ACTIVITY REPORT: MONS 2015, EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE
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The Mons 2015 Foundation has brought to a close a cultural year that has kept its promises. The quality of the programme, the high visitor numbers and the transformation of the city that has taken place all underscore the success we have shared as a community. The year ended with over two million visitors, significant economic impacts, positive media coverage and recognition of Mons as a cultural metropolis.

I wish to thank all the teams who have contributed to this success with their competence and their enthusiasm. I would like to salute in particular the members of the Foundation’s Board of Directors for their commitment, constructive spirit and total dedication to the rigorous management of the resources allocated to us.

Thanks to a prudent approach, the European Capital of Culture operation, unlike many other large-scale events, has not just closed its financial books without loss, but leaving a legacy that will contribute to the continued pursuit of an ambitious cultural policy in the Mons region.

The year 2015 has been the culmination of a project initiated several years ago, but we never saw it as an end point. The momentum generated by the unique adventure of the European Capital of Culture must continue. The transition process is underway. The Mons 2015 Foundation, recently renamed the Mons 2025 Foundation, is heading towards new challenges, including the organisation of an art biennial in 2018.

This approach represents part of the city’s 2025 project, approved by the municipal authorities, the purpose of which is to allow Mons to continue its promotion of culture and tourism and its economic and social restructuring.

As I pass the torch to our successors at the Mons 2025 Foundation, I wish all the residents of the city and surrounding areas a future full of excitement and discovery.

Guy Quaden
President of the Mons 2015 Foundation
Honorary Governor of the National Bank of Belgium
Mons 2015 has been a superb human adventure in which two million visitors have participated. It has changed our city and the way we think about the future. In order to move forward together, to achieve our goal, to help our region to recover, we have overcome divisions and mobilised our strengths. I think I can say that the gamble has paid off. Mons 2015 has set countless projects in motion, and for the entire region, 2015 marks the beginning of a new era. One of the greatest achievements of Mons, European Capital of Culture, is probably the new vision that the people of Mons now have of their city and themselves. Another major achievement has been the involvement of companies, trade unions, teachers, community organisations and others. The European Capital of Culture has restored the zest of an entire region! Another big change is a new way for citizens to experience culture: Mons 2015 has been a laboratory of new cultural practices. What we wanted to do was to reduce the gap that often separates the world of culture and the general public. For example, the Grand Eight has enabled audiences that have traditionally been far removed from culture to be drawn together by their past, their history and their heritage. It has also allowed them to experience different forms of creativity: everyone has been able to develop their artistic side. And we have also seen the emergence of a sense of pride: the Montois have been proud to pay tribute to their heritage and their artists on the international scene. Finally, Mons 2015 has raised awareness of the economic impact of culture. Today, culture has expanded its scope. It permeates the whole of society, starting with the world of work. It is involved in any and every place where there is a need for creativity, authenticity, originality and innovation. It has become a source of inspiration far beyond the circles in which culture-lovers have traditionally moved. Moreover, culture is no longer a somewhat marginal activity. It has become a very important economic sector. The big cultural businesses now compete with powerful industries.

After such a tour de force, we felt it was vital to leave a positive legacy, and so to keep on organising a major cultural and artistic event every two years. Along the lines of Lille 3000, this will be an international event combining exhibitions, shows, street art and other delights. And given the success of the experiments that have been conducted, the City of Mons now intends to stress an approach of participatory democracy – for culture makes it possible to bring together all types of audience in a broad social mix. Few people believed this before 2015, but a majority of our citizens are convinced of it today. Finally, we have completed the city’s physical transformation. We have worked hard, with the support of Europe, to complete the many ongoing projects in the city. Five new museums have been opened, three of them UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Doudou Museum, the Belfry, the Flint Mines at Spiennes, the Mons Memorial Museum and the Artothèque. It is abundantly clear that Mons is making active preparations for its future prosperity, while holding onto the best of its history – and indeed this was the essence of this magnificent European Capital of Culture project. Thank you to all who contributed to its success. Do not lament its passing: say instead that the adventure continues in a new way, and this time without any finishing date!

Elio Di Rupo
Mayor
Minister of State
A tribute to the team

The newspaper *Le Soir* ran the following headline on the cultural page of its edition of Saturday 12 December 2015: *Grande distinction pour Mons 2015* – 'First-class honours for Mons 2015'. That *distinction* – those honours – are yours, they belong to you, they are the reward for your daily labours for the past year, two years, three years, ten years. Because it is you who, as the days, months and years have passed, have put together and accomplished this exceptional year. The success of Mons 2015 is your success – all of you. In this activity report, which is as comprehensive as possible, you will recognise your own projects and discover the numerous projects of others. But the most important aspect, of course, is the hundreds of contributors who are revealed, page after page – festive, cheerful, hardworking, inquisitive and above all alive. Flick through these pages quickly for a kaleidoscopic vision of the spirit of Mons 2015. There it is, alive and proud, bold and vibrant. Each page is brought to life by you, for it was you who invented, created and attempted everything. And made a success of it. Above all, let there be no nostalgia. Your life is ahead of you. It will be enriched by all the experiences you stored up for yourself during Mons 2015 and that nobody, nobody, can take away from you. Pride was what I could see during all the receptions in the eyes of the Mons 2015 ambassadors, of the singers in the *Grande Clameur*, of the teachers, of the craftsmen of the *Grand Eight*, of the thousands of associated artists. Pride, too, was what I sensed on the closing evening in the joyful faces of the dancers in our great festivity. You restored that pride to them, and for that reason pride should also be yours. Do not undervalue it. It is your foundation from now on. It must endure and carry you when ill winds blow, when our successes are decried, when others, for the sake of their own survival, point the finger at what they consider mistakes.

Regret nothing. But remind them where we came from. Of how Mons was once the laughing-stock of the cultural world, the target of biting irony and total scepticism.

In 2013, a guest of *Le Soir* put it like this: ‘... the orientation of cultural policy in Mons is in my view an example of scandalous mismanagement. Mons 2015 is the epitome of contempt for the public for whom it is intended. [...]’
It is an autocratic cultural policy that is thirty years behind the times, a cultural heist. The people of Mons are not to be found in Mons 2015. Quite a visionary, this person! Personally, I tend to believe that we were in fact a few years ahead of our time. Did you know that the first memo written in 2005 in preparation for our candidacy already mentioned St George, Orlando di Lasso and Van Gogh? It went on to talk about young people ‘who will turn 20 in 2015’ and suggested, at point 1.2.4.2.3. (you couldn’t make it up!), a closing festivity based around dance that would bring together all the voluntary organisations and the public. The list of partner cities and institutions was included in virtually complete form, and the memo also featured – if you will excuse the pompous turn of phrase – the proactive operational mode of a huge call for projects which, thanks to the talent of our regional team, eventually begat the Grand Eight. And we never deviated from our original slogan: ‘Mons, where technology meets culture’. More generally, we maintained our standards, our policies and our objectives all the way through. For instance, in the archives that we now need to start setting in order, I have found a newspaper clipping about Arne Quinze dated 16 November 2008, and minutes from a first meeting at the Van Gogh Museum from the same period. The point is that little was left to chance and even our omissions have a story behind them – and this should never be forgotten.

To the warp and woof of this rich tapestry, each of you left your comfort zone to contribute your bit, your imagination and your passion, and you surprised me every day with such fresh inventiveness that I admit I sometimes had trouble in appreciating it as it deserved. Please accept my thanks for this.

You were magnificent, and I have no fears about your future. The future I see is a rich, sensitive and European one, and I am sure that tomorrow you will dazzle just as we did together on 24 January 2015. What is clear is that after Mons 2015, we all need to change our cultural model. The public, the young people, the families who showed up in droves to our activities all noticed the difference. Venues, hours, rules – all different. Secret places, a hanging garden, a literary guinguette, a chapel of silence, surprise concerts were all big hits, as was the use of the Belfry Gardens by circus jugglers and other street entertainers. When the public turned out in large numbers, it was to escape the cold technology of the broadcasting screens – it was for human warmth, a shared coffee, a transgenerational conversation at the Café Europa, a chair unfolded on a lawn, a big-screen skype with a stranger from Sarajevo; it was for the night sky, bread fresh from the oven, not to mention the newly discovered artist, the recited poem that brought tears to the eye, the passage through the night of an unknown producer. Dare to be different.

For we had to move fast to escape from a period in which we seemed doomed to be caught between the pitilessness of limited government spending on the one hand and the economic contingencies of daily life on the other. And now, our empirical project, which we knitted together stitch by stitch throughout this exceptional year, our project must serve as a model for future seasons. Mons as an exemplary prototype: our city deserves no less. And in this way we will also ensure our survival.

Yves Vasseur
General Commissioner, Mons 2015
1. VISITORS

- **Number of visitors: 2,182,622**
  - By nationality (in descending order):
    Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the United States, Italy, Spain, Canada, Austria, China.
  - Unusual countries represented:
    New Zealand, Thailand, Colombia, etc.
  - In Belgium, by region: 72% from Wallonia, 18% from Flanders and 10% from Brussels.

- **Top 15 successful events**
  - Van Gogh exhibition: 180,000 personnes
  - Opening festivities: 100,000 personnes
  - Events of the Grand Eight and Grand Ouest programmes: 80,000 personnes
  - Metamorphosis weekend (new museum openings): 50,000 people
  - City at Play Festival: 50,000 people
  - Doudou Museum: 44,000 people
  - Belfry: 38,000 people
  - Sun City (sunflower maze): 35,000 people
  - Grand Ouest: 29,000 people
  - Fervent China: 27,000 people
  - Mons Memorial Museum: 22,500 people
  - The Literary Guinguette: 22,000 people
  - Van Gogh’s House: 21,000 people
  - The Hanging Garden: 20,000 people
  - Café Europa: 15,000 people

NB: the museum cluster sites attracted 477,000 visitors in total.

- **Guided tours organised in the city and during exhibitions in 2015:**
  6,180 guided tours for 109,623 people – up 2,500% on 2014
2. REVENUE - BUSINESS
* on 29/02/2016
- Total ECoC budget: €71,020,440
- Average spend per tourist: €75 per day
  (€117 for an overnight visit and €39 for a day visit)
  (source KEA survey).
  • Total revenue (ticketing and sales): €3,904,000, including 587,557 tickets sold
  • Number of private partners: 841 companies with membership of the Mons 2015 Companies Club and 70 private/institutional partners (non-artistic)
  • Number of retail partners: 110 retail partners in Greater Mons and 22 labelled products
  • Number of new restaurants opened in 2015: 38 in Greater Mons
  • Number of new shops opened in 2015: 70 in Greater Mons

3. PROGRAMMATION
• Total number of scheduled activities: 219 projects giving rise to 2,390 scheduled activities (including 117 cross-disciplinary projects)
  • Number of artists mobilised: 6,700
  • Number of volunteers: 7,590, including 2,140 ambassadors
  • Partner cities and municipalities: 48
  • Partner cultural institutions: 50
  • Number of associated communities: 499
  • Number of venues used: 102

4. INFRASTRUCTURE
New or renovated culture and tourism infrastructure in connection with ECoC:
  • Foundation headquarters at 106 Rue de Nimy
  • Arsonic
  • Doudou Museum
  • MMM
  • Artothèque
  • Beffroi
  • Silex’S (Spiennes)
  • MICX
  • L’Alhambra
  • La Maison du Design
  • VisitMons
  • The renovation of the Maison Losseau, the BAM – Mons Art Gallery, Van Gogh’s House and the Mundaneum
  • Temporary buildings and atmospheric venues: the Literary Guinguette, Café Europa, the Hanging Garden, Le Bistrot Folie, Le M.

5. PRESS AND DIGITAL
• Number of press articles and TV or radio stories nationally: 8,420
  (national penetration rate: 401,186,143 people)
  • Number of press articles and TV or radio stories internationally: 3,717
  • Number of accredited journalists: 2,330 accreditations, including 450 international journalists
  • Twitter: over 70,000 mentions reaching more than 127 million users (within and outside Belgium); more than 63,000 followers in total
  • Facebook: posts had a total reach of 4,700,000 impressions
  • Instagram: 40,000 mentions
  • Number of visits to our website: 1.8 million visits including 1.1 million unique visitors (over 5 million page views)

6. RP – INTERNATIONAL
• Number of Belgian delegations received: 41 national delegations
  • Number of schools / training institutions impacted: 710 teachers involved
  • Number of international delegations received: 82 international delegations (1,760 people)
  • Number of official events abroad attended: 42

7. MONS 2015 IN FIGURES
• 2,189 preparation and design meetings for the Grand Eight
• 210,000 badges distributed
• 62 litres of paint for the 10 km of The Phrase in the city
• 10,999 purchase orders
• 800 kg of coffee
• 100,911 copies of Mons2015
• 1,583.69 m² of promotional tarpaulins
• 3 million emails sent by the Mons 2015 teams
• 7,000 books for the River of Books urban installation
• 27,000 km of wooden planks for Arne Quinze
• 20,000 concrete blocks for the dominos
• 175 live connections from the Mons Café Europa with the 15 other partner cities in the network
• 147 litres of ‘Bière perchée’ brewed using traditional methods (and drunk) in the Hanging Garden
• 1,000 flags and banners planted at Place du Parc for the Ideal Demo
• 124 3D fox masks made with the laser cutter at the Café Europa lab
• 1,768 videos submitted by the public on the Café Europa wall of screens in the Beehive project

• Celebrities who attended included the Belgian royal couple, director Patrice Leconte, Jaco Van Dormael, Patti Smith, Adamo, Princess Léa, Martine Aubry, Michaeille Jean, Youssou N’Dour, etc.
Le projet de Capitale européenne de la Culture a été rendu possible grâce à l’implication de toutes les équipes de la Fondation Mons 2015 et du Manège.
THE FOUNDATION’S STRUCTURE
The Mons 2015 Foundation was established on 23 March 2006 at the initiative of the Government of the French Community of Belgium with the support of the Walloon Region, the Province of Hainaut and the City of Mons. The foundation, a public service organisation, is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of twenty directors representing the five constituent authorities in a pluralistic manner, six co-opted independent directors and two observers. The Board met four times in 2008, four in 2009, seven in 2010, four in 2011, three in 2012, four in 2013, six in 2014 and seven times in 2015. Its Executive Board consisting of six members (and one observer), met twice in 2008, once in 2011, three times in 2012, four times in 2013, twelve times in 2014 and nine times in 2015. The organisational structure of the Mons, European Capital of Culture 2015 programme is double-headed, consisting of the Mons 2015 Foundation, which initiated the project, and the non-profit organisation Le Manège.Mons, which was in charge of artistic management. This arrangement reflects the structure recommended by the European Commission, independence for the artistic management being one of the eligibility criteria for candidate cities.

To this end, on 20 May 2011 the Foundation’s Board of Directors adopted a mandate agreement with Le Manège. Mons defining the scope and arrangements for the implementation of the special mandate for artistic management entrusted to Le Manège by the Foundation. On 21 March 2012, the Foundation’s Board of Directors adopted an operational charter validating the decision-making processes and the powers of each body. This charter was adapted several times by the Board in order to reflect changes in the structure.

The Mons 2015 Foundation employed 199 people to run the European Capital of Culture.

Under the mandate agreement between the Foundation and Le Manège, the latter employed 167 people under fixed-term contracts and 23 people under open-ended contracts (Le Manège employees working for the ECoC).

The Foundation employed 9 people under fixed-term contracts independently from the mandate.
When our thoughts turned to the question of where the Mons 2015 Foundation’s nerve centre was to be located in the city, we responded with alacrity to a proposal from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels Infrastructure Service to place at our disposal the disused site of the former Academy of Fine Arts at 106 Rue de Nimy. Ideally positioned close to the city centre, it quickly became the heart of the ‘cultural kilometre’, looking across to the Théâtre du Manège, next door to Arsonic and the Mundaneum, yet also close to the Maison Folie. The refurbishment of the premises was entrusted on a competitive basis to the Brussels architectural firm K2A and had to satisfy three major criteria:

1. The main building had to be converted for use as open-plan offices; this work had to take account of the building’s architectural heritage listing (relating to its façades)

2. A contemporary touch needed to be added; a structure to replace the building’s soulless and dilapidated left wing, to be used as a public contact and meeting place

3. An open courtyard needed to be created to effect the transition between Rue de Nimy, one of the main access routes to the city centre, and a new residential area, leading to the Tour Valenciennnoise.

Moreover, it was decided that the building’s right wing should be used for service functions, the caretaker’s premises, a residential apartment, an electrical cabin and storage.

‘106’ as it is commonly called in reference to the numbering of buildings on Rue de Nimy, was inaugurated on 21 September 2013 and occupied directly afterwards by the Foundation’s artistic and communication teams. It was also used as a workplace by the national and international press throughout 2015. Since its opening, incidentally, ‘106’ has also housed the team of the Mons Press Club or ‘Maison de la Presse’. 
Le budget de la Fondation Mons 2015 s’élève à 71.020.440 € (chiffres au 29/02/2016).

Ventilation des dépenses (au 29/02/2016)

- Fonctionnement: 15.813.992 € (22%)
- Communication: 8.978.588 € (13%)
- Programme artistique: 46.227.860 € (65%)

Ventilation des produits (au 29/02/2016)

- Apports publics: 61.464.160 € (87%)
- Apports privés: 7.843.500 € (11%)
- Produits financiers: 1.712.781 € (2%)
## COMPOSITION DU CONSEIL D’ADMINISTRATION

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## LES ÉQUIPES MONS 2015

### COMMISSARIAT
- Yves Vasseur: Commissaire général
- Philippe Degeneffe: Commissaire adjoint général
- Marie Noble: Commissaire adjointe artistique

### Secrétariat du commissariat
- Dany Van Craen: Assistante de direction/Coordinatrice
- Adeline Brecht: Assistante de direction
- Virginie Willame: Responsable transports et logements
- Stéphanie Bauwens: Assistante administrative
- Yoann Waroquier: Assistant administratif/Welcome officer
- Aubane Brebant: Réceptionniste

### SECRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL
- Anne-Sophie Charlie: Secrétaire générale
- Elodie Després: Assistante

### Partenariats
- Gaëtan Jacquemin: Chef de projets partenariats
- Stéphanie Gilson: Chargée de projets pour les partenariats
- Virginie Parijs: Chargée de projets partenariats

### PROJETS ARTISTIQUES
- **Ailleurs en folie**
  - Anne André: Cheffe de projets
  - Stéphanie Lefèvre: Chargée de projets et de production
  - Marion Chourane: Chargée de production Ailleurs en Folie et Weekend en Folie
Adeline Voisin
Chargée de production Ailleurs en Folie et Weekend en Folie

André Meurice
Chargé de production – scénographe Ailleurs en Folie & Weekend en Folie

Nina Fazzini
Assistante scénographe Ailleurs en Folie et Weekend en Folie

Arts de la scène
Daniel Cordova
Chef de projets
Sandrine Plenevaux
Chargée de projets / Chargée de production
Meryll Moens
Chargée de production
Juliette Dulon
Chargée de production
Hélène Vandewalle
Assistante administrative et de production
Agathe Cornez
Assistante de production

Expositions
Xavier Roland
Chef de projets
Laurent Busine
Conseiller artistique
Philippe Reynaert
Chef de projets Cinéma
Alice Cantigniaux
Chargée de projets
Murielle Laurent
Chargée de projets
Isabelle Delvaux
Chargée de projets
Charlotte Benedetti
Chargée de projets
Caroline Dumoulin
Chargée de projets
Bruno Vande Graaf
Chargé de projets
Arnaud Godart
Chargé de production
Charlotte Belayew
Assistante exposition Verlaine

Fêtes & Installations Urbaines
Philippe Degeneffe
Chef de projets
Philippe Kaufmann
Chef de projets et Conseiller artistique
Radjiny Schiltz
Chargée de production
Laura Van Nieuwenhove
Assistante de production
Aurore Vanderhaegen
Assistante de production
Agathe Cornez
Assistante de production
Guillaume Verriest
Responsable logistique

Gastronomie
Loïc Clairiet
Chef de projets
Mathilde Gérard
Chargée de production

Jeunesse
Lucie Fournier
Chef de projets
Hélène Colmant
Chargée de production

Littérature
Karelle Menine
Cheffe de projets
Léa Varlet
Chargée de production
Tom De Wilde
Assistant chargé de production
Vincent Tandonnet
Régisseur général
Iona Suzuki, Camille de Barbuat,
Renaud Fouchet
Peintres en lettres
Emmanuel Regniez
Libraire Maison Losseau

Mode & Design
Yesmine Sliman Lawton
Chef de projets
Christelle Charpentier
Assistante administrative

Musique
Jean-Paul Dessy
Chef de projets
Julie Grawez
Chargée de projets
Cécile Demal
Chargée de production
Fabienne Wilkin
Chargée de diffusion Musiques Nouvelles
Maria Seminara
Chargée de projets musique classique

