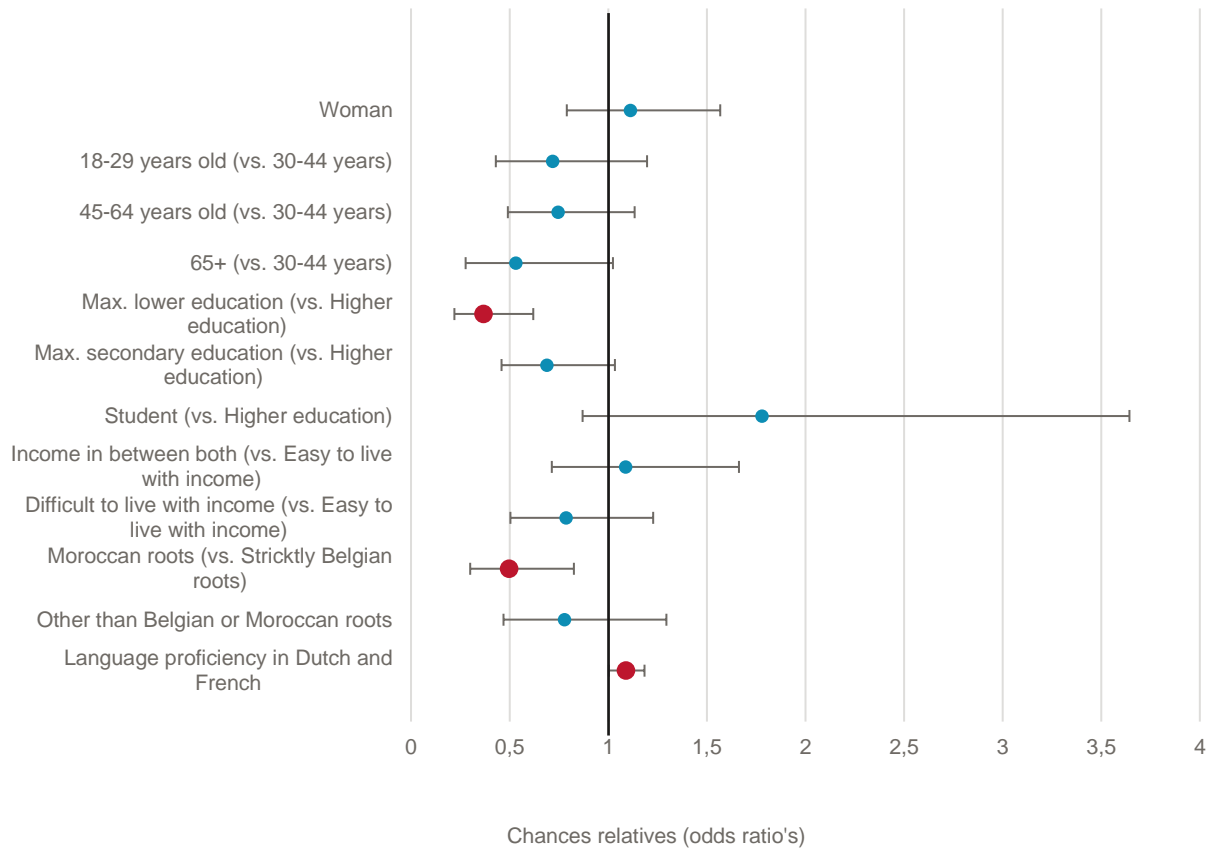
« [...] c'est beaucoup d'énergie d'aller chercher les gens, même les voisins, les gens proches ici, on doit aller les chercher, les enfants qui jouent dans la cour, on doit leur dire, vous voulez venir [à l'activité culturelle] » (RP24, entretien, 4/3/2020).

3. The **rate of participation in receptive culture** is rather high (55%). In the sample, the occasional passer-by, who live outside the area of study, have the highest chance of being a receptive art participant (66%), indicating that the receptive disposition is rather present amongst the people who live outside the perimeter. Secondly, the city-context provides the stage upon which access to a large cultural offer is facilitated. The access to receptive cultural representations however is unequally distributed and reveals some social divides. In statistical terms, lower levels of education, having Moroccan-roots and lower levels of Dutch and French proficiency all negatively affect participation in the so called receptive offer of art and heritage.

**FIGURE 3: RECEPTIVE CULTURAL PARTICIPATION: PERCENTAGES (N=635)**



**FIGURE 4: DIFFERENCES IN RECEPTIVE CULTURAL PARTICIPATION: RELATIVE PROBABILITIES (ODDS RATIOS WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS)**



Red points and axes not intersecting the 1-axis indicate statistically significant differences, right of the 1-axis means a greater relative probability than the reference group, left of the 1-axis means a smaller relative probability.

*Knowing the specific codes and contents of a cultural initiative seems to be an important factor to facilitate participation. Hence the idea to propose topics related to people's needs and interests, or to involve them in a gradual process of familiarization when the artistic practices and contents are new. The cultural institutions engage with social questions within the area and respond by trying to tackle a set of relevant concerns (illiteracy for example, or youngsters' issues). However, in an area that is marked by socio-economic precariousness, art in itself is not necessarily a priority for inhabitants. Also, people in the neighborhoods may not always recognize themselves in the proposed cultural content, especially if it is disconnected and distant from the urban issues that resonate in the area. Instead, **forms of art that value the lived experiences in the neighborhood** emerge as more appropriate and can also foster change in negative imaginaries.*

Quotes :

*« [...] raconter une nouvelle histoire de Bruxelles. [...] on met l'accent sur cette diversité extraordinaire de Bruxelles, [...] [ce qui permet de] redécouvrir la ville, parce qu'en se promenant avec ces nouveaux bruxellois [...] j'ai appris des choses. [...] on est une ville avec cette caractéristique de diversité, de langues différentes [...] que certaines personnes vont voir comme quelque chose de négatif, et nous on cherche à contribuer à notre échelle à pouvoir en faire quelque chose de positif, un enrichissement. [...] et donner la possibilité à beaucoup de personnes qui sont ici, qui souvent sont en difficulté, de leur donner droit à la parole » (responsable association, notes de terrain, 23/1/2020).*

*« nous ne faisons pas des choses pour eux, mais des choses avec eux. [...] les habitants sont informés, responsabilisés, outillés » (Opérateur d'une association, documentaire visionné le 22/4/2020).*

*« c'est toutes des histoires de vie incroyables, [...] on relie à la vie actuelle et aux préoccupations actuelles. Si on veut intéresser les gens, il faut savoir d'où ils viennent, ce qui les intéresse » (RP8, entretien, 12/12/2019).*

*« on a fait un gros travail d'analyse partagé du territoire [...], c'est-à-dire aller à la rencontre des gens, c'est quoi pour vous la culture, le culturel, ce que vous aimez, comment est-ce que vous vous sentez ici, etc., quel est le sens de tout ça. Et donc en croisant toutes les infos, les rencontres, on a pu déterminer des enjeux prioritaires et des objectifs à remplir » (RP20, entretien, 18/2/2020).*

