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The SSE in creative districts: Embeddedness and social utility in local communities

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Abstract:

This article sets out to identify the conditions for fostering cultural vitality and social meeting spaces in neighbourhoods with a concentration of cultural and creative organisations (i.e., cultural or creative districts), some of which are part of the social and solidarity economy (SSE). How can the latter help create places open to residents where people can meet and interact? Does their belonging to the SSE strengthen the social and cultural vitality of these neighbourhoods? Based on qualitative surveys conducted in three neighbourhoods in France – in Nantes (Les Olivettes), Marseille (Le Panier) and Grenoble (Berriat) – the positioning and role of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE are analysed. These organisations appear mainly (65%) driven by the desire to engage with residents through concrete activities while profitability comes second.

Keywords: social and solidarity economy (SSE), cultural and creative organizations, local community, proximity, creative district, Nantes, Marseille, Grenoble

Introduction

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is considered as a “complementary form of organisation, which coexists with the private and public sectors” (Bioteau and Fleuret, 2014)¹. Organisations belonging to the SSE do not put profitability first: they aim to advance the common good, while functioning in a democratic way (Jeantet, 2008; Laville, 2011). SSE organisations prioritise solidarity and sharing, with the goal of strengthening social ties and, ultimately, helping create a society of the commons (Dardot and Laval, 2015).

There is an alignment between SSE values and those of the creative and cultural sectors. Indeed, the pursuit of social goals is an important characteristic of cultural and creative sectors (Stokkink and Graceffa, 2015) and they are also considered vectors of social cohesion (KEA, 2006; Klein and Tremblay, 2010), particularly in urban neighbourhoods with a high concentration of artists, theatres or communication agencies, many of which choose to operate under the SSE legal status.

SSE organisations within the cultural and creative sectors have been studied previously (Colin and Gautier, 2008; Emin and Guibert, 2009; Michel and Le Claire, 2019; Rousselière and Bouchard, 2010). However, there are few geographical analyses of these SSE organisations focusing on their local embeddedness in a specific urban neighbourhood, on their ability to create meeting places for the local community as well as on the specificity of their SSE status.

Therefore, this article aims to measure to what extent cultural and creative organisations of the SSE are able to create cultural and social meeting places that are open to the residents of their own neighbourhoods. How do these organisations (mainly associations and co-operatives), their employees and their volunteers, see their role in the local community? Do they attempt to create places where local residents can meet and share? Do they seek to implement SSE’s values of sharing and openness within their neighbourhood? Or are they solely focused on their primary cultural or creative objectives?

These questions shed light on an important issue, namely the role the SSE can play in building meeting places in cities. This article will focus on the role cultural and creative actors take on in their local community, and the measures they implement to add a social dimension to their presence. The focal point is deliberately set on cultural and creative organisations of the SSE, their projects and their initiatives. The analysis is based on qualitative research carried out in

¹ In France, the SSE is defined by an eponymous law in 2014; its organisations can be considered as the French third sector.

three neighbourhoods containing a high concentration of cultural and creative organisations (i.e., cultural or creative districts): Les Olivettes, in Nantes; Le Panier, in Marseille and Berriat, in Grenoble.

The first part lays the conceptual framework necessary to an analysis combining such concepts as the SSE, the cultural and creative sectors, and creative districts. The second part presents the three study areas and the methodology of the research. The third part analyses the role of cultural and creative organisations and the type of measures they take, in order to understand to what extent organisations belonging to the cultural and creative SSE are able to help create socially-oriented meeting places in their local area.