Musiques actuelles
Pascal Goossens
Chef de projets

Programme numérique
Pascal Keiser
Chef de projets
Bérénice Deroux
Chef de projets adjointe
Wolf Kühr
Chargé de projets
Mladen Bundalo
Chargé de projets
Laurence Beckers
Chargée de projets
Bertrand Baudry
Chargé de projets

Territoires
Emmanuel Vinchon
Chef de projets et conseiller artistique
Loïc Clairiet
Chargé de projets
Ingra Soerd
Chargée de production
Mathilde Gérard
Chargée de production
Svetlana Sukneva
Chargée de production

Villes & institutions partenaires
Marie Godart
Chef de projets
Liesbeth Vandeputte
Chargée de production
Jérôme Thibaut
Agent d’accueil à la Maison des Villes
Partenaires (Home On Tour)

Scénographie
Anne Desclée
Scénographe

Développement durable
Hélène Colmant
Chargée de production

COMMUNICATION
Charlotte Jacquet
Directrice
Nicolas Lambert
Conseiller en stratégie
Géraldine Simonet
Responsable communication expositions

Marie Bertouil
Chargée de communication expositions
Martin Heyde
Chargé de communication Alhambra

Presse
Charline Cauchie
Responsable des relations presse
Johan Vreys
Attaché de presse néerlandophone et culture
Charlotte Bonbled
Assistante presse

Communication digitale
Pauline Coutant
Chargée de communication digitale
Marie-Justine Carlier
Community Manager

Diffusion
Sandrine Tytgat
Chargée de communication médias et diffusion
Loïc Robeaux
Chef de diffusion / événementiel
Denis Scoubeau
Chef de communication – production / événementiel
Pascal Forlet, Jean-Jacques Vandiependael, Thérèse Vanoverschelde
Affichage et distribution
Production
Xavier Flamant
Responsable éditorial
Sabrina Nkusu
Responsable de production et de planning
Floriana Da Silva
Graphiste
Andy Craps
Graphiste
David Bormans
Graphiste

RELATIONS PUBLIQUES
Emmanuel Vinchon
Responsable du service relations aux habitants
Isabelle Peters
Coordinatrice stratégie RP/pôle Jeunesse et Famille – Médiation
Elise Gravez
Chargée des RP Jeunesse et famille / Jeune public
Clémantine Hemeryck
Chargée des RP Jeunesse et famille / Jeune public
Florence Devos
Chargée des RP Jeunesse et famille / Etudiants – Jeunes travailleurs
Aline Aulit
Coordination stratégie RP/relais professionnels, sociaux et économiques
Fleur Sizaire
Chargée des réseaux associatifs
Hélène Rolland
Responsable produits
Bernard Mingiers
Responsable boutique Mons 2015 et merchandising
Quentin Dardenne
Responsable presse

SERVICE AUX PUBLICS
Natacha Vandenbergh
Directrice
Ana Rodriguez
Adjointe RH
Maxime Depasse
Adjoint à la Direction
Thomas Mmad
Responsable accueil et billetterie
Thomas Gondry
Responsable accueil de l’Office du Tourisme
Fabienne Cyriaque
Coordination comptable et financière
Lindsay Rifaut
Adjointe à la coordination comptable
Amandine Adam
Assistante comptable
Céline Mauro
Secrétaire / responsable plannings
Aude Quivy
Assistante plannings
Emilie Baugnies
Coordination billetterie
Marie Audain
Responsable de la billetterie des personnalités, du personnel et de la presse
Camille Cornil
Responsable de la billetterie de l’enseignement et des groupes

ADMINISTRATION
Mauro Del Borrello
Administrateur général Manège.mons
Annie Cadran
Assistante en charge de l’administration
Laurence Brulez
Assistante projets
Béatrice Vincent
Gestionnaire du stock des Éditions

Service informatique & téléphonie
Maxime Depasse
Chef de service / Informatique, systèmes d’information et de billetterie
Jonathan Valdevit
Développeur / Chargé des développements et gestion des systèmes d’information
Hugues Poulet
Gestionnaire informatique et téléphonie / En charge du support et de la maintenance

S.I.P.P.T.
Benoît Dufrasne
Conseiller en prévention-sécurité

Service d’appui administratif aux projets
Stéphane Molinet
Chef de Service
Etienne Calomme
Chargé des marchés publics et assurances
Madicken Deham
Chargée des marchés publics
Gestionnaire administrative et financière
Nocturnes des expositions – Éditions
Thibault De Coninc
Gestionnaire administratif et financier
Projets Européens manège - Expositions
Dolorès Dumortier
Gestionnaire administrative et financière
Communication Fondation – Relations Internationales – Protocole – Villes et Institutions Partenaires
Sarah Sandron
Gestionnaire administrative et financière
Numérique – Territoire – Gastronomie – Mons Street Review
Simon Scoulaire
Gestion budgétaire transversale
Fondation – Mode & Design – Service Accueil au Public – Divers Projets
Adelinda Abawe
Gestionnaire administratif et financier
Jeunesse – Musique actuelle – Alhambra – Fêtes – Pop up
Wendy Ponitka
Gestionnaire administrative et financière
Gastronomie - Numérique - Villes et Institutions Partenaires

Service financier
Beroin Ghosez
Chef de service
Myriam Berti
Assistante administrative et financière
Julie Gilbert
Assistante administrative et financière

Gestion des ressources humaines
Anne-Thérèse Verschueren
Chef de Service
Ambassadeurs
Ils ont été plus de 2.000 à nos côtés, un grand merci à l’ensemble des Ambassadeurs Mons 2015 pour leur soutien.

Stagiaires et bénévoles
L’élaboration d’une Capitale européenne de la Culture ne pourrait se faire sans l’aide précieuse et l’abnégation de nos stagiaires et bénévoles. Merci.
The European Capital of Culture was not built in a day. It required stubbornness in its genesis and consistency in its values. From the initial plans to the candidacy and then through to the implementation of the project was an adventure of nearly fifteen years. For Mons 2015 forms part of an even broader strategy for the transformation of Mons and its region. Becoming a ‘Creative Valley’ in a world that has been turned upside-down by new technologies means swimming with the current – but without losing one’s bearings. Mons 2015 resoundingly offered much more than just a fantastic arts festival: by giving voice to its citizens and to visitors from all countries, with its very own distinctive touch of madness and magic, it devised a new model of participation. This reinvention of social ties has challenged and prompted a radical rethinking of its own identity, its relation to others and the new paths along which the world is travelling.
MONS 2015: FROM GENESIS TO CULMINATION (2003-2015)
‘The days of doubt and irony are long gone! The people of Mons have seen their city undergo a transformation, and have given their heartfelt support to the emergence of a new way of sharing culture in their city.’

**YVES VASSEUR, GENERAL COMMISSIONER**

‘People should be in no doubt that each individual was indispensable in this improbable adventure.’

**MARIE NOBLE, ASSISTANT ARTISTIC COMMISSIONER**

‘Now that you are beginning to know me, you will understand that what I have to say is not to be taken lightly. You have changed forever the face of my city, and to some degree the lives of all of us – and certainly mine in any case.’

**ARIANE VAN GALEN, MONS TOURIST GUIDE**

‘Let me take this opportunity to highlight the remarkable work that has been done by your Foundation since the nomination in 2010. The stability, professionalism and tireless dedication of the management team, combined with the enthusiasm and the involvement of all team members, including the volunteers, have been key elements in the success of 2015.’

**KAREL BARTAK, HEAD OF UNIT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG EDUCATION AND CULTURE**
**FIRST BEGINNINGS**

The story goes back a long way. Back to 2003, in fact. Ulrich Fuchs, who was part of the adventure of Linz 2009 and Marseille 2013, remembers well a meeting at Maubeuge in that year. At the time, he was preparing the Bremen and Marseille 2013, remembers well a meeting at Maubeuge Ulrich Fuchs, who was part of the adventure of Linz 2009 along new lines. And with the arrival of Google, which chose the theatre at Maubeuge. Tourism in the city was being reshaped Le Manège. Mons in partnership with the Le Manège national theatre had led to the establishment in 2002 of the performing arts had led to the opening of the Borinage mines in the early 60s. He had created a reflection group in 2003 bringing together journalists, some politicians, academics and economists. A year later, the reflection group came up with three recommendations: focus on culture, change the vision of tourism in Mons and – a more personal intuition on the part of the mayor – emphasise the new technologies. The cocktail’s ingredients had been identified.

To inject energy into the process, we suggested coupling it with a bid from Mons to become European Capital of Culture, a title that was due to return to Belgium in 2015. Elio Di Rupo agreed and entrusted us with the task of preparing for the candidacy, which he himself announced to the citizens during the traditional presentation of the City’s New Year’s wishes in January 2004. It was a clear signal that from now on, nothing was immune to change in Mons.

**EUROPEAN PROSPECTS**

2004 was drawing near, and Lille, the current European Capital of Culture (ECoC), was impressing everybody with its dynamism, the success of a comprehensive initiative whose aim was to put the city on the map of Europe and the incredible popular enthusiasm for the project. This gradually had an impact on our thinking.

It was at this time that things started to move in Mons. Reflection on the need for a new cultural centre for the performing arts had led to the establishment in 2002 of Le Manège.Mons in partnership with the Le Manège national theatre at Maubeuge. Tourism in the city was being reshaped along new lines. And with the arrival of Google, which chose Mons over 27 other candidate cities to host its Data Center, the intuitive decision to focus on new technologies was bearing fruit. In Google’s wake came Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco and new ICT and video game startups such as IMoviX and Fishing Cactus. Today, around a hundred young companies form the Digital Innovation Valley, creating nearly a thousand jobs. So how did the Cultural Capital fit in with all this? A first paper was placed on the mayor’s desk in 2005, a thirty-page reflection on the structure, strengths, resources needed and construction projects to be carried out. Mons was in potential competition with Liége and Mechelen.

September 2007 saw the creation of an embryonic team of three people and a few interns, who set to work. The first goal was a considerable one. It was to:

- evaluate the budget and launch the first applications to the relevant institutions: the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, the Walloon Region, the Province of Hainaut, the City of Mons;
- get the key cultural operators of the City and Province behind the candidacy;
- launch the first sponsorship calls;
- assess the feasibility of the three major exhibitions planned: Van Gogh, Verlaine, St. George;
- embark on an ‘inform and explain’ campaign in relation to the project, initially targeting the social and cultural associations encountered during seven theme nights and then extending it to all citizens;
- and on this basis, to prepare the first candidacy submission for the deadline of February 2009, to be defended in June of the same year.

In autumn 2007, the first information sessions for the general public were painstakingly launched, theme by theme: folklore, literature, the visual arts, theatre, etc.

The aim was to convey an understanding of what a European Capital of Culture is. Hundreds of meetings were required in schools, businesses, workshops, at the Maison Folie, etc., and general support was far from being gained: the goal was remote, the objectives unclear and the budget substantial, at a time of severe financial crisis.

Oddly enough, the very concept of European Capital of Culture suffered at that time, and we believe still suffers, from a serious image problem that the European Commission needs to take into account. Although Mons participated in the Greater Luxembourg Region project in 2007, and especially despite the proximity to the example of Lille, only a few insiders really appreciated the scale of the challenge and were aware of the medium-term multiplier effects. However, there was one very positive factor that supported us as we made our case to the institutional partners: Lille in 2004 showed, at that stage, that a European Capital of Culture is not just a festival but an incredible opportunity for a city to make its name known. Had not Martine Aubry, the Mayor of Lille, said that the European Year of Culture had moved her town ten years forward in terms of brand image and power of attraction?

It was with this in mind that Mons was determined to work. The projects took the form of information sheets, a partner network was built up, the first sponsors were confident and, in 2008, work started on the three major international exhibitions, with an incredible ‘dream team’ of curators: Sjraar Van Heugten for the Van Gogh exhibition, for which the indispensable cooperation of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam was secured, Bernard Bousmanne and the Belgian Royal Library for Verlaine, and finally Laurent Busine and Manfred Sellink for St George. The bid for ECoC was acquiring some substance.

**THE LAUNCH PROPER**

In February 2009, the initial dossier was submitted to the European Commission. The jury met in June and we got the go-ahead to present the final dossier and undergo the definitive assessment the following year. It was no time to dither: solid work was needed to strengthen the lines of approach stressed by the jury: working with citizens, and particularly audiences remote from the cultural sphere, highlighting the European nature of the candidacy, partnership with the Czech cities that were also vying for 2015, and a clearer and more comprehensible substantiation of the chosen slogan: Mons, where technology meets culture.

The appearance before the final jury took place in two stages in early February 2010: a one-day visit to Mons by a delegation from the jury and the appearance before the full jury in Brussels the next day. We prepared the presentation of our case with great care. Elio Di Rupo, Richard Miller, Christian Delporte, Pascal Keiser and Didier Fusillier were the other members of our delegation. We gave it all we had, putting a real element of drama into the final presentation and allowing for the unforgiving nature of the occasion. And then, bingo, the go-ahead was given unanimously by the jurors, who recognised the strength of the case and noted with pleasure its radical improvement since our first presentation. Mons 2015 was finally launched.
THE HOUSE OF 2015

2011 and 2012 were low-key years. The main aim was simply to build the foundations of the house of 2015. While continuing the necessary work of information provision, we negotiated budgets, established agreements, organised calls for projects, defined the support structure and drew up the governance charter, which had to cover all imaginable potential problems. This was crucial. If problems arose, there had to be clarity about how a decision would be made.

Meanwhile, the people of Mons had not yet taken the measure of the project, and the discreet nature of this work behind the scenes sometimes brought discredit upon the team, whose effectiveness was called into question in some quarters. All the same, the first signs of real public interest began to be observed, quickly leading to the spontaneous submission of numerous suggestions of all kinds and from all sides. These called for a response, and the response came in the form of a wide-ranging call for projects on the Foundation’s website, detailed with reference to a series of objective criteria. Its success exceeded all expectations: 533 projects were eventually submitted by the closing date of the call. In the event, only 22 projects were selected by a panel of independent experts from the Foundation, on the face of it suggesting that hundreds of potential malcontents had been created. However, those whose ideas were rejected were subsequently interviewed to find a way to incorporate the essence of their projects into the overall programme for the year. This was the period of the campaign entitled Plus on est de Vous (roughly speaking, ‘The More, the Merrier’), which also aimed to swell the numbers of active partners, and the start of the Mons 2015 Ambassadors. The public responded en masse, and little by little one could sense growing enthusiasm among the Montois, spurred on by their love for their city.

A year later, incidentally, they would put their energy into the following campaign, 2015 Ways to Participate, and give their clear support for the launch of Mons 2015.

The foundations had been completed, and the structure of the building was now in place. It was only at this point that the team gradually assumed its final shape. New categories developed – the region, young people, exhibitions, literature, urban events, partner cities and institutions – joining the existing categories of theatre, music, the Maison Folie and digital. The whole thing came together harmoniously, with innovative ideas from the various category leaders naturally finding their place within the framework we had established since the first candidacy submission, the essence of which would remain unchanged all the way through.

IGNITION

Although we were still keen to reveal as little as possible about the programme which was falling into place step by step, project by project, data sheet by data sheet, we gave people a glimpse of aspects of the planning every month between 2013 and mid-2014; in some cases this was in any case essential, such as for the major exhibitions, the timing of which needed to be known by European tour operators and tourist offices at least two years in advance. The communication campaign proper finally started after several months of reflection.

This was because we had to reconcile several types of public – habitual culture-lovers and the general public, the local public and the European public – the aim being to involve a catchment area of about 250 km around Mons, an area of rich cultural potential encompassing the major urban areas of North-West Europe: Brussels, Antwerp, Paris, Lille, London, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Cologne, Luxembourg and so on. On 7 October 2014, the official announcement of the programme was finally made at a press conference which, despite the capacity of the room provided for the purpose (3,000 seats) we had to give a second time. Four hundred Belgian and foreign journalists were present, imparting momentum there and then to a project that the people of Mons now claimed unreservedly as their own.

Following on from this, our International Relations service organised a number of road shows in cooperation with Wallonia-Brussels Tourism in a series of target European cities: Amsterdam, Paris, London, Cologne, Madrid, Rome, Berlin and even Montreal.

Interest was evident everywhere, but especially in Germany, resulting in an invasion of Germanic journalists, tour operators and visitors in 2015.

THE OPENING

We chose 24 January as the date for the opening ceremony by agreement with the police and security services, firstly in order to avoid competing with the usual end-of-year festivities and encroaching on the public spaces reserved for the traditional Christmas market, and secondly so that we could rely on students in higher education, who would have completed their mid-January exams by this time.

All the same, the mood was morose. We had just had the attacks on the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris and the bloody dismantling of a terrorist cell in Verviers in Belgium. The socially engaged film festival Ramdam had been cancelled in Tournai, again under threat of an attack. And the collapse and then dismantling (before its reconstruction a few months later) of the Arne Quinze structure that was supposed to signify something new in the city at the start of the cultural year came as a blow to the team, even though we managed to get things moving in a positive direction again.

On Saturday 24 January at 8 am, we breakfasted and looked out on a frosty landscape. Big flakes of snow were falling on Mons. No matter – the positive editorials in the early morning press galvanised us into action. The die was cast and the return of the sunshine at the end of the morning gave the day, especially the evening, cool but dry conditions that were ideal for celebrating. The festivities were magnificent, and although their success was due in large part to the quality of the plans put forward, they were due even more to the generous energy of the hundred thousand people who attended (including King Philippe, Queen Mathilde and Prime Minister Charles Michel), placing their trust in powerful solidarity, a magnificent determination to live life despite the tragic events of recent weeks, and an affirmation that culture could unite the people around the core values of tolerance, sharing and pluralism.

Success was also due to our decision, taken very early on – in fact since our visit to Guimarães in Portugal for the opening ceremony of the European Year of Culture 2012 – firstly to minimise the formal ceremony and make it a sober and powerful moment of unity at a symbolic place in the city (St Waudru’s Collegiate Church), and secondly to avoid concentrating the partying in one spot in a city characterised by its medieval topography, winding streets and narrow squares, but instead to spread it across twenty proposed venues right across the city.
By the end of the awards ceremony, we knew that we had made the right decision; disconcerted members of the team were coming over to tell us that the 80,000 city plans that had been printed to hand out to the visitors were all gone. The party could begin. As far as we were concerned, the good ship 2015 was finally afloat and would sail its course. The fireworks at the end of the day were merely a foretaste of what was to come.

THE YEAR

To say, therefore, that 2015 proceeded like a long and tranquil river would be to traduce and denigrate the incredible efforts of all the teams to ensure the success of each project. What we can say, though, is that everything was done peacefully, without internal conflicts or temper tantrums. The lineaments of the entire project were kept steady right from the first working memoranda, the mayor’s confidence was gained and never put in doubt, and the teams received a clear and precise roadmap as soon as they were engaged that was never questioned except on points of detail. What is more, the weather was relatively kind throughout the year, contributing to our success by giving its fiat to all the urban dreams we had premeditated.

The programme was distributed over the eleven months of activities required by the European Commission in four seasons: dazzlement in the midst of winter; metamorphosis in the spring; the stopover in the summer; and renaissance in the autumn. Each of these seasons relied on a popular launch event and was structured with two or three major exhibitions that attracted both a regional and an international audience, ensuring a steady stream of visitors throughout the year. The end of the road was reached on 12 December (although some exhibitions continued through until late January 2016) in a magical, musical evening during which four balls were attended by thousands of participants all over the city.

CONCLUSION – A FRESH START

We are proud to say that 80% of the original project from 2009 was carried out, and that the estimated budget from that time is still holding out, just a few weeks away from the final financial balance sheet which will probably show a surplus, – a relatively rare occurrence in the history of the European Capitals of Culture. Today, Mons 2015 is the brand name of a new dynamic process; a city that has been put on the map of Belgium and Europe by more than two million visitors; and an impressive cultural infrastructure with five new museums, a convention centre and (almost) an exemplary multimodal station.

It is also synonymous with a team tasked with continuing the mission... We were unwilling to mention any names from this past and future team: if we had mentioned one we would have had to mention all – an impossible task. We have hailed the team members in the editorial of this report. They should all know that they were indispensable, each in his or her own way, in this improbable adventure. You will find precise figures to detail this assessment, but if we had to choose a single number, it would be the 180,000 visitors to the exhibition Van Gogh in the Borinage: the Birth of an Artist, an absolute record attendance figure for any art exhibition in Belgium. But beyond the numbers, the most important point to single out is perhaps the positive change in people’s outlook.

Along with the incredible infrastructural transformation that the city has undergone in just under half a decade, the incredible transformation of attitudes cannot go unmentioned. Long gone are the days of doubt, irony or even contempt! The people of Mons have seen their city undergo a transformation, and have given their heartfelt support to the emergence of a new way of experiencing, sharing and engaging in culture in their city. What better proof could there be of this than the unbelievable success of the atmospheric venues?