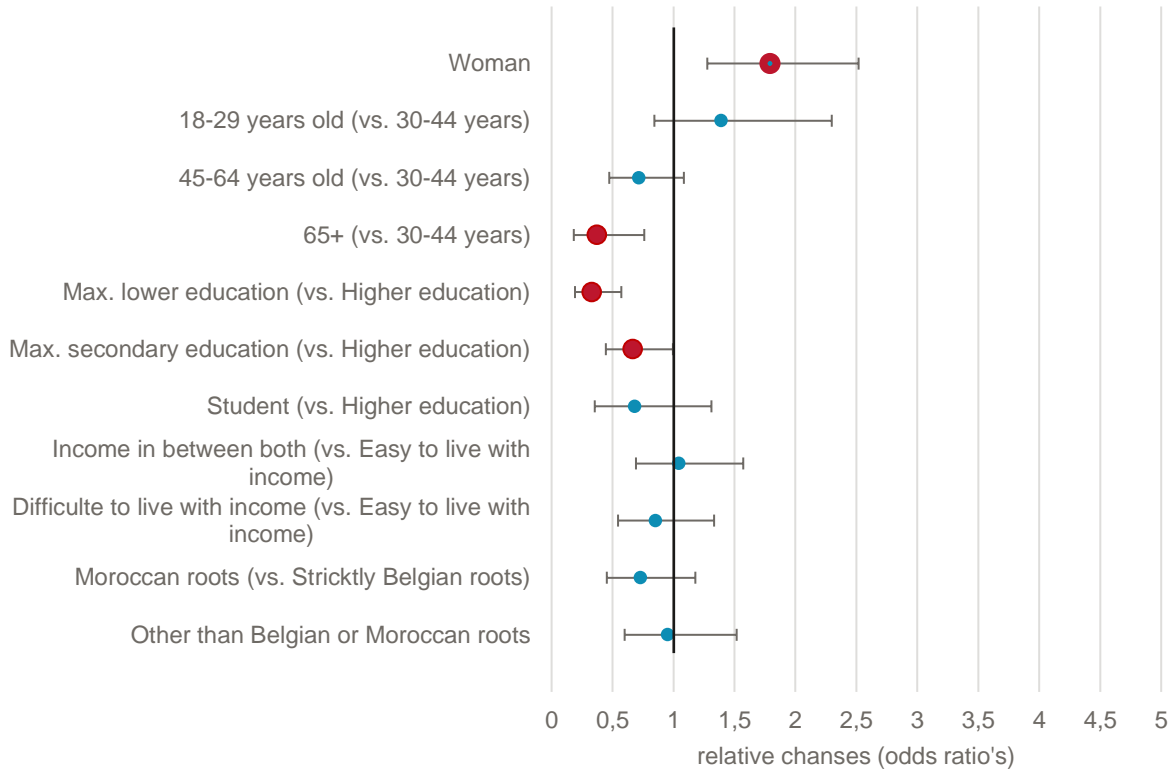


4. **Creativity is a cultural engine** in the area. The rate of creative engagement is quiet high (45%). Amongst the more popular are handcrafts (16%), visual arts (16%), and music (13%). For the pupils (-18) the creative involvement is even broader and the specific interests shift more towards creative writing and dancing next to visual arts and music (Figure 6). Although these activities are mostly performed inside the house, the demand for an organized support of the creative hobby is substantial.

**TABLE 3: CREATIVE HOBBY: PERCENTAGES (N=635)**

	%
Handicraft or work: sewing, weaving, flower arranging, creative wood or metal processing ...	16,2
Pictorial arts (sculpting, ceramics, painting, glassware, goldsmiths art, drawing, ...)	16,2
Making music (instrument, electronic,...) or singing	13,4
Creative writing (texts, poems, diary, blog, ...)	12,4
Dancing (ballroom dancing, urban dance, folk dance, jazz, classical dance, ...)	11,5
Audio-visual art (photography, video, ...)	8,5
Theatre (stand-up comedy, poetry slam, musical ...)	6,8
Circus (acrobatics, magic tricks...)	4,4
<b>Creative hobby (total, practiced at least 1 time over the last 6 months)</b>	<b>52,6</b>
<b>Creative hobby (total, at least 1 creative hobby practiced at least 4 times over the last 6 months)</b>	<b>41,1</b>

**FIGURE 5: DIFFERENCES IN CREATIVE PARTICIPATION: RELATIVE PROBABILITIES (ODDS RATIOS WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS)**



Red points and axes not intersecting the 1-axis indicate statistically significant differences, right of the 1-axis means a greater relative probability than the reference group, left of the 1-axis means a smaller relative probability.

*The ethnography shows that creative culture acquires further value if it leads to **useful learning**, relevant in daily life. Moreover, the potential for individuals' expression within cultural initiatives that provide spaces for creative action and that allow for the **co-construction of cultural contents** increases and stabilizes the engagement of participants. The creative cultural sphere is a site where horizontal relationships promote the sharing of experiences. The idea is that everyone's interests and talents must be valued and enhanced through creative, informal, and bottom-up practices that provide with alternative spaces to the constraining – and often judging and discriminating – institutional fields.*

Quotes:

*« dans la société de manière générale il y a assez peu de place pour ça, pour la créativité, pourtant ce sont des choses essentielles dans la vie de tous les jours, mais l'école a pris le choix de ne pas les mettre en avant pour plein de raisons, et là il y a justement un endroit où ils peuvent développer ça, où ils peuvent libérer cette créativité, ce ressenti, [...] parfois on essaie d'étouffer ça, il doit être démontré, démontrable, et là on est dans quelque chose, je le fais comme ça parce que je le sens comme ça, c'est à l'instinct et je ne le comprends pas, sans aucune rationalité » (RP26, entretien, 4/3/2020).*

*« les personnes que je rencontre, [...] quand je dis, je suis à Molenbeek, on me dit, oh, tu es à Molenbeek ! Avec tout ce qui s'est passé, mais moi je trouve que Molenbeek, tu peux passer ton temps, tu remplis ton agenda, tu fais plein de choses à Molenbeek ! [...] je vais à [l'institution culturelle], je rentre à 11h du soir, je suis à pieds, je connais plein de personnes qui sont comme ça. Mais j'en connais d'autres qui disent, ah non ! [...] c'est très mitigé. Le racisme ça existe aussi, c'est pas éradiqué » (Jacinthe, entretien, 24/1/2020).*

*« c'est l'audace artistique, c'est aider chacune et chacun à se connecter à sa propre créativité. [...] [ailleurs] on place dans des canevas qui sont trop rigides, qui peuvent presque parfois devenir dogmatiques par rapport à une certaine approche, alors qu'en fait c'est de l'ordre de l'intuition, du plaisir, et puis ça peut donner lieu à des disciplines, à une pratique plus appuyée, on apprend et on construit, mais le truc à saisir, c'est s'autoriser à se connecter à quelque chose » (RP20, entretien, 18/2/2020).*



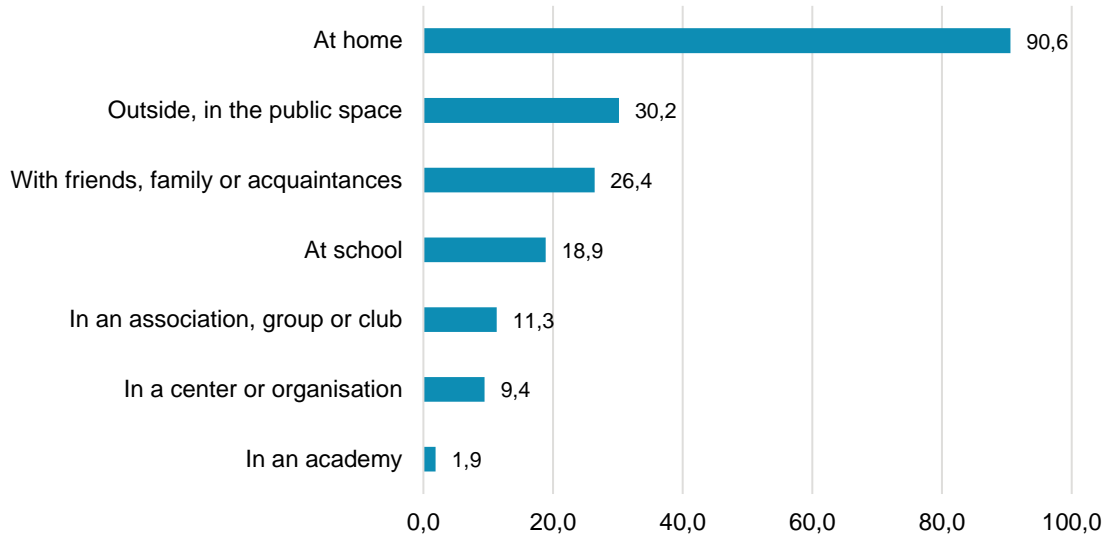


5. Culture is portrayed as a **supportive framework and expressive outlet for the youth**. The idea is that culture might ‘help’ in the raising of children, big and small, and the socialization that is implied. Young people attending school in the perimeter also show a broad involvement in creative activities themselves. However, very little of them actually perform their hobby’s outside the house, in an organized setting. In contrast to the adults in this study, they seem rather hesitant towards institutional support of the creative activities they perform privately. Lastly, when we look at the musical preferences of these youngsters, Hip-hop/rap music clearly comes out as the most popular.

