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So near and yet so far:

Marseille youth attitudes towards democratised institutions of culture

Elena Raevskikh, Maxime Jaffré and Emmanuel Pedler

This paper examines how young people in Marseille perceive democratised cultural institutions that seek to get in tune with their expectations and cultural preferences, and explores the interplay between the political vision of the city's peripheral neighbourhoods and the aspirational pursuits of its inhabitants.

European policies encourage young people to be active citizens and participate in society in order to ensure their involvement in the European democratic processes. As culture strengthens local communities and forges a sense of identity and belonging to the larger community of Europe, contemporary forms of cultural consumption are conceived to stimulate integration and mobility and also create a legitimate and transnational ideal young European citizen type. However, cultural struggles and identity conflicts emerging in Europe, particularly in the current context of increasing immigration issues, raise new challenges for inclusive cultural policies.

The statistical and ethnographical analysis of interactions between the National Scene – Theater of Le Merlan and young people from the nearby Grand Saint-Barthélémy urban area, typically associated with immigration, drug dealers and crime, identifies a weak impact of national and European inclusive policies on young audiences. This article highlights three main research results: 1) top-down state and European inclusive cultural policies contribute, paradoxically, to the progressive estrangement of targeted populations (especially young, poor and immigrant audiences) from democratised institutions of culture; 2) the immediate proximity of cultural institutions is relatively unimportant for populations. Regular theatre audiences can easily reach peripheral districts to participate in new cultural offerings, while populations poorly integrated into cultural life are not attracted even by nearby cultural offerings, despite their spatial proximity; 3) the general assumption of centralisation and gentrification of Theater of Le Merlan's audiences

can be relativised with the quantitative analysis of the theatre's attendance depending on different shows. While the local young population was underrepresented among the audiences of both "classical" and "contemporary" shows, we find, nonetheless, a significant change of audience when the theatre offers youth and family shows.

Historian Philippe Urfalino has described French cultural policy as a movement away from the ideals of cultural democratisation to the realities of cultural democracy. According to this narrative, the paradigm that guides state intervention in culture has evolved from the 1950s Malraucian view of art as a transcendent good to be bestowed upon the benighted masses to a relativistic view that acknowledges the values of cultural diversity (Drott 2011). With the accession of the Socialist Party to power in 1981, pluralism became the main vehicle of cultural policy. Since that moment, the cultural practices of popular neighbourhoods, and particularly youth subcultural practices (rock, rap, slam etc.) were officially recognised and included in public decision-making processes. Downtown elitist cultural institutions moved beyond a focus on access to cultural work, and had to incorporate access to the means of cultural production and distribution. Theatres, conservatories and museums have been decentralised in the urban space to get closer to targeted populations. The programs of these institutions were developed to meet the expectations of "popular" social fractions, contribute to youth integration through culture, and reduce criminality and interracial conflicts.

In 1985, French Minister of Culture Jack Lang came up with the idea of designating an annual 'European Capital of Culture' to develop new forms of civic cohesion through inclusive and participative cultural events at the European level. Henceforth, the use of culture as a tool for youth development became a central concern in European political thought, and inclusive cultural policies were promoted because they were seen to provide more and equal opportunities for young people and to encourage them to actively participate in society. In this approach, the cultural assets of a city elected 'ECC' are mobilised to attract a wide range of new audiences, including young populations poorly integrated into local cultural life and consequently distant from pre-existing cultural offers and practices.

The new cultural consumption pattern is conceived to stimulate integration and mobility, but also to create a legitimate and transnational ideal of a European citizen type. However, cultural struggles and identity conflicts that are emerging in contemporary Europe, especially in the context of increasing immigration issues, raise new challenges. Despite long-term policies of youth inclusion, as well as almost 30 years of cultural democracy, *The Independent* identified Marseille, in 2012, as "Europe's most dangerous

place to be young”. There were almost as many murders of young men in the first nine months of 2012 as in the whole of 2011. Proportionally, Marseille (population 800,000) had almost as many drug-related murders as New York (population 8,000,000).¹

Nevertheless, in January 2013, Marseille was elected as the ‘European Capital of Culture’. Cultural institutions, historically rooted and implemented in a specific territory, were called upon to renew their perimeters while redefining their relationships with audiences. This paper examines how the intervention of European cultural policies changed the interactions between young audiences and democratised institutions of culture in Marseille. How did these institutions renew their scope and redefine the relationships they had with their audiences during the ECC year? Are they now managing adaptive or hybrid strategies with new conceptions of culture? Or, conversely, did they gradually become obsolete? How did audiences (especially youth) react to new European cultural policies? Have they become more participative, or conversely, did they remain resistant to cultural institutions and to new cultural offerings?