The townspeople drank and feasted at the Bistrot Folie and Le M, settled down in the sunshine at the literary Guinguette, made a night of it at the Alhambra and its summer extension, the Rooftop of the BAM, baked their bread and brewed their beer in the Hanging Garden, and gathered their thoughts in the Chapel of Silence – offbeat venues that we have been asked (by popular demand) to preserve.

Truly, we must capitalise on this wild year in which, as the people of Mons themselves put it, “There was so much that we couldn’t do everything!” The challenge is great. But we know that the energy of Mons is equal to it.

Yves Vasseur and Marie noble, February 2016
THE VALUES OF MONS 2015
Over and beyond the quality of the projects that were put forward and their public success, one of the important achievements of Mons 2015 was to have opened up a new way of relating to culture, to have mapped out alternative forms for encountering and relating to audiences, and to have unified energies. Our core values, our DNA, can be summed up in three concepts.

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**ROOTEDNESS**

Mons 2015 was built with the people. This was evident in several ways: in the success of the participatory online platform 2,015 Ways to Participate, which allowed anyone to sign up on the web for projects open to non-professionals in culture or art; or in the impressive number of active ambassadors (more than 2,000). Above all, though, this involvement was the outcome of a methodology developed during the organisation of the Grand Eight and the Grand Ouest: a methodology of presenting with the people, their land, their story, their daily lives... All the projects to do with Vincent van Gogh’s time in the region, the Mons Superstar exhibition and Aube Boraine are further examples of this approach of shining the spotlight on the region and getting people involved.

Beyond the mere fact of participation in a show, the projects that were carried out gave rise to and nurtured a new pride, a sense of positive engagement and exceptional emulation. It is these factors alone that constitute the rootedness of Mons 2015, and they are pillars on which a solid cultural and social edifice can be built in the future.

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**GENEROSITY**

Many of the projects and artistic adventures leave us with a memory of simplicity, willingness to share with as many people as possible, closeness, human warmth, family and social occasions (the Hanging Garden, the literary Guinguette, Dominoes, Rock’n chairs, La Grande Clameur, etc.).

The project developers’ purpose was not to ‘produce’ shows and invite the people to attend them, but to construct a collective human adventure. The size of the city and its history were essential factors in this, and Mons 2015 clearly could not have been done the same way anywhere else.

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**ARTISTIC INNOVATION AND ASPIRATION**

The Mons 2015 teams made inventiveness central to their work, and the artistic ideas and output displayed boldness, an independent and questing spirit, and in many cases a cross-disciplinary approach. A theatrical marathon lasting several hours by one of the most important contemporary playwrights (Wajdi Mouawad’s The Last Day of his Life), new technologies serving the people (Café Europa), or support for young local directors brought together in a festival (Le Festin – The Feast) are all examples of the universal determination to make the most of the opportunities offered by the title of European Capital of Culture to try out new artistic adventures rather than rely on the sheer number of projects or the power of attraction of celebrities.

This bias in favour of ‘shifting the boundaries’ involved taking some risks, of course, but the vast majority of projects produced were of high artistic quality and marked by great professionalism.

Besides boldness and creativity, with the benefit of a few months of hindsight we can also notice a breeze of benign craziness that blew through many of the offerings in 2015 (The Phrase, Red Ball, Sun City, breakfasts on a slag heap, Home and Away, etc.).

This unique, sometimes cheeky, often joyful and invariably offbeat breath of fresh air will doubtless remain one of the hallmarks of the 2015 adventure.
With 300 major events representing nearly 2,400 activities in the space of one year, Mons 2015 restored pride and transformed people’s spirits as much as it did the city’s streets. It paid tribute to the city’s heroes, from St George and Di Lasso to Van Gogh and Verlaine, while involving dozens of cities and cultural institutions from Belgium and the rest of Europe in the adventure. All of them connected by means of technology and a new kind of café.

It invented fantastic parties and summoned light and dazzlement into the cold of winter. As the trees and plants came into bud, it opened up new, flamboyant venues characterised by their distinctive ambiance. It brought urban epics to life, transported the curious to other destinations in the Home and Away programmes and revolutionised the technique of holding a demo. It was a place to stop over in the summer. It was where we tasted the delights of a much-anticipated Renaissance in the autumn. The Phrase, which has now (almost entirely) disappeared, brought the streets to life with poems that had for too long been confined to old manuscripts. We saw all and braved all in the city.
LIST OF PROJECTS
Projects resulting from the project grant scheme

- Projects resulting from the project grant scheme
- 2015 Stories, TéléMB
- Allô Monsters ?
- Armada of a Thousand Lights
- Art Act Need - Multi sensory and immersive experiences
- The Cottage
- Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Greater Mons
- Off-Limits: The Theatre of Death
- Transparent Hypergothic
- Virtual Immersions in the City
- Innovation & Ready Made
- Stone path at the Caillou qui bique
- Le Grand Large: The Territory of Thought
- St John’s Eve Bonfires
- MONSens
- Mons in 2015 photos: A Subjective Inventory ...
- Mons Fashion & Design Week
- Opening the Walls - Mons 1865-2015
- Tidy Your Room
- SlaMons & Friends: Slam in All its Forms
- Tomber volontiers dans le panneau
- True Story
- Une Aube boraine
- Van Gogh & Co. La mine comme atelier
HOME AND AWAY

Ailleurs en Folie - Melbourne © David Bormans
‘The succès of the home and away events has confirmed us in the belief that the concept must not be dropped.’

ANNE ANDRÉ, HOME AND AWAY PROJECT LEADER AND DIRECTOR OF THE MAISON FOLIE

‘What can I say about all that time spent sorting, cutting out, assembling cloth, bits of wool? So much happiness, creativity and relaxation. The sharing and friendship between young and old are the high points that I remember. It was also great to create something artistic. I had been thinking of going there for one day... I stayed for the whole two weeks of the course!’

FRANÇOISE, 66, ON THE HIROMI HOTEL WORKSHOP AT THE MELBOURNE HOME AND AWAY

‘This inspiring, unifying project consolidated exchanges and built new bridges between our two cultures. Over the past two years, working with each of you has been essential for the development of this programme, and we now go home delighted to have had such an enriching transatlantic experience.’

JASMINE CATUDAL, CURATOR OF THE MONTREAL/QUEBEC HOME AND AWAY
The Home and Away project consisted of eight multidisciplinary arts programmes lasting four to eleven days, developed in collaboration with a curator selected for his or her knowledge of the artistic and cultural scene in the guest city.

A temporary make-over transformed all areas of the Maison Folie into a building from the city in question. The programme focused on the guest city’s current and emerging art scene (exhibitions, music, dance, performance, design, etc.) and on cultural and everyday life (games, sports, food, etc.), and encouraged productive interaction between artists and organisations from Mons and the guest city.

The visitors discovered these Home and Away programmes in a particular context linked to the idea of coming together, sharing and celebration. A restaurant on site, the Bistrot Folie, allowed visitors to sample the flavours of world cuisine. To add to the fun, various participatory activities with some relevance to the guest city were offered, involving games, sports, language, dance, electronic music and so on.

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**OBJECTIVES AND TIMING**

The Home and Away programmes invited visitors to discover other cultures, with two goals:

- to use an artistic and cultural programme that was dynamic, innovative, quirky, family-oriented and festive to present the elements that have shaped the identity of the cities concerned, and to compare that identity with our own;
- to transform the Mons Maison Folie into a Maison Folie from the guest city, a laboratory of contemporary artistic practice at the confluence of the two cultures.

Starting in 2009, during the project conception phase, contacts with potential partners culminated six years later in eight major events of the European Capital of Culture:

- 24 January to 1 February: Lille;
- 19 to 22 February: London;
- 16 to 26 April: Casablanca;
- 7 to 17 May: Milan;
- 18 to 28 June: Melbourne;
- 17 to 27 September: Montreal / Quebec;
- 15 to 25 October: Tokyo;
- 12 to 15 November: Plzen.

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**EVALUATION**

Overall, the Home and Away programmes were a big hit. The public was immediately won over, and a kind of Home and Away ‘community’ was formed: a loyal following of fans from day one. The attractiveness of the concept lay in the opportunity it provided to discover different cultures, through a multidisciplinary programme open to all, young and old alike, which transformed the Maison Folie. Each Home and Away offered a new atmosphere and new experiences: looking around the strange curio cabinet reinvented by artists from Lille as a realm of contemporary narcissism; sampling the atmosphere of a working men’s club in London, with its eccentric staff and out-of-the-ordinary activities; migrating to the antipodes, losing yourself in Melbourne’s laneways and celebrating its greatest asset, its cultural diversity; treating yourself to a trip to Milan and ‘tasting’ it in its everyday excesses; experiencing Casablanca, free from reductivist clichés, through some decidedly contemporary cultural experiences; from the art of shogi to the avant-garde, discovering Tokyo, city of contrasts at the crossroads of Eastern traditions and Western hyper-modernity; celebrating the Montreal/Quebec Home and Away session in the company of more than 80 Québécois and French-speaking Belgian artists around a warm and inviting campfire amid a blanket of snow; and paying tribute to our twin cultural capital, Plzen, its vitality and its remarkable underground culture.

The eight focus locations lived up to our overall expectations, and the requirements were satisfied. However, for all eight Home and Away programmes, we would have appreciated being able to welcome the artists further in advance (in 2014 instead of ten days before the opening) by means of working residencies.

Where they were possible – thanks to additional funding from the country concerned – these residencies provided an occasion for multiple encounters, activities and exchanges with local people, which helped strengthen the programme’s roots in the territories concerned. We greatly appreciated the help of the International Youth Office (BIJ) of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, which enabled us to send young artists on residencies to the cities, leading to projects combining artists from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and the guest city.

Other sources of satisfaction:

- the smooth implementation of all eight Home and Aways, representing more than 150 activities / artistic offerings, including 37 new pieces of work, without any serious hitches;
- the quality of the artistic work and the financial equilibrium at the end of the eight programmes;
- a close-knit and responsive team that demonstrated great professionalism;
- the success of the participatory projects, workshops, creative work and involvement of a very wide range of different people and groups, ‘non-publics’, local clubs and associations (Vespa owners, chess players, etc.), farmers, etc. These projects generated ‘atypical’ ties between people from walks of life which are usually separate from one another;
a year of incredible richness for the team in terms of discoveries of different working methods and cultures completely different from ours;

a partnership with the protocol, ticketing, communication and other services which really found its stride during the Home and Away programmes;

the publication of a brochure in 10,000 copies for each Home and Away for optimal promotion;

our reception of the public improved considerably during the Home and Away programmes as a result of the establishment of an info point and the addition of a reception and ticketing work.

External projects and Weekends at the Folie

We supported four projects, run by local organisations, resulting from the project grant scheme. All were close to the spirit of the Maison Folie: innovative, quirky, collective and family-oriented. Hors Limite had what will prove to be a permanent impact on the arts scene in Mons. With regard to Art Act Need, SLAMons&Friends and Tomber volontiers dans le panneau, public success raises the question of where to go next: intensified partnerships, export abroad, continuation in the form of a biennial? Answers needed in 2016!

At outlying venues, around the Home and Away programme, the Weekends at the Folie featured off-beat and wacky offerings from local organisations and art schools, thus taking the spirit of Home and Away into new settings.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Today, following this exceptional year, nothing could be more rewarding for all of us than to hear a unanimous ‘Ah!’ of satisfaction from the audience to which I announced the scheduling of a ninth Home and Away in April 2016! And this despite the fact that they had already covered 35,394 km in just one year! The success of the Home and Away programmes has convinced us that the concept should not be dropped.

Le Manège.Mons has decided to incorporate it in its programming starting in 2016. So off we go to Abidjan in April 2016, Dakar in May 2017, Indonesia in October/November 2017 and other destinations, for more of these vital opportunities to express differences.
PERFORMING ARTS
‘2015 brought the theatre out from behind its walls; it revived a close dialogue with local artists; it allowed a region to rediscover its ability to express itself and its artistic distinctiveness. It also placed Mons at the centre of the world with new international creative work that has had an impact on the theatrical scene in Europe. We must maintain this network and the place of our city internationally.’

DANIEL CORDOVA, PERFORMING ARTS PROJECT LEADER, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF LE MANÈGE
2015 a convoqué le public à participer à des projets hors normes. La réponse a dépassé nos espérances. Nous devons maintenant maintenir cette liberté qui permet aux artistes d’oser des formes innovantes en dehors du carcan auquel le théâtre est trop souvent contraint.

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**OBJECTIVES AND TIMING**

For the European Capital of Culture, there were numerous challenges and questions, and these fed into the artistic choices made for 2015:

- what place should be given to the theatre in such a major event?
- how could we avoid straining its limitations and ending up with theatre being subsumed in mere grandiloquence, or reducing it to mere words that nobody would hear?
- how could we open a window on theatrical creativity in Mons and the Federation Wallonia-Brussels in the course of a year brimming over with hundreds of artistic offerings, many of them free of charge?
- how could we bring new international creative work to Mons and offer a different view of the world?
- how could the theatre take part in this regional shake-up, reinvent its real and imaginary boundaries, and inspire a new desire for culture and sharing that could carry us in the long run during the following years?

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**EVALUATION**

**The scheduled projects and the support given to them**

No fewer than 33 new pieces of work emerged in 2015, from the intimate (Home-Made, performed solely in the private living-rooms of hosts in Mons) to the outsized, such as the marathon offered by Wajdi Mouawad and based on the tragedies of Sophocles in *The Last Day of His Life*.

Amid this emerging work, we were anxious to secure a place both for local artists (Axel Cornil, Hassiba Halabi, Giuseppe Lonobile, Hugues Chamart, Daniel Decot, etc.), for creative talent from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (Philippe Blasband, Jean-Michel Van den Eeyden, Michèle Noiret, Jaco Van Dormael, Axel de Booseré, Maggy Jacot, Saule, Michèle-Anne De Mey, etc.), for major Belgian artists (Guy Cassiers, Dominique Pauwels, etc.) and for international figures (Joël Pommerat, Denis Marleau, Wajdi Mouawad, the Teatrocinema Company, etc.).

The planning for the year therefore made sure to leave a window open on young talent, while also showcasing established artists from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and a number of international masters working with Belgian professional or amateur teams. Support for projects – both of young talent and of established artists – from gestation through to creation and performance on tour was consistently a major part of our approach. Of the 33 new pieces of work in 2015, we acted as executive producer for 13.

The Drama Centre was keen to organise the encounter between new work and the public and to ensure that it was noticed and disseminated both within the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and at the national and international level.

We made an effort to link artists together in a network, to bring them up against one another, to partner them with other artists, with experienced concept developers, and in this way to generate rich, formative, lasting artistic alliances. The Théâtre le Manège was undoubtedly a major asset in this work of supporting artists and companies. We strove daily to maintain this sophisticated tool, optimise its performance and place it at the disposal of creative artists and companies by receiving them on residencies, which acted like a kind of cocoon for creativity.

**A new relationship with the public and the city**

The opening of a restaurant – an atmospheric venue within the Théâtre le Manège – enabled us to work on a new approach to the public. The venue was made accessible outside performance periods. Meetings between artistic teams and the public took place on a daily basis in a simple and friendly way around a table; the exchanges that occurred demystified the creative process and made it more accessible, allowing the spectators to appropriate and share in it.

Secondly, amid the abundance of activities and shows put on during this exceptional year, we sought consistently to bring creative work into the heart of the city – in its usual venue and through itinerant and ‘off-road’ projects (*Autour de la table*, which was organised in the different areas around Mons, *Home-Made*, which set up shop in the living-rooms of Mons, and so on), but also through more participatory projects that forged close ties between Mons and creative artists within the creative process itself (Marco Martinelli’s *Rumore di Acque* and Joël Pommerat’s *Ça ira, fin de Louis*).
Digital

The application of digital technology to the performing arts was given a high profile at the Festival VIA. This festival, organised for the past few years as a cross-border project with Le Manège de Maubeuge, chose to honour three artists from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels: Michèle Noiret and Jean-Michel Van den Eeyden, who were both commissioned to write a piece addressing the question of memory, forgetfulness and the Walloon identity, and Fabrice Murgia with Children of Nowhere.

Co-productions

The ties which are formed as the years pass and from one artistic adventure to the next allow us to offer an ideal co-production framework for supported projects. However, this network has to be maintained daily; the exceptional year of European Capital of Culture was an opportunity for us to expand it and open it up further to long-term international horizons. In this context, the first edition of the festival of Mons creativity, Le Festin, allowed us to line up alongside us no fewer than six local cultural centres, and five Mons creative artists received support in this way.

This festival and the cooperation that has been established in this way will be perpetuated by means of a biennial event. Other cultural centres have expressed an interest in joining in the adventure.

Links that we have had for several years with the north allowed us to establish some fruitful artistic collaborations around Guy Cassiers’ Passions humaines (a mixed team of French- and Dutch-speaking actors) with the Toneelhuis, Denis Marleau’s L’Auteur hiver with LOD and the co-production of the latest work by Wim Vandekeybus, Speak Low if You Speak Love, with Ultima Vez. The partnership with the Théâtre de Namur, the Varia and the Théâtre de Liège in connection with the project 4 à 4 allowed us to support two new works this year, Philippe Blasband’s Le Tramway des enfants and Aurore Fattier’s Le Festin, which were chosen to honour three artists: the production of Children of Nowhere in Santiago, besides being highly symbolic, confirmed the enormous talent of a theatre-maker from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels.

Our collaboration with our fellow European Capital of Culture Pilsen in connection with the UBUS project of Axel de Bossere and Maggy Jacot (a mixed team of Belgian and Czech artists and designers) enabled us to establish new links in particular with Petr Forman, puppeteer and artistic director of Pilsen 2015.

The production of the latest work by Michèle Anne De Mey, Jaco Van Dormael and the collective Kiss and Cry, Cold Blood, is particularly emblematic of international theatre collaboration: the project brought together Belgium, France, Switzerland and Canada.

Our international links also enriched our planning by opening a window onto the world with shows from other places (including Teatrocinema’s La raconteuse de films) and the inclusion of major international masters such as Joël Pommerat, Denis Marleau, Wajdi Mouawad and Marco Martinelli.

The Festival au Carré (16th edition)

The cross-disciplinary, widely appealing programme of the Festival au Carré, the major event of the summer, was designed according to the following principles:

› As a not-to-be-missed moment coming between the creation of new work and its wider dissemination, the festival seeks to combine artistic excellence with a friendly atmosphere;
› Strong cross-disciplinary synergies, with evenings combining theatre, dance and music to meet the differing expectations of the public;
› The scheduling of a moment dedicated to young audiences and families;
› Shows performed at multiple sites, with Le Carré des Arts as a focal point, but paying heed to the distinctive character of different venues: drama, dance and creativity at the Théâtre le Manège, concerts in the Cour du Carré, family events at the Maison Folie, complemented by the use of unusual venues in the city (Tour Valenciennoise, Belfry Gardens, etc.) where the performing arts are not necessarily expected!

Internationally: strong ties and new partnerships

2015 was an opportunity for us to act on our intuitions regarding international partnerships and establish some new ones: the production of Children of Nowhere in Santiago, besides being highly symbolic, confirmed the enormous talent of a theatre-maker from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels.

Our collaboration with our fellow European Capital of Culture Pilsen in connection with the UBUS project of Axel de Bossere and Maggy Jacot (a mixed team of Belgian and Czech artists and designers) enabled us to establish new links in particular with Petr Forman, puppeteer and artistic director of Pilsen 2015.

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CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

After this extraordinary year, our initial questions and wishes have all met with a response – a fitting and positive outcome. What we have gained will provide food for thought, and in the coming years we plan to propose an innovative project that reflects the artistic and cultural needs and desires of an entire region, aroused by the undisputed success of the European Capital year.

The main challenge for our approach was to create close relationships with the spectators. 2015 brought the theatre out from behind its walls to meet people in private and at close quarters, creating a complicit relationship between the theatre and its audience, artists and spectators. 2015 invited the public to participate in some extraordinary projects. The response surpassed our expectations... We must now maintain this freedom for artists to try out innovative forms outside the straitjacket in which the theatre is too often constrained. 2015 enabled us to renew a close and constructive dialogue with local artists; we need to preserve this in the years ahead and thus allow a region to rediscover its voice and its artistic distinctiveness.

2015 placed Mons at the centre of the world with international creative work that has had an impact on the theatrical scene not only in Mons but in Belgium and Europe in general. We must maintain this network and the place of our city internationally. At the end of this year, the Drama Centre will continue its adventure, fortified and enriched by the momentum of this unique and unforgettable experience. There is no end to post-2015...
EXHIBITIONS
‘The programme of exhibitions was suitably grand for a European Capital of Culture, with incredible richness and diversity. The themes addressed presented a unique panorama of the history of art: from the figure of St George to the Chinese contemporary monumental sculpture, and with highlights in the form of prestigious exhibitions devoted to Vincent van Gogh and Verlaine, two major figures influenced by their time in Mons.’
Dès 2014, le Pôle muséal de la Ville a pris en main la coordination générale des expositions de Mons 2015 sous la direction de Yves Vasseur. La mission était la mise en œuvre de 20 expositions avec un budget total de près de 9 millions d’euros.