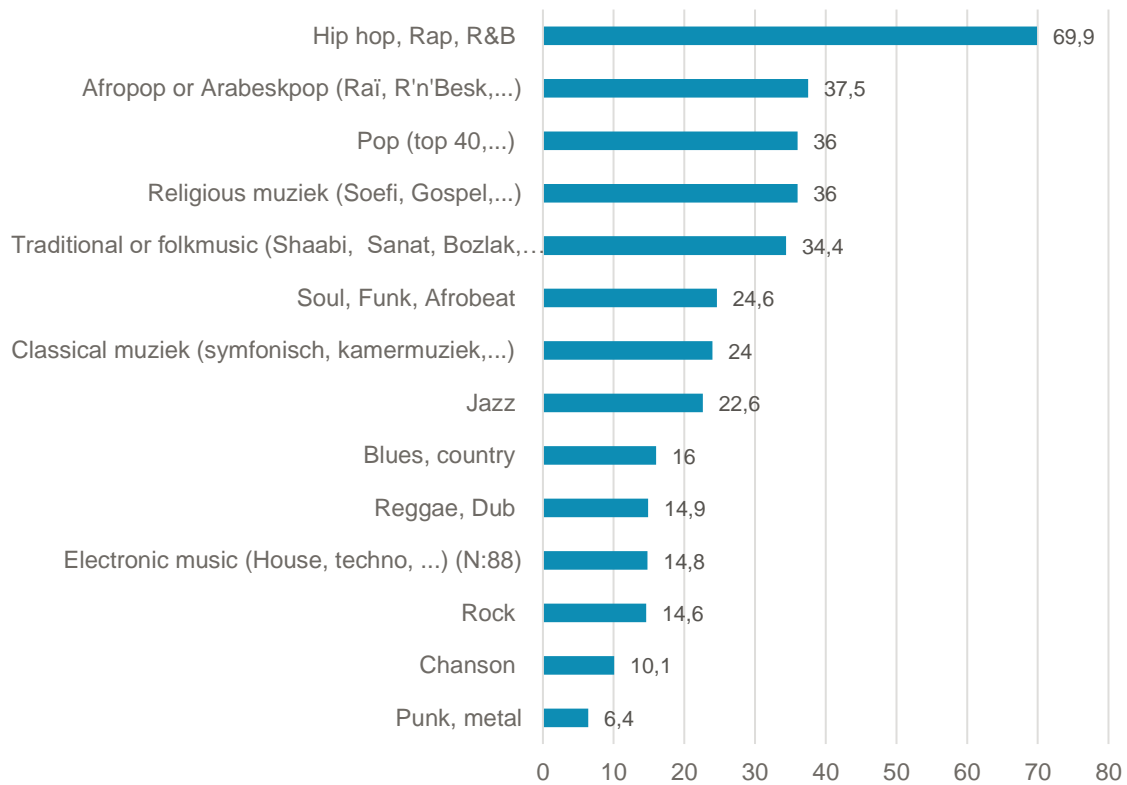
**TABLE 4: YOUNG PEOPLE'S CREATIVE HOBBIES: PERCENTAGES (SCHOOL SURVEY, N=87)**

	%
Pictorial arts (sculpting, ceramics, painting, glassware, goldsmiths art, drawing, ...)	29,9
Creative writing (texts, poems, diary, blog, ...)	29,9
Making music (instrument, electronic,...) or singing	26,4
Dancing (ballroom dancing, urban dance, folk dance, jazz, classical dance, ...)	24,1
Audio-visual art (photography, video, ...)	24,1
Handicraft or work: sewing, weaving, flower arranging, creative wood or metal processing ...	6,9
Theatre (stand-up comedy, poetry slam, musical ...)	5,7
Other	5,7
Circus (acrobatics, magic tricks...)	3,4
<b>Practiced at least 1 creative hobby over the last 6 months (total)</b>	<b>60,9</b>

**FIGURE 6: PLACE OF CREATIVE HOBBY - YOUNG PEOPLE: PERCENTAGES (SCHOOL SURVEY, N=53)**



**FIGURE 7: MUSIC TASTE: PERCENTAGE THAT LIKES TO LISTEN TO GENRE (N RANGES FROM 69 TO 103)**



*The spaces promoting a **creative dimension** are often mentioned as special places that are more flexible and akin to the talents of the neighborhood's youth than more constraining institutions such as schools. In general, the need for young people to experience alternative ways to develop themselves and to gain self-worth, is substantial. When negative imaginaries, for example about the neighborhood itself or targeting specific cultural and religious traits, get incorporated into the self-image of the youth, creative activities have the ability – and responsibility – to work in the opposite direction. A supportive cultural framework can then be a preventive tool for deviant behavior and foster positive occasions for learning.*

Quotes:

« [...] c'était d'une part important pour eux d'être valorisés dans nos activités, [...] avoir un public qui n'est parfois pas de Molenbeek et qui est très surpris [...] de voir des jeunes dont ils avaient entendu parler mais de façon très négative, autrement, en train de [participer à l'activité culturelle], [...] super accueillants, avec un grand sourire, [...] ce sont des véritables ambassadeurs en fait de la commune de Molenbeek » (RP6, entretien, 11/12/2020).

« tout le temps, il y a toujours eu un bout d'atelier créatif, [...] pas comme apprendre une technique artistique mais comme moyen d'expression de ce que les gens [...] vivent. [...] à aujourd'hui, dans la plupart de nos activités, qu'elles soient collectives, individuelles, il y aura toujours ce souci à un moment donné d'avoir la culture comme outil d'émancipation, comme outil d'expression, comme outil de citoyenneté » (RP32, entretien, 23/4/2020).



6. The **most important barriers** to partake in the receptive cultural offer are: a lack of time (40%), price (28%), interest (29%), and knowledge (28%). Often a lack of time is an easy answer to give when asked to indicate a reason for non-attendance. Nonetheless, it is linked to the lives and social responsibilities that are characteristic of the research context.

**TABLE 5: TYPES OF OBSTACLES: COMPOSITION AND PERCENTAGE (N=628)**

	<b>% that has indicated the obstacle</b>
<b>Financial obstacle</b>	<b>28,0</b>
It is too expensive	28,0
<b>Physical obstacle</b>	<b>14,2</b>
It's hard for me to get there (too far, difficult to reach,...)	9,1
A health problem limits me	7,0
<b>Interest obstacle</b>	<b>29,0</b>
I'm not interested	27,1
My previous experiences were disappointing	3,3
<b>Time obstacle</b>	<b>39,8</b>
I don't have enough time	37,9
I have too many other hobbies	8,3
<b>Knowledge obstacle</b>	<b>27,6</b>
I don't have enough information about it	23,4
I don't know enough about it	9,1
<b>Social obstacle</b>	<b>15,9</b>
There is nobody who can or wants to join me	10,2
I would not feel comfortable there	5,3
My family and/or friends would disapprove of some of these activities	2,2
<b>Language obstacle</b>	<b>7,2</b>
I don't know the language well enough	7,2

Some research participants in the ethnographic study point to the importance of a **temporality of cultural activities** that fits with individuals' family engagement, for example for mothers. The **price of culture** can also be a factor affecting participation. However, in line with the idea of a democratization of culture, measures are developed to enable people with less economic capital to participate, beside those who can easily afford cultural activities. Lastly, a cultural offer that presupposes passive – instead of creative and active – participation and that does not relate to the lived experiences in the neighborhood, might cause lack of interest.

Quotes:

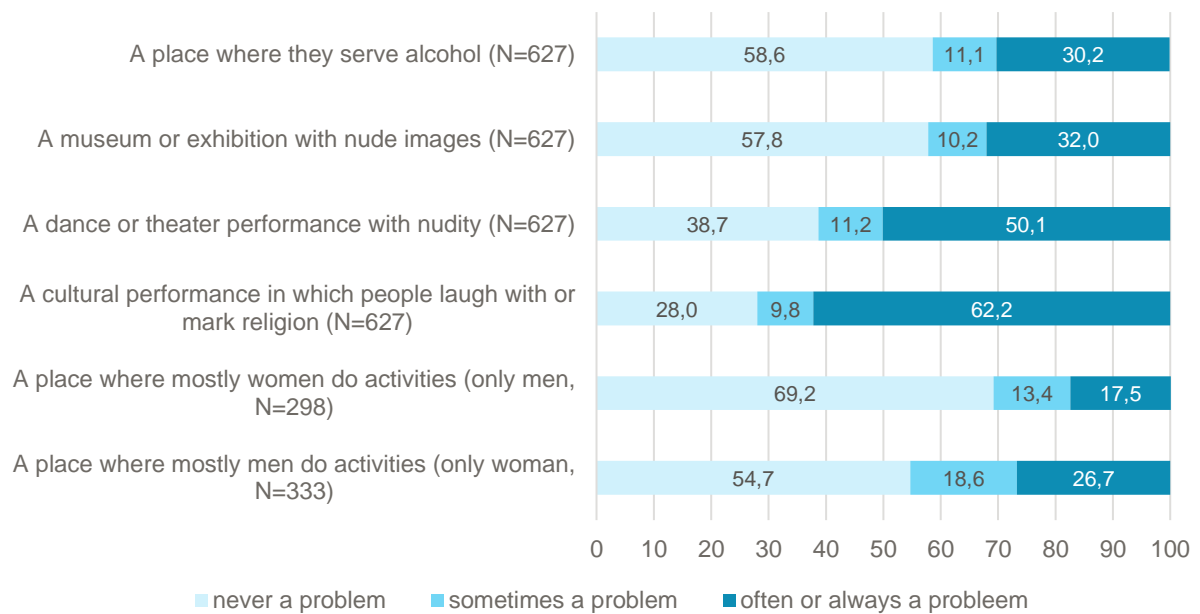
« il fallait [pour les mamans des tous petits] qu'elles trouvent une solution pour pouvoir venir [...], c'est un enjeu, [...] des familles qui ont d'autres préoccupations, [...] de santé, de garde des enfants, elles sont isolées, ou elles sont sans papiers et ont plein de démarches à faire, c'est très difficile de leur faire comprendre qu'elles peuvent avoir un temps à elle, et que c'est très important aussi, [...] c'est aussi prendre un temps pour leur famille, parce que ça va [...] pouvoir les nourrir... [...] et que ça fera du bien à l'ensemble de la famille. Mais c'est une culture qui n'existe pas en fait » (RP17, entretien, 29/1/2020).