1. The links between the SSE, cultural and creative sectors, and creative districts

1.1. Importance and characteristics of the SSE within cultural and creative sectors

Since the early 2000s, a vast literature has emerged about the creative and cultural sectors (Caves, 2000; Landry, 2000; Scott, 2000). Those are comprised of three sub-sectors: the arts (visual and performing arts) and cultural heritage, the cultural industries (film and music industries, etc.) and the creative industries (design, architecture, etc.) (KEA, 2006). The organisations in these sectors are diverse, especially regarding the level of adherence to market logic (Grésillon, 2014). However, they are similarly based on the act of creation and rely on the creativity of their workers (Chantelot, 2010). Creative and cultural organisations are also generally small (HKU, 2010), characterized by widespread employment instability (Vivant, 2011) and by the fact that their productions integrate a strong symbolic and aesthetic dimension. A large share of these organisations is created under a legal status which belongs to the SSE, mainly as *associations*², less often as co-operatives (Latarjet, 2017; Rousselière et Bouchard, 2010). The use of these statuses can partly be explained by the desire of many people within the creative and cultural sectors to advance the common good and pursue social goals. It is also the result of a propensity to see the *association* as a simpler legal status to test their project. Finally, many creative and cultural organisations do not wish to operate as for-profits: it further explains the high recourse to SSE statuses.

Thus, the SSE is strongly represented within the cultural and creative sectors, especially within the performing arts. In France, the share of jobs belonging to the SSE in the cultural sector is estimated to be between 26% and 29% (Observatoire national de l'ESS [SSE National Observatory, France], 2017; Stokkink and Graceffa, 2015). For Hannecart and Marzin (2015),

² An *association loi 1901* refers in France to a non-profit organisation of two or more people.

“the cultural sector is a fertile ground for the SSE”. And this trend is continuing: the French Official Journal of Associations, which records the creation of *associations*, shows that culture is the number one field of registration between 2015 and 2019 with 20.3% of registrations, far surpassing sports (14.1%) (numbers computed by the authors).

The SSE is also an important part of the cultural and creative sectors at the regional scale: 14% of SSE organisations in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region (southeast France) belong to the cultural and creative sectors (Stokink and Graceffa, 2015), while 19% of jobs in the cultural sector are part of the SSE in the Pays de la Loire region (northwest France) (Hannecart and Marzin, 2015). This importance of the SSE is exemplified in the Pays de la Loire region by the existence of the Cooperation Centre for Contemporary Music [Pôle de coopération pour les musiques actuelles]. This *association* works to build a regional network of collaboration and mutualisation in the field of contemporary music. Its 125 members are mainly *associations*, and they share values such as democratic governance, solidarity, and cultural diversity, further placing them within the SSE.

1.2. What is the social role of cultural and creative organisations?

Scientific literature has highlighted a process of spatial concentration of cultural and creative organisations in urban districts characterized by their centrality, their lower than market average housing prices, and their industrial past (Bell and Jayne, 2004; Michel, 2018). These districts are then described as “cultural” or “creative” due to the presence of many actors from these sectors (Evans, 2009; Roodhouse, 2006). They may emerge in different ways: some are planned by public authorities (top-down) while others are the result of a spontaneous clustering of cultural and creative organisations (bottom-up) (Mommaas, 2004).

Studies have generally focused on the processes of urban regeneration and economic development in these districts (Bailoni, 2014; Evans, 2009; Montgomery, 2003; Roodhouse, 2006). Their social dimensions, particularly the links between residents and creative and cultural actors, have less often been studied (Markusen, 2006). Therefore, the social role played by cultural and creative organisations in these districts remains little-known. Furthermore, the SSE status of some of these organisations is seldom considered, even though it can help understand them (Michel, 2017). As a result, the ability of cultural and creative SSE organisations to build meeting places within the urban neighbourhoods they occupy is something to question and evaluate.

This central question raises two issues: (1) the specificities of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE, their projects and the measures they take, (2) the capacity of these organisations to foster local cultural vitality by creating places and opportunities for members of their local community to meet and exchange.

2. Cultural and creative organisations of the SSE: investigation in three creative districts

This article is based on surveys conducted between 2013 and 2016 in the neighbourhoods of Les Olivettes (Nantes), Le Panier (Marseille) and Berriat (Grenoble). The qualitative methods used were semi-structured interviews, observation, and textual analysis. Fifty-two interviews were conducted with people in charge of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE located in the aforementioned neighbourhoods. Additional interviews were conducted with residents (34), local planners and stakeholders (5) and for-profit cultural and creative organisations (125).