Les projets d’expositions se sont répartis sur 9 lieux essentiellement en centre ville :

- Van Gogh au Borinage, Naissance d’un artiste au BAM ;
- Mons Superstar ! aux Anciens Abattoirs ;
- Voir Clair à la Salle Saint-Georges ;
- Hollywood au pied du Terril au Frigo des Abattoirs ;
- Un numéro un destin au Mons Memorial Museum ;
- Napoléon, protecteur des Arts au Musée Duesberg ;
- Atopolis au Manège de Sury ;
- Monsens au BAM ;
- Ouvrir les murs à la Salle Saint-Georges ;
- Chine Ardente aux Anciens Abattoirs ;
- Parade Sauvage au BAM ;
- Verlaine, cellule 252 au BAM ;
- L’Homme le Dragon et la mort au Mac’s ;
- Parcours d’artistes dans 40 lieux de la ville ;
- Eternel éphémère au Magasin de Papier ;
- Like I dislike au Magasin de Papier ;
- Territoire de la Pensée au Magasin de Papier ;
- Light of House au Magasin de Papier ;
- D’entre eux à la Salle Saint-Georges ;
- Sommet européen des arts appliqués (WCC) aux Anciens Abattoirs ;
- Salon du Bon vouloir aux Anciens Abattoirs ;
- Jacques Dubroeucq à la Chapelle du Bélian et au Château de Boussu.

### OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

2010 saw the first discussions between Yves Vasseur and the future curators about the plans for prestige exhibitions: Van Gogh and Verlaine. The sites needed to be prepared to host exhibitions of international stature, especially the BAM and the Slaughterhouse, where work began in 2011. In 2014, a framework agreement and then a co-production agreement were signed between the City and the Foundation, making provision for the overall coordination of the Mons 2015 exhibitions. The team was then reinforced with project leaders (at both the Foundation and the City), a registrar and a worker for the implementation of the exhibition projects.

During this cultural year, close collaboration arose between the teams of the Foundation, Le Manège and the City. The pace of project development was intense, but the partners were pursuing common goals:

- the exhibition projects were the programming backbone of Mons 2015; the aim was that they should be blockbusters that would attract the general public to Mons; once there, they could be encouraged to participate in other events;
- to ensure the quality of the exhibitions and visitor reception, bring the teams up to a professional standard and unite them around a unique experience;
- to gain recognition in the national and international museum sector and put Mons museums on the map at national, European and international level, thanks to collaborations with the greatest museums in the world and large-scale communication campaigns;
- to renovate certain sites and generally meet the requirements and standards for receiving exhibits on loan;
- to make the Mons public proud of its history, heritage and culture and take away the mystique from visiting museums;
- to work with subcontractors on publishing, display design, transport, the exhibits, signage, graphics, etc. and with other types of institutions, such as Forem, which trained the museum guards and reception staff prior to recruitment.

### EVALUATION

A coherent philosophy, successful programming and adherence to requirements

The density and diversity of the exhibition schedule was definitely a key factor in the success of 2015. From a strategic point of view, the programming was balanced, with a blockbuster exhibition early on to attract media attention and the international public, summer programming focused on contemporary art with three major exhibitions (Atopolis, Fervent China and MONSens), and more of an emphasis on history in the last part of the year with Verlaine and St George. With this shrewd mix, visitors were offered a journey through every era and style. The unifying theme was Mons, its great figures and its history. Meanwhile, the Mons Superstar! exhibition made a profound impression on the people of Mons, who had not expected to discover such a history of their city. Mons lacked a positive self-image, and the success of Mons Superstar! highlighted the need for its people to learn more about themselves and take pride in their city.

The exhibition budget was kept to, as were the planned opening dates, despite a very tight overall schedule with overlapping periods of mounting and dismantling across multiple sites. In terms of environmental impacts and measurements, the catalogues were printed on FSC paper and the purchase of tickets on line was encouraged.

### Venues

Of the nine exhibition venues used by the Museum Cluster for Mons 2015, five were traditional exhibition spaces used by the city (BAM, Slaughterhouse, the St George Room, the Magasin de Papier and the exhibition room at the Mons Memorial Museum). The team faced technical difficulties with implementation at sites that were not designed to host exhibitions. We had to organise and budget for the flow of visitors, setting up a tent for the reception area/shop, an event space, security requirements, etc.

### Official activities and events

Numerous activities took place that catered to specific audiences:

- general public: first Sunday of the month free, entertainment and activities relating to the exhibitions during Museum Night (late August), tours including meetings with curators, the Van Gogh Room and the
Cottage installed in the Jardin du Mayeur, combined exhibition tickets etc.

- families: family Sundays, courses during the holidays, special family rate;
- schools: teaching packages, tours and creative workshops via Dynamusee for children, tours and special events for teachers, special schools rate etc.
- businesses: 100 events were marketed in 2015 on the basis of five exclusive formulas (reception + exhibition tour) and attracted 10,631 visitors;
- marginal groups: visitor guides in FR/NL Braille (collaboration with the non-profit organisation Les Amis des Aveugles de Ghlin), 'easy to read' visitor guides, guided tours on tablet in sign language, thermoforming of two works etc.

Satisfaction levels among the public, artists, curators and lenders

Helpful and constructive comments passed on by many visitors, who invariably praised the quality of the exhibitions, led to improvements in the standard of reception. Among artists / lenders / curators / speakers / authors / participants, overall levels of satisfaction were very high. The curators often emphasised the professionalism of the teams in project management, display design, and assembly and dismantling. There were numerous official visits, with the same positive response.

Work with the other sectors

In terms of public reception / ticketing, one of the biggest challenges was the introduction of a joint ticketing system for Le Manège, the Foundation and the museums of the City of Mons. The ticketing software was installed on the eve of the launch of the European Capital. It was necessary to get to grips with the software and make optimal use of it to ensure that the public could be given the best possible reception. The other challenge was to train the reception staff (most of whom lacked experience). These aspects were managed by the public reception service.

VisitMons played a major role in promoting overnight stays and packages (accommodation plus exhibition visit) to operators using attractive products such as the Van Gogh exhibition, in the management of guides and in guided tour bookings.

CONCLUSION/AND AFTER 2015?

In order to develop the year's exhibition projects, numerous contacts were established with national and international museums (the Van Gogh Museum, the Royal Museums, participation in the Van Gogh Europe network, etc.); these will be pursued further. Loans were granted on the basis of sometimes very strict requirements and conditions on the part of certain institutions (hence the importance of facility reports for each exhibition site). As a result, the Mons venues have acquired a national and international reputation and recognition as reliable and credible players. The professionalism of our teams increased and in the space of one year our museums gained unprecedented international visibility that helped position the BAM as a major venue.

What can we learn from this experience for the future?
First, for even more efficient organisation, the collaboration between the Museum Cluster service and the Foundation should ideally start sooner for the implementation of projects. Secondly, we need to work on pooling cultural operators’ activities in Mons at various levels: joint public communication, the promotion and dissemination of common advertising material across the Mons region, marketing and sponsorship, single ticketing, and international relations.

Thanks to the Van Gogh exhibition, we were able to introduce and promote a previously under-exploited Van Gogh tourism offering. Following its reopening in February, the Van Gogh House in Cuesmes experienced an increase in visitor numbers. Another unexpected outcome was the explosion in the number of guided tours for groups throughout the year.

The future of Mons starts here and now!

The museums’ role as an ‘experimental crossroads’ must remain a key element in our approach. One of the key challenges today is to keep the museums and exhibitions as close as possible to people’s lives. The atmospheric venues created in 2015 imparted fresh vigour to cultural practices. We exhibition designers must take inspiration from this.

Mons must position itself in the field of creativity, innovation and cross-fertilisation between different skills and forms of expertise. Thanks to the potential offered by our schools, universities and museums, the City will continue this process. In the spirit of 2015, we must not forget the superb diversity of popular and engaged projects, as for example with the duo Atopolis / Fervent China, two exhibitions which took a very different approach to art. With projects like these or, in a very different register, with the Artothèque, Mons has gained a credibility which it can legitimately use as the basis for an urban image and project based on culture. It would be a shame not to take this further...
FESTIVALS, INSTALLATIONS AND PUBLIC SPACES
‘Feeding and nourishing the curiosity of visitors to the city remains an essential challenge for society.(...) We should put our trust in our artists, whom we need to support us in the construction of inventive, off-beat, funny and adventurous cities.’

PHILIPPE KAUFFMANN, FESTIVALS, INSTALLATIONS AND PUBLIC SPACES PROJECT LEADER
Sans concession aucune à la qualité des œuvres, en faisant le pari de la curiosité des citoyens, nous avons choisi d’investir la ville dans tous ses recoins pour y proposer des nouveaux rendez-vous gratuits, en dialogue permanent avec « la cité » : son urbanisme, ses habitants, ses spécificités.

À titre de symbole, on citera le projet Dominoes du collectif anglais Station House Opera, qui proposa à plus de 300 Montois de construire ensemble une ligne continue et éphémère de blocs de bétons cellulaires à travers toute la ville ; ou encore les VADROUILLES circassiennes de la compagnie AOC, qui proposaient une visite de la ville à travers plusieurs petites formes de cirque écrites en dialogues avec l’espace montois.

On retiendra aussi l’Île aux enfants, ou comment créer un espace dédié aux familles dans une ambiance poétique où les artistes proposent des lectures sous les arbres, des voyages en élan, des concerts sifflés ou du théâtre de marionnette à base de pommes de terre…

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**OBJECTIVES**

This section had three missions:

- to set up large-scale popular gatherings throughout the year, including the opening and closing festivities and Dominoes.
- to programme projects involving circus arts, street theatre, music, etc. in public spaces: the City at Play festival, the Enchanted City summer programme, Le kiosque invisible, etc.
- to invite artists to develop art installations at the heart of the city.

With these three areas of focus, all developed in public spaces, our objective was clear: to set up a self-reinforcing positive relationship between the unsuspecting spectators and the language of contemporary art.

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**EVALUATION**

Focus on a few highlights

**The opening festivities**

How do you talk to 100,000 people? How do you solve the seemingly insoluble equation that has user-friendliness and poetry on one side and the energy of a crowd on the other? In response to this insane challenge, our choice was clear: we would organise a celebration across the city, using as many spaces, squares and streets as possible for artwork created for the occasion, bringing to life the history of Mons and its people.

This approach proved successful beyond our wildest expectations, thanks to the involvement of generous artists and a team that was put in place at a very early stage and had remarkable success in anticipating all the logistical aspects of this type of event: security, signage, mobility, protocol, etc.

**Urban installations**

A dozen international artists were set the task of providing, from April 2015, a work in situ, i.e. created in close dialogue with its chosen setting. As a result, Mons saw the emergence (quite literally) of a giant river of books, a mound topped with golden wings, various murals and hundreds of flags each made by a different artist. Several of these works which were originally installed for 2015 only will remain beyond this year – proof of how successfully they have become integrated.

Prior to this ‘invasion’, two other ambitious projects were developed:

- Arne Quinze’s Passenger, a monumental wooden structure that was supposed to welcome visitors from the end of 2014, but which unfortunately had to be demolished in early January due to a technical fault. Fortunately, the joint determination of the Foundation and the artist not to give up enabled the construction in October 2015 of Passenger II, which will remain in place for a period of five years.
- the illumination of the Belfry was also planned in advance to enhance the splendour of this classified monument from 1 January 2015. Given the success of this technological and poetic attraction, the City of Mons has decided to extend the project and make the lighting permanent.

Finally, we cannot omit to mention the fabulous temporary installation of thousands of sunflowers in the Grand-Place for a period of ten days in the form of a huge acoustic maze – the work of Fanny Bouyagui and the members of Art Point M from Lille.

A critical look at the projects carried out

Overall, the team believes it fulfilled its missions and the objectives that were set.

Artistically, the projects as a whole met the objectives. Some of the less rigorously conceived events and offerings proved less than wholly convincing, but this too was part of our mission: to invite artists to take risks and push them to develop new forms.

The major community projects were particularly well attended (Dominoes, Sunflower Maze, the weekend openings of the Transformation with the preview of the urban installations, etc.). Their success clearly depended on the participation of local people and visitors.

The work done by the Local Relations teams and the complementary tool that was put in place (the ‘2015 ways to participate’ web platform) enabled us to meet hundreds of people who were keen to participate.
The only downside was that lack of time and resources precluded us from producing all the intended sculptural installations. Public space is expensive, safety regulations of all types are very energy-consuming and highly restrictive (justifiably for the most part!), and the general characteristics of the city of Mons are not always adapted to monumental projects (for example, there are few abandoned walls for large murals, large numbers of listed buildings, narrow streets, etc.). Our drawers are stuffed full of plans for powerful but unrealised artistic works. One day, perhaps?

**Technical and financial overview**

The overall picture is also positive in technical and financial terms. We may have overspent in a few areas (mainly technical aspects and additional personnel needed for the proper implementation of projects and to provide reinforced safety and security measures at certain times of the year (security guards, etc.), but the overall budget earmarked for our projects was not exceeded. The projects’ success was definitely related to the amount of preparation time made available to us. This time was of course useful artistically: it was used to understand the city, its strengths and its various squares and spaces, and it also gave us a chance to meet the artists in advance and allow them to find their creative bearings. Above all, though, the preparation time was important organisationally – for meetings with the city services and related agencies (police, fire, etc.) and voluntary organisations of all types, but also for the evaluation of projects’ finances, technical feasibility, risks, etc. A small but close-knit team, which was extremely highly motivated and versatile in its activities, was the driving force behind this preparatory work.

Concerning the public, it has to be acknowledged that despite our efforts with signage and communication and the modest size of the city (which can be walked across from one side to the other in 30 minutes!), we sometimes struggled to entice visitors beyond known and clearly identified streets and squares such as the Grand-Place and the Belfry Gardens. Feeding the curiosity of visitors to the city remains an essential challenge for society. We were surprised at how many people we came across, map in hand, finding their way through the streets leading to the installations!

If we had to point to one downside, it would be the missed opportunities to make a connection, sometimes with the public and sometimes with potential partners of the city.

In terms of city organisations and projects, despite the good will on both sides – it has to be admitted that difficulties were experienced in creating a genuine encounter between the traditional entertainment/activity projects planned in the city centre and our artistic adventures. We remain convinced that everyone would have benefited from opting to have the city brought to life by visionary artists, rather than reproduce more traditional and conventional activities such as bouncy castles, face painting, the rigging up of sound systems in shopping streets, markets, carnival parades, funfairs and so on.

**CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?**

We could simply say (in all modesty) ‘it worked’. But leaving aside the (alleged) success of our projects, we especially wish to emphasise the critical importance of what was adumbrated in 2015: encounters that were all about curiosity, the unifying potential of the cross-disciplinary, the proactive approach of voluntary organisations, the support and engagement of local people, and members of the public as spectators.

Those encounters were also about the potential of a city that is open and generous to its inhabitants and to visitors who are passing through. We should put our trust in our artists, whom we need to support us in the construction of inventive, off-beat, funny and adventurous cities. Where the expression ‘living together’ is not a slogan but an everyday reality.
GASTRONOMY AND ATMOSPHERIC VENUES
‘Inventing restaurant concepts, working with highly talented chefs, creating a 10-km tablecloth in collaboration with street artists, occupying a brownfield site and creating a temporary restaurant – all were great fun as well as being learning opportunities at every moment during this cultural year.’

**LOIC CLAIRET, GASTRONOMY PROJECT LEADER**

**OBJECTIVES**

- **25,000** plats servis en 7 ans dont **6,000** repas servis en moins de **16** heures lors du Dimanche Toqué 2015
- **10** kilomètres de nappe créée en collaboration avec le collectif Hell’O Monters
- Des dizaines de milliers de visiteurs sont passés dans les lieux gastronomiques imaginés pour Mons 2015
Mons est une ville de gastronomie. Pour s’en convaincre, il suffit de citer les 60 restaurants de la région repris dans les trois guides de référence au niveau belge. Un record !

Aujourd’hui encore, la Belgique joue un rôle important dans la vie gastronomique de l’Europe occidentale. Les Belges sont connus pour leur style de vie dit « bourguignon » et partagent volontiers le plaisir de la « bonne chère » avec leurs hôtes. Fier de leur patrimoine, ils sont aussi friands de découverte et d’ouverture aux saveurs du monde. Le plaidoyer de Mons 2015 était ambitieux : notre gastronomie est une culture et manger, un patrimoine qu’il fallait mettre en valeur à l’occasion de la Capitale européenne de la Culture.

L’équipe a pris à cœur de mettre en avant cette spécificité belge et sa déclinaison montoise et d’ouvrir les papilles à la diversité à travers une série d’objectifs sérieux et de projets gourmands.

OBJECTIVES

› to shine the spotlight on food, cooking and creativity through events, special activities and tastings;
› to place gastronomy and world cuisine at the heart of the cultural capital, in a country where they are already important;
› to promote the local culinary and agricultural heritage and expertise;
› to set up sociable venues to go with the cultural activities on offer in the city;
› to develop partnerships and give voice to different people and groups involved in food in the city: traders, producers, farmers, restaurant owners, local organisations, markets, canteens (schools, universities, companies, etc.), table artists, foodies, etc.;
› to develop culinary activities to promote social cohesion and bring people together;
› to develop tools to enable tourists to experience the richness of the region;
› to provide an artistic and/or cultural dimension to food-related projects in the spirit of Mons 2015.

TIMING

The first food-related event, which was also the first event set up by Mons 2015, was Dimanche Toqué. This has existed since 2010.

The Food and Atmospheric Venues section was set up in February 2014 to address the growing need to pay specific attention to the art of gastronomy.

EVALUATION

Gastronomic and culinary projects

Potjevleesch, spéculoos, moules frites, mitraillettes, carbonades flamandes, chicons au gratin, meatballs, sauce Bicky, waffles, chocolate, côtes de porc à l’berdouille, boulets à la liégeoise… it hardly seemed far-fetched to give gastronomy and cuisine a place right at the heart of the Capital of Culture in a land where those things already have an important place, given the number of restaurants in the region, the eagerness of restaurateurs to take part in the adventure and the tools developed from 2009 onwards in connection with the candidacy and the preparations for Mons 2015.

Since 2010, Dimanche Toqué, organised by the Mons 2015 Foundation with the support of the City of Mons, has been held on the last weekend of every August in the Belfry Gardens. As such, it was the first major event of the European Capital of Culture.

Dimanche Toqué has represented, since its inception, a partnership with the local business sector and a demonstration of the city’s riches and its culinary and scenic heritage. It also aimed to set the tone and model the spirit of conviviality and shared enjoyment that Mons 2015 wished to convey through its artistic projects.

Thus, over the years, Dimanche Toqué has become a recurring fixture at the end of the summer, thanks to the creation of a co-production committee between the Mons 2015 Foundation and a network of chefs from Mons and the wider region. Another project implemented by this network was the restaurant guide, which was published in 2011 and quickly became the new reference work for locals and tourists in the city. This guide depended on the work of a committee of restaurant owners from the region, formed with a view to Mons 2015.

Every year, it lists quality restaurants from the region according to three criteria: the establishment’s presence in the region, its listing in one of three reference guides in Belgium (Michelin, Gault&Millau or Delta) and the approval of the committee of restaurateurs, consisting of nine leading chefs from the region. The guide had a circulation of 15,000 copies between 2011 and 2014 and 30,000 in 2015, and has been out of stock since the end of summer 2015. Developing partnerships with the help of an economic
sector such as the catering industry involves lengthy negotiations on prices, product choices and benefits. Giving a voice to various stakeholders in the city (retailers, producers, farmers, restaurant owners, associations, markets, tableware, connoisseurs of fine food, school or business canteens, etc.) was therefore not easy, but our approaches met with interest from groups that were willing to become fully involved and that brought the rest of the sector with them.

Occasionally, there was no time to build a solid relationship of trust with certain players, to allow everyone to find their new comfort zone or to give the project a real artistic dimension. Despite this, we succeeded in promoting the local culinary and agricultural heritage and know-how and everyone was able to take part in the adventure, however much or little they wished to be involved.

The development of culinary activities as a vehicle for social cohesion was a great success of the overall project, and took two main forms. The first of these, based on the idea of making use of unsold food from the supermarket Carrefour, involved creating meals that were given away to a hundred beneficiaries throughout the year; to this end, collaboration was set up between a social centre and a Mons chef, and an additional cultural activity was organised (such as a concert). The second involved setting an affordable admission price for the various events and venues, or even making them free of charge (universally accessible gastronomy).

**Atmospheric venues**

The establishment of the atmospheric venues – places used for artistic and cultural purposes, or to provide support to artistic projects – was a real success of the Capital of Culture. Conviviality is an integral element of the new cultural practices. Nowadays, we do not go to the theatre just to see a play: before or after the play, we look for spaces where we can meet friends, have a chat, enjoy a moment with the family, or have a drink or a bite to eat.

