

Collections of Ghent

Stories from the neighbourhoods

An inspirational search.



Vlaanderen
verbeelding werkt

This project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund via the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative.

Preface

This story and inspiration booklet is one of the many results of the European project [Collections of Ghent](#). You can read how we set to work in various Ghent neighbourhoods to discover stories of Gheentians who crossed our path.

We would like to take you on the adventure that this project was for us. A beautiful but bumpy journey, started in challenging times. With a covid pandemic, an energy crisis, a crisis in Ukraine, and a disaster in Turkey.

First of all, you will learn more about this participatory project in which **heritage, community work, and technology reinforce each other**. Then we will take you through our working method in the neighbourhoods where we were active. The many encounters, activities and neighbourhood explorations produced many stories. Some of these stories were used as interactive stories and narratives in the CoGhent Box, with the pictures themselves being available online as well. . Many other fascinating and striking testimonials, anecdotes, and reactions also surfaced. A selection of these stories can also be found in this booklet .

Our goal? To inspire you with the many stories and the methods we used to uncover them. No ready-made recipes, but tools to uncover hidden stories yourself. Tools to connect and create shared meaning.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all Ghent residents, big and small, young and old, who have been in Ghent for many years or who have recently arrived in Ghent, for sharing this experimental experience with us and generously sharing their stories. A heartfelt thank you!

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The Cogent-box, a digital experience that travels around Ghent's neighbourhoods, brings heritage objects to life through surprising stories.

About the project

What if citizens, museums and heritage institutions could make creative use of each other's objects, documents, and stories? An innovative project made this cross-pollination possible: Collections of Ghent.

Urban heritage institutions possess a wealth of objects and stories. But despite increasing digitization, valuable heritage knowledge often remains within the museum walls. While there are still many other hidden treasures out there, namely how residents experience that cultural heritage, and the stories they have to tell about it. Collections of Ghent brought those two worlds together.

The heritage collections of five Ghent institutions are united in Collections of Ghent: Design Museum Ghent, STAM Ghent, Industry Museum, House of Alijn, and Ghent Archives. Open (linked) data made some **76,000 heritage objects** public for the first time. And how!

The creative sector transformed the digitised collection into a spectacular visualisation in the CoGent box. The visitor could view objects, photos, documents, maps, and stories. To make this happen, the initiators of the City of Ghent, Design Museum Ghent, and District09 (Digipolis) joined forces with the museums mentioned above, knowledge institutions, and companies from the creative sector: Ugent, Inuits, Fisheye, Chase Creative, Meemoo, Studio Dott, and iDROPS.

Collections of Ghent went much further than just letting museums, organisations, and companies work together. Another ultimate goal was to allow Ghent residents to participate more and better in culture in the city and thus to strengthen social cohesion. Collections of Ghent developed tools and methods to bring citizens into contact with the existing urban heritage more quickly and invite them to enrich that with their own objects, stories, photos...

From the beginning of 2022, the CoGent box, a digital experience space traveled through 3 Ghent neighbourhoods: Wondelgem, Watersportbaan-Ekkerghem, and Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham, reviving heritage objects by surprising storylines. Visitors could discover, experience and share their past with other residents of Ghent. In June 2023, the journey of Collections of Ghent on site ended.

The project is subsidised by the Urban Innovative Actions initiative and is innovative within Europe in terms of digitization, co-creation, and participation in the urban cultural heritage sector.

How did we proceed?



Stories

The project connects people with heritage. We collected stories, first in the selected neighbourhoods¹ of Wondelgem, Watersportbaan-Ekkergerem, and Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham, but also more widely in Ghent thanks to the Co-creation fund². Where possible, a link was made between the story and the digital collections of the participating heritage institutions.

The various project partners, each based on their expertise, thought up a methodical plan of action for neighbourhood activation. Those project partners included the Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare, the Policy Participation Service, iDROPS, and the participating heritage institutions. They were responsible for informing, inspiring, and activating the chosen neighbourhoods and their residents. To activate the neighbourhoods, available levers and working methods were used, including various forms of neighbourhood exploration (via the neighbourhood explorer from STAM Ghent³ and the Raconteurs⁴), encounters (e.g., via activities during the opening hours of the CoGent box, etc.), various activities (such as neighbourhood walks, lectures, workshops, events, etc.), specific trajectories (e.g., research trajectory on marriage) and the starting stories in the CoGent box, made by the heritage institutions (e.g., 'De straat op').

