



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

ONLINE PEER-LEARNING VISIT HOSTED BY THE CITY OF KORTRIJK (BE)

FOCUS ON PARTICIPATION AND CO-CREATION THROUGH CULTURAL HERITAGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kortrijk's DNA breathes creativity. Kortrijk is a growing and dynamic city in southern West-Flanders. It builds on the dynamics created by the recognition as a "[UNESCO Creative City of Design](#)", whereby creativity is a driving force for the sustainable development of the city and region.

During the Middle Ages, Kortrijk significantly grew thanks to the flax and wool industry linked the river Leie and became one of the biggest and richest cities of Flanders. An important part of the Belgian tiles and bricks-industry is still situated around Kortrijk. The city is also often referred to as City of the Golden Spurs (Battle of the Golden Spurs which took place on 11 July 1302).

Kortrijk has been experimenting for several years with projects on citizen' participation and participatory governance. In the new administrative agreement 2020-2025, the city government established the involvement of its citizens in the co-creation of urban projects as a priority.

The online peer-learning visit (19-23 April 2021) focused on participation and co-creation through cultural heritage. The main questions discussed were:

- How do participatory projects work in practice?
- How can artistic interventions foster participation and co-creation?
- How can participation be triggered by cultural institutions?
- How to include citizens' participation in cities' long-term cultural strategies?

The visit considered best ways to secure citizens participation through art and culture, in particular:

- Participation through artistic intervention (for example through Emma the little giant and the Track and Trace festival).
- Participation triggered by local cultural institutions (for example by the forthcoming local museum on identity).
- Participation embedded in the development of the city's cultural strategy as part of Kortrijk's attempt to become European Capital of Culture in 2030.

For more information on participation and co-creation through cultural heritage in Kortrijk, please see [this video](#).

For more information on 'Emma the small giant- A giant step for participation and inclusion', featured in the Cultural Heritage in Action catalogue of good practices, please see [this video](#).

All presentations show during the online visit are available [here](#).

MAIN TAKE-AWAYS

- From the past to the future: local cultural heritage can be reinvented with the participation of citizens and relevant organisations, allowing new connections between the past and the future of a place.
- Art and cultural heritage have the power to really address social issues and challenges. By delivering this message to politicians, it is possible to get them on board.
- Local administrations play a key role as facilitators: the ultimate role of participation and co-creation in cultural policy is to empower citizens through arts and culture to change the society they live in. Cultural organisations can play a key role as agents of transformation.
- Citizens needs and expectations: recognising local citizens' needs and interests (so called „local DNA”) is key to reach out to large audiences. When developing a cultural strategy, it is essential to build a narrative that gathers people or citizens. Cultural heritage can play an essential role in building this narrative.
- Long term view: co-design must be tangible, practical and not just talked about as a theory in policies and strategies. Long-term participation and ownership is key - co-design can not be a one off workshop, it needs legacy.

ANALYSIS

The visit in Kortrijk gave a very interesting and in-depth consideration on the value of art and culture in triggering citizens participation to inspire changes in the city, to address societal issues and to stimulate innovation. The theme of the visit could be summarized as “culture to drive changes in cities by stimulating citizens ‘participation”.

A driver of changes is increasingly ensuring citizens participation and empowerment in the life of the city. Art and culture are essential tools to enable such participation and engagement. The latter will ensure a more cohesive society and build confidence for citizen to feel ready to confront various

challenges (climate change, resilience, well-being, security or identity issues). Citizen’s empowerment in turn contributes to a more democratic society that values freedom of expression and social engagement.