Background

In the early years of the Fifth Republic, one of the most ambitious undertakings of the newly formed Ministry of Cultural Affairs was the creation of cultural centres (*Maisons de la Culture*). By providing new spaces for exhibitions and performances, these cultural centres were called upon to combat cultural inequality and make culture accessible to a broader part of the population, regardless of social background or income. The cultural production that presented in these cultural centres had to rise to international standards. There would be no “vulgarisation” of challenging shows, even if the audiences’ educational level challenged their understanding. Instead of vulgarisation, so-called “cultural animators” were engaged to facilitate encounters between audiences and artistic productions, and to bring “high culture” to the people (Drott 2011). However, surveys indicate that most visitors to cultural centres came from social groups with high levels of education (teachers, young professionals, university students). The very “culturally deprived” groups that the centres sought to serve (the working class and farm workers) made up a miniscule fraction of their audiences (Bécane 1973).

As a consequence, the political vision of culture as an object of simple transmission was defeated. Instead of the passive perception of culture as a number of objects and symbols that should be admired by the majority of citizens, cultural action became a medium for social action. Most cultural centres achieved the status of ‘National Scenes’ and were transformed into centres of arts education and cultural activities, focusing on young

people. Today, the 71 National Scenes represent more than 3.5 million entries per year, offer 4,000 shows per season with nearly 9,200 performances, and employ more than 1,800 people.²

The case of a National Scene – Theater of le Merlan

In Marseille, the National Scene – Theater of le Merlan was founded based on the Sociocultural Center situated in the peripheral Grand Saint-Barthélémy urban area. Since its beginning and until the present time, the theatre shares its space with a supermarket, a police station and a children’s library.

In the 1970s, the Sociocultural Center accommodated local cultural associations and was both a strong cultural reference and a meeting point for local youth. However, in 1982, owing to political issues, it obtained ‘Municipal Theater’ status. Consequently, new professional cultural administrators replaced the pre-existing “bottom-up” management established by neighbourhood inhabitants. This “top-down” intervention of municipal authorities was perceived by the young people of Grand Saint-Barthélémy as a “repression” and led to arson attempts, as well as assaults on male dancers wearing pants during the theatre’s shows that were “too tight”.

In 1993, the long-term conflict between the Municipal Theater and the neighbourhood became even more intense, because of its upgraded ‘National Scene’ status. Local associations and artists were excluded from the National Scene – Theater of Le Merlan’s program. The newly invited national and international theatre companies that performed at the Theater of le Merlan mainly attracted bourgeois audiences from the wealthy southern and downtown districts of Marseille. Paradoxically, despite political discourse that dissociated the “elitist” model of Cultural Centers from the “inclusive” notion of National Scenes, the Theater of le Merlan created a broad distance from targeted populations *after* becoming a ‘National Scene’, and thus *after* integrating the “cultural democracy” scope statement.

During the Marseille ECC–2013 year, the Theater of le Merlan was strongly impacted by European inclusive policies that strengthen and support the broad vision of a theatre open to everyone – regardless of income, cultural origin, age or education level. The new artistic director of the Theater of Le Merlan, Francesca Poloniato, began with the public presentation of a new program with an African dance symbolising the “young” image of the institution. The annual programs of the theatre combine rap, juggling, family and hip-hop shows with several “intellectual” avant-garde shows. By offering free tickets to youth and family associations in neighbourhood, and also by employing local youth as

technical assistants, doormen etc., the Theater of Le Merlan was engaged in the process of a gradual restoration of its interactions with the Grand Saint-Barthélémy urban area.