« [J]es élèves ont assisté à une [activité culturelle] qui parlait du racisme. La particularité de [l'activité], c'était très jeune, il y avait de la musique, et le sujet intéressant, [...] très captivant, ça a plu beaucoup aux élèves, parce qu'il y avait de la musique, il y avait la jeunesse, la danse. Les élèves étaient très captivés par le contenu même. [...] par contre quand on va [à une activité culturelle] [...] d'un niveau intellectuel un peu plus élevé, [...] ils ne comprennent pas les messages, ils ont du mal à suivre, là on sent qu'ils ne sont pas très attachés. [...] il y a une partie [...] qui vont être captivés, mais le reste ne va pas être intéressé parce que le niveau, les personnages, ne les captivent pas, ne leur parlent pas » (RP34, entretien, 28/4/2020).

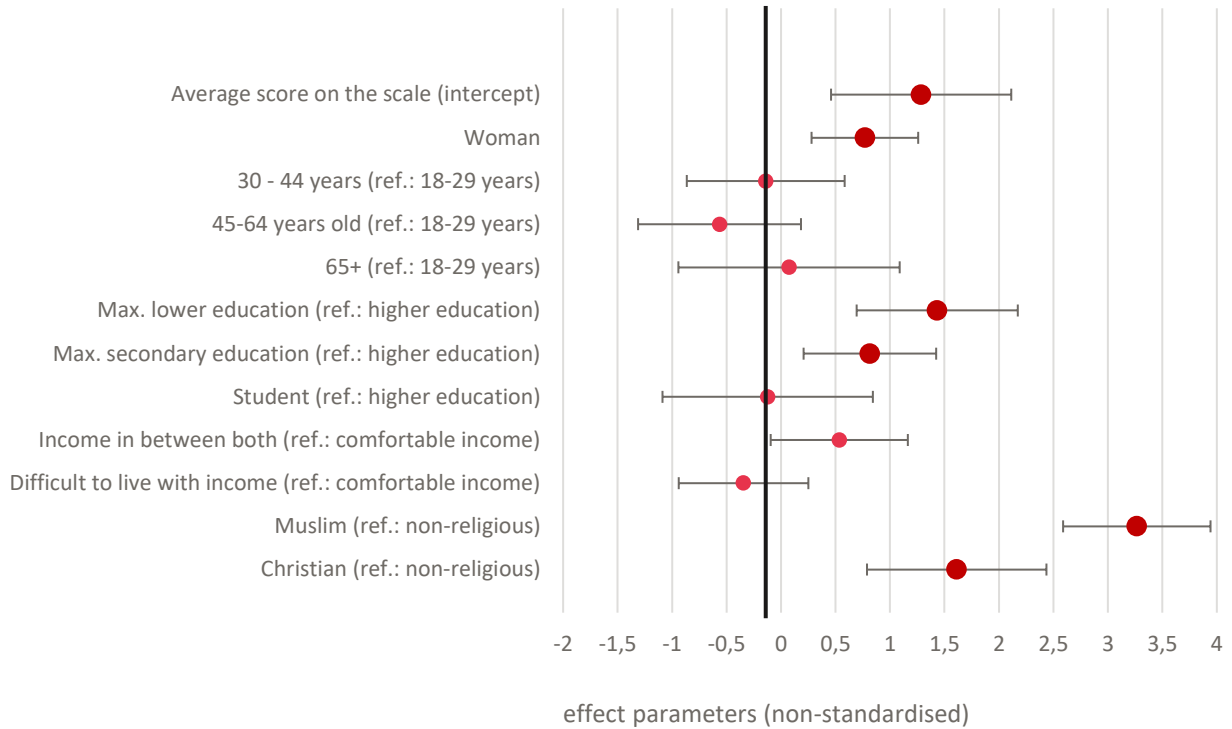
« [...] on ne sait pas faire tout, tout en même temps. [...] j'essaie... [...] parfois c'est payant aussi, des fois t'arrives pas. [...] une fois on a pris le petit-déjeuner, et puis on a été dans un concert, ça nous a coûté 20 euros ! [...] je suis invitée le 8 février, c'est une soirée entre femmes, [...] habillées, en ville. [...] je ne suis jamais allée dans ce petit restaurant. [...] là c'est 30 euros. [...] quand c'est tous les mois, ça fait un truc ! C'est souvent payant ! » (Houria, notes de terrain, 15/1/2020).

**7. Symbolic boundaries shape the social – and cultural – environment.** In general, the alleged ‘transgressive’ aspects of some cultural forms and context, such as the use of naked in theatre and expositions, serving alcohol at events, and the mocking of religion, evoke reactions that differ according to gender, religion and educational level. For woman, Muslims, Christians and people with lower levels of education, higher barriers towards the ‘transgressive’ features of culture are observed. However, the barriers are experienced also beyond the categories mentioned above, leading us to think that they are a more general feature of the research area. These often unforeseen barriers can cause an unequal access for a part of the population to consume or create culture.

**FIGURE 8: CULTURAL BARRIERS TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION: PERCENTAGES**



**FIGURE 9: DIFFERENCES IN SYMBOLIC BARRIERS ON A SCALE<sup>2</sup> FROM 0 TO 10: NON-STANDARDISED EFFECT PARAMETERS<sup>3</sup> (RATIOS WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS).**



Red bars indicate statistically significant differences compared to the reference group, the right side of the 0-axis means that one experiences these barriers more strongly than the reference group, the left side means that one experiences them less.

<sup>2</sup> The scale 'symbolic barriers' is a sum scale that was constructed on the basis of the first four items in figure 8.

<sup>3</sup> The intercept, which here is 1.29, represents the expected value on the symbolic barrier scale if the respondent is in the reference category for each explanatory variable, i.e. if the respondent is a non-believer, highly educated and financially wealthy man between 18 and 29 years of age. The other points should be read as deviations from this intercept in relation to the reference group. In other words, women score 0.77 points higher on this scale than men.

Symbolic representations also concern the studied area, often negatively portrayed in the media. The canal itself is often conceived as a symbolic frontier shaping **imaginaries on the respective “other side”**. Inhabitants of the area may feel stigmatized by these narratives. However, **counter-narratives** are developed to change negative representations and to claim for recognition, and they also operate through cultural activities.

As for the reception of specific cultural contents containing for example nudity among specific publics, ethnographic data enable us to state that reactions are not only and not necessarily caused by individuals' alleged personal – namely religious – characteristics. They are also connected with contextual elements. Tensions may arise when sensitive contents are imposed and perceived as a kind of “test” targeting specific stereotyped groups. In addition, similar contents may not be disagreed with if people become familiarized with them through a gradual process of re-appropriation, within which they can express their opinion in a setting of comfort and trust.

#### Quotes:

« C'est une barrière symbolique, [...] entre [le quartier] et l'autre monde, pour eux c'est l'autre monde. [...] au fond d'eux, ils ont envie de [voir], et puis il y a la crainte de ne pas être acceptés [...], est-ce que ma religion, est-ce que mon physique correspond à l'autre monde, c'est un peu caricaturale, ils abusent un peu, mais il y a l'esprit » (RP34, entretien, 28/4/2020).

« quand il y a un rejet, ça arrive qu'une personne ou le groupe entier dise, 'non, ça on ne veut pas voir', la question de la nudité, c'est pas évident, tout ce qui a trait à la religion, c'est parfois très sensible » (RP10, entretien, 18/12/2019).

« [J]e travail artistique est basé sur la confiance, et la confiance ne vient pas en deux jours, [...] c'est après des années qu'on cueille les fruits, [...] il faut de la patience, [...] c'est long, c'est comme du slow food, c'est du slow art, il faut prendre le temps » (RP19, entretien, 28/2/2020).