2.1. Understanding the role of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE

The interviews with SSE actors were structured around seven themes: the history of the organisation; the reasons behind their choice to settle in the neighbourhood; the organisation's project, characteristics, and management; the partnerships with other cultural and creative organisations within the neighbourhood; the measures carried out towards the neighbourhood and its residents; interviewees' spatial representations and practices of the neighbourhood; and the organisation's prospects. The main objective of these interviews was to identify how these actors view their role in relation to their neighbourhood (Les Olivettes, Le Panier or Berriat) and to figure out: firstly, what kind of ties they have with local residents; secondly, whether creating social ties is a part of their organisation's project; thirdly, if practical measures are implemented in order to achieve this; fourthly, whether organisations within the neighbourhood collaborate to facilitate social and cultural exchanges with residents.

Interviewees were chosen on the basis of their field of work (artists' collectives, theatres, cultural communication, etc.) in order to represent the diversity of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE and therefore allow us to yield generalizations about their ability to create meeting places in their local community. The actors interviewed are women (60%) and men (40%), who are mainly between 20 and 39 years of age (51%) and some of whom also live in the neighbourhood they work in (29%). Regarding the types of organisations studied, the sample in Les Olivettes is mainly made up of *associations* (81%), and of co-operatives, most notably co-operative and participative societies [Sociétés coopératives et participatives, or

“Scop”]. The arts sector³ is the most represented (76%) but there are also organisations in the field of communication as well as digital technology. Finally, the organisations are small (4 people on average). In the neighbourhoods of Le Panier and Berriat, the sample is exclusively made up of *associations*, mainly in the arts sector⁴ (respectively 85% and 88%). As in the case of Les Olivettes, the organisations are also quite small (3 and 6 people on average), which reflects the average within the cultural and creative sectors (HKU, 2010).

To complement and substantiate the discourse of these actors, phases of observation in the neighbourhoods (during events, in cultural places, etc.), analyses of the organisations’ websites as well as interviews with residents were carried out. In situ observation allowed to ascertain the public’s participation, especially that of the residents, in the events led by cultural and creative actors in the neighbourhoods. It was also the opportunity to measure how frequented the places and events are (performances, art workshops, etc.) and to what degree participants and cultural and creative actors interacted (discussions, collective creations, etc.).

2.2. Introducing the neighbourhoods: the characteristics of Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat

The three neighbourhoods studied in this article are located in French cities characterized by a vibrant cultural life: Les Olivettes is situated in Nantes, a city renowned for *Le Voyage à Nantes*, an urban itinerary of permanent and temporary artworks which include *Les Machines de l’île*, a large-scale art installation in the city’s former shipyards; Le Panier is located in the city of Marseille, which was European Capital of Culture in 2013 and boasts a dynamic underground art scene; and Berriat is situated in Grenoble, home to *Le Magasin des horizons*, a national centre of art and culture, as well as *Les Musiciens du Louvre*, a world-renowned Baroque orchestra, among others.

Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat are all urban neighbourhoods that are located close to the city centre. They all have been through a phase of economic and urban decline, followed by a bottom-up process of clustering of cultural and creative organisations, with the spontaneous arrival of artists in the 1990s and architects and other creative workers in the 2000s. Attracted by the proximity to the city centre, affordable housing prices and the working-class history of these neighbourhoods, creative workers became progressively more numerous, until the neighbourhoods themselves came to be seen as “creative”. The creative workers assert their neighbourhood’s creative image, as the words of a non-profit organisation director in Les

³ Artists’ collectives (performing arts, plastic arts), theatres, dance studios, non-profit organisation for cultural mediation...

⁴ Artists’ collectives (performing arts, plastic arts), theatres, art galleries, concert and art venues...