This paper looks at the Theater of Le Merlan’s audiences, and examines how young inhabitants of peripheral neighbourhoods react (or not) to the innovations induced by European cultural policies.

Research methodology

The methodology of our research is built on the articulation of several types of statistical and cartographical data analysis. Since 2013, we have been working on the analysis of the Theater of Le Merlan’s ticket office databases. These databases contain addresses and zip codes of every subscribed and non-subscribed ticket-buyer, as well as information available on the shows that he or she prefers to visit during the year. To complement and describe these data, we also conducted 15 in-depth interviews with the administration of the Theater of Le Merlan, public relations managers, social workers and young people from the nearby urban area. These semi-structured interviews were all conducted in person by our research team. We also implemented four different paper questionnaires with a number of detailed questions on personal cultural experiences and practices of the Theater of Le Merlan’s audiences.

For the questionnaire surveys, we chose four shows from the program of the Theater of Le Merlan. This approach allowed us to analyse the socio-demographical differences between the audiences of each show, and to consider whether the theatre’s new inclusive program met the expectations of different types of spectators. The figure below describes the main characteristics of each show that we included in our comparative scope (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The main characteristics of theatrical shows included in our analysis

| Institution | Show | Main characteristics of the show |
|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Theater of Le Merlan | <i>Smashed</i> (Gandini Juggling) | Artistic juggling with apples |
| Theater of Le Merlan | <i>Asphalte</i> (Cie Dernière Minute) | Modern dance and hip-hop |
| Theater of Le Merlan | <i>Dormir 100 ans</i> (Pauline Bureau) | Youth and family show |
| Theater of Le Merlan | <i>My dinner with André</i> (Tg Stan & de Koe) | Avant-garde theatre |

These qualitative questionnaire surveys gave us information about the subjective preferences of each respondent, while the ticket office databases provided an overall view of the composition of the audiences. From these data, we built a number of small-scale

data sets containing multiple dimensions about living areas, lifestyle and urban cultural mobility patterns of audiences. These data sets were compared with other databases such as those from the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), to examine correlations with the socioeconomic characteristics of Marseille’s population. Two main geographical units structure the INSEE databases: the zip and district codes (commune/arrondissement level) and the IRIS codes (infra-communal level). The city of Marseille is divided into 16 districts. Each district has its own zip code (13001, 13002 etc.). These codes allow us to locate the different urban zones inhabited by theatre audiences, and also to identify areas where individuals do not participate in the theatre’s cultural offerings. The map below shows the distribution of Marseille’s districts, as well as the position of the Theater of Le Merlan in the 14th district (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The administrative division of the city of Marseille by district and the position of the Theater of Le Merlan in the 14th district (symbol in black)



The IRIS (Aggregated Units for Statistical Information) geographical division is more detailed than zip and district codes. France is composed of around 16,000 IRIS codes that cover infra-communal territories scaled at the target size of 2,000 residents per basic unit. Thus, the combination of big data (national statistics by zip codes and IRIS codes) and small data (ticket office databases and qualitative surveys of the theatre’s audiences) allowed us to create new databases for the analysis of the impacts of European cultural

policies in Marseille. These methods allowed us to test and evaluate the inclusive power of cultural institutions concerned with the ECC program, such as the Theater of Le Merlan, by finding correlations between the social profile of theatre audiences and socioeconomic characteristics of Marseille's population. This original methodology allows us a better understanding of youth cultural participation, as well as insight into how social and cultural stratification can be impacted – or not – by European cultural policies.

'Mosaic city': Negotiating borders between the National Scene and its neighbourhood

Visitors are often puzzled by the anarchy of Marseille and the city's contradictory behaviours. Unlike other cities in France, where social housing projects are located in the suburbs, in Marseille these are inside city limits. Whereas 26% of people in Marseille live below the poverty line, compared to 15% nationally, popular perceptions exist of Marseille as a multicultural and inclusive "mosaic city" that erases the borders between rich and poor, young and old, native French and immigrants. According to this viewpoint, the social mix of the city's inhabitants guarantees solidarity between different identities, often called the "Marseille model". Marseille's urban integration was highlighted during the competition for "European Capital of Culture" status in 2013. To celebrate the election of Marseille-ECC 2013, the *New York Times* published two articles in 2012 and 2013 about the spirit of tolerance and integration of the city of Marseille. In the first issue, which examined the historic French republican concern about "who gets to be French?"³, the newspaper asked "can and should the Marseillais spirit of civilized tolerance spread northward?". The following year, the newspaper highlighted Marseille as "the secret capital of France".⁴