« On fait un pas en arrière, [...] on ne va pas s'exposer nous maintenant à aller contre, on va essayer d'aller avec, d'attirer les personnes pas à pas, [...] et pas directement casser les croyances, les remettre en question, [...] on n'a pas envie de se couper d'un public qui nous entoure » (RP6, entretien, 11/12/2019).



**8. Economic deprivation is a fertile ground for barriers in cultural participation.** Next to the more obvious financial barriers, also a lack of knowledge, physical and social means disproportionately belongs to the reasons of non-participation amongst those who live in precarious circumstances. The barrier of interest (meaning a lack of it) is however felt less for those with low levels of economical capital in reference to those who are more at ease with their revenue(s). This resonates with the observation that this category craves for culture in the neighborhood more than the economically advantaged. Poverty seems to affect a totality of aspects that exceed strictly financial struggles. But even though the need for culture is high, the road to get there seems to be filled with numerous bumps.

**TABLE 6: RELATIVE PROBABILITIES OF EXPERIENCING BARRIERS TO CULTURE FOR DIFFERENT SOCIAL CATEGORIES (ODD'S RATIO'S).**

	Obstacles (relative chances – odds ratio's)						
	Financial	Physical	Interest	Time	Knowledge	Social	Language
<b>Gender</b> (ref. man)							
Woman	1,30	1,87*	0,68*	1,30	0,96	1,63*	1,82
<b>Age</b> (ref. 30-44 years)							
18-29	0,56	0,57	1,43	0,75	1,08	1,70	0,74
45-64	0,97	1,08	1,79*	0,57*	0,99	1,04	0,66
65+	0,80	3,27**	1,78	0,46	0,56	1,91	0,97
<b>Level of education</b> (ref. Higher education)							
Max. primary education	0,83	1,35	1,07	0,75	0,64	1,44	3,41**
Max. secondary education	0,94	1,39	1,34	0,66	0,70	0,96	1,72
Student	1,44	2,15	2,04*	1,55	0,93	0,73	1,00
<b>Income</b> (ref. easy to get by)							
in between both	2,50**	2,57**	0,68	1,102	2,00**	2,67**	1,92
Hard to get by	5,80***	3,53***	0,58*	0,741	2,31**	2,56**	1,60
Single	/	/	0,57*	/	/	/	/
<b>Ethnicity</b> (ref. Belgian origin)							
Moroccan origin	0,79	0,59	1,25	/	/	1,04	/
Other than Belgian or Moroccan origin	1,06	0,60	1,02	/	/	0,68	/
<b>Language proficiency</b> (NL & Fr)		/	/	/	1,07	/	/
<b>Care for family member</b> (ref. No care for family member)		1,24		1,52*	/		
<b>Working</b> (ref. not working)				2,43***	/		
<b>N</b>	611	603	604	606	603	611	615

*The need for **culture for citizens living in precarious conditions** is a central concern of the cultural offer in the area. Cultural institutions also accustom their actions, open during the day, keep prices low, and work alongside social organizations, so as to accommodate an economically disadvantaged public and envisage specific social outcomes. The image of 'inactivity' which can be a stigma for the unemployed, for example, can be reversed by constructing new images of worth through the socio-cultural activities in which people engage.*

Quotes:

*« les fondateurs [...] c'est des gens qui habitaient ou qui étaient actifs [dans la commune] avec à cœur de mettre en avant les problématiques vécues par les gens. Très vite ils ont investi l'espace public, en essayant d'associer les gens et de manière créative, en dessinant, en slogan, etc. L'outil créatif était présent pour mettre en avant, pour rendre visible ce qui n'était pas pris en compte » (RP32, entretien, 23/4/2020).*

*« On essaye à chaque fois de répondre à des besoins exprimés par les gens du quartier. [...] Donc pour nous c'est d'abord être à l'écoute du quartier, quels sont les besoins du quartier, puis après essayer de trouver certaines réponses. » (RP9, entretien, 17/12/2019).*

*« [n]otre mission c'est d'abord de voir quels sont les besoins de ces populations et de construire avec eux des activités qui sont demandées par les gens eux-mêmes, et qui puissent avoir une importance au niveau de la cohésion sociale, [...] et de l'inclusion » (RP3, entretien, 20/11/2019).*



- 9. Women show a diffuse cultural pattern.** In contrast to the men in this study women have a greater disposition towards creative hobby's (figure 5), but on the other side they also experience barriers to be -more- part of cultural activities (table 6). Their gender role causes them to experience more physical social barriers and symbolic barriers (table 9) related to the cultural participation.

*The ethnography highlights the significant cultural involvement of women and their active engagement in building bottom-up cultural networks. For the women who do not participate, the main barriers have often to do with the availability of time. In fact, women have main family and household responsibilities to comply with. Concerning the contents of cultural activities, familiar – though gendered – topics and practices are object of greater appreciation. Cooking is often mentioned in its function for social cohesion, also when it is linked to cultural activities of a different sort.*

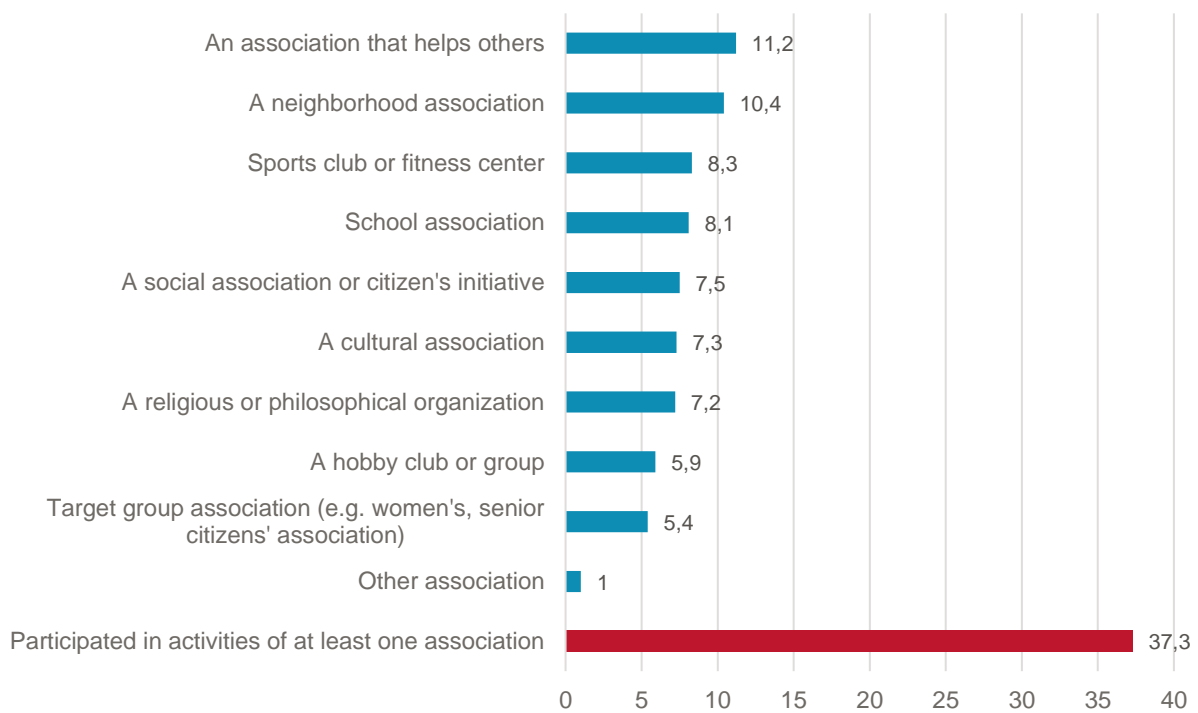
Quotes:

*« depuis le départ l'objectif c'était que les femmes se réunissent. Il y avait des activités traditionnelles, [...] des ateliers de couture, [...] des activités sportives, [...] cours de cuisine, des cours des français, avec aussi une permanence sociale » (RP5, entretien, 5/12/2019).*