Olivettes illustrate: “*I am proud to be in this district; as I often say, I work in the historic creative district*” (director of a cultural events association, July 2015)⁵. In 2017, there are respectively 250, 128 and 175 cultural and creative organisations in Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat (Michel, 2017). Among them, about 28% are SSE organisations. These organisations can be artists, artists’ collectives, cultural spaces (theatres, dance studios, art galleries...), communication agencies, events agencies, and cultural mediation agencies. Within each neighbourhood, they collaborate in a variety of ways: sharing information, lending equipment, exchanging services, working on collective projects, etc⁶.

Three of these SSE cultural and creative organisations will be presented briefly. They were selected to showcase different legal statuses (*association* or co-operative) and sub-sectors (artistic creation, communication, crafts). In addition, they illustrate the desire, widely shared by these organisations, to develop a creative activity that is close to their hearts, and through which they seek to apply values considered close to the SSE (well-being at work, sharing, openness, economic gain relegated to the background).

- *Scopic: itinerary of a communication agency in the neighbourhood of Les Olivettes*

Scopic is a communication agency with the co-operative status (Scop⁷). It was created in 2004 after Pick’up Productions, an *association* which organises events around hip hop and graffiti, was repeatedly asked to design communication campaigns. Three members of Pick’up Productions created a co-operative to answer those requests. Scopic now has 14 employees and has been based in Les Olivettes since its beginnings. Following the principles of co-operatives, the company values the well-being of its employees: “*We ask ourselves a lot of questions about the workplace in general, in the sense that we realize we have to spend three-quarters of our lives working so there’s no way we’re going to spend three-quarters of our lives bored out of our minds. So, we want to ensure it goes well and that implies going over everything and asking ourselves questions about the business/the workplace in itself*” (cofounder and director of Scopic, April 2013).

⁵ For more details about the transformation of the neighbourhoods of Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat in creative districts, see Basile Michel’s PhD dissertation (2017).

⁶ On average, the organisations interviewed interact with 14 other cultural and creative organisations within their neighbourhood. Most often, these interactions are punctual.

⁷ A Scop [Société coopérative et participative] is a type of co-operative where employees own at least 51% of the company’s shares, and democratic rules dictate governance and how profits are distributed.

- *L'Atelier 1 par 1: a place for creation in Le Panier neighbourhood*

L'Atelier 1 par 1 is an *association* that brings together various creators in a space that is both a retail space and a workshop. It has been located in the neighbourhood of Le Panier since 2011. Its founder is a woman who went through a career and life change: “*Here, I was able to do everything I wanted. I worked for 25 years on stupid things that didn't make me happy. I'd rather volunteer and make very little money than work how I used to work. [...] I think that I need that to be happy*” (cofounder of L'Atelier 1 par 1, November 2015).

This non-profit organisation relies fully on volunteering. Although a dozen creators are showcased, only two regularly use the workshop. The *association* is not governed by any rules, simply by the desire to create a space which is open and favours exchanges and communal life.

- *Les Barbarins fourchus: a pluri-disciplinary artists' collective in Berriat*

Les Barbarins fourchus is a collective of performing and street artists created in 1992 in Grenoble. The founders hail from different disciplines (visual arts, music, writing) and from different scenes (punk, rock'n'roll, classical). For them, having a centralized venue is essential: from the start, the artists wanted to be able to meet up, exchange, live, create, perform, and welcome audiences in a common space. Until 1999, they occupied several squats in Grenoble before being tasked with the management of Théâtre 145, a theatre in the neighbourhood of Berriat. In that theatre, they found the common space they were searching for.

In 2011, the city hall decided to delegate the management of the Théâtre 145 to another organisation. The collective expressed their wish to be granted a new space, in order to continue creating and welcoming audiences: “*We wish to have a place because that's our centre, the centre that allows us to create and work, and also where we can meet residents from our neighbourhood, and that's important to us*” (artist and cofounder of the collective, June 2016). After lengthy negotiations with public authorities at different scales (the city, the region, etc.), the collective obtained la Salle Noire, a former textile factory in the Berriat neighbourhood. It is therefore from this site that Les Barbarins fourchus pursue their actions.