However, the ethnographic research that we have conducted in the Theater of le Merlan challenges these perceptions. Even a first-time visitor can notice the striking signs of urban segregation in the Grand Saint-Barthélémy area. The young people of the Grand Saint-Barthélémy urban area define themselves as the "owners" of the neighbourhood, and control the access to "their" territory. Since the Theater of Le Merlan ceased to be an endogenous part of the neighbourhood following its "National Scene" status, local inhabitants perceive this institution as a heterogeneous "island" of state intervention within the context of a local hierarchy headed by drug gangs. For instance, the Theater of le Merlan's staff, as well as theatre audiences that come to the neighbourhood, are asked by the local young men to avoid certain buildings appropriated by neighbourhood drug dealers. Laure-Marie Rollin, the Theater of Le Merlan's public relations manager, commented:

When you pass by that street, near the block, the young people from the neighborhood come to you, and ask you politely what you are doing here. You respond that you are going to the Theater of le Merlan. Then they advise you very firmly to choose the other way. You should avoid “their” territory. It could be dangerous. Once, our Theatre organised an outdoor event for the local teenagers. They were quite interested and many of them came to us. The local gangsters reacted immediately: they arrived at the theatre in their big black BMW full of presents and food from McDonald’s. Naturally, all the teens left our show to join them.

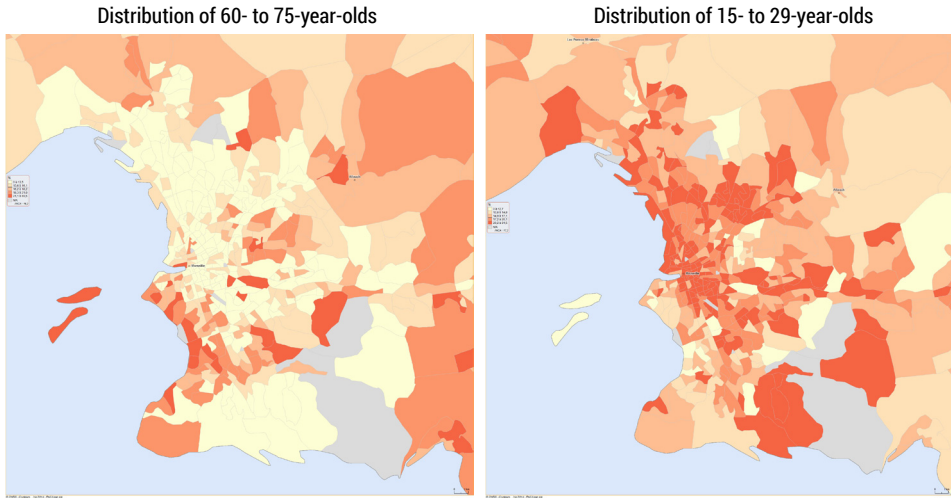
The National Police station that shares its premises with the Theater of Le Merlan accepts the “silent agreement” with local inhabitants, and does not disturb the neighbourhood’s endogenous hierarchy, and justice and social order. However, police intervention is still accepted on the limits of the negotiated borders. For example, access to the parking lot of the Theater of Le Merlan is controlled by the police station, which guarantees the security of visitors’ cars.

So, does the “Marseille model” of urban integration really work?