A SELECTION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES



<p>Focus on / main topic</p>	<p>Participation and co-creation through artistic interventions and through making the most of the local cultural heritage: Emma the small giant.</p>
<p>Title</p>	<p>Participation and co-creation through artistic interventions</p>
<p>Description</p>	<p>There is a 14th century old tradition of Giants in Kortrijk. Bolwerk (an art organization specialized in street art) was entrusted to renew this tradition and make it contemporary again to reflect modern times and new social challenges, notably social inclusion and cohesion. The Emma giant was born.</p> <p>The process of co-creation involved the local industrial design school and primary schools, visual artists, writers and illustrators as well as craftspeople. A survey was addressed to citizens to support the narrative of the project.</p> <p>For more info, read our good practice here.</p>
<p>Results / impacts</p>	<p>An artistic invention can lead to participation as shown by the following figures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased interest in the heritage of giants among inhabitants - increased participation of a diverse set of people from civil society: 29 graduate students from Howest-Ugent, 120 pupils from different schools, 40 children involved during summer holidays, 3 groups of giant-committees from districts of Kortrijk, 10 young people (18 – 30 year) involved in the management of Emma, 40 scarf knitters - 6 individual actors/entrepreneurs from the creative sector involved in the production of Emma - 4 performances of Emma in Kortrijk, 3 performances in other cities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emma is regularly invited to festivals in other cities, and this creates income to continue the project and to dream about the creation of a friend for Emma.
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<p>To set up a successful participation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrust artists and give them freedom to develop their vision. - Accept that you will not be able to reach everybody. - Consider the process as an experiment. - Creation is attractive to people: starting outside cultural institutions facilitates engagement. - The process is as important as the end-result. - Root the project in a local tradition and give this tradition a contemporary spin to make it relevant again (tradition as a resource to innovate) – this is a good way to give heritage a new meaning and purpose. - Consider the sustainability of the project from the start. Sustainability should be embedded. - Engage with Local artists and cultural entrepreneurs – know your local artistic and cultural resources. - Accept that it takes time – the process as well as the impact.
Feedback from hosts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not try to do everything by yourself: analyse the challenges and look for the right partners, public, private and from civil society 2. Be humble and trust the knowledge, expertise and drive from actors in the creative and cultural industries 3. Approach cultural heritage in an innovative way: this helps promote social inclusion and shared ownership
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Focus on / main topic	Participation and co-creation through artistic interventions and through making the most of the local cultural heritage: Track and Trace photo exhibition.
Title	Participation and co-creation through artistic interventions
Description	The photo festival Track and Trace perpetuates a tradition of local photographers working with social organisations and vulnerable citizens, seniors or migrants with artists curating the exhibition and coaching through workshops participants. The aim is to find creative ways for people to connect. Exhibitions take place inside and in the public space. For more info: https://www.trackandtracekortrijk.be/
Results / impacts	<p>By not only inviting well-known names but also launching an open call and giving the floor to local photographers, the photography-DNA of the city was strengthened. Track and Trace brings art to citizens and to public spaces where much more people can be reached.</p> <p>Track and trace adapted to the pandemic and developed additional outside activities (walking and experiencing art).</p>
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	Root the project in a local tradition and give it a contemporary spin (tradition as a resource to innovate) – this is a good way to give heritage a new meaning and purpose.
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Focus on / main topic	Participation triggered by cultural institutions: towards a future museum on identity in Kortrijk
Title	Citizens and cultural institutions: sharing local stories
Description	<p>Another way to stimulate citizen participation is through the activities of cultural institutions. In this instance Kortrijk has taken the decision to develop a museum on identity – to be completed by 2024. This will be done through the renovation of the Kortrijk city museum with a contemporary approach: a strong element of co-creation and participatory activities is embedded in the project. It shows how citizens can engage with cultural activities, how local stories can be shared with a strong emphasis on inclusion. It is a way of re-inventing the past, building an identity, re-thinking how we can offer culture to everybody with an emphasis on social inclusion and diversity: 127 nationalities live in Kortrijk and non-Belgian citizens represent almost 10% of the total population.</p> <p>The museum aims to become an innovative, low-threshold and high-end art site, with identity as its central theme.</p> <p>In fascinating temporary exhibitions and through inspiring participatory projects, the museum will examine every corner of the concept of ‘identity’, in all its complexity and diversity:</p> <p>Heritage and identity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do our artifacts, monuments and ‘lieux de mémoire’ tell us about who we are? • What do our rituals and cultural habits disclose about ourselves? • Why do we identify with certain objects, places and practices? <p>(Intangible) heritage is a conversation starter that enables us to enter in dialogue about who we are and what connects us, across borders, cultures and generations. Participation is a focal point here: all people are experts in identity.</p>
Results / impacts	<p>The process involves the need to build the community and raise awareness amongst associations and social organizations as well as cultural workers.</p> <p>The management is hiring a participatory expert connected with local organisations. It has also contracted with an organization specialized in community practices (School of Commons) and which is going to develop the methodology. It is also going to work with a high school to stimulate the development of innovative participatory projects.</p> <p>Participatory activities at the level of governance are also something to consider (at the level of an advisory board, the setting up of youth panels for instance).</p>
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<p>Local cultural institutions (notably museums and libraries) can play a key role in citizen engagement and participation. Local governments can stimulate their local cultural institutions to be more proactive in enabling citizens ‘engagement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinating policy actions going in this direction. - Providing financial incentives to participatory projects and governance/review funding mechanisms and set new criteria