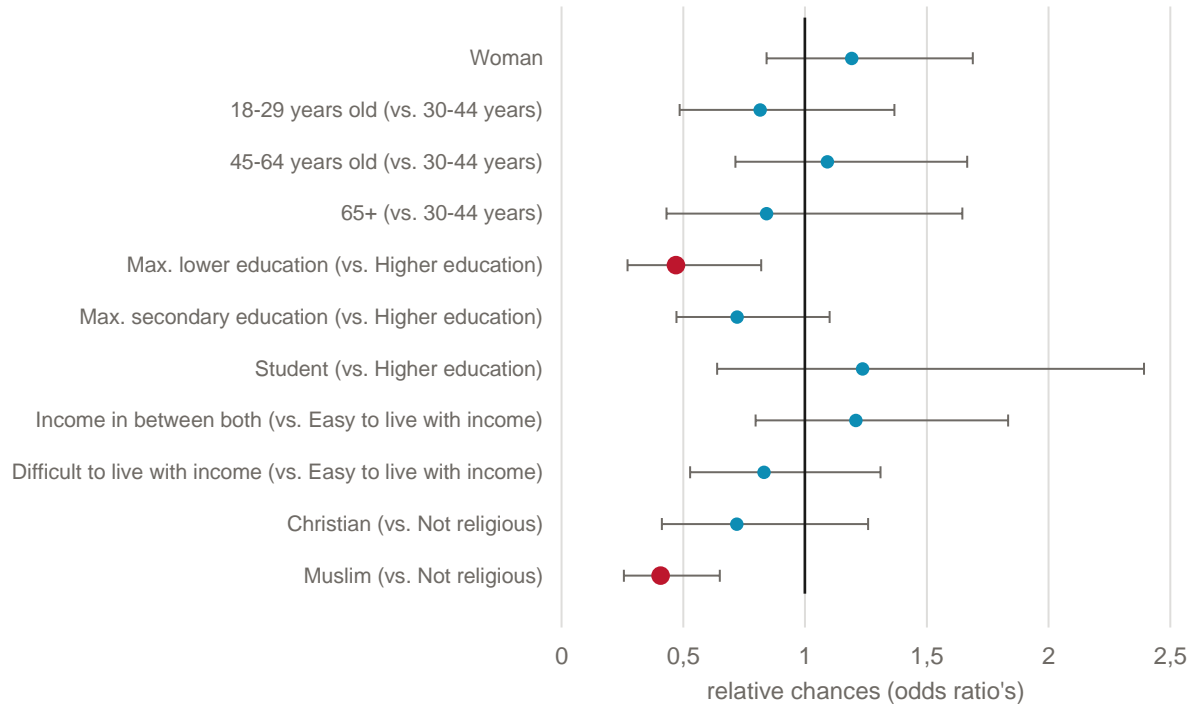
*« il y a un groupe de [...] mamans qui accompagnaient leurs enfants dans les maisons de quartier, mobilisées et soutenues par une femme [résidente dans la commune] qui travaillait pour une autre ASBL [...]. Elles souhaitaient créer [un lieu de rencontre pour femmes], pour que les femmes aient aussi un espace pour elles, pour leurs activités. [...] elles ont aussi été soutenues par les médecins de quartier [des maisons médicales], qui constataient aussi chez les femmes des troubles psychosomatiques liés à l'isolement, à la précarité, etc. » (RP5, entretien, 5/12/2019).*

**10.** Only 37% of the respondents indicated some sort of involvement in an association. Engagement of this sort is mostly directed towards associations designed to help others (11%) or neighborhood-institutions (10%). Compared with non-religious people, Muslims are less engaged in the kind of institutions taken up in the survey. The same is true for people with lower levels of education in regard to those who are or were enrolled in higher education.

**FIGURE 10: PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES (AS A MEMBER, VOLUNTEER OR PARTICIPANT) ACCORDING TO TYPE OF ASSOCIATION AND PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE: PERCENTAGES (N=635)**



**FIGURE 11: DIFFERENCES IN PARTICIPATION IN ASSOCIATIVE LIFE: RELATIVE PROBABILITIES (ODDS RATIOS WITH 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL, MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS).**



Red points and axes not intersecting the 1-axis indicate statistically significant differences, right of the 1-axis means a greater relative probability than the reference group, left of the 1-axis means a smaller relative probability.

Through ethnography, we observed **different levels and kinds of engagement** in the socio-cultural life of the neighborhood. Often conceived and referred to as a 'shared space', the neighborhood is the main life environment of residents and participants, who are linked to it through practices as well as through memories. Within this framework, culture functions as an important mediator for the enactment of citizenship in the area and for re-appropriating socio-cultural spaces conceived "for and by inhabitants". Socio-cultural institutions operate, then, as relevant actors to foster the empowerment and social engagement of residents. However, some participants remark that people with migrant background (relatively over-represented in the area) are under-represented in positions of responsibility in the cultural domain.

Quotes:

« j'étais président d'une ASBL au quartier, [...] lorsque [je travaillais], je savais que si je veux essayer de changer ma société, il fallait que je m'investisse [...], [...] les 15 dernières années de ma vie, c'était vraiment une lutte acharnée, [...] Il faut être actif. [...] la vie, elle est faite de luttes » (usager, entretien, 4/2/2020).

« dans ce [lieu culturel public] on se dit bonjour et on parle... [...] il y a des voisins qui se découvrent » (David, entretien, 27/1/2020).

« nous sommes en train de travailler pour essayer de changer les rues, les mettre à sens unique, [...] plus de pistes cyclables [...]. On est arrivé à faire la rue pour les enfants, [...] la rue écolier, on s'occupe [...] de l'implantation pour embellir le quartier » (Julien, entretien, 11/3/2020).

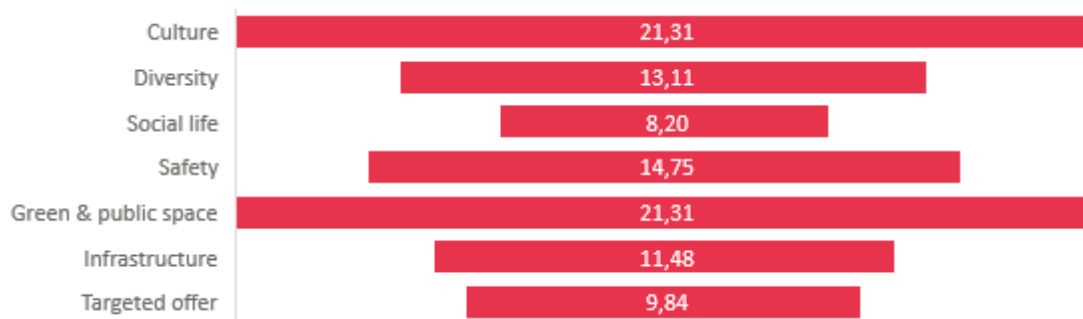
« la diversité est dans Bruxelles, sauf qu'il y a encore beaucoup de pouvoir qui est tenu... [...] c'est blanc comme neige au-dessus ! » (RP11, entretien, 10/1/2020)



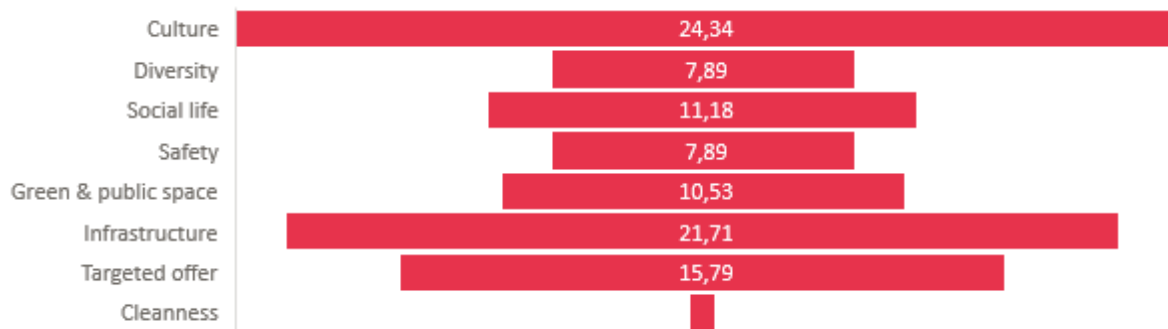
11. This section gathers the answers to the open-ended question asked at the end of the survey: “Are there things you miss in this neighborhood to spend your leisure time?” . The answers are then grouped according to recurring themes. They provide a numerical overview of the general concerns in the district. Within the perimeter, a general need for 'space' is expressed. This demand revolves around cultural and sports facilities, security and green public spaces. In addition, for some respondents, there is a need for this offer to be more targeted towards certain segments of the population, such as women or young people.