Young, poor, under-educated immigrant: The typical profile of an inhabitant of north Marseille

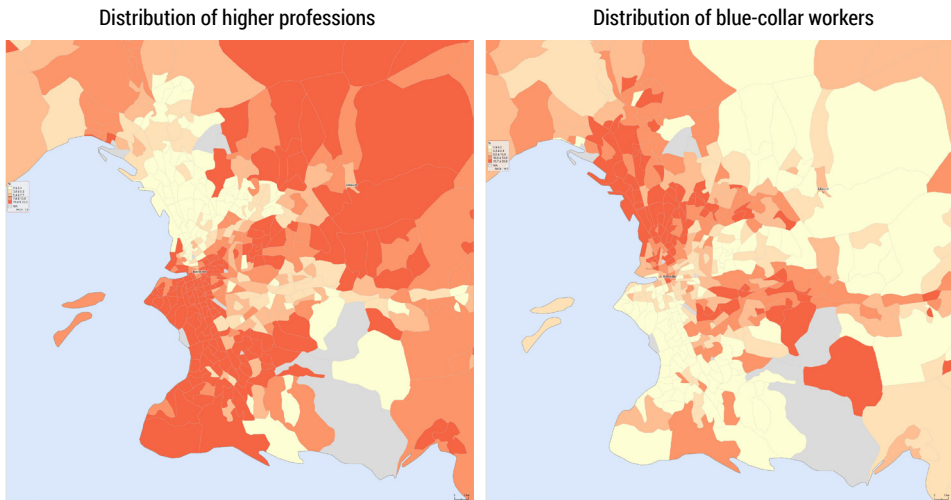
We find dramatic results in the sociodemographic distribution of the population of Marseille when we analyse the city by profession, income, age and ethnicity. When we compare the distribution of the population by age, we find a city quite divided between the north and the south. When we look at a map showing the percentage of 60- to 75-year-olds compared with the percentage of 15- to 29-year-olds, it is very clear that the elderly population does not live in the same neighbourhoods as the younger population. Despite the fact that youngers are quite numerous downtown in the historical centre of the city – as in most cities in Europe – many are nonetheless living in the north side of the city, in the northern neighbourhoods of Marseille. In contrast, most of the elderly population lives in the south side of the city, in the neighbourhoods of Marseille’s waterfront (see Map 1).

Map 1: Distribution of the population by age in Marseille at the infra-communal level (IRIS codes)



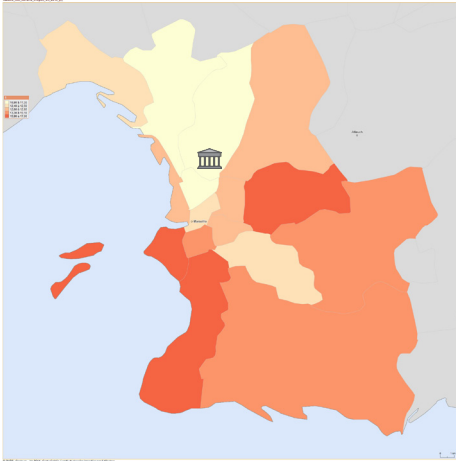
The percentage of higher level professions (CEOs, intellectual professions and managers) is also much greater in the south side of Marseille, while the percentage share of blue-collar workers is located much more in the north side of the city (see Map 2).

Map 2: Distribution of the population by profession in Marseille at the infra-communal level (IRIS codes)



If we compare statistics on income and rates of poverty, we find strong relationships with the two previously explored variables – age and profession. The population with the highest income lives in the south and east sides of the city. While the south side near Marseille’s waterfront appears to be very wealthy, conversely the northern neighbourhoods seem to be rather disadvantaged economically (see Map 3).

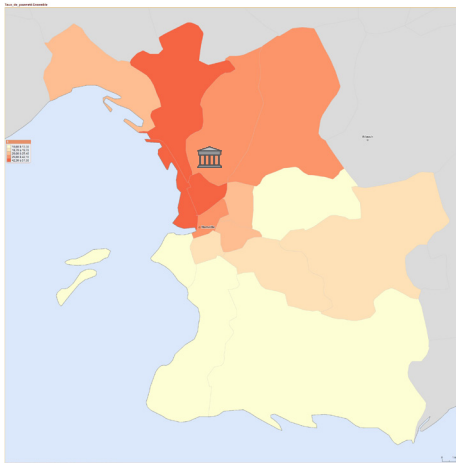
Map 3: Distribution of the population by income in Marseille at the zip-code level and the position of the Theater of Le Merlan in the 14th district (symbol in black)