	<p>linked to efforts to engage with citizens and the local community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate participatory goals in local cultural policy. - Support a long-term vision and a vision that considers new constraints (notably resilience, sustainability). - Establish indicators to measure level of citizens’ participation and impact. - Make available information on good practices, build capacity to think “out of the box” and to review “conservative” practices.
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Focus on / main topic	Participation in developing a local cultural strategy: DURF2030
Title	Developing long-term local cultural strategies that include citizens participation
Description	<p>Kortrijk is competing to become European Capital of Culture in 2030. In this context it is implementing a strategy of policy development in co-creation with citizens, businesses, associations, and organisations as well as the cultural sector. It has set up a platform, DURF2030, to support voluntary projects that are artistic or creative, that can trigger positive changes in the community and that involve citizens. Kortrijk wishes to use the 2030 landmark for culture to contribute to the city’s development strategy. The ambition is to show that culture is a driver of change and an agent of transformation empowering citizens to be actors of change.</p> <p>The model is that of a city that is not a programmer but rather a facilitator. The approach is bottom up and grassroots, counting on the capacity of NGOs and individuals to propose interesting projects, for the cultural strategy to develop concrete projects. The coordination structure is light, acting more like an incubator of initiatives, monitoring whether all parts of society are involved and engaged in the process. The initial investment of the city is quite low – less than 200 000 Euro, essentially covering for staff costs and the hosting of the platform (space). The coordinator of the platform is therefore required to think of alternative source of funding available from foundations, the region, businesses or crowdfunding platforms.</p>
Results / impacts	The platform’s work will be decisive in determining the project the city wishes to present in the application to become to European Capital of Culture. It puts the onus on the cultural workers and NGOs to build an attractive programme and concept.
Lessons learnt & Key success factors	<p>It was noted that such participatory programme helped policy makers to better understand the nature of cultural investment and the impact it can have in building notably understanding, empathy and social cohesion in a community.</p> <p>The journey in Kortrijk showed the importance for the art and cultural sector to make the efforts “to get in the minds of policy makers” and build the capacity to speak the language of policy making. Political support was deemed essential to be able to develop a co-creation ecosystem in a sustainable way.</p>

	<p>The journey showed that the cultural narrative is important as it contributes to the city innovation, economic and social development strategy with the added capability to engaging emotionally with people.</p> <p>This set the conditions for citizens to perceive that they are part of the solutions to various societal challenges (well-being, social cohesion, security, prosperity, environmental issues or urban regeneration) and that they can proactively contribute to a better city.</p>
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CONCLUSIONS

The peer learning visit hosted by Kortrijk showed the value of culture and art to stimulate debates in the community including on difficult issues such as identity, whilst authorities must often deal with a demographics and a population becoming more and more diverse. Heritage is great source of inspiration for addressing contemporary societal challenges, as shown with Emma the small giant.