**FIGURE 13: QUANTIFIED OPEN RESPONSES: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE CHANGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?**

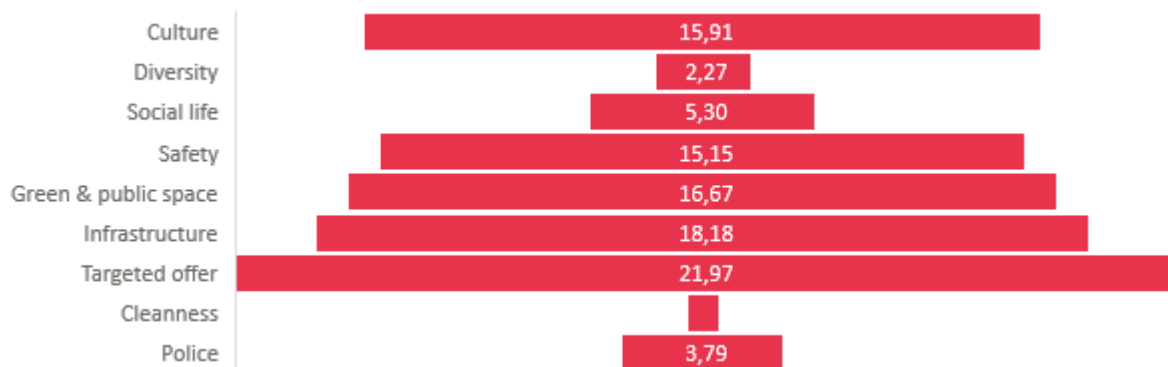
*Harbor district*



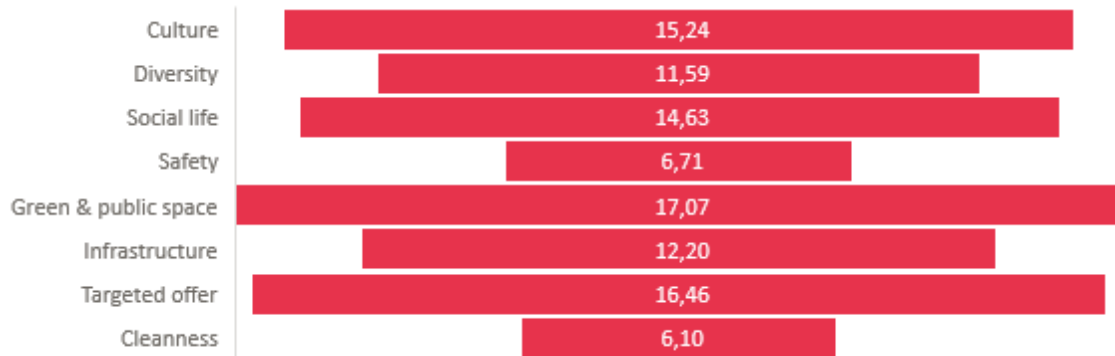
*Historical Molenbeek*



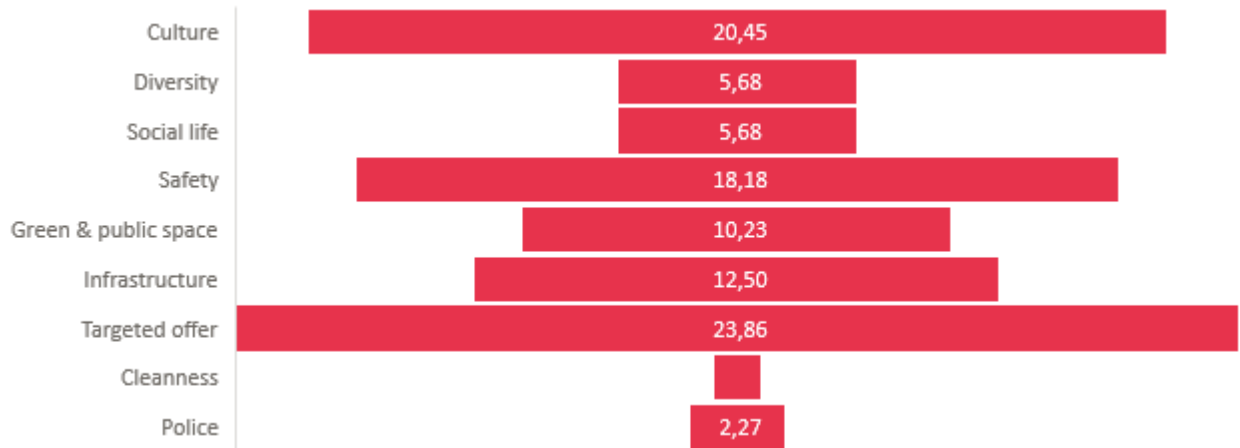
*North district*



*Old-Laken east*



*Weststation*





*Dans la partie qualitative de l'étude, cet espace d'évasion est compris comme un « **espace(-temps) pour soi-même** ». Par rapport à d'autres parties de la région bruxelloise, ces quartiers sont non seulement économiquement défavorisés et objets d'imaginaires négatifs développés autour de groupes stéréotypés vivant dans la zone, mais ils sont également défavorisés en termes d'infrastructures ainsi que d'espaces (espaces vert par exemple) adaptés aux besoins des individus. La culture est alors un espace sûr pour se développer et pour construire et renforcer la sociabilité dans le quartier.*

Quotes:

*« j'avais un travail toute la journée [à temps plein], j'ai fini maintenant, je prends du temps pour moi. Je suis dans le social, je m'intéresse à tout. [...] c'est ma deuxième maison ici, [...] j'y suis occupée toute la semaine » (participante, notes de terrain, 18/12/2019).*

*« [l'activité culturelle du vendredi est] sacré[e], [...] même l'hiver quand tu es fatigué et il fait froid et tu penses rester au chaud devant la télé, mais non. [...] les enfants sont en sécurité [ici] » (notes de terrain, 21/2/2020).*

*« je suis très contente parce que c'est un endroit où il y a beaucoup de partage, des gens avec qui on peut échanger, avec différentes personnes. [...] c'est génial, on a appris beaucoup de choses, c'est une nouvelle découverte. [...] je me sens chez moi, c'est ma deuxième maison » (participantes, notes de terrain, 18/12/2019).*

*« je suis une vielle des vieilles [dans l'atelier], chaque fois ici c'est ma petite boule d'air, [...] il y a toujours une bonne entente, je suis bien entourée. [...] je serai contente d'y être [dans une prochaine activité planifiée] avec mes amis » (participante, notes de terrain, 19/2/2020).*



## GUIDELINES FOR POLICY ACTIONS

To conclude, on the basis of the qualitative and quantitative research data collected in the five Brussels neighborhoods of the perimeter, we provide some points of attention and possible policy options. The aim of this study was to uncover the factors that influence cultural practices of the residents and participants of the area, as well as the cultural activities themselves, in order to provide relevant elements that need to be considered throughout the implementation of contemporary urban development programs.

The elements listed below, in the form of suggestions, can help actors – the people responsible of socio-cultural organizations and the representatives of local, regional, communitarian institutions and funders – to improve the cultural participation and access to culture itself. On the one hand, these suggestions relate to the creation of structural opportunities for participation that effectively involve the inhabitants, and on the other hand, they relate to the promotion of an inclusive and pluralistic approach to culture. We would like to emphasize that these are suggestions towards policy and the sector to offer a more accessible offer, whereby the needs and interests of the culture sector and cultural providers themselves must of course also be considered. Cooperation between policy makers and the cultural sector is therefore recommended.

1. The two strands of research show that economic factors can still create a barrier to cultural participation. Moreover, residents and passers-by are often unaware of existing financial measures. That is why it remains important **to develop financial incentives and measures and to inform about existing financial measures** in order to support cultural participation.
2. Participation in art and culture in these neighborhoods is often not an end in itself or purely motivated by aesthetic reasons, but rather a means to respond to specific social needs through cultural participation. Moreover, leisure activities are also spaces of socialization within and outside the family and acquaintances network. When organizing cultural activities, it is therefore advisable **to take into account the social dimension of cultural activities and the needs of local participants**.
3. The qualitative part of the research illustrates the strong demand to involve residents of the neighborhood more closely in the cultural program. Such a demand could be answered through the **formalization of collaborative arrangements between cultural and social institutions** that involve the inhabitants of the neighborhood and the issues they raise.
4. The qualitative research clearly shows that the social profile of the organizing framework of social and cultural institutions is much less diverse than that of their audiences and participants. **Ensuring greater diversity of sociological profiles** (age, socioeconomic status, ethno-cultural, professional status, gender, etc.) **within the organizational and managerial framework of social and cultural institutions** would testify a more equal access to cultural professions. Moreover, it would bring the composition more in accordance with the groups targeted and could promote communication with and participation by them. A similar diversity objective should also be sought in the staff responsible for cultural programming in order to increase the probability to propose a more varied cultural offer.
5. In order to put participants at ease and thus promote both participation and a positive experience of the activity, it is important **to provide appropriate and welcoming spaces** that respect the needs of

the participants (diverse in terms of gender, age, socio-cultural backgrounds etc.) and that allow them to express themselves in a non-judging and open environment.