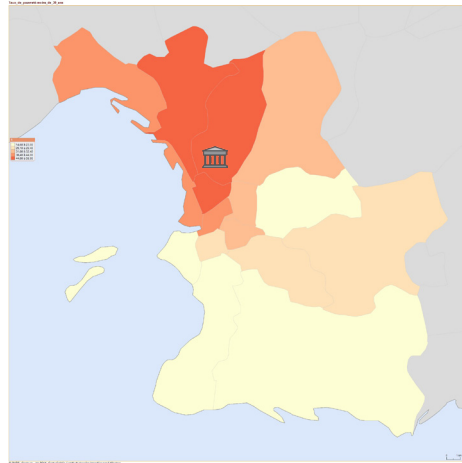
To contrast this observation, we can compare income with the poverty rate. The areas with the highest distribution of this variable are the exact opposite of those of income. The poorest population is essentially based in the northern neighbourhoods of Marseille (see Map 4). In the present case, and considering what we have previously analysed, we can see that the poverty rate is strongly correlated with neighbourhoods where the population is not only undereducated, but also very

young. This is exactly what we observe on the next map showing the poverty rate distribution of the under-30-year-olds population (see Map 5). Interestingly, the districts of the city that have the highest poverty rate are also the youngest ones.

Map 4: Poverty rate distribution in Marseille at the zip-code level and the position of the Theater of Le Merlan in 14th district (symbol in black)



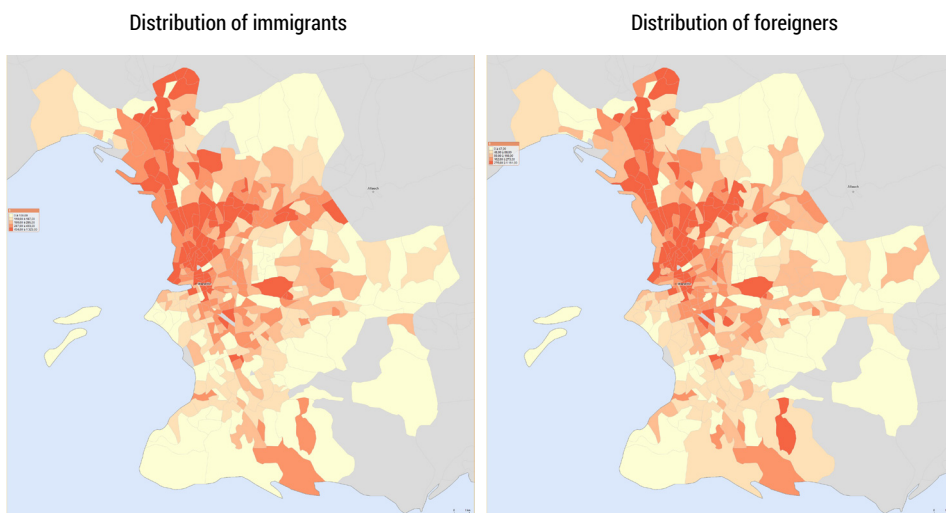
Map 5: Poverty rate distribution of the under-30-year-old population in Marseille at the zip-code level and the position of the Theater of Le Merlan in the 14th district (symbol in black)



Finally, once we move on to the analysis of the immigrant and foreign population⁵ distribution in Marseille, contrasting by income, age and profession, we find strong evidence that these populations are likely to be correlated with young, undereducated

and low-income neighbourhoods. The following two maps show the distribution of the immigrant and foreign population across the city of Marseille (see Map 6). As we can observe on these maps, the districts with the highest rates of immigrant and foreign populations are essentially located in the north side of Marseille, where, as we have seen before, the population tends to be younger, poorer and more undereducated than in the other parts of the city. Furthermore – all things being equal – we also find strong correlations between district locations for both immigrant and foreign populations. These observations suggest that the status of both immigrants and foreigners might be correlated and share the same social profile.

Map 6: Distribution of the immigrant and foreign population in Marseille at the infra-communal level (IRIS codes)



These analyses allow us to have a better idea about the social profile of the populations living in the north and south sides of the city of Marseille. From our observations, we can conclude that while the population of the southern neighbourhoods of the city appears to be older, more educated and wealthier, the social profile of the population from the northern part is, however, younger, less educated and living in poverty.