Discussions with the group also showed that co-creation and participatory activities are now integral part of local cultural policies and are increasingly being implemented. Art and culture are exemplary to introduce and implement co-creation and co-design processes in a community. These processes illustrate how art and cultural heritage can be a driver for change in society, how art and cultural heritage have the power to address social issues and challenges. Time is of essence in such processes and long-term vision is necessary to enable the project to develop but also to be able to measure a meaningful impact. It is important for authorities to entrust cultural workers and artists to let them drive the process in a creative and engaging way.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM PARTICIPANTS (NON-EXHAUSTIVE)

City/region/ stakeholder	Main learning points	Future use of ideas and knowledge gained – Projects that were shared and that could be transferable to other contexts
Bolwerk (Kortrijk)	<p>The ultimate role of participation and co-creation in cultural policy is to empower citizens through arts and culture to change the society they live in. As cultural workers we must give citizens the tools so they can act as agents of transformation.</p> <p>As cultural workers we must emphasize the role that culture</p>	<p>The learning points are very useful to develop the narrative for our organization (we are at the point of negotiating with the city about the long-term use of our location).</p> <p>The above insights will help our organization to develop a clear project that shows the impact our organization can generate for the city and its citizens.</p>

	<p>and arts play in social inclusion, urban development, tourism, innovation, etcetera. We can do this through different methods of measurement and evaluation of the impact of cultural projects.</p> <p>When developing a cultural strategy for an organization or a city it is essential to build a narrative that gathers people or citizens. Cultural heritage plays an essential role in building this narrative.</p> <p>Cultural heritage, arts, culture in general has the power to address sociocultural issues. As cultural workers we need to deliver this message to politicians.</p>	
Pau	<p>Participation is a key tool to improve the quality of life of citizens.</p> <p>Each citizen is an expert of identity.</p> <p>Using objects from the city and its heritage is a way to start a debate about the city's past and future.</p>	I will share knowledge with local cultural institutions such as the museum, the conservatory etc.
Pesaro	<p>I learnt a lot especially about the concept of identity.</p> <p>The citizens needs are the basis for successful projects.</p> <p>Importance of finding together the identity of the city, crucial role of policy makes support to organize the engagement of all citizens.</p>	I now feel more confident to approach politicians to suggest ways for a friendly city.
Fortress of Culture Šibenik	<p>Participation is very important part of any cultural strategy and we should have in mind the ways on how to include our local community in our future projects. Every activity must be planned, having in mind its development as a part of a long-term strategy.</p> <p>The basis of our strategy should be a very good research - e.g., it is important to know our audience, their needs, preferences, habits, new trends...</p>	<p>In Šibenik, a photo festival like the Kortrijk's one could be organized.</p> <p>Emma is also inspiring because it shows how to take a part of a tradition and make it relevant in present times. We manage two fortresses in Šibenik, so we try to preserve and show our cultural heritage to new generations, but we also follow new trends and technologies and actively use them.</p>
Belfast	<p>Look at new ways of working with heritage/tradition to give a</p>	As we work towards our year of culture in 2023, I have been really inspired by Emma