The neighbourhood activation plan provided a framework and direction within which the project partners could work, with sufficient flexibility to work tailor made considering the residents and the neighbourhoods, and to respond to unforeseen challenges and/or opportunities. The working group of the project partners also needed time to work on its own way of collaborating. Aligning vision, approach, working habits, and methods took a lot of time. For example, the cooperation in the last neighbourhood went much more smoothly than in the first.

The central themes in the 3 neighbourhoods were very diverse. In Wondelgem we united the residents around the history of the neighbourhood and social changes. In Watersportbaan-Ekkergerem, we went looking for stories about housing and urban development (Watersportbaan) and about recent history (Ekkergerem). In Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham, we looked for stories about the textile past and about marriage rituals, but perhaps even more so for an answer to the question 'Whose neighbourhood does it belong to?'

1. For the choice of the neighbourhoods, we used a number of qualitative and quantitative criteria, fed by the expertise and data of various city services.
2. Co-creation fund of Collections of Ghent: a total of 13 projects were supported through this fund that creatively and technologically reused the digital collections. More info at www.collection.gent/cocreation
3. The role of the neighbourhood explorer is to act as an intermediary between the participating heritage institutions and the residents of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood explorer brings the digitised heritage of the museums to life in the neighbourhood, but also enriches the digital heritage of the museums by looking for stories and heritage in the neighbourhood that would otherwise be missing from museum collections.
4. Raconteurs: people from Ghent who like to conduct interviews themselves, write stories, take photographs, or have a passion for audio or video. More info: <https://raconteurs.gent/>



Credits: Dienst Ontmoeten en verbinden - buurtwerk

A smooth collaboration and cross-pollination between the contributors of the stories, the data team, the public and research staff of the museums and heritage institutions and the communication partners proved to be crucial. We distributed finds in the collections that could have an effect in a neighbourhood via the website and on social media, or shared these during a local activity. We used the current exhibitions, research, and public activities to stimulate residents.

You can still view the different stories on the 180° story wall, which has been installed in De Krook Library⁵ since June 2023. They will also remain available online on the YouTube channel⁶ and the websites of both Collections of Ghent and the Raconteurs. You can view the images featured in the stories more in detail on the online platform⁷.

Not all anecdotes grew into a story. In this booklet you will find some of them by way of illustration, in addition to what we have done in the neighbourhoods and how we and the people of Ghent have experienced this process.

5. De Krook Library, Miriam Makebaplein 1, 9000 Ghent
6. Via https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeSwS9Ay5ixQJk_O-SXNz8Xw
7. Website: <https://data.collectie.gent/>

Stories from the neighbourhoods

Stories from Wondelgem

Wondelgem, as a former sub-municipality of Ghent, is characterised as a neighbourhood where local residents are more likely to be part of the higher income class, and actively take part in community life via traditional and typical organisations with an authentic identity. On the other hand, the inflow of many young, active families creates new dynamics in this community life. This calls for new forms of connection. Despite the obvious heritage sites (Vroonstalledries, Vyncke-Bovyn Castle, Neptune, its own local historical museum, etc.) and the presence of organisations with heritage awareness (such as the local history organisation), the degree of cultural participation is rather low. The physical distance to the cultural vibrant city centre of Ghent may play a role.

We chose Wondelgem on one hand for its geographical location, in function of the spread of neighbourhoods within the project. But it was also a choice to explore the contradictions in terms of neighbourhood identity within the project.

The CoGent box resided from the end of April to the end of July 2022 in the courtyard of residential care centre De Liberteyt.

Through encounter, activity and play

Quote Mattias, project employee Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work: "The socio-cultural life in Wondelgem is thriving, but the arrival of Collections of Ghent gave an opportunity to make new connections between the various organisations and generations of citizens. The box was used as a stopover, as a meeting place, often with music. We cooperated with 123-piano⁸. Every week we received a group of residents from a neighbouring residential care centre. On sunny moments, especially after school, it was a cosy place with the CoGent box as a third place⁹."