Mons 2015 led to the creation of some enduring atmospheric venues: Le M, located in the Théâtre le Manège, was open at lunchtime and on performance evenings, immersing diners in the world of theatre, amid majestic origami birds, vintage furniture and friendly chic. Something of a gathering place for the support teams, partners and artists of Mons 2015, Le M was the ideal place for meetings without any barriers.

Located right at the heart of the cultural kilometre, the theatre’s novel cafeteria introduced audiences to a new and delectable way of enjoying the evening, the meal and the show.

Le M was (and still is) a place of creativity, fascinating experiences and culinary and theatrical thrills. Based at the Maison Folie, the Bistrot Folie offered restaurant and bar services in an alternative venue whose furnishings and cuisine could be adjusted to match the décor and theme of each Home and Away programme in Mons 2015. Every weekend, the bistrot offered a different setting in which to attend a lecture, a concert or, for children on Sunday mornings, the screening of a cartoon. On each of these special occasions, a different culinary speciality could be sampled – poutine and meat pie, perhaps, or sushi accompanied by a delicious Japanese tea.

This was an hospitable venue that catered to the need to relax with friends or family, and, for children, to have a clean space designed especially for them. Other venues, developed in collaboration with other artistic sectors of Mons 2015, completed the range of atmospheric venues: a space for young people in the park of the former military bakery, which has been taken over by an adventurous neighbourhood association, or a place for reading and poetry in the garden of the Maison Losseau – a project whose long-term continuity is now ensured by the support of the Province of Hainaut.

There was also a clear desire to create venues with a specific atmosphere for various events: at each of the Grand Eight locations, facilities with specially designed décor enabled visitors to savour the experience to the full. To give another example, during the Transformation weekend in April, the potential of the Grand-Place to be used as a place to hang out and gather was enhanced with information points, a mobile RTBF studio and dozens of huge red balls!

**CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?**

In general, good food and atmospheric venues at Mons 2015 attracted large numbers of people, as the figures show: every event was packed out and the venues were very popular. From an artistic point of view, the purely gastronomic events should perhaps have put more emphasis on cross-pollination with other artistic disciplines. Although we regard chefs as artists and gastronomy as a supreme element of culture, adding a touch of high-quality music, circus, etc. would have put the ‘icing on the cake’. Creative work started at an earlier stage by a dedicated grouping, and a consequent increase in the budget, would certainly have helped develop this cross-disciplinary character.

But leaving the difficulties and the statistics aside, good food and atmospheric venues gave us a different experience of this European Capital of Culture, and enabled us to create a new way of seeing artistic and cultural projects and ensuring continuity in the years ahead, thanks to venues with a strong character such as Le M, the Bistrot Folie, the Hanging Garden and the Guinguette.

These venues have all been continued with new organisers in 2016. The same goes for gastronomy in general, with the continuation of Dimanche Toqué and the desire to make Mons gastronomy an important focus of the city’s tourism, cultural and economic development. It enabled new publics to make discoveries involving artists and chefs, and it will carry on doing so.
YOUTH - MON(S)
IDEAL (MY IDEAL)
‘Mon(s) Idéal (My Ideal) is first of all inseparable from a thorough consideration of the place of young people in society. Can we define the young without straitjacketing them? Why have a youth section in a European Capital of Culture? How should young people be involved in the projects?’

LUCIE FOURNIER, YOUTH PROJECT LEADER
La réflexion de Mon(s) idéal a été alimentée par des débats et des rencontres en interne et avec le public tout au long des années 2012-15 et trouve son apogée dans le projet Avoir 20 ans en 2015 et dans l’exposition Adolescence, la fabrique des héros qui en retrace l’aventure.

Nous avons décidé de ne pas donner de limite d’âge à la jeunesse, mais de la considérer plutôt comme une philosophie, une manière de vivre. Les « jeunes », ce sont les personnes qui souhaitent vivre Mons 2015 en tant qu’« acteurs actifs » et non pas seulement spectateurs. Les « jeunes », ce sont aussi ceux qui veulent profiter de l’énergie de cette année particulière pour inventer et construire l’après.

Quelques slogans issus des différents workshops de la Manif idéale :

- « Je suis un acteur social ! »
- « La poésie sauvera le monde »
- « Ta vaisselle : Fais-la toi-même ! »
- « Un monde avec plus de lapins »
- « Un cerveau c’est bien, plein d’cerveaux c’est mieux ! »
- « Le weekend de 7 jours »
- « Ne demandez pas la Lune, exigez-la ! »
- « Les bombes tombent, la bourse monte. »
- « Danser toute la vie »
- « Je suis Mons de toi »
- « J’arrête d’arrêter »

OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

Operation I’ll turn 20 in 2015 was launched in 2011, as soon as Mons had been designated European Capital of Culture. It offered activities to the generation concerned so that young people would be involved in Mons 2015 right from the preparatory phase.

From 2013, the activities launched at the start continued, and plans were developed to address all generations of young people. The unifying theme Mon(s) idéal (My Ideal) began to encompass the whole process. For 2015, a proper programme was implemented, which grouped together both the outcome of initiatives launched at an earlier stage and new proposals to ensure overall coherence and visibility.

The unifying theme Mon(s) idéal (My Ideal) quickly became the name of the Mons 2015 youth section. It had two basic principles:

- ‘Do it yourself’: the idea was to involve participants actively and concretely, in projects in which they called the shots: the students in Monstudentclub organised concerts, the young journalists of m@g wrote a blog on the sidelines of Mons 2015, the children of Mons à petits pas produced a book about the city with an artist, participants at the ABC studio workshops made their own protester’s kits, and so on.
- ‘Utopias’: the idea was to instil in each project ongoing reflection about utopias and ideals, in order to rethink society and come up with alternatives that could be used to create a better world for tomorrow and construct the years to come; the programme included concerts by socially engaged artists, political poster workshops, the Hanging Garden, Ideal Demo, etc.

EVALUATION

Artistic

- The organised projects were numerous and very varied, and we can congratulate ourselves on their quality, diversity and relevance to the established theme.
- In order to be consistent with the overall theme of Mon(s) idéal (My Ideal), all projects addressed the question of ideals and utopias to some degree. The angles of attack were multiple and sometimes unexpected: fashion, music, street art, new technologies, cooking, journalism, performance arts or even gardening.
- Some links were established with other disciplines: a workshop with the fashion and design section, a recurring workshop at the Café Europa, a few events in connection with the Grand Eight, concerts scheduled in conjunction with the Alhambra and the Festival au Carré and the collaboration on slam poetry with the Maison Folie. In general, though, we regret the fact that the connections were not more numerous, and above all that they were not more thoroughly explored.
- We tried to impart a national, European or international dimension to our projects: trips to the Flemish partner cities with the Dutch coaching project; a long-term school exchange with a secondary school in Pilsen; trips to Poland, Greece and Senegal with the youth project I’ll turn 20 in 2015 led by Wajdi Mouawad; and, again in connection with travel, the production with young editors, designers and illustrators from Mons of the Use-it guide, which selected and presented things to do and places to go in the city that would be of interest to young people.
- The most interesting aspect of the youth projects was the cross-disciplinary nature of most of the proposals. The aims was to make the projects thought-provoking, but also fun and even festive, and always friendly and generous. To give one example, studio ABC offered a huge playground on the theme of demonstrations – and a little earlier in the year on the theme of the city – with books, reference materials, debating opportunities, plenty of chances to learn, plus games, films, music, things to make and exuberant performances, all in a mood of listening and caring.
All of these aspects will be explored in more depth in the publication of a manifesto in spring 2016. With a collective of facilitators who have given us long-term support, we have chosen ten examples of our programme that present utopian and novel ways of coming together, in order to present the methodology in detail.

**Relationship with the public**

Most projects had a very strong participatory aspect. Despite some difficulties in ensuring a large influx of participants in the long term, we can conclude that our method was successful in view of the perpetuation of certain projects.

In order to allow people to ‘do it themselves’, as our objective stipulated, we decided to take what they wanted as our starting point in most cases. The idea was to support them in the accomplishment of their project, to offer a listening ear, a framework and resources. To give a few examples, there was the possibility for locals to come and try out their ideas without taking too much risk at the Hanging Garden (yoga sessions run by an amateur, Asian cookery classes and collective tasting organised by a group of young people, a free bookshop set up by a neighbour, etc.), brainstorming sessions with teachers ahead of the *Media DJ* project in order to understand their desires and expectations properly, parties completely organised by the students from *Monstudent* and so on.

The work with the local relations team proved a fertile testing ground for this method. The team was in contact with a number of groups, and we organised projects together on a three-way basis.

When we ran projects ourselves, there was always a ‘do it yourself’ element or an opportunity to make use of participatory initiatives: the making of demonstration materials at studio ABC, the creation by the children of the guide *Mons à petits pas*, sold in bookshops, the film made by the young people of Hornu, the socially engaged rap concert, the first part of which was performed by the participants of a one-week course held beforehand, and so on.

We frequently also took our activities into schools (poster workshops, flags, intensive workshop days at the *studio ABC*, various lectures and discussions, specific projects with some classes), and received very positive feedback.

On the other hand, it was harder to reach young people outside school, and especially to involve them actively and over time. Possible reasons for this include the multiple demands on the time of local people in 2015, the volatility of the target audience (the 12-18 age group), the difficulty of communicating outside the usual channels, and the seriousness of the commitment required in some cases for activities conducted over a longer period.

However, some projects have had great follow-ups, indicating that they were popular with the public. The best example is the Hanging Garden. Following the success of the summer, local residents got together to form a non-profit organisation that will renovate, look after and run the place from the spring, so that it can be reopened and active in 2016 and subsequent years.

Other groups formed in 2015 in connection with our projects have also demonstrated their desire to continue their involvement, including the *Monstudent* club and the young people in the project run by Wajdi Mouawad.

**Communication**

It was decided, in agreement with the communications team, that a specific graphic charter would apply to Mon(s) *Idéal* (*My Ideal*). This was made necessary by the specific characteristics of the project relative to others: the desire to involve people actively and in advance and the alternative, socially engaged aspect of the message.

The absence of the Mons 2015 logo and the use of a specific Facebook page helped us to gain greater independence in managing our communications, and to appear as a clearly alternative project to the mainstream. Mons 2015 activities. However, this inevitably meant less visibility than for the other disciplines, as we had very few official channels at our disposal.

The press: highlighting personalities

Every Monday, *Le Soir* offered a portrait on its back page of a young person involved in *Mon(s) Idéal* (*My Ideal*). Through this partnership, the newspaper demonstrated its understanding of the philosophy of the project: to prove that young people have ideas and projects and to encourage them to play an active role in their own town and their own lives.

**CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?**

The initial sense as we take stock is of satisfaction at having been able to carry out alternative, participatory and experimental projects, true to the original aspirations and aims. Like others (*Grand Eight, Café Europa*, etc.), we helped to give the European Capital of Culture a different dimension that was perhaps more human and ‘of the people’.

The teamwork was very satisfying: the work with those responsible for local relations was particularly constructive and innovative. Instead of just getting people to come to the events, local relations were integrated into the project design, so that the participants were also involved right from the start.

This method, though sometimes a little messy, was very productive, yielding interesting results. Despite the heavy day-to-day organisational workload (especially for our team, which was very small relative to the number of events produced), we maintained a strong relationship with the participants in our projects (*Dutch coaching, Wajdi’s project, the Hanging Garden regulars*), and that relationship was essential to keep us as close as possible to the reality of our missions.

However, we cannot close this report without asking a few questions which remained in the background throughout the adventure and are more obvious now: what will become of all the energy put out by our teams and all the participants? Once the spotlight has moved away, will the Foundation bounce back and take advantage of this unique experience to move forward in a new direction? One of the slogans of *Mon(s) Idéal* (*My Ideal*) deliberately played on a Mons 2015 slogan: ‘In 2016, I’m inventing the world. How about you?’ What has come of this today?
LITERATURE
‘One of our challenges related to the very nature of literature: intimate and discreet. How could it be differentiated from all the other activities on offer at Mons 2015? The literary heritage of Mons is unexpectedly rich in poetry, with Verhaeren, Verlaine and surrealists such as Dumont just from the late nineteenth century onwards. It was this characteristic that we needed to highlight: poetry. Poetry is the soul of literature and, in addition, the lifeblood of any artistic act.’

KARELLE MÉNINE, LITERATURE PROJECT LEADER
Il s’agissait ainsi de mettre la poésie à la portée de chacun, sans la dénaturer ou rabaisser son exigence. Cela passa principalement par trois projets, la création de *La Phrase* et de *la Guinguette littéraire* et le choix de Carl Norac comme artiste complice, qui ont permis de décloisonner l’idée que l’on se fait de «LA littérature» et de replacer Mons sur la carte littéraire européenne.

Mons, dont on trouve traces dans les nombreuses correspondances entre Rilke et Verhaeren ou Dumont et Breton, se devait de retrouver de sa prestance d’artiste complice, qui a permis de décloisonner l’idée que l’on se fait de «LA littérature» et de replacer Mons sur la carte littéraire européenne.

### OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

The first ambition was to:

- draw attention to the wealth of the literary and poetic heritage, especially in Mons;
- invite European literature to Mons;
- create a venue dedicated to literature, with a strong identity, where people could come and read, alone or with their families, meet authors and discover works away from ordinary bookshops, and that enabled us to highlight the vital profession of bookselling, create a network of partnerships (the Goethe Institute, the Italian Cultural Centre, etc.), revitalise the writing workshop, enable literary soirées to continue late with musical accompaniment and so on.

From 2013, our plans coalesced around two larger projects: the *Literary Guinguette* and *The Phrase*.

### EVALUATION

In light of the coverage in the international, national and local press and the feedback from individual members of the public, discussions and debates during 2015, it is clear that literature had an impact on people and got them asking questions and engaging in discussion. This was a real success of a kind of which Fernand Dumont, the pioneer in the sociology of culture, would surely have been proud.

**A literary public is born**

A public with a potential interest in literary events was quite difficult to approach and secure the loyalty of, because such a public did not really exist beforehand. There was an existing audience, of course, especially at the Maison Losseau, but it was not large enough and did not cover enough of the general population, merely consisting of people who attended a few literary events every year.

Moreover, the general public was offered so many cultural activities in 2015 that the literary audience had become divided. However, it grew over the months, displaying curiosity and loyalty. In late 2015, a non-profit organisation was created (Les Amis de la Guinguette littéraire) that will work hand in hand with the Province to continue the adventure (*La Guinguette* will reopen in 2016...).

### Supporting artist Carl Norac

Carl Norac is a wonderful Mons poet who now enjoys international recognition. In the course of our exchanges with him, Carl came to a decision to write a book of poetry based on an old tradition of the Borinage, the Dark Quarter-Hour, which involved reading a story in the semi-darkness, just as night was falling but when the lights had not yet been turned on. We thought this tradition so lovely that we punctuated the year with a series of Dark Quarter-Hours all across the region, in places where literature does not usually venture: the supermarket, the bar, the hospital, a basketball match – even prison.
Our involvement at this last location took several forms: typography and letter-painting workshops, the bringing of The Phrase to the prison’s walls through the creation of a mural with the prisoners, readings and musical performances, the creation of a mosaic mural on the front of the prison recalling the poets who were imprisoned there, inviting American artist Patti Smith to meet the prisoners and write a new poem on one of the exterior walls by hand. As part of his collaboration, Carl Norac also performed a number of artistic actions during the year (a lecture, a story-telling evening, etc.), as a way of introducing young and old to the endless world of fiction.

The creation of the Literary Guinguette in the garden of the Maison Llosseau

The Literary Guinguette was a garden wholly dedicated to literature: an atmospheric venue, a literary bar including an installation by Kitty Crowther (her ‘Box’) and the Hundred Books bookshop (presenting the top ten books of ten booksellers).

The Guinguette, which was specially created for Mons 2015, hosted events involving poetry from Mons or from other countries (evenings dedicated to publishing house Editions Warda, Michael Schmidt and Séverine Ballon, a ‘Dialect attack’ evening, a slam session, etc.), foreign and Belgian literature (Julien Blanc-Gras, Camille Louis, Pierre Senges, Gabriel Josipovici, Marie-Hélène Lafon, Jean-Luc Oters, Marco Lodoli, Diane Meur, Reinhard Jirg), unplugged concerts (Nicolas Deletaille, Dencoloai &Provoost, Les lundis d’Hortense), brunches; remarkable writing workshops led by artists of all kinds (Indekeuken, Béata Szparagowska, Fatrasproduction, Juliette Mancini, Mélanie Yvon), aperitifs and summer siestas.

Today, a non-profit organisation plans to take over and support the Province of Hainaut in maintaining a programme of literary activity in the beautiful garden of the Maison Llosseau.

A literary gazette through the year

The literary gazette L’Afrontée (meaning ‘The Impertinent’ in Mons dialect) found its way into every project, recreating the famous literary journals of the era of the late nineteenth century in which poets battled it out over the question of free verse, with one gazette pitted against another in a kind of public correspondence. Emile Verhaeren was a particularly brilliant participant in this literary conflict, as were Verlaine and the ‘Rupture’ group. The editorial con-tent (i.e. the choice of artists to invite) was agreed between us and Carl Norac, our supporting artist.

We gave carte blanche to our graphic artist Floriana Da Silva. The aim was to produce an original gazette that would be an outlet for various poets and illustrators from all over the world, and to take a questioning look at our own programme through four limited editions. Although L’Afrontée was received very well in Brussels, it was harder for it to attract notice in Mons...

Difficulties encountered

One of the difficulties encountered concerned communication and filling venues. The existence of some events was not broadcast to the world sufficiently: they were overwhelmed in the flood of communication as too ‘small’ and ‘intimate’, so the Literature team had its work cut out to inform the public and ensure visibility for the artists present.

The Phrase was a very ambitious project, and it was sometimes hard to keep the pace up in spite of the cold, rain and heat. The working hours of the letter painters had to be increased several times in order to rise to the challenge; however, we had foreseen this and discussed the matter with them, and were thus able to avoid extra costs or problems within the team.

At all the events, relations with the ticketing system were awkward, as its way of working was unsuitable for projects of this type. As a result, for certain events we took over the functions of receiving the public and ticketing ourselves in order to avoid hiccups.

The technical and financial dimensions

Technically, there were no hitches – despite order turnaround times that were extremely long in some cases due to the paperwork required for any expenditure of public money – due in large part to the painstaking work of a production coordinator and a general registrar, both of them completely dedicated to the literary projects.

We were also able to run some more tricky ‘customised’ projects, such as The Phrase, involving methods that had never been tried before, or Kitty Crowther’s box Inside, which presented numerous constraints due to its being located in a classified building (the Maison Llosseau).

The construction of the entire Guinguette and of the exhibition at Jemappes under the scenographic supervision of Anne Desclée also went off on schedule and within budgets. All safety regulations were adhered to.

Financially, a saving of over 10% of the overall budget was achieved, as requested by the general management and the administrative team.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Literature has its place on the programme of a European Capital of Culture, provided it is supported (as was the case) by the curators, who must be determined to make it a strong element. It has a central place in all cultural creativity. There is not a single great artist whose thinking is not strongly influenced by poets, philosophers and novelists.

However, it seemed important to put together individual literary projects in which risks could be taken, with two aims in mind: firstly, to enable literature to stand out from the other programming focuses of the Capital of Culture, where the idea was sometimes to bring everyone together, to draw the crowds; and secondly to establish the identity of the city behind the projects, as distinct from other cities that also have literary projects (Lyon and Les Assises du Roman, Toulouse and Le Marathon des Mots, Saint-Malo and Etonnants voyageurs, etc.).

We needed to work with both local literature (and we had chosen to work with our heritage here) and European literature, each feeding the other. The creation of a venue also seemed important.

During our visit to Riga, we had attended some superb poetry evenings in a community centre specifically dedicated to literature.

This trio of elements – distinctiveness, high standards and a venue – was definitely potent. The fourth factor that was needed to ensure balance was time. The European Capital of Culture only lasts a year, but if the public that is created and whose loyalty is gained during those twelve months finds opportunities to continue the adventure in the following years, it will do so, and grow, and doubtless ensure that the city grows with it…
FASHION AND DESIGN
‘Bringing together design institutions around a joint project, raising the profile of creative talent from Mons, assembling the people of Mons in creative workshops promoting intergenerational ties and social diversity: such were the objectives, and they were met with passion!’

YEMINE SLIMAN LAWTON, FASHION AND DESIGN PROJECT LEADER
Soyons réalistes : Mons n’est pas une ville proche de la mode. Elle n’a pas de styliste particulièrement renommé, pas d’école proposant cette section, pas de musée retraçant son histoire ou ses innovations. Cela aurait été une relative perte d’énergie de vouloir faire de Mons la place forte de la mode nord-européenne. Par contre, parsemer et faire transparaître cet art dans divers projets (d’expositions ou d’Ailleurs en Folie, par exemple) a permis d’attirer l’attention du grand public sur un art majeur et accessible.