3. Creating meeting spaces: from principles to practice

Here, we will analyse how cultural and creative organisations of the SSE view their role in regard to their neighbourhood. Then, we will show how those principles translate to reality through practical measures.

3.1. The neighbourhood, an area of focus for 65% of SSE actors

The majority of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE located in Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat consider that at least part of their activity is focused on their neighbourhood. As such, in addition to leading projects on the metropolitan, regional, national, or international scale (shows, exhibitions, events, etc.), these organisations seek to embed a part of their cultural and creative work in their neighbourhood. This stated principle is the result of the actors' wish to meet residents, build a dialogue and foster community engagement. The case of L'Atelier 1 par 1 illustrates this philosophy of social activism which guides the projects of many cultural and creative organisations of the SSE. Since its beginnings, this non-profit organisation has been characterized by a strong social and local dimension, as its objective was to *“create a cultural place to make this neighbourhood move a little, because this neighbourhood is magnificent, it's full of history and potential but it was completely abandoned. [...] It was really lacking a place where people could gather, where you could play music again, and meet outside”* (cofounder of L'Atelier 1 par 1, November 2015).

Following this same philosophy of local community involvement, cultural and creative organisations in Les Olivettes and Berriat also defend their commitment to *“creating meeting places and moments around culture”* (coordinator of a cultural organisation located in Berriat, April 2016). One of the founders of Les Barbarins fourchus also testified to this commitment: *“We had seen places that were very closed off, they would open only from 8pm to 10pm and that was it. We really didn't envision it that way, we would say: “no, no, there need to be open moments, shared meals, public rehearsals...””* (artist and cofounder of the collective, June 2016).

In the neighbourhood of Les Olivettes, the cofounder of Scopic also expressed his ambition for openness towards residents, while questioning the social role of a business: *“We ask ourselves about this economic actor [the business]: can it have a social role, and if so, what role? We think for starters that a business is not isolated; it exists in a local community. That local community, if we are to take the smallest scale, is the street and the neighbourhood. So, if a business is a social actor on top of being an economic actor, it means it probably is open to*

that place, to that neighbourhood, that local community. What does it offer? How can it engage with the neighbourhood, how can it offer things and not close itself off?” (cofounder and director of Scopic, April 2013).

3.2. Going beyond the artistic and economic function?

These interrogations highlight the ambition of cultural and creative actors to push their *association* or their co-operative beyond their artistic and economic function by being socially involved in their neighbourhood. The words of the founder of a theatre in Le Panier confirm this intention: *“It’s kind of an intention I had at the beginning, which is shared by the team: a theatre is embedded in a neighbourhood, in a local community, in a population and it can’t limit its work to its main tasks which are creation, artistic programming, etc. To have a real impact on the population, it must do things that aren’t directly linked to its artistic program. Otherwise, it will stay an island, a little lost within its community”* (founder of the Théâtre de Lenche, October 2015).

On the other hand, for 35% of the actors surveyed, the neighbourhood is not a targeted area. They do not express a specific desire to engage with it to create meeting spaces and moments with local residents. This is due to the priority they place on the regional, national, and even international impact of their activity. In this context, the neighbourhood scale does not appear in their project. This situation does not prevent the spontaneous establishment of informal links with residents (17% of the actors interviewed), outside of any socio-cultural initiative. Still, this sizeable minority of actors who do not view openness to their local community as part of their project does refute the idea that cultural and creative organisations of the SSE are necessarily committed to building a dialog with residents.

Nonetheless, the majority of actors in Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat has the ambition to include local residents. Therefore, it is now necessary to examine how these principles are put into practice.

3.3. A variety of initiatives

The organisations’ desire to engage with the neighbourhood expresses itself through their efforts to create places and moments where people can meet. The testimony of the manager of a Berriat-based cultural organisation illustrates the link between the core project of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE and the implementation of measures in coherence with that project: *“The association Et à Fond has really wanted to be embedded in this neighbourhood [Berriat]. It’s something we’ve often repeated, and we’ve put it into practice by meeting*

neighbourhood residents and by creating places where they can practice art themselves” (manager of the non-profit organisation Et à Fond, April 2016).