Quote Marieke, project employee of the Ghent heritage unit: "During the opening moments of the box and together with the heritage institutions, we organised scanning sessions, a sticker search, walks, guided tours, a puppet show. But the top activity was the lecture 'The year of the village'. There, the merger of (former municipality) Wondelgem with the city of Ghent in 1977 was placed in its historical context. A protest canvas against the merger from that year was also re-exhibited."

8. 123-Piano has been strengthening social cohesion with music and art for ten editions. Placing a piano of excellent quality in public spaces creates a dialog between pianists, residents and passers-by.

More info via <https://www.123-piano.be/>

9. In sociology, the third place refers to the social surroundings that are separated from the two usual social environments of home ("first place") and the workplace ("second place")
From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_place

Neighbourhood books

In Wondelgem we made friend books for the neighbours, with questions that creatively question the residents about their history, hobbies, and facts about the neighbourhood. This way you get to know your neighbours and you always find new topics for conversation. This was also an interesting experiment for Collections of Ghent. Nine neighbourhood books provided us with a well-filled 'living archive' with facts, images and pieces of neighbourhood history!



The neighbourhood tests the friends book prototype

Some answers from Wondelgem

- What is your favourite word in your dialect?**
Blaffure, de Kirremelkzieker, just, joas, brudruuster, tjeepmuile, snuifstekker, ...
- What dishes do/did you eat on special occasions?**
Homemade croquettes with chicken and apple sauce, game, baklava, rice with Sarma, vol-au-vent or roast beef with chips, homemade fish pizza, ...
- What is the oldest object you have at home?**
My dad, a standing antique clock (which belonged to my mom), a kerosene lamp, a map of old Wondelgem, ...

Toolkit for cultural participation¹⁰

The toolkit and accompanying training, developed with iDROPS, helps to come up with activities that warm up and inspire people to get started with heritage. It is a modular guideline for professionals in the cultural field, such as: museums, schools, associations, heritage institutions, community work, and so on. Motivated citizens can also use it.



Trainers get started with the toolkit
Credits: iDrops

In the spotlight: the 5 building blocks method

This card game gives community workers, teachers, collectors, residents the chance to come up with projects.

5 building block cards will help you on your way:

- **Type of activity:** what are you going to do?
- **Theme:** what is the focus, what are the activities about?
- **Ways of collecting stories:** how can you capture the input of the participants?
- **Target group:** who do you want to work with, who do you want to reach, from whom do you want to hear stories?
- **Results:** what do you want to have in hand after the activities? What results are you aiming for with your project?

After playing the game you record everything in a project sheet.

10. English version via <https://www.collections.gent/cocreation>



Sandra, participant and local resident of Wondelgem:

"It was very nice to use the toolkit to make the vague ideas in my head more concrete. After the session I was able to explain my idea better and I knew where to start!"

	Activity types	Ways of collecting stories	Deliverables (outputs)	Target Groups	Themes
1	storytelling	social media posts	video's	children	traditions
2	strolling, walking	use of intersections or central points in the neighbourhood	VR video's	families with children	(mother) languages
3	workshop	idea-container/box	dictionary	mums	dialects
4	matching with a "buddy"	scanning and sending/uploading photos (everything 2d)	booklets	youngsters in the neighbourhood	(local, thematic) vocabulary
5	read-alouds	recordings (with elderly, with a collector, on a heritage site..)	digital/printed photo albums	elderly residents	(traditional, ethnic) recipes
6	story-catching	shared anecdotes	maps	young and old together	cuisines
7	collecting	written information	online timeline	day-cares	interactive art
8	guided tours	(structured) interviews	tour guides	schools	open-air art
9	singing	(digital) presentations	short documentaries	youth organisations	unknown objects
10	dancing	idea-bus (mobile)	neighbourhood postcards (of people, locations, activities)	ethnic-diverse residents/families	art (by residents, children ...)
11	playing instruments	using the locations of neighbourhood (hobby) organisations	on-location exhibitions	former and current business owners (and families) in the neighbourhood	(traditional, disappearing, local, ethnic) crafts
12	competitions	info via show and tell	window exhibitions	assisted living homes	recent history of the neighbourhood
13	(loose) conversations / chat	sharing photos/videos/sound recordings during an event	VR-exhibition	residents with specific vulnerabilities	old fashion objects
14	movie screenings	via windows (stickers, posters, displaying items, written messages)	a social media account (a page, individual or group account)	local artists (musicians, painters, graffiti artists, collage makers, movie makers..)	old fabrics
15	debates	social media groups	digital presentations (photo/video and text/sound)	local art institutions	old games
16	recitals	as homework	playground with heritage component	museum staff	old household items
17	recreating ceremonies, rituals	organising family meetings	neighbourhood games	local historians	family traditions