Concernant le design, le constat est plus nuancé : dans le passé, une tradition de l’orfèvrerie et de la céramique ont positionné la Région et ses artisans comme importants dans ce domaine. Le Grand Hornu ou le Centre Keramis ont pris naissance dans ce contexte et bénéficient aujourd’hui d’une reconnais-sance internationale. Il fallait aider ces institutions à travailler ensemble et à être encore plus visibles.

OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

Jean-Paul Lespagnard officially became a supporting artist in June 2013, during a press conference given in his studio. From August 2013, the aims of the Fashion and Design programme were to:

- unite the Mons design and fashion world around a common presentation of their programme and give them visibility at national and international level;
- pool the resources of regional design and fashion actors;
- come together for creative workshops and offer an alternative form of ‘self-cultivation’;
- spotlight creative talent in the region and promote the development of local innovators and their products;
- accompany other artistic sectors of Mons 2015 with an additional creative and participatory dimension.

The aims for the partnership with Jean-Paul Lespagnard were to:

- help spread the reputation of a great emerging artist;
- promote the city of Mons and its creative and innovative potential through the designer’s profile;
- ensure that his creativity was shared as an encouragement to local creativity.

EVALUATION

Preparing for the launch

In October 2014, Mons 2015 was present at a major event: the Interior Biennale in Kortrijk. Thousands of people attended this event, discovered Mons 2015 there and formed a positive impression of it. By consolidating institutions such as Le Keramis, Le Grand Hornu, the WCC-BF and the Maison du Design for presentational purposes, we made it clear that the region had real potential. An important achievement just a few months before the Opening...

The Opening itself, incidentally, saw heavy involve-ment from the Fashion and Design team. The ponchos were Jean-Paul Lespagnard’s idea. He wanted a bright and original unifying element that would be worn by as many of the people of Mons as possible on this evening in January 2015. His gamble paid off: 20,000 ponchos invaded the streets during the opening festivities. Enthusiasm was widespread, and the involvement of people from all strata of the population was required, with the preparations for the opening festivities, which were to be a major event for Mons and its region, involving workshops to customise the poncho from the end of 2014. Hundreds of people, young and old, decorated their poncho and prepared themselves emotionally for the festivities that came a few months later.

Projecting an image of fashion and design as attainable, accessible arts

Obviously, the aim of the Fashion programme was not to bring Milan to Mons (although one of the Home and Away projects succeeded in doing just that for a week!), but to raise public awareness of the world of fashion through workshops, often in conjunction with the Maison du Design (the creative talent market, Innovation and readymade, Design in shops, etc.). Organising Fashion and Design activities as a way of promoting social cohesion was a large part of the overall project.

Most of the events were free and accessible, and aimed at all ages and all audiences. Exhibitions such as Lumeçon Inspiration gave visibility to creative talent in Mons in one of the busiest places in the city in 2015: the Tourist Office.
Bringing together local players

Another strength of the Fashion programme was its support for the success of other programmes by weaving ties (no pun intended). Thus there were sewing workshops for the Milan Home and Away, ‘mini scalaletta’ workshops (likewise for the Milan Home and Away), the Lumeçon Inspiration parade at Museum Night, preparations for the Ideal Demo with workshops involving ARTS² students, workshops at the Café Europa and Doudou it Yourself. Mons already had several institutions involved in design: ARTS², Grand Hornu Images, the Maison du Design, the WCC, and the fashion cluster within Creative Valley, but there was nobody to bring together these institutions and get them working on a joint project.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Bringing together design institutions around a joint project, raising the profile of creative talent from Mons, assembling the people of Mons in creative workshops promoting intergenerational ties and social diversity: such were the objectives, and they were met with passion!

The world of design was already saturated with design weeks, design fairs, biennials, etc., so it was unlikely that Mons would become yet another ‘capital’ of design.

Despite this, Mons does seem to be moving in the direction of the creative economies, and design has a major role to play in this discussion, as do the new technologies. Positioning Mons as a smart and design city obviously requires sound economic foundations, but above all a strong cultural identity.

Design as an actor and creative force in festivities, contributing actively to the creativity and bustle of the city: it was in this very specific niche that the city wanted to stand out: design serving culture. Good examples of this approach are the display designs for the Mons Memorial Museum, the Arlothèque and the Doudou Museum, which are of high quality and in some cases employ innovative concepts and technologies.

Mons thus needed to position itself and differentiate itself from other cities by being a ‘neutral’ meeting place where people could come to engage in exchanges, experience new things and enrich themselves along similar lines to the Domaine de Boisbuchet in France, and in this way become:

- A knowledge centre with conferences, seminars, etc.
- A laboratory with workshops, summer camps, a creative hub, etc.
- An innovative showcase of ideas, concepts, cultural and atmospheric venues, display and set design, performances, pop-up pavilions, temporary exhibitions and so on.

At present, there appears to be nobody to unite the region’s different design actors. An institution is needed whose purpose is to create a design movement in Mons with an artistic and creative approach.

Such an institution will need to occupy a meaningful and unifying role between the various business and academic structures and the many fab labs and private initiatives in the region with greater or lesser relevance to this art in its own right.

As part of a biennial or triennial, one can easily imagine an artistic trend or theme that is covered by an exhibition at BAM being presented at the Grand Hornu for furniture, at Kéramis for ceramics, at the WCC-BF for jewellery, and at the Maison du Design through meetings and workshops. Watch this space…
MUSIC
‘The overall idea was for music to be a place where people could meet, take part and discover, a place of wonderment and pride for all Montois in 2015.’

JEAN-PAUL DESSY, COMPOSER, MUSIC PROJECT LEADER AND DIRECTOR OF MUSIQUES NOUVELLES

- 10,000 personnes ont assisté aux différentes propositions de La Semaine Lassus
- 500 choristes pour la Grande Clameur
- L’Alhambra représente en 2015 61 concerts, 204 groupes et 690 musiciens
OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

The Music section began work on all the projects it ran in 2015 well in advance.

From 2008, the first outlines of the Music projects were sketched out, the first preliminary memos were drafted, and the first meetings with the future general commissioner were held.

In 2009, contacts were initiated with European experts on Orlando di Lasso and with the label Musiques en Wallonie about the recording of five CDs dedicated to unpublished works of Di Lasso, to be issued at the rate of one per year from 2010 to 2015; preparatory work was conducted with the music faculties of Belgian and foreign universities with a view to launching a detailed and lengthy research project examining musical life in Renaissance Hainaut (leading to two important works to be published by Brepols), and with the main Renaissance music performers in Belgium and Europe; and sections concerning the Music projects were written for the candidacy dossiers.

From 2010, following the actual designation of Mons as European Capital of Culture, preparations were made to implement the projects included in the application. The Musiques Nouvelles team took on the whole of this work in addition to its regular duties. In the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, this implementation work rose to a crescendo. All of the many projects took shape, gradually and with increasing precision, in artistic but also in budgetary terms.

The aims were:

- to promote Orlando di Lasso, the most famous musician of the sixteenth century, make his work better known and loved, and symbolically bring him back to Mons and restore him to his place in the hearts of its people;
- to develop participatory projects so that the people would be and feel included in the Mons 2015 Music projects (La Grande Clameur, concerts in people’s homes);
- to develop projects in which children were involved (El Sistemons, Shanti-Shanti!);
- to put creativity at the heart of the Mons 2015 programme (European Contemporary Orchestra, Tactus);
- to organise musical exchanges with other European Capitals of Culture (Plzen, Wroclaw, Donostia, Aarhus);
- to generate public enthusiasm for Arsonic, the brand-new venue for acoustic music (inauguration, programme of events, activities).

EVALUATION

The overall picture is extremely positive. The success of the majority of projects far exceeded our expectations. And not only by the quality of the artistic offerings but also by the number of spectators.

For instance, more than 10,000 people enthusiastically attended the different elements of Di Lasso Week, proving that there is a large public for such events if they are properly implemented and presented. At the heart of Di Lasso Week, La Grande Clameur was extraordinarily successful. This was reflected in the number of participants, which was limited to 500 (and we were having to turn people away not long after registration had opened), and in the size of the audience, with 5,000 people flocking to the foot of St Waudru’s Collegiate Church in order to attend.

This success has continued on YouTube, where the recording of La Grande Clameur attracted thousands of views. El Sistemons was another good example of the quality and success of the participatory musical projects: for almost two school years, musicians/activity leaders (in partnership with ReMuA) visited six primary classes in Mons and 19 municipalities in order to make weekly preparations with the pupils and their teachers for a great show/concert involving 150 child singers and musicians supported by the Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles on the stage of the Royal Theatre on 24 and 25 April 2015. These children, who had never played music before, gave three performances of a work specially created for them, before 1,800 spectators, the majority of whom had never previously walked through the doors of the Théâtre Royal de Mons.

The only events that did not attract full houses were the one-off concerts: Tactus, European Contemporary Orchestra, and the concerts given by ensembles from other European Capitals of Culture (Aarhus, Wroclaw). These one-off offerings, which were isolated and the subject of little communication, were probably lost amid the very full programme of activities.

Liste des projets (hors musiques amplifiées):

- Installation Cubiculum Musicae
- Ouvrages publiés chez Brepols
- Colloque Le plus que divin Orlande
- 2 concerts Harmonia Sacra
- Exposition Hainaut, Terre Musicale aux Fucam
- Cd Vox Luminis / Concert Vox Luminis
- Concert Lassus, enfant montois
- Concert des Vêpres de Sainte Waudru
- Concert Lassus dans le concert des Nations
- Concert de Jurgen de Bruyn
- Journée Viva Orlando
- Projet El Sistemons
- Projet Shanti-shanti!
- Ouverture d’Arsonic et journées portes ouvertes
- Bal à valses (Clôture de Lons 2015)
- Concerts Jeune Public
- Concert Operatic Actions avec Aarhus
- Concert European Contemporary Orchestra
- Concert Sonic Lassus
- Concert Pierrot Rewrite à Plzen
- Echange avec San Sebastian/ Donostia 2016
- Echange avec Wroclaw 2016 (Musiki Nowej)
- Concerts à domicile
- Concert Voix des Anges
- Concert Tactus
In addition to the large audience sizes and eager participation, the huge satisfaction expressed by all the artists without exception is the third element of our success. As a result, we can consider the Mons 2015 Music project as a whole as a great success.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Musically, Mons 2015 made numerous dreams come true. The dream of hundreds of Montois who did not believe they could sing and who, since La Grande Clameur, would not give up singing in the choirs they have joined for anything in the world. The dream of the thousands of spectators who were treated to the best of music and wish to carry on enjoying powerful musical experiences such as those has offered during Di Lasso Week. The dream of the hundreds of children in El Sistemons and Shanti-Shanti! who managed to create high-quality, very moving musical performances. All these dreams, which came true thanks to its hard work, gave the music team of Le manège.mons, which was unstinting of its time and efforts, the immense joy of sharing in the enthusiasm of performers and public.

The Alhambra and amplified music

In its organisational chart, the Mons 2015 Foundation also included a specific section dedicated to ‘contemporary music’ (or ‘amplified music’). Initially, this was set up by two ‘Festivals and facilities’ project managers before the position was taken over the Alhambra programme manager. Rather than think in terms of event-driven programming, they opted for a long-term investment in the leasing and management of a club (a former disco) located a few metres from the Grand-Place. This filled a gap in Mons, which lacked a specific venue dedicated to amplified music. Thus the Alhambra, a medium-capacity hall (350 seats), fully equipped and decorated by the street-artist BONOM, was created in January 2014.

Open two to three nights a week (sometimes four), the Alhambra was intended from the outset to be eclectic, alternating electronic music, local rock discoveries and international artists. The number of concerts in 2015 was 61, representing 204 groups and 690 musicians with an average of 150 spectators per concert.

Big names featured included the likes of Jean Louis Murat, Oscar & The Wolf, Aeroplane, Jay Jay Johansson, Giedré, Girls in Hawaii, Suarez, Veence Hanao, Alice on the Roof, Yelle and Bastian Baker. Among the special evenings were the Mons Got Talent evenings, the Sundays Brunch, the Tremplin Dour Festival, and others.

The Alhambra will remain open until the end of June 2016, still under the responsibility of Le manège.mons. The amplified music programme also included outdoor events. Particularly memorable here was the public success of the afternoons on BAM’s splendid rooftop terrace throughout summer 2015, the collaboration on the programming of the Summer Project Festival and the collaboration with the 2015 Dour Festival edition on a free fifth day for festival-goers.
DIGITAL
‘Where technology meets culture... was one of the first bold steps of the European Capital of Culture. The idea was not technology for technology’s sake, but using it to reduce the social and digital divide: initiating empowerment, inventing new artistic and business models and creating links, warmth, intergenerational contact. With digital technologies, a field of possibilities opens up and gives a new dimension to the words “imagine” and “enterprise”.'
L’équipe numérique de Mons 2015 conçoit le numérique comme véritable levier social et culturel, qui nous questionne sur la citoyenneté européenne, l’identité digitale, les industries créatives et ne peut s’envisager sans de nombreux partenariats, qu’ils soient locaux, régionaux, nationaux, voire internationaux.

Le Café Europa, c’était concentrer les forces créatrices de tout un continent dans 70m² !

Les différents projets-pilotes en rupture, comme MEDIA DJ, Mons Street Review, Café Europa, Hypergothique transparent, le Symposium Crossovers culture and technology, les résidences d’artistes ambitionnaient de modifier notre conception et notre usage des nouvelles technologies.

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**OBJECTIVES AND TIMING**

From 2003, Pascal Keiser was part of a task force set up by Elio Di Rupo, Mayor of the City of Mons, to study an economic and cultural redeployment policy. In 2004, the city’s official candidacy as European Capital of Culture was announced; it emphasised digital technology as an economic and social development factor. The team began to form in 2013. Its objectives were to:

- reduce the social and digital divide by creating a welcoming, intergenerational neutral space for exploring and being introduced to the new technologies;
- show the general public the significant technological advances developed in Mons over the last ten years (Technocité, Google, Microsoft, Digital Innovation Valley, etc.);
- form a network of local partners;
- invite major international digital artists and compare respective practices;
- develop a European network of shared programming;
- change the way we think about and use new technologies: see digital programming as a social and cultural lever that raises questions about our European citizenship.

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**EVALUATION**

The digital project surpassed our expectations and met the objectives and tasks that we had set ourselves.

Culture and technology came together in concrete ways within each digital project. The encounter between contemporary digital artists and the public was definitely a valuable one, relating to new discoveries at the interface between art and science, design and construction, illustrated lectures, and presentations of prototypes.

The public was always fully included, whether through welcoming and festive moments, invitations to participate in workshops, or the display of interactive and participatory installations. Strikingly, those who visited the digital projects were completely trans-generational:

- **Children**: at the Café Europa creative workshops, meeting their European counterparts, during the filming of the Mons Review Street, etc.
- **Teenagers**: at Café Europa’s Ideal Europe hacker meetings, at the retrogaming sessions, at the Café Europa Lab, etc.
- **Adults**: makers, entrepreneurs, artists, designers, parents, teachers, tourists, digital professionals, geeks: connected one to one with other European cities, presenting their own initiatives at Sustainable Development and Social Innovation moments at the Family Lab on Sunday, at the online festivities with Kaliningrad, etc.
- **Older people**: discovering St Waudru’s Collegiate Church and central Mons in a new way in Transparent Hypergothic and the Mons Street Review; sharing in the 3D printer and laser cutting initiation, visiting exhibitions and attending various workshops, etc.

**Café Europa: a European venue for sharing**

The headquarters for all things digital, the location that brought together all the projects under development, was the Café Europa. The starting point for the various artistic activities, the ultimate outreach location, a centre for residencies and communication, the Café Europa welcomed an impressive number of visitors (some 1,500 per month), introduced them to new tools, and invited them to share in our investigations, glimpse ways to improve the environment in which we live, encounter one another and engage in common activities, and to make things together.

Café Europa comprehensively conveyed the concept of hot technologies and served as a pleasant place to hang out and make new discoveries, open to all, regardless of age, social class, or knowledge of new technologies. Each visitor was taken in hand on arrival and received a presentation of the various activities and possibilities on offer. As they left, visitors invariably expressed a sense of having been changed, and gratitude at having been given a glimpse of the infinite opportunities offered by digital technology.

Café Europa attracted a diverse public. Numerous highly original and personal projects were carried out in the Lab with the 3D printer or laser-cutting tool. The venue was also a great success as an atmospheric venue at the weekend. The European network developed impressively, with more than ten Café Europe opening around the world,
and there were plenty of shared activities on a variety of topics between different operators. What worked less well were the themed workshops (Creative Coding, Do it Yourself, HackerLab, Connected Party) and the tablet lending service.

Café Europa in 2015 offered a window onto what this venue could be like later on. The most successful activities were the complete guided tours of the place, its philosophy and its programme of activities for different groups (official delegations, journalists, schools including from outside Mons, NGOs, universities, Creative Hubs gathering, businesses, families, etc.); the use of the premises for meetings by companies or non-profit organisations, press conferences or as a radio studio; and the workshops (families and retrofuturism on Sundays, cookery classes in English, introduction to the 3D printer and laser cutting). In addition to the introductory sessions offered by the team, the Lab was made available to the public, who could come in to work on the machines (3D printer and laser cutter) and carry out private projects: 48 different community projects have been supported and completed so far.

**A concrete example of the circular economy at the Café Europa**

A concrete example makes all this clearer: about two years ago, Marie launched a project in the Pays des Collines Natural Park relating to the local supply chain for wool, which she turns into natural felt with the participation of sheep farmers and shearers. She markets this sustainable wool, which she turns into natural felt with the participation of her first tests confirmed the possibility of cutting the felt by laser, as well as leaving a pleasant sheepfold odour in the Lab.

She met Evelyne there, a professor of object design at ARTS2, whose students will soon learn about the felt production chain, working on the colour, density, thickness and other properties of the material that are integrated into the design process. A true win-win partnership!

**Transparent hypergothic**

St Waudru’s Collegiate Church hosted a numerous and varied public. Tablet tours, a kind of virtual treasure hunt organised by a recipient of support under the project grant scheme, proved very successful. One slight downside was that the tour was too long, which meant that it was sometimes broken off without being completed.

**Mons Street Review**

The people of Mons discovered their city in a new light by participating in various filming sessions for the Mons Street Review in 2014 and then browsing through the results on the Internet. Numerous clubs and associations joined in the project (local groups, former miners, the blind people’s association Les Aveygues de Ghlin, sportspeople, volunteers, enthusiasts, etc.), which was probably the most ambitious in the digital programme. It was managed by two teams: the installations and public space team for the filming; and the digital team for development, post-production and the website.

Ten tablets presenting an augmented-reality Street Review route were made available to the public at Café Europa.

**CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?**

Mons 2015 helped (re)create the links between the different digital players in the Region. One of our first initiatives was to create a ‘digital dome’ bringing together cultural organisations, businesses, non-profits, start-ups, universities and associations working in the areas of innovation, creativity and digital technology. From this digital dome was born Creative Valley, Mons’ own creative hub, which has obtained European funding and includes Creative Wallonia.

The obvious success of Café Europa shows that people are on the lookout for innovative initiatives focusing on recycling, sustainability, social innovation, improving our living spaces and activities for the family.

**TOWARDS REDISCOVERING THE OTHER, CROSS-DISCIPLINARITY, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

The digital focus in Mons is clearly set to grow exponentially after 2015. Creative Valley will assume the role of mediator and convener of the various initiatives developed by each partner.

It will thus take on one of the roles of Café Europa. A permanently neutral venue will be opened in a splendid house in Rue de la Coupe, where the various activities of Café Europa will be continued as a matter of course: Fab Lab, meetings with designers, exhibitions, activities and introductions to new tools, public meetings, discussions and debates.
REGIONAL TERRITORIES
‘Traditional French bals musettes or American country dancing, festive banquets, poetry or sports trails, intriguing spectacles in surprising places, hidden heritage and mysterious legends, wellness rooms for acoustic massages and sailors’ tattoos, gardening, knitting or genealogy workshops... Imaginativeness and human warmth abounded.

There were some incredible experiences.’
Sans les Montois, Mons 2015 ne pouvait pas se faire. En 2013, une bourse désignait plus d’une vingtaine de projets portés par des structures locales, citoyennes et parfois non-professionnelles qui prirent place dans la programmation. Puis, la Fondation, avec et pour les habitants du Grand Ouest et du Grand Mons, a imaginé des événements de voisinage.

En 2015, le Grand Mons a ainsi vécu au rythme de 8 manifestations réparties sur 8 secteurs : bals et banquets festifs, parcours surprenants, à pied, à cheval, en vélo ou en poussette, chapiteaux de cirque intrigants, artistes chez l’habitant, redécouverte des patrimoines cachés et des légendes mystérieuses. Tout un imaginaire valorisé au cœur d’une semaine concoctée avec passion avec et par les Montois.