The initiatives carried out can take different forms: designing workshops for residents, putting on shows during neighbourhood festivities, creating cultural events, opening a venue during rehearsals, etc. This appears to be a specificity of SSE organisations: among the cultural and creative organisations interviewed in the three neighbourhoods, 65% of SSE organisations reported implementing measures specifically designed to connect with residents, as opposed to only 10% of private-sector organisations⁸. These initiatives are grounded in the immediate environment, following a culture of proximity. Far from large-scale events such as *Le Voyage à Nantes*, they consist in more intimate activities and events aimed at residents or connoisseurs⁹. Furthermore, they are organised in a variety of places in the neighbourhood, sometimes in direct contact with residents (public parks, bars, etc.). This specificity refers to the basis of SSE organisations, whose character of social and cultural utility is largely due to their embeddedness in local areas (Bioteau and Fleuret, 2014). Several examples illustrate this local embeddedness in the neighbourhoods of Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat¹⁰.

For instance, in Les Olivettes, the Scopic co-operative sets up a bi-monthly organic food market in its premises and in the courtyard, which it shares with other organisations. This initiative has both opened the offices to outsiders and created a time and a place for residents and workers to cross paths. For Scopic’s cofounder, this meeting place is a source of satisfaction and embodies the company's desire to play a social role in the neighbourhood: *“We informed the residents on one side of the street and the businesses on the other side, that we were welcoming a young farmer who had great organic products. We told them “if you want to come by, it’s open and you can buy them”. And then, after a while, the food market became very frequented. And it led to “oh you work here; oh, that’s funny I’ve never seen you; well I did, I saw you the other day, you were having a smoke...”! And that’s it: it created a place where people could meet and talk, which wouldn’t exist otherwise”* (cofounder and director of Scopic, April 2013). Since 2015, the market has turned into a weekly distribution of food baskets and remains a moment

⁸ The private-sector organisations who are involved in their neighbourhood are independent artists, art galleries and creative businesses. For instance, they occasionally open their premises to meet with residents.

⁹ Many events and workshops only involve dozens of participants. However, some concerts and exhibitions can attract hundreds of spectators or visitors.

¹⁰ The examples described in this article are representative of the initiatives led by cultural and creative organisations of the SSE in the three neighbourhoods. Many other equivalent examples could have been presented that illustrate how organisations work to meet residents.

when workers and residents can see each other, although the attendance is never very large (over thirty visitors each week).

This initiative is one of several carried out by organisations in Les Olivettes. For example, the collective of artist companies Pol'n created a silkscreen festival named Kraft, held every year from 2012 to 2015 in the neighbourhood. On these occasions, the artists invested the community centre [Maison de quartier], a restaurant, an architectural agency, and a store to offer exhibitions and participatory workshops. During the festival, the artists exchanged with residents, who were encouraged to enter the various venues by a specific signage installed in the neighbourhood. In addition, other one-off moments of exchange between Pol'n artists and locals take place throughout the year. Shows including post-show discussions are organized in the collective's venue and in the community centre, as well as various participatory workshops where residents and artists co-create art (photographic portraits of residents displayed on the walls of the neighbourhood, ephemeral artworks in public spaces, etc.).

In the neighbourhood of Le Panier, the non-profit organisation Atelier 1 par 1, meanwhile, enlivens the neighbourhood by installing chairs, armchairs, and tables in front of its premises. The creators of the collective settle in to discuss, eat, have an aperitif, drink coffee, or play music. Locals join them and settle in. Unplanned meals are regularly shared. People are free to come and go in this workshop, the doors are open, and the occupants are welcoming. A micro-library set up on the street also allows people to borrow and deposit books freely. Thanks to all these informal projects, L'Atelier 1 par 1 becomes a place of sociability and sharing, open to its neighbourhood.