	<p>contemporary version of old stories.</p> <p>Co-design must be tangible, practical and not just talked about as a theory in policies and strategies.</p> <p>Long-term participation and ownership are key - co-design can't be a one-off workshop, it needs legacy</p>	<p>and want to look at new ways we can work with our heritage/old traditions in Belfast and find contemporary ways of exploring them with a new lens and involving people new to this city.</p>
Brussels	<p>Building an identity takes time. Citizen's participation can also be done in a very simple way. Be more connected to the local organization's needs.</p>	<p>By understanding more the needs of the local organizations, NGOs, museums... Ask them more: what do you need, how, where, when?</p> <p>Brussels is, as Kortrijk, candidate for European Capital of Culture 2030: we can be inspired by their strategy and way of thinking about culture.</p>
Budapest KEK	<p>Importance of local identity. Importance of storytelling.</p>	<p>Ideas on how to reach the policy making level with bottom-up initiatives.</p>
Malmö	<p>Value of citizens participation in developing services, looking at new methods for this, importance of considering different target groups</p>	<p>Developing new museum can be relevant in context of our city, including methods for citizen participation in planning of this.</p>
Narva	<p>Cooperation and interactivity are key.</p>	
Pokolenia Pokoleniom Foundation	<p>Importance of citizens participation in local cultural activities.</p> <p>Importance of citizens inclusion - all age groups, different kind of people, different professions etc</p> <p>Importance of intensive cooperation between NGOs, institutions, groups of interest, local authorities, politicians, artists etc.</p> <p>Recognising local citizens' needs and interests (so called „local DNA”) is key to reach out to large audiences.</p>	<p>I will use those ideas and knowledge while working on cultural heritage projects of our NGO.</p> <p>Emma: perfect example of reaching the interests of local citizens for local cultural heritage. Inspiring for the city of Pruszkow and its 140- years tradition of ceramic production.</p>
Kiuruvesi/lisalmi/lisalmi visual arts society	<p>Remind local decision makers of the importance of culture.</p> <p>A good story is worth telling, take time to tell it!</p> <p>Let project grow!</p>	<p>I have written to local newspapers about the importance of cultural heritage and put pressure on law-based right to culture. I am asking in public what is the modernization of our local culture stories and will encourage to express it freely.</p>

		Photo festival: local photographers in places. Old photos compared to new ones from same scenery is already done here, one could develop this in using apps etc.
Zlin university	Importance of research about public engagement and participation impact Preparing ECoC candidacy 10 years ahead.	I will be using knowledge gained during the visit within the city culture infrastructure and at the university research department.

LIST OF REFERENCES AND PROJECTS SHARED

Local projects mentioned by participants:

City of Kortrijk:

- [Track and trace](#), open air participatory photography exhibition
- [DURF 2030](#), application for the European Capital of Culture 2030, bottom-up experimental platform gathering citizens and local organisations that use art and creativity to tackle local challenges through concrete projects.

City of Zlin:

- [The city of Zlin belongs to the network USE-IT](#). USE-IT stands for no-nonsense tourist info for young people. USE-IT maps and websites are made by young locals, are not commercial, free, and up-to-date.
- [Week of design in Zlin, from 7 to 14 May](#)

City of Pesaro:

- The 42 edition of the [Rossini Opera Festival](#) will take place in Pesaro from 9 to 22 August

City of Nova Gorica:

- The city of Nova Gorica, [European Capital of Culture for 2025](#), will implement a cross-border programme

City of Leeds:

- Due to Brexit the city of Leeds will not be able to be European Capital of Culture in 2023. Therefore, the city has decided to implement [Leeds 2023](#), which will be a landmark year of culture for Leeds and its wider region.
- [Centre for cultural value](#), national research centre based at the University of Leeds

City of Malmö:

- The [archive of Malmö city](#) opens its doors for youngsters, between 16-19 to tell the story of the city from a contemporary point of view.

City of Belfast

- [10-year cultural strategy](#)

City of Pau:

- [Project on classic music for the general public](#)
- To celebrate the arrival of the Tour de France with dignity, this is the noble objective of the great [Caravane Déjantée team](#)

Best practices from the Cultural Heritage in Action catalogue that were mentioned during the visit:

- [Budapest](#)
- [Sibenik](#)

Other projects shared by participants

- [Lovaina has 8 giants active in the city](#)
- [The giants of Mechelse](#)
- [Pitts River museum in Oxford](#)
- [Les machines \(elephants in Nantes\)](#)

Other organisations/networks

- [European network of cultural centres](#)
- Final report of [RECCORD](#) set out to explore participation in cultural centres in Europe
- [Unesco creative cities](#)
- [SCHOOL OF COMMONS](#), a growing network of local schools offering a modular series of workshops using tools for commoning
- [Eurocities culture forum in Leeds](#)
- [Liveurope](#) is an initiative supporting concert venues in their efforts to promote up-and-coming European artists
- [KEA](#), manifesto for a modern cultural policy

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