Et de 12 manifestations toutes aussi alléchantes et enrichissantes sur les 12 communes de la région Mons-Borinage, déployant des thèmes comme l’eau, Van Gogh, Moneuse, Corentin et bien d’autres !

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**OBJECTIVES**

- To study the situation in Mons and in the Borinage, and the apparent lack of interest on the part of a large part of the population in culture in general and the European Capital of Culture in particular;
- To transform distrust into a desire to participate in this exceptional year, and then into a capacity to produce collective and shared events;
- To plan neighbourhood events, both geographical and cultural, with local residents and associations.

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**EVALUATION AND TIMING**

**The Grand Eight (G8)**

Getting to know the region and its local associations and residents represented six months of walking, encounters and discussions (over 2,100 meetings up to March 2015), especially in relation to projects which failed to attract funding under the project grant scheme. The organisation of the G8 highlight weeks was undertaken with residents’ groups and associations, which acted as the ‘designers’:

- Stage 1 (summer 2013): survey by local people of historical, cultural and landscape aspects of Mons;
- Stage 2 (autumn 2013): inspiring the imagination of the people of Mons, based on the key findings of Stage 1, to help them to welcome works of art and art collectives later on;
- Stage 3 (winter 2013/14): setting up of individual projects by the designers;
- Stage 4 (spring 2014): emphasis on the collective aspect of G8: teaming up with neighbours, reorganising approaches, pooling skills and reorganising budgets into a generally approved framework. The creation of the trails was a factor here.
- Stage 5: training for all amateur participants:
  - Budgets for clubs and associations: educational worksheets on budgets and technical aspects were issued
  - Communication: meetings with the COM and PR teams in order to explain our strategy in more detail and add focus to their requests for communication tools.

The idea was ensure that everyone developed their ability to understand, organise and participate in later events from 2016 onwards.

- Stage 6: implementation of the eight programmes (April - October 2015) around various unifying themes: The Unicorn (and Recycling); Cuesmes, Altitude 2015 m; Mysterious Journeys; Castle Life and the Senses; Scarecrows, Puppets and Giants; Water and Ghosts; The Wind in the Fields; Topsy-Turvy.

**The Grand Ouest**

- Stage 1 (01-07.2014): Assemble and design
  - The 12 mayors of Mons-Borinage sought support from Mons 2015, along the lines of the Grand Eight;
  - The 12 designated local coordinators (councillors, cultural officers, directors of facilities) established an agenda for projects between March and December 2015 and proposed various unifying themes for them;
  - The media launch with the mayors on 19 June 2014 officially confirmed the collective interest of the municipalities;
  - As a result, the word ‘Borinage’ officially reappeared in the vocabulary of Mons 2015, to the delight of councillors, associations and residents: the brand created in this way was thus definitely successful.

- Stage 2 (09-12.2014): Initiate and pool
  - Public meetings and meetings of local associations; to involve the local community;
  - Field visits: to lay the foundations for the fun and culture trails;
  - The pooling of projects throughout the Grand Ouest: to promote the collective nature of the twelve municipalities rather than isolated
projects. This brought to light tensions caused by certain aspects of the communication work (press conference, publication of programmes, public meetings), due to the fears that individual projects would be swamped by the flood of activities in Mons 2015;

› The solution lay in promoting each event and sharing tools: a symbolic collective photo, the passing of the Grand Ouest flag from mayor to mayor during the Grand Ouest, the presence of the city of Mons and the Foundation at ceremonial occasions, and preparations for post-Mons 2015.

Participatory projects

The objective was to find individual tools that would enable everyone, in their own way and depending on their available time and their skills, to take part in one or more events, such as:

› La Grande Clameur: a choir of 500 amateur singers that joined forces with 19 existing choirs. The concert was performed before 5,000 people, and many of the amateurs and the composer Jean-Paul Dessy are interested in carrying on singing or setting up new choirs;

› Genealogy of European Mons: using individual genealogy and the origins of the city’s inhabitants to show that the city was European before it became a European Capital. A workshop conducted throughout the Grand Eight and Grand Ouest;

› 1 m²: tubs containing 1 m² of soil provided for children to create imaginary gardens with the help of casual gardeners, businesses, botanists, tree specialists, etc.;

› Scarecrows: in connection with Territory 5 (Scarecrows, Puppets and Giants), a series of scarecrows was created by artists and then by groups from various sectors: childcare, psychiatry, social, etc.;

› Each Grand Eight territory and most of the Grand Ouest municipalities had their own participatory projects, in addition to the above, involving photography, interior decor, sensory theatre, costumes, parades, etc. local people who were unable to be involved over the whole period (two years in the case of the designers) thus had an opportunity close to home to attend a variety of workshops for all ages.

External project monitoring

The idea here was to support projects run by associations that received grants under the project scheme that were close to the spirit of the regional events: collective, shared and involving as many members of the public as possible.

The success of these projects with the public – concentrated on one or two weekends in the case of St John’s Eve Bonfires or Amanite or spread over 18 months in the case of Théâtre Épique and Pop UP – raises the question about follow-on projects. How can we bounce back and make the most of a European Capital year that changed the outlooks of operators, artists and visitors? It is up to these project leaders to find their own response from 2016…

City workshop on accessibility

At the City’s request, a ‘City workshop’ for specialist associations from Mons and Brussels was organised on disability and accessibility issues:

› Four subgroups (buildings, communication, employment and travel) worked with an evident desire to be both effective and realistic;

› A report offering recommendations was presented to the Foundation in late June 2014. A final document was submitted to the City and the Foundation in December 2015 in order to continue this collective work. The associations insist that sensitivity to issues of accessibility can and must be a characteristic that the Foundation can and must be able to claim to have displayed in its retrospective assessment;

› The Working Group has chosen to continue its reflections by constituting itself as an official body.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Following these three years of consultation and then of designing and implementing the 20 events in close engagement with the people of Mons and the Borinage, the team senses from our partners a need to continue this adventure after 2015, in a form to be defined. This continuation was integrated throughout our strategy. We have left behind a number of tools for the team that will take over this activity; it can overhaul them as required for the period 2016 - 2025:

› recommendations to the teams;

› stored technical and communication equipment;

› an associative network in place around people of reduced mobility.

In its Mons 2025 project, the Foundation wishes to continue this adventure with and for the people of Mons and capitalise on the work done for Mons 2015; this initiative is also wanted and supported by the municipal authorities.

Thus, a project that presents real continuity with the Grand Eight and probably the Grand Ouest is being considered, with an identical methodology of co-construction with local residents, non-profit organisations, artists, and anyone wishing to participate: from amateur gardeners to teenage BMX fans via pensioners skilled at crochet.

However, this project will take a different form. It will divide Greater Mons into five or six sectors rather than eight, and their identity will be different. One of the great challenges of this new stage in the process of ‘neighbourhood cultivation’ will be to maintain and expand the network of partners that engage in the life of the city – that make up Mons.

PARTNER CITIES AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
'From 2008, in a positive response to Yves Vasseur’s and Elio Di Rupo’s call for a regional dimension to be given to the European Capital of Culture, most of the major cities of the country and the border area, the major cultural institutions in the region and many of the municipalities in the Province of Hainaut became involved in the Mons 2015 adventure. Seven years later, our work has caused relationships of trust to be forged and a unique cultural, artistic and tourist network to be built across a territory of an unprecedented scale in Belgium.'
OBJECTIVES

› to establish a regional cultural, national and cross-border programme for the European Capital of Culture;

› to establish and coordinate a public relations and communication strategy for the whole territory, including for the relevant partners and their publics;

› to encourage the mobility of cultural and tourist publics within a 150 km radius in Belgium and in the French border zone;

› to set up and run a network of cities and institutions to promote the exchange of experiences and forms of joint cultural projects.

EVALUATION AND TIMING

Geolocalised productions

In 2015, Mons 2015 made waves all across Belgium and northern France. Financial exchanges were governed by precise rules depending on the geographical area covered by the Foundation’s subsidising bodies. As such, only projects by partners from the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and the Province of Hainaut benefited from financial support. Major projects of our Flemish and French partners received co-production budgets, putting €200,000 of funding into them;

› With the main cities of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (Brussels, Liège, Namur and Charleroi), we co-produced projects, putting €200,000 of funding into them;

› We offered a financial partnership to all cities and municipalities in Hainaut, based on a contribution of €0.50 per capita per year (starting from a year x of joining the scheme ranging from 2008 to 2014 for the most recent). The Mons 2015 Foundation pledged to double this amount for the implementation of a project by the contributor city in its own territory. 35 entités took this opportunity: the 12 municipalities of Mons-Borinage, La Louvière, Le Roeulx, Soignies, Thuin, Merbes-le-Château and 18 municipalities in Walloon Picardy operating as a single territory;

› Finally, the allocation of co-production budgets for the partner institutions, also located in Hainaut, was the result of negotiations and was undertaken according to the specific needs of each project.

A unique regional, national, cross-language and cross-border network

The richness of the network of partner cities and cultural institutions lay in its territorial extent, of course, but also in the number, diversity and quality of active parties within it. After the initial contacts, essentially of a political nature, the operational phase quickly brought to the table the towns’ and cities’ cultural and communication services, tourist offices, cultural operators and artists involved in the partner project. In total, nearly 150 people were in permanent direct contact with the Mons 2015 Foundation. Moreover, meeting regularly as a Committee (the Partner Cities Committee and Partners Institutions Committee), these resource partners got into the habit of meeting and got to know one another, and these links led to other artistic projects and/or communication partnerships. These multilateral and collateral connections thus created a network that has a real potential to last permanently.

A high-quality programme

Across all projects, more than 50 partner cultural institutions were involved in the planning of Mons 2015: museums, art or dance centres, all of international importance, musical ensembles, renowned festivals, cultural centres and key players on the arts scene scattered across the Mons 2015 territory. The wide range of disciplines represented (exhibitions, art in public spaces, fairs and major events, film, dance, dramatic, musical and digital performance) made this partner programme an effective complement to the Mons programme.

With one or two exceptions, financial support from Mons 2015 and the symbolic importance of the event enabled and pushed the partners to transcend their usual framework, offering projects of exceptional breadth and quality, including world premieres (the first retrospective of the work of Jasper Morrison at the Grand-Hornu), new events (Karbon Kabaret in Liège, Les 400 coups in Walloon Picardy or Smoke on the Water in Charleroi) and (re-)openings (BPS 22 in Charleroi, Keramis in La Louvière, the Mundaneum in Mons and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Valenciennes).

Most of the partner cities, particularly in Hainaut, also seized this opportunity – regarded as an important chance to raise their profile – to showcase to the rest of Europe their
local artistic talent and the architectural or natural heritage, folklore, traditions and strengths of the region: the medieval citadel in Thuin, folklore and the natural heritage in Wallon Picardy, artistic talent in Liège and Charleroi, the blue stone of Soignies, etc. Their participation was thus based on an approach of cultural tourism – an emphasis that is increasingly present in the plans of cities in Wallonia.

New synergies

Based around this overall process, synergies were reinforced within cities between administrations, tourist operators and cultural operators: in Charleroi, the Théâtre de L’Ancre and the City joined forces with several cultural actors and artists for Smoke On The Water; in Liège, there was the massive mobilisation of artists and associations for Karbon Kabaret, and in La Louvière for Décrocher la Lune and the publication of a guide listing all Mons 2015 activities from the Central Region (including Soignies, Binche and Le Roeulx).

Given its spatial extent and its unifying and participatory character, Les 400 coups in Wallon Picardy is probably the most relevant example of this synergistic approach, involving 18 municipalities, artists, associations, cultural and tourism operators and citizens under one banner for nearly two years.

Bridges with Flanders

Build strong bridges with Belgium’s other linguistic community was an important task. Particular attention was paid to this in terms of human resources, with the recruitment of a Dutch-speaking worker who was assigned on a half-time basis to work with the Flemish partners; in terms of networking, with the formation of systematic links between the Flemish partners and Mons-based or Wallon partners; and, thanks to support from the Flemish Ministry of Culture (subsidy granted in 2014), in financial terms, with the funding of projects by Flemish artists and institutions in the Mons region.

Thus we were approached by De Grote Post Arts Centre in Ostend, the Vooruit Arts Centre in Ghent and the Interior Biennale in Kortrijk. Collaborations were set up in particular between projects from the area surrounding Bruges (Uitwijken) and the Mons Grand Eight; and between ARTS², the Mons Conservatory and the city of Ghent (project 1.2.3 - Pianos). The bell-ringers and choirs of Mons and Mechelen also came together, as did the participatory orchestras Tosso in Ostend and L’Orchestre National Lunaire in La Louvière.

Several Mons 2015 projects incorporated this bi-community character from the design phase onwards: the Cedric Gerbehaye exhibition D’Entre Eux co-produced by the Museum Cluster of Mons and the Antwerp Fotomuseum, Denis Marleau’s bilingual opera L’Autre Hiver, co-produced by LOD, Le Manège de Mons and the City of Ghent or Les Passions Humaines, a bilingual theatre piece by Guy Cassiers performed at the Toneelhuis in Antwerp and co-produced by Mons 2015.

In terms of visitor numbers, Flanders was likewise potentially very important. The work done by our partners in passing on information made our communication more effective, spreading the word about Mons 2015 and increasing the influx of visitors.

Home on Tour

At the request of the Partner Cities Committee, Mons 2015 ran a Partner Cities House throughout the year. Each city had the opportunity to occupy this showcase in Mons city centre and present activities, drinks, parties, exhibitions and tourist information. The project was funded by Mons 2015 (leasing of the premises, maintenance and recruitment of a reception worker), and the activities were financed by the cities.

Home on Tour was well attended (over 6,000 admissions) from February to October. It quickly became an information centre that complemented the Mons Tourist Office, a place of new synergies and creativity with a combination of operators from Mons and the partner cities. Despite its strong symbolic value, however, such a project can only be justified in connection with events attracting very large numbers of visitors, as the investment in terms of energy and budget is considerable relative to the impact.

Bus on Tour and public transport

To encourage trips between Mons and the partner cities and institutions, Mons 2015 established a programme of excursions to these locations, with VIP reception, at a very affordable price. This operation was appreciated by the partners and was a big hit with the public.

However, the cost of transport (from a private coach company) is very high given the actual impact in terms of mobility. In view of the area covered and the scale of the events included on the programme, we were hoping for more collaboration with national public transport operators, including the SNCB, but their involvement outside Mons was cautious.

All partners and the Foundation agree that the overall picture is very positive. Although some parameters are hard to gauge accurately, the national reputation of Mons 2015, the public success of the European Capital of Culture in and outside Mons and the significant increase in visitor numbers for the vast majority of partners justify the conclusion that this operation was a success.

Towards more cultural cooperation

Our main legacy is the forging of new links: between neighbours, between culture and tourism, between culture and business, between cities and between institutions; and at the local, regional, national and international levels. Today, in a society which is subjecting its models to profound scrutiny, this contribution is fundamental.

Cooperation, the breaking down of barriers and a cross-disciplinary approach are the new key concepts, in the culture as elsewhere.

Partnerships, exchanges and the sharing of resources and ideas have enormous potential in financial terms and in terms of visibility and creativity. The European Capital of Culture, with its exceptional and one-off character, served as a pretext for opening up possibilities. Meeting, sharing and transcending ‘rivalry’ take time and energy – resources which are not necessarily available when one’s outlook is defensive.

Mons 2015 was just the beginning. In 2016, 2017, 2018 and so on, the challenge will be to capitalise on this momentum. Several partners concluded their review of our collaboration by simply saying ‘This should be done again!’, but I would say: ‘This should be taken further!’.

Let us accept this co-ordinatory role: there are more ties to be forged across this region in order to make more sense of the jigsaw puzzle.
Carte des Institutions partenaires

1. Festival Les (Rencontres) Inattendues
2. MAC'S / Musée des Arts Contemporains
3. Grand Homu Images
4. Hainaut Cinéma
5. Festival S/5
6. Le Domaine de Senelle - Musée de l'orfèvrerie
7. BPS 22
8. Pain Daiza
9. Musée de la Photographie
10. Charleroi Danses
11. Musée de Mariemont
12. Centre de la Gravure et de l'Image Imprimée
13. Mundaneum
14. Le Museum régional des Sciences naturelles – SPW
15. Transcultures
16. Écomusée du Bois-du-Luc
17. World Crafts Council
18. Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie
19. Fabrique de Théâtre
20. Musée International du Carnaval & du Masque
21. Le PASS
22. Le Centre Keramis
Mons 2015 was a team, mostly young and mostly female, in which trust was placed, and which was eager to build giant bridges, develop extensive networks, invent new working methods and muster titanic forces. The European Capital of Culture led to the organisation of a series of cultural offerings of unprecedented density in Mons, made possible with substantial funding from numerous partners and supporters.
COMMUNICATION & LOCAL RELATIONS
‘Joining forces in order to communicate together makes you stronger: it gives you more bargaining power and allows you to pool the recruitment of qualified staff, facilitate calls for tenders and show the rest of the world that culture in Mons is a true mark of the city, that it is strong, vibrant and completely in tune with the city’s new slogan, “Culture is here”.

**CHARLOTTE JACQUET, COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR**

‘2015 was a wonderful laboratory for testing new forms of social innovation that reinvent the way we live and work together, with valuable and sometimes unexpected partners. An essential process that should be perpetuated when we define the new city project.’

**ALINE AULIT AND ISABELLE PETERS, COORDINATORS OF THE LOCAL RELATIONS TEAM**

### De la communication
- **2,330** accrodiations distribuées pour des centaines de journalistes dont **450** internationaux
- **3,800** articles de presse et sujets radio ou télé à l’étranger
- **9,000** articles de presse et sujets radio ou télé en Belgique représentant plus **430** millions de personnes atteintes par l’information
- 20% des Belges ont activement recherché de l’information sur Mons 2015, principalement via le site internet.
- **1,800,000** visites pour **1,100,000** visiteurs uniques sur mons2015.eu
- **4,700,000** impressions (portée totale des posts) sur Facebook
- **70,000** mentions sur Twitter pour une portée totale de **127,000,000** impressions
- **40,000** mentions sur Instagram
- **380** points de distribution des outils de communication en Belgique et dans le Nord de la France
- **9** mensuels imprimés en **1,350,000** exemplaires et distribués notamment grâce au Soir
- **4** trimestriels imprimés en 3 langues et tirés à **153,000** exemplaires

### Des relations aux habitants
- **1,015** enseignants touchés de manière personnalisée
- **500** ateliers et **9,700** jeunes y participant
- **15,000** jeunes touchés par diverses actions
- **1,000** associations et **1,000** entreprises
- **915** commerçants dont **115** commerçants partenaires actifs
- **2,140** ambassadeurs
L’étude de notoriété montre que Mons 2015 jouit aujourd’hui d’une image très positive auprès du grand public belge et est principalement vu comme une initiative positive, un événement festif offrant une programmation de grande qualité, riche et diversifiée. L’image de Mons a progressé de manière particulièremen spectaculaire en Flandre, parmi les Hennuyers et les amateurs de culture.

Les équipes de communication et de relations aux habitants ont travaillé en constante collaboration, les objectifs de chacune étant étroitement liés.

OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

The mission of the communication team in 2015 was to spread the word about a new project, the European Capital of Culture, which would very soon loom large in the lives of Montois, Walloons, Belgians and foreign tourists and ‘put Mons on the map of Europe’. We had to make a programme of over 1,000 events clear, comprehensible, accessible and attractive. We had to bring in the public – families, art lovers, schools, the unemployed, friends, enemies, in short, the general public – to this impressive plethora of events. And finally, once the crowd was here, we had to guide the visitors to the right place and provide them with clear and accurate information…

Meanwhile, the local relations team focused on increasing support and involving local people closely in this adventure. These were titanic tasks, but above all, this was a unique opportunity to develop a project that was very unusual and extremely rare in the cultural community. One important initial consideration that affected the timing of the two teams was the unveiling of the Mons 2015 programme. We deliberately kept the contents secret until a few months before the start of 2015. We unveiled the programme on 7 October 2014. A press conference gave the starting signal for our launch campaign *En 2015, je suis Montois*. Et toi ?, for the active search for participants for projects, for the mobilisation of numerous networks (for sports, associations, education institutions, businesses and so on), and served as a means of swelling the number of Ambassadors, arousing enthusiasm for the opening festivities and launching the roadshows organised in Paris, London, Amsterdam and Milan by the international relations team.

Prior to this key date, our objective was twofold. Firstly, we needed to familiarise ourselves with and mobilise the local support base – the Montois. With this in mind, surveys were conducted, meetings were held and relations were formed, all underpinned by several regional campaigns: *It will make us all grow, The more, the merrier, and 2015 ways to participate*. Secondly, we needed to attract the attention of culture lovers. To do this, we gave some sneak previews of our plans during monthly press conferences from 2013 onwards.

This period was also used by the teams to learn about the programme in more detail, as it was essential for them to be steeped in it in order to communicate as effectively as possible.