Other actors in Le Panier organise more formal events. The Théâtre de Lenche, for example, organises street performances to meet the locals without waiting for them to walk through the doors of the theatre themselves: *"The traditional population of the neighbourhood hardly comes to the theatre. So, if we want to meet them, we have to offer something else. That's why we have these parties that allow us to work with people, to see them and to show that we are interested in them"* (director of the Théâtre de Lenche, October 2015). The theatre is thus one of the major players in the neighbourhood festival, which consists of four cultural and festive events that are open to the residents, free, and aim to enliven the public space.

In Berriat, the Barbarins fourchus offer writing workshops, aperitif concerts, music workshops, balls, film screenings, neighbourhood meals, public rehearsals, etc. that aim to make the company's cultural project interact with the neighbourhood and to amplify relations between artists and residents. Other organisations develop similar initiatives, such as the non-profit

organisation “Histoires de”, which created a board game and a digital guide¹¹ to the history of Berriat, in collaboration with school children and senior citizens of the neighbourhood.

3.4. The role of SSE networks

These different initiatives in the neighbourhoods of Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat help create spaces to meet residents. Their impact is multiplied by the collaborative networks that exist between cultural and creative organisations of the SSE within each neighbourhood, as these networks promote the creation of collective events open to the residents. In Les Olivettes, for instance, the choreography centre Le Sept Cent Quatre Vingt Trois and the art collective Honolulu regularly organise joint events. They offer an art stroll through the streets of the neighbourhood and get to combine both of their respective audiences in the process. In Le Panier, the Nuit de l’Instant festival sets up a series of art works in shops, restaurants, cafes, galleries, and theatres. Organised annually, it is the idea of a non-profit cultural organisation that brings together other cultural organisations, residents, and shop-owners to create a moment of social and cultural sharing and exchange. Finally, in Berriat, a dozen cultural and creative actors of the SSE meet each year to actively contribute to the neighbourhood festival: they offer various activities that take place in the public space, in shops and in their own premises (shows, concerts, games, etc.). In partnership with l’Union de quartier, the local neighbours’ association, the organisations involved cooperate to prepare this festive event which is open to everyone.

Thus, the individual and collective measures taken by cultural and creative organisations of the SSE in Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat illustrate their ability to promote social exchanges and access to culture at the scale of these neighbourhoods.

Conclusion. A part of the SSE organisations committed to the local community

Analysing how cultural and creative actors of the SSE view openness to their neighbourhood has highlighted the desire, shared by a majority of them, to create opportunities to meet with the residents of Les Olivettes, Le Panier and Berriat. However, there is also a relatively large proportion of these organisations who do not consider that getting involved with their immediate neighbourhood is a part of their project. They do not particularly seek to meet the people of the neighbourhoods where they are located. This demonstrates that the SSE status of cultural and creative organisations does not guarantee their openness to their local community, even though that openness is in line with the principles of the SSE. Regarding organisations who are explicitly committed to that inclusion, their principles, as expressed in their projects

¹¹ The guide can be accessed online: www.histoires-de.fr/raconte-moi-Berriat-Saint-Bruno.

and their words, are put into practice. Their initiatives generally consist in a culture of proximity with intimate artistic and cultural events embedded in their neighbourhood. Meeting spaces are thus created in outdoor and indoor public places (courtyard, street, park, square, community centre) or on the premises of organisations (theatre, studio-gallery, etc.), in the immediate vicinity of the inhabitants.

In conclusion, cultural and social exchanges with the neighbourhood are carried out only by a part of cultural and creative organisations of the SSE. Through their projects and their creations, these organisations who choose to get involved at the neighbourhood level seek to share places and experiences. In doing so, they promote openness and exchange within creative districts, which echoes the values promoted by the historical actors of the SSE. These values were reaffirmed in the French law of 31 July 2014 but sometimes forgotten as SSE organisations face an increasing pressure to be profitable. While the imperative of financial sustainability is present in the cultural and creative SSE, most organisations in these sectors tend to prioritise artistic creation and social utility.

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