To test these assumptions, we conducted repeated regression analyses with SPSS. The database used for the test came from the National Statistics Institution (INSEE) and was scaled to the city level of Marseille. The results we found provide strong evidence to support our conclusions.⁶

Marseille youth attitudes towards the National Scene – Theater of Le Merlan

How do these quantitative results relate to youth cultural practices? To what extent are the youth of Marseille integrated into the Theater of Le Merlan? And how does the ‘European Capital of Culture’ program influence youth’s cultural participation?

We asked the audiences of the Theater of Le Merlan three very simple questions: 1) How old are you?; 2) What is your means of transportation?; and 3) Where do you live in the city? The second question gives us information about whether the person comes: 1) by foot, 2) by public transportation, 3) by bike, 4) by car, or 5) other. The third question tells us whether the person lives near or far from the theatre.

Most of the Theater of le Merlan audiences are between 30 and 44 years old (34.8%). Young people (15–29 years) represent only 16.6% of the theatre’s audiences, the same as older adults (60–74 years), while children (0–14 years) and seniors (75 years or more) are very underrepresented (1.1%).

To establish whether inhabitants of nearby neighbourhoods come to the Theater of Le Merlan we did some simple frequency tests on the transportation methods used to travel to the theatre. We found that 73.3% of the audience of the Theater of Le Merlan came by car, while only 0.5% came on foot. These results confirm our hypothesis that, despite its location in a northern district of Marseille, the Theater of Le Merlan does not impact the populations of its nearby neighbourhood (e.g. local youth), but rather attracts audiences from the central and eastern districts of the city. As we see in Table 1, the factor of distance is stronger than proximity as the great majority of audiences come by car rather than by the theatre’s shuttle).

Table 1: Means of transport used to come to the Theater of Le Merlan

How do you come to the Theater of Le Merlan?

| | Frequency | Percent | Valid percent | Cumulative percent |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | 3 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| – By foot | 1 | .5 | .5 | 2.1 |
| – By bike | 3 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 3.7 |
| – By public transport | 22 | 11.8 | 11.8 | 15.5 |
| – By car | 137 | 73.3 | 73.3 | 88.8 |
| – By the Merlan Theater’s shuttle | 21 | 11.2 | 11.2 | 100 |
| Total | 187 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

To attract and retain new generations of local audiences, the Theater of Le Merlan currently implements two strategies. The first “top down” strategy consists of an intensification of collaboration with the social workers who distribute theatre tickets to the targeted population: families, school groups, social centres, etc. The second “bottom up” strategy consists of the creation of several theatrical workshops engaging the neighbourhood’s young women and children in production of “amateur” shows about their own lives, their relationships, their cultural origins, etc. This strategy is called upon to enhance the theatre’s attractiveness through the “word of mouth” method.

However, interviews conducted with social workers as well as with the neighbourhood’s inhabitants showed that both of these strategies encounter obstacles. For instance, N., a social worker respondent, commented:

Once, I asked the young women from the nearby block to come to the theatre for a workshop. They responded: “We can’t go there alone. The theatre is poorly lit, dark and scary”. So I had to accompany them, even if they lived just several meters from the Le Merlan.

L., a young woman respondent from the neighbourhood, feels “scammed” by the theatre:

What’s the “scam” that you see behind the theatre show? They invite us because they want to make sales. So the social workers call us for the least interesting shows. And it is very discouraging to be scammed!

Visibly, the absence of an appropriate approach addressing long-term group dynamics challenged the new initiatives of the theatre. The other important braking factor is the lack of personal confidence in relations between the theatre’s staff, social workers and the targeted population.

However, the general assumption of the centralisation and gentrification of the theatre’s audience and its estrangement from Grand Saint-Barthélemy urban area becomes more balanced when we analyse attendance based on the different shows offered. The restructuring and “inclusive” rebranding of the Theater of Le Merlan focused on the immersion of the theatre in its local environment (i.e. in the poor northern districts), and on the attraction of local audiences (mostly young immigrants). The comparison of four heterogeneous shows from the theatre’s annual program reveals differences in audience make-up depending on the types of shows.