*From January 2015*, communication was structured around the specific projects. Meanwhile, the local relations...
In December 2015, the thank-you and heritage campaign began: video clips, souvenir postcards, the launch of several publications (the magazine 24h01, the book La Phrase, etc.) and special evenings were arranged to bring the great adventure to a close.

EVALUATION

Communication

We decided to organise the communication team into different sections, with a team leader, a budget and some operational autonomy for each section (editorial, production, dissemination, digital, press and media), and with a specialist agency in each area taking on an ‘older brother’ role. Thus the press team was supported by an international press agency; the digital team received advice from a digital strategy agency; the production team worked closely with a graphic design firm; and the media and dissemination section followed the approach suggested by a media agency.

Another foundational element was strategy. Constructed in advance and in collaboration with the artistic management, the strategy served as a clear framework, taken into account by everyone. Communicating about a European Capital of Culture programme to some extent means operating in a permanent state of emergency. Once we were into 2015, the teams no longer had time for anything except ‘doing’.

It was essential that the ‘thinking’ had been prepared beforehand. We did a thorough job on the brand positioning for Mons 2015 and on analysing its public. We then tried to find the best strategy to deal with the mass of events.

We decided to divide the year into four seasons. Each season would have a headline event that would give the public at least one good reason to go to Mons and that would maintain the visibility of the European Capital:

- Dazzlement in the winter, with the opening festivities and the exhibition Van Gogh in the Borinage as its mainstays;
- Metamorphosis in the spring, centring on the opening of five new museums and the inauguration of a trail consisting of twenty urban installations;
- The stopover in Mons in the summer, featuring numerous summery, outdoor events including contemporary art exhibitions, atmospheric venues and the Enchanted City festival;
- The renaissance in the autumn, hinging on Di Lasso/Dubroeucq Week and the major autumn exhibitions.

Among the thousands of projects and events about which we had to communicate, we established two levels of priority projects: level 1 key projects and level 2 projects. Supported by comprehensive international communication campaigns, the key projects, which were often exhibitions presented in twos or threes (Van Gogh and Mons Superstar, Fervent China, MONSens and Atropolis and the exhibitions about Verlaine and St. George) served as headliners for the Mons 2015 season, and were intended to bring the mass public to Mons. The level 2 projects played this role of enticing the public to a lesser extent, with communication campaigns tailored to the size of the project.

The remaining projects were the subject of what we called ‘transversal communication’ – in other words, tools that covered all of our projects. One special case was recurring projects (such as Home and Away and the Grand Eight), which were treated as a strategic exception.

Graphic production: Development of an extensive graphics chart, with numerous customised versions for different partners. The production of four quarterly publications listing all programmed events; four brochures presenting ‘choice morsels’; four special family brochures; 11 monthly publications entitled Vincent, inserted every month into the pages of Le Soir and placed in over 50 displays in the city; a full-page on ‘At Mons 2015 this week’ in the La Soir; at strategic locations across the country and in certain capitals such as Paris or Amsterdam (airports, railway stations, city entrance points, etc.); media campaign purchasing and planning. For the distribution of materials, we designed a network of Mons 2015 flocking interior displays.

These were distributed across several networks: 18 partner cities and 22 partner institutions, branches of the bank ING and the shop Mais il est où le soleil?, the European Commission, cultural venues, Mons merchants, hotels, restaurants, etc. This network spread information about Mons 2015 far and wide. In the city centre, we opted for some fifty ‘outdoor displays’: a kind of metal newspaper rack from which the public could obtain free copies of the monthly Vincent.

The partners also played a crucial role in the dissemination of key messages, using their own communication tools (websites, emails, newsletters, brochures, etc.) to amplify Mons 2015 communications.

Digital: creation and daily updating of the information website (news, agendas); input for a webzine (blog, interviews, videos, audio) by the communications team, the artistic team and numerous external collaborators. Sending out of a weekly newsletter for a general readership and a monthly newsletter for specific groups (ambassadors, designers, etc.); management of the social networks; daily updating of the mobile app VisitMons (content, notifications, etc.); capitalising on press coverage and tourist feedback and live feeds of events (video, photos, live tweets); digital marketing campaign (banning, SEO, etc.). About 20% of Belgians actively sought information about Mons 2015, mainly through the website.

Press: organisation of the event-specific previews and press conferences that launched the key moments of the programme, organisation of international press trips, information mailings on a monthly and weekly (and, in some periods, daily) basis, management of interview and information requests, customised work for specific projects. The profile study showed that the press and editorial coverage was the main source of knowledge about Mons 2015.

Partnerships with numerous media outlets played a vital supporting role in informing the general public: at the local level, Télés MB developed 2015 Histoires in 2015, a weekly and WebTV show all about the people who made Mons 2015; nationally, Le Soir had its editorial team operate from Mons on more than one occasion, organised a master class and the presentation of the Rossel Prize there and published four issues of MAD and two special supplements; RTBF developed an impressive array of documentaries and special programmes via all its TV channels, radio stations and websites and even trained six young journalists from Mons for nearly three years via the editorial team of Vivacité. The magazines Beaux-Arts Magazine, 24h01 and WAW Magazine all provided in-depth coverage of the news from Mons with extraordinary special numbers.
Local relations
The daily tasks of the Local Relations team were to:

- ensure that local people received the programming information;
- take the time to discuss, inform and answer questions;
- suggest assistance if they wanted to go further, receive training and acquire new knowledge;
- and above all, look after these relationships by arranging venues for public meetings, so that everyone could experience the year, participate actively in it and grow by gaining new experiences.

As part of the campaign to garner acceptance for Mons 2015, various groups of citizens formed spontaneously or at the prompting of the Foundation. Among them, the Ambassadors Group undoubtedly stood out from the rest by virtue of its size (2,140 ambassadors by December 2015) and the dynamism of its members. As soon as the candidacy was launched, they symbolised the pride and energy instilled by the European Capital of Culture by disseminating information in their networks, getting involved in the design meetings, taking part in the participatory projects (Dominoes, Sun City, Grand Eight, opening and closing parties, etc.) and by attending activities in large numbers. The Ambassadors are eager to ensure that this active involvement in their city continues.

The voluntary sector also mobilised: having started from a position of making demands and expressing opposition to the project, some disability associations grouped together as a structured platform. This task force eventually integrated thinking about the audiences for Mons 2015, and their recommendations were heard (analysis of the accessibility of Mons 2015 and helped spread it. City centre retailers were approached as potential partners (exchange of visibility, cross-communication, integration of artistic activities in shops, etc.), and around a hundred shops became very actively involved in the adventure. The internally conducted satisfaction survey shows that these retailers are the ones that believe they saw real economic benefits in 2015.

During this year, nearly 500 activities and workshops were coordinated within schools.

Here too, the expectations of these groups are important for what will happen later and the partnerships with universities marked a new form of collaboration between our structures that has the potential to continue.

The continuing education structures got into the spirit of Mons 2015 and helped spread it. City centre retailers were approached as potential partners (exchange of visibility, cross-communication, integration of artistic activities in shops, etc.), and around a hundred shops became very actively involved in the adventure. The internally conducted satisfaction survey shows that these retailers are the ones that believe they saw real economic benefits in 2015.

However, youth movements are dynamic groups that require active participation. By contrast, the efforts made to approach teachers (primary, secondary, higher/university) were a success, thanks in particular to the dissemination of a cross-disciplinary educational guide which covered all the activities from an educational viewpoint. Also, from the launch of the project I’ll turn 20 in 2015, activities had been offered within schools, and these were intensified until 2015.

Beyond these identifiable groups, the spirit of Mons 2015 spread to hospitals, prisons, sports clubs, service clubs, etc. often in a more confidential or invisible manner. Moreover, the projects that were the richest, the most interesting and the most promising for the public were very often those which, from their genesis, took account of people’s expectations, characteristics and constraints, not just as consumers but also as participants. For example, for the open weekend for the new museums, a game was designed in close collaboration with the youth movements. The success of these projects was largely due to work done hand in hand with the artistic teams, and demonstrated the strength of a collaborative approach.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

After a heady year in which Mons was the talk of the world, we believe we successfully lived up to the challenge that was presented to us: we achieved a high standard of professionalism and we connected with others: people, other cultural operators in the City, the tourist sector and non-cultural circles.

The main emphasis in the Communication and Public Relations strategies was on getting to know the public and the territory better and collaboration between different cultural operators in Mons. 2015 was a growing experience for us. The Mons 2025 Foundation will continue the momentum and the work of collaboration and the pooling of cultural communication. Obviously, the idea is not to efface the identities of the different operators (after all, they demonstrate the artistic richness of the city), but rather to carry on encouraging cooperation by communicating together with certain defined tools.

We will do this in order to give Mons and its region a common identity, a distinctly cultural image in line with the city’s new branding: Mons, Culture is here.
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & OFFICIAL VISITS
‘International relations helped to generate interest beyond our borders and to consolidate an emerging status as a cultural city in Europe, as well as build a lasting image of Mons for tourism and the economy for years to come. Mons 2015 has turned out to be a great springboard for the future development of the City.’

**CAROLINE KADZIOLA,**
**DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND OFFICIAL VISITS**

‘Bravo! You, the team and all the strengths and talents of Mons and our region have produced the very best and shown how we can be creative, effective and profound. As always, the values we uphold have been present or implicit in this hair-raising year. You have changed images, challenged stereotypes and restored hope, ambition, joy, optimism and prosperity to a region which badly needed them.’

**FABIENNE REUTER,**
**GENERAL DELEGATE IN PARIS OF THE FEDERATION WALLONIA-BRUSSELS**

‘I want to thank you for including Quebec in this extraordinary adventure and for all the support you have given us.’

**JEAN FRÉDÉRIC,**
**HEAD OF CULTURAL SERVICES, QUEBEC GOVERNMENT OFFICE IN BRUSSELS**

- 80 délégations officielles accueillies selon des programmes sur mesure
- Plus de 1.700 personnes venues en délégations officielles
OBJECTIVES AND TIMING

We need to (re)establish the position of Mons on the map of Europe. To this end, the International Relations (IR) section was set up in late 2013 to promote the reputation and attractiveness of Mons and Mons 2015 internationally and over the long term, by creating a strong cultural identity.

In the interests of consistency, the protocol section was attached to the IR section, as formal relations were also closely linked to international aspects. The territory covered by international relations was limited to the neighbouring countries which were the main target markets identified by the body responsible for tourism in Brussels and Wallonia (WBT), namely France, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain and, to a lesser extent, Flanders (treated as a separate market for the purposes of tourism). However, it should be noted that the Flemish public was integrated into the overall communication strategy and hence also targeted. The target audiences were the international general public, tourism and cultural operators, key opinion leaders and the institutional public.

EVALUATION

The action plan had four prongs:

Reconciling tourism and culture

With Mons 2015 in prospect, it seemed obvious that culture and tourism were closely linked and that it was necessary to work hand in hand with the tourism team, not just at City level but for the Federation Wallonia-Brussels as a whole.

We therefore approached Wallonia-Brussels Tourism to give them as much input as possible about the Mons 2015 project, in order to derive maximum benefit not just from their communication networks but also from their access to tourism professionals in their respective markets. To this end, we set up a quarterly steering committee consisting of the Mons 2015 Foundation, the Mons Tourist Office and WBT. The International Relations section was the privileged interlocutor of the Tourist Office and worked to ensure that programming-related information was passed on properly.

Among other things, we worked on the development of tourism materials for Mons 2015 (for the general public and tourism professionals), and of specific products (guided trails in the City), as well as on the creation of a special Mons 2015 Guide du Routard in collaboration with WBT France and Hachette.

International visibility

Following the official announcement of the programme in Belgium (7 October 2014), we travelled far and wide in order to present the project as a whole to the press and European tour operators through our partners WBT and WBI, which were able to accommodate us, advise us and help us in the implementation of the project. This cooperation was not of the same intensity in all markets, and we were dependent on the goodwill of the team in place (mainly in the UK market).

We were present in Paris, London (twice), Madrid, Milan, Cologne and Amsterdam. The concept was built around a general press conference with a different focus in each city, depending on the resonance of the project in the relevant markets: in Amsterdam we focused on Van Gogh and his journey to the Borinage, while in Cologne we focused on the digital aspect.
During this period, we engaged a Brussels-based agency specialising in culture with partners in each of our target markets to coordinate the international press and implement the previously defined strategy. This agency worked closely and very effectively with the Mons 2015 and WBT press teams, as the wide press coverage makes clear.

In 2015, numerous international events took place with the support of the communication team:

- Organisation of a Made in Mons 2015 evening at the Gare Saint-Sauveur in partnership with Lille 3000 (April 2015);
- Same type of event at the Folies Festival in Maubeuge (June 2015);
- Participation in the AWEX/WBI trade mission to Milan, including a cookery show run by our Mons chefs that was streamed in Belgium via the Café Europa (October 2015).

Artistic collaborations

In order to meet the objective of the European Commission as best we could, namely to ensure a European dimension for the project, the IR section took a particular interest in artistic projects with an international dimension, including support for our artists at the Avignon Festival via a special newsletter and booklet distributed on location, a Mons 2015 presence in the communication materials of the Ars Elektronica festival in Linz, etc.

The idea was also to have an across-the-board view of the entire programme and make sure that connections were created with other projects. Such was the case with the Romania Weekend at the Folie, which had not originally been on the programme, but took shape following a meeting with representatives of the Romanian Cultural Institute who wanted to get involved in the project. It was also the IR section that designed and coordinated the Mons Home and Away in Pilsen (September 2015) within the framework of the partnership agreement with our Twin Capital.

Protocol/Official visits

The foremost task was to pool contacts and data from different departments using a flexible invitation management tool. Our existing IT resources did not allow us to integrate this application, so we had to devise a standalone solution that proved adequate for our temporary requirements.

In 2016, the lessons learned from this experience have improved our practices, and the invitations process is now fully integrated into a single software program. Over a hundred official events were directly controlled by the Foundation, and greatly contributed to the creation of close ties with the different target audiences (local councillors, representatives of partner institutions, directors and managers of the economic and cultural world). These events helped create networking opportunities between artists, politicians and businessmen from Belgium and abroad. A host team was set up with the participation of the Mons 2015 voluntary ambassadors.

Other international missions

Apart from its four main areas of focus, the IR section was responsible for:

- monitoring and coordinating the institutional partnerships that supported us financially or otherwise, including the Quebec Delegation in Brussels for all projects related to Quebec and the Japanese organisation EU Japan Fest, which funded many of our projects related to Japan;
- overseeing all linguistic aspects of reception and general communication;
- representing the Mons 2015 Foundation and the project during events and invitations abroad and acting as interlocutor and representative to the Network of European Capitals of Culture and the European Commission.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

Overall, it is fair to say that Mons 2015 benefited from excellent international visibility and recognition. Evidence of this is the attendance figures from the tourist office. The smooth cooperation of our partners and their willingness to be part of this prestigious adventure contributed to this success. The Maison Folie through its Home and Away programmes and the Café Europa were particularly useful tools for hosting international official events and exporting Mons: one example worth singling out is the lecture of the Governor of the Province of Hainaut, broadcast live from the Belgian pavilion at the Universal Exhibition in Milan via the Café’s connected wall, and the Home and Away programme organised in Pilsen.

Although the rapprochement between the tourism teams and the Foundation could have been even closer – indeed, a merger would have been welcome – we took a great leap forward in our way of working with various cultural and tourist facilities in the city during 2015. Many of the messages of thanks that were sent to us throughout the year and at the end of it stress the quality of our heritage and our cultural offering, and refer to the positive transformation of our region’s image.

Official activity provided communication leverage thanks to (and within the limits of) the budget allocated to it. Many links were forged, but we probably underestimated the temporal aspect of the project; we have realised that investment is required well beyond the EcoC year if we really want to build a relationship for the long term. Many doors have been opened, such as the possibility of developing musical projects with Korea or literary projects with Quebec... but these avenues will amount to nothing unless they are actively used.
SPONSORING & PARTNERSHIPS
‘We attracted the interest of the business world in culture and the interest of the cultural world in the business sector. And I think this is where the future lies for both of them. A “simple” partnership produces little. Real projects in which both business and culture participate move everyone forward ten steps instead of one.’

GAETAN JACQUEMIN, PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT LEADER, ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY
The cultural world is sometimes hermetically sealed off from the business world. At a time when arts funding is under pressure, one challenge for the European Capital of Culture was to bring about an encounter between these two sectors and make them both more amenable, while at the same time helping with the financing of the Mons 2015 operation.

OBJECTIVES

› to bring business and culture closer together;
› to enable companies of all kinds to be associated with a unique and exceptional event;
› to involve the business community in a project with very high local visibility and international stature;
› to invite Belgian companies to be involved in a key stage in the transformation of a region;
› to encourage financial and other contributions from businesses;
› to take advantage of additional communication networks and new audiences;
› to market the events to the business public.

TIMING


First quarter of 2014: prospecting, production of a brochure, meetings, public call for partners via a major presentational meeting, project monitoring.

Second quarter of 2014: initiation of partnerships, general operating method, preparation of marketing, definition of protocol aspects, etc.

2015: monitoring of partnerships, clubs, official contacts and communication; specific communication with businesses, quarterly reviews, activities in the business world, etc.

2016: evaluations, activity report and compilation of recommendations on the legacy of Mons.

EVALUATION

Partnerships

› Corporate club with 841 members, chaired by Eric Domb, founder and owner of Pairi Daiza;
› 70 private/institutional partners outside the arts field;
› 10 million euros via private partnerships.

Marketing

› 97 business events based on defined formulas: one event every four days;
› 10,631 visitors present at these events.

Communication

Amplification of communication through communication networks made available by the partners

Networks

Exceptional mobilisation of the corporate world through the creation of a new funding model: the Mons 2015 Companies Club.

Changing perceptions

The business world is of interest to the cultural sector (in terms of funding, its public, its outlook, exchanges, etc.), while culture brings a new outlook on business to companies.

Tailor-made partnerships

Beyond the established framework, we also responded to specific requests from companies: some did not give any money but contributed their skills. This was the case with the project relating to the Van Gogh House in the municipality of Colfontaine, which had fallen into disrepair. Several business leaders got together and became real culture and heritage redevelopment project leaders. They brought their personnel into the adventure, as well as dozens of students from the region’s technical and vocational schools, who received training in the field and in the footsteps of the great Van Gogh.

CONCLUSION / AND AFTER 2015?

The creation of the Mons 2015 Companies Club was an innovative and unique initiative in the history of European Capitals of Culture. This experiment now serves as a model for harnessing the power of business in future European Capitals of Culture. Such enthusiasm on the part of new business players (SMEs, micro-businesses and the self-employed) for a cultural project is unprecedented in the region.

The mobilisation of the business world around the project was important, thanks in particular to the partnerships described, which satisfied both the companies’ wishes and the requirements of the Mons 2015 Foundation. The creation of this potential win-win situation was a real achievement, the effects of which will prove to be lasting.
Mons 2015, and after…

Given the success of the European Capital of Culture, the Foundation team has decided to perpetuate the gains of Mons 2015. This is consistent with the recommendations of the European Parliament that the effects of European Capitals of Culture should be made permanent wherever possible. Mons 2015 was the culmination of over ten years of work by the municipal authorities to bring about the economic and social redeployment of Mons and its region through the prism of culture, creativity and digital technology.

At a more basic level, Mons 2015 is the starting-point of a metamorphosis in the city and in people’s mentalities that is inspiring all parties to keep the momentum going. The mission of the newly christened Mons 2025 Foundation will be to organise an art biennale from 2018 onwards, providing an occasion to further promote the reputation of Mons and its region as a centre for culture and tourism, both nationally and internationally.

It will also have the task of continuing the rapprochement between the business and cultural sectors, with the conversion of the Mons 2025 Companies Club potentially spearheading this operation.

Finally, it will continue to oversee the coherence of the region’s cultural offering, in order to consolidate our newly acquired European Capital of Culture status. The Mons 2025 Foundation is committed to working alongside all those – partners, ambassadors, members of the public – who decide to continue the adventure in which we were all engaged during this wonderful year.
PARTENAIRES INSTITUTIONNELS

Les partenaires institutionnels sont à l’origine de la Fondation Mons 2015.

PARTENAIRES OFFICIELS

Les partenaires officiels sont associés à tout le programme de Mons 2015.

PARTENAIRES PROJETS

Les partenaires projets sont associés à une ou plusieurs manifestations de Mons 2015 qu’ils soutiennent plus spécifiquement.

FOURNISSEURS OFFICIELS

Les fournisseurs officiels apportent un soutien logistique dans le cadre d’un partenariat transversal Mons 2015.

FOURNISSEURS PROJETS

Les fournisseurs projets apportent une contribution en mettant à disposition leurs savoir-faire et compétences.

PARTENAIRES MÉDIA

Les partenaires média sont associés à Mons 2015 et participent à la communication de la manifestation en général.

PARTENAIRES MÉDIA PROJETS

Les partenaires média projets participent à la communication de plusieurs projets.