6. Based on the observed different interests and motives for cultural participation, it is more fruitful **to propose diversified contents and to provide the choice to participate** (rather than pursuing everyone's participation in everything). Also in this respect, it is important that the organizations are aware that there are different interests among the potential audiences and that it is impossible to meet all of them.
7. Certain groups still do not find their way to the cultural offer as easily as others. It results from the quantitative research that a group that systematically participates less is the group of lower educated people. Compared to the higher educated, this group more often indicates a language barrier to participation in the cultural offerings. Moreover, and notwithstanding the level of education of the participants, cultural contents that connect with the everyday life experience of residents of the concerned neighborhood resonate more. It is therefore important to **ensure that the content is comprehensible** to the specific audiences targeted.
8. The qualitative research also shows that co-creation fosters participation. Therefore we encourage all cultural organizations **to consider the participants as active producers** (and not only consumers) of culture, through making them co-constructors of cultural contents, through enhancing the creative dimension of cultural participation and through valuing each one's contribution and interests.
9. Word-of-mouth communication through friends, family and acquaintances is one of the most important channels of information, according to both the qualitative and quantitative research. In order to promote cultural participation and strengthen involvement, it is therefore advisable **to formalize and enhance a work of proximity** with residents in the implementation of means of communication.
10. Both in the quantitative and qualitative research part, the demand for more safe and accessible spaces, especially for families and children, emerged. **Ensuring that public spaces are safe and accessible for families and children**, gives them the opportunity to meet each other and to create in a more non-committal way.

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER EU CASES

Within the framework of the literature review and in collaboration with the Local Environment Management and Analysis (LEMA) unit of the University of Liège (researcher: Mohamed El Boujjoufi), we studied ten urban projects developed in Europe, that promoted the integration of cultural practices in urban planning. In order to produce an overview of some best practices that are compatible with the Brussels area and the aim of our study, for each of the projects we analysed: the contextual factors; the cultural practices and the socio-cultural actors involved; the financial contribution of institutions; the integration of the concerned cultural project into local urban planning policies. Here follows the list of the studied projects and a summary of the elements that we considered:

### 1. Campo de la Cebada (Madrid, Spain – 2011)

Context: Economic crisis and protests

Cultural practice: Construction of a temporary swimming pool

Socio-cultural actors: Citizens, artists, local municipality, local associations

Financial contribution: Local municipality

Integration in urban planning: Collective gardens and street furniture

### 2. Galeria de Arte Urbana (Lisbon, Portugal – 2008)

Context: Political role of urban arts

Cultural practice: Street art murals

Socio-cultural actors: Citizens, artists, local associations

Financial contribution: Local municipality

Integration in urban planning: Institutionalisation of street art, guided tour

### 3. Fiction-Park (Hambourg, Germany – 1994)

Context: Overpopulated neighborhood and protests

Cultural practice: Participatory art piece

Socio-cultural actors: Citizens, artists, local municipality, (private) tourist organizations

Financial contribution: Local municipality

Integration in urban planning: Play tools in the public space

### 4. Quartier de la création (Nantes, France – 2003)

Context: Industrial crisis and reconversions

Cultural practice: Arts district

Socio-cultural actors: SAMOA, entrepreneurs, creative project leaders, residents.

Financial contribution: SAMOA – Société d'Aménagement de la Métropole Ouest Atlantique



Integration in urban planning: Art schools, exhibitions, arts centres

**5. Atelier des artistes Montreuil (Paris, France – end 1990s)**

Context: Industrial reconversion

Cultural practice: Arts centre

Socio-cultural actors: Local municipality, artists, local associations

Financial contribution: Local municipality

Integration in urban planning: Residential and professional spaces for artists

**6. Ferblanterie (Lille, France – 2011)**

Context: Industrial reconversion

Cultural practice: Arts district

Socio-cultural actors: Local artists and artisans, residents, local associations

Financial contribution: Regional and local institutions

Integration in urban planning: Redevelopment of the district

**7. Paratissima (Turin, Italie – 2005)**

Context: Multicultural and popular district

Cultural practice: Exhibition

Socio-cultural actors: Artists, local sellers, local and state institutions, residents

Financial contribution: Public policy

Integration in urban planning: Reinforcing local identity

**8. Superkilen (Copenhagen, Denmark – 2012)**

Context: Multicultural and popular district

Cultural practice: Public place (urban park)

Socio-cultural actors: Local municipality, private foundations, private architects, artists, residents

Financial contribution: Local municipality, private foundations

Integration in urban planning: Urban itineraries for pedestrian and cyclers

**9. Gateshead Quayside (Gateshead, United Kingdom – 2002)**

Context: Arts policy

Cultural practice: Arts centre

Socio-cultural actors: Regional and local institutions

Financial contribution: State government

Integration in urban planning: Local urban identity

**10. Incredible Edible (Todmorden, United Kingdom – 2008)**

Context: Local actions targeting food security and sustainability

Cultural practice: Agriculture and food initiatives

Socio-cultural actors: Citizens, public authorities, local associations, residents

Financial contribution: Public authorities

Integration in urban planning: Redevelopment of public infrastructures and spaces

Throughout these projects, we can identify some key factors that favour the development of the initiatives. The existence of some public spaces that can be invested and re-appropriated by local residents for a set of reasons (economic crisis, urban reconversions, enhancement of local heritage, local protests, etc.), as well as the availability of material (such as recycled items), create concrete opportunities of engagement. The latter are reinforced by the collaboration between inhabitants and artists (together with local associations and institutions), within a process of co-construction of cultural contents that will be performed in the public space. Moreover, the embedment of the specific project in a larger perspective on the concerned neighborhood/city leads to the development of further and connected facilities in the territory, from the development of specific infrastructures until reaching, in some cases, the creation of arts districts – where arts are the main activities of the area. The durability of the project depends on the continuity of the engagement of inhabitants and the other social actors involved, as well as by the existence of structural funding (beyond the resources that permitted the launch of the project). By participating to specific projects, residents get engaged more broadly in the socio-cultural life of the neighborhood/city and develop new relationships with the place itself and within it (with other residents but also with other social actors operating in the area). These projects function then as means of requalification of public spaces, social inclusion, urban promotion and enhancement of urban (formal or informal) forms of art. In this way, arts (and artists) embrace social and political objectives, triggering the creation of spaces of participation where citizens can express their opinion (and desires) on local urban planning issues and where they have concrete space of (creative) action. Therefore, the urban planning process itself become a real public issue involving a larger panel of social actors than policymakers (including residents and local associations), and this happens thanks to the mediating role of arts (and artists), notwithstanding the specific artistic tool or topic that is mobilised. This also means to create new and alternative channels and circuits for artistic production and consumption. Such process operates in diverse contexts, in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics. These examples show that culture is an essential key to promote participative and complex urban programs also targeting the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the involved area, as well as to trigger the creation and enhancement of strong local urban identities.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bourdieu, P. (1979). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard university press.
- Carpenter, J., & Lees, L. (1995). Gentrification in New York, London and Paris: An international comparison. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 19(2), 286–303.
- Chemetoff, & Maillard. (2014). *Plan-Canal / Kanaalplan*. ATO.
- Cicchelli, V., Octobre, S., & Riegel, V. (2016). After the Omnivore, the Cosmopolitan Amateur: Reflections about Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism. *Global Studies Journal*, 9(1).
- Devroe, E., & Ponsaers, P. (2016). Radicalisering in Molenbeek. *Studies*, 42.
- Hanquinet, L., Savage, M., & Callier, L. (2012). Elaborating Bourdieu's field analysis in urban studies: Cultural dynamics in Brussels. *Urban Geography*, 33(4), 508–529.
- Kesteloot, C., Meert, H., Mistiaen, P., Savenberg, S., & Van der Haegen, H. (1997). De geografische dimensie van de dualisering in de maatschappij. *Overlevingsstrategieën in twee Brusselse wijken*. Brussel: FWTC.
- Rouyet, Y. (2014). *Rock the Canal! A history of cultural life in the canal area of Brussels*. Brussels Studies. *La Revue Scientifique Électronique Pour Les Recherches Sur Bruxelles/Het Elektronisch Wetenschappelijk Tijdschrift Voor Onderzoek over Brussel/The e-Journal for Academic Research on Brussels*.
- Van Steen, A., & Lievens, J. (2011). Geen goesting: Over drempels en percepties van kunstenparticipatie. In *Participatie in Vlaanderen 2: Eerste analyses van de participatiesurvey 2009* (pp. 307–346). Acco.
- Wiard, V., & Pereira, F. H. (2019). Bad neighborhoods in a good city? Space, place and Brussels' online news. *Journalism Studies*, 20(5), 649–674.
- Willekens, M., & Lievens, J. (2016). Who participates and how much? Explaining non-attendance and the frequency of attending arts and heritage activities. *Poetics*, 56, 50–63.