The following table indicates the distribution of the audiences of the Theater of Le Merlan in different Marseille districts, depending on five heterogeneous shows included in the program during the ‘European Capital of Culture’ year (see Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of Le Merlan Theater's audiences in different Marseille districts, depending on four heterogeneous shows

| | | Representation | | | | Total |
|--|-------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------------|
| | | <i>Asphalte</i> | <i>Dormir cent ans</i> | <i>My dinner with André</i> | <i>Smashed</i> | |
| If you live in Marseille, can you specify the district | 13001 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 16 |
| | 13002 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| | 13003 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 13004 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 21 |
| | 13005 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 17 |
| | 13006 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 24 |
| | 13007 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 13 |
| | 13008 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| | 13009 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | 13010 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 13012 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 8 |
| | 13013 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 17 |
| | 13014 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| | 13015 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | 13016 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 |
| | 84000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 23 | 32 | 39 | 50 | 144 |

While we find a strong presence of inhabitants from Marseille's southern districts (13005, 13006, 13007) for certain types of shows such as *Asphalte* (hip-hop show), *Smashed* (juggling show) and *My Dinner with André* (avant-garde show), nonetheless we find a significant change of audience when the theatre performs shows aimed at youth and families, such as *Dormir Cent Ans*. Among the four shows analysed, we can see that *Dormir Cent Ans* attracted the most local population from the northern districts (12 individuals from the 13th, 14th and 16th districts). However, the specific artistic and avant-gardist staging of *My Dinner with André* is clearly more in line with the audience coming from Marseille's southern districts (19 individuals from the 5th, 6th and 7th districts). Thus, we can make the assumption residential populations from downtown tend to come to the Theater of Le Merlan mostly for avant-garde shows. However, we can assume that the inclusion of more youth and family shows in the theatre's program could potentially entice more young people to come more often to the Theater of Le Merlan.

Conclusion

Three main conclusions can be drawn from these different results: First, top-down state and European inclusive cultural policies contribute, paradoxically, to the progressive estrangement of targeted populations (especially young, poor and immigrant audiences) from democratised institutions of culture. Second, in the case of Marseille, the pre-existing local cultural geography involves several spatial scales (north-south axis, district, neighbourhood) related to the various populations, lifestyles and cultural practices. Our analysis highlights the relative unimportance that the immediate proximity of cultural institutions has for populations, and the fact that the regular theatre audiences can easily reach the peripheral districts to experience new cultural offerings, while populations poorly integrated into cultural life are not attracted even by nearby cultural offerings, despite their spatial proximity. Finally, the general assumption of the centralisation and gentrification of Theater of Le Merlan's audiences does, however, become more balanced when theatre attendance is analysed on the basis of the different shows offered. Whereas local young populations were underrepresented among the audiences of both "classical" and "contemporary" shows, we nonetheless find a significant change in audience composition when the theatre offers youth and family shows, such as *Dormir cent ans*.

Notes

1 Lichfeld J. 2012, 'Marseille: Europe's most dangerous place to be young', retrieved from, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/marseille-europes-most-dangerous-place-to-be-young-8166738>

2 'The official program of the Theater of Le Merlan', retrieved from, <http://www.theatre-contemporain.net/images/upload/pdf/f-688-5620d0e897700.pdf>

3 Meyer K. 2012, 'Who gets to be French?', *The New York Times*, April 11, retrieved from, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/12/opinion/who-gets-to-be-french.html>

4 Kimmelman M. 2013, 'Marseille, the Secret Capital of France', *The New York Times*, October 4, retrieved from, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/04/t-magazine/marseille-the-secret-capital-of-france.html?_r=0

5 According to the definition adopted by the French High Council for Integration, an immigrant is a foreign person born abroad and living in France. Some immigrants have become French, the others remain foreigners. The foreign and immigrant populations do not merge completely: an immigrant is not necessarily a foreigner and vice versa, some foreigners were born in France. The quality of an immigrant is permanent: an individual continues to belong to the immigrant population even if he or she becomes French by acquisition. It is the country of birth, not nationality at birth, which defines the geographical origin of an immigrant.

6 Statistical results available from authors.

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