Neighbourhood game

'Onder de 3 kronen' (Beneath the 3 crowns)

After three months in the courtyard of the residential care centre De Liberteyt, the neighbourhood said goodbye to the CoGent box with a three-day party and a neighbourhood game. Local resident Rik came up with the neighbourhood game 'Under the 3 crowns', based on the television format 'The chair'¹¹.

The name refers to the annual local tradition of involving all organisations in a procession in Wondelgem around Epiphany¹². Rik used the CoGent box as a registration board. He drew 3 crowns on the box and distributed wooden sticks that organisations and local residents could decorate. Beneath the 3 crowns they could screw the sticks to indicate that they were going to participate. Each game day's assignment appeared on a local website. Every organisation and every resident who brought the object within the time slot was eligible to win a prize, donated by the project partners of CoGent and the local organisations and entrepreneurs from Wondelgem. Local key figures took on the role of master of ceremony for each day of the game and briefly interviewed all participants about who they were and what story they had about their item they brought with them.

The three game days were really connecting moments. Some seized the opportunity to come and see the stories in the CoGentbox one last time, others to get to know their neighbours and other local residents better. There were conversations, laughter, a new protest song and stories told.



Quote Rik, local resident of Wondelgem and organiser:

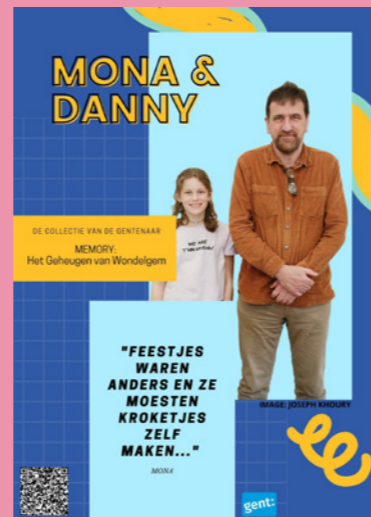
"I have tried a lot, asked for advice and received a lot of input in terms of concept and communication."

11. A format on television where a location is shown and the request is to bring a specific object. The first to arrive at the spot with the object wins the prize. More information via <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnu/a-z/de-stoel/>
 12. A Christian holiday on January 6th - More information via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_\(holiday\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphany_(holiday))





Credits: David Slosse



Credits: Students journalism Artevelde Hogeschool & David Slosse

Memory game 'The memory of Wondelgem'

An intergenerational game for children (juniors) and the elderly (seniors) from Wondelgem, aiming at an exchange of knowledge and experience about everyday life in the past and today. Through the game, children learn more about how life in Wondelgem used to be. With this game, the elderly keep a finger on the pulse of today's youth.

The memory game is played in pairs (1 senior and 1 junior) with at least one generation (25 years) age difference. The game consists of the following eight

themes: childhood, school, leisure, faith, shopping, living, partying, and typical for your neighbourhood. Each theme contains questions that junior and senior can ask each other.

After the game and the conversations, we made a duo portrait of the players and they were interviewed briefly, so that we could capture the essence of the conversations.



Quote David, project employee Raconteurs:

"We played the game simultaneously with 20 duos. Both the children and the elderly thought it was exciting to get to know each other and their neighbourhood in an interview. For the children who participated, we also organised a return visit to the CoGent box. We asked them to bring a precious family object and tell its story. Children were very excited about that."

Through neighbourhood exploration and research



Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer from STAM Ghent:

"Wondelgem only became part of Ghent in 1977, so we do not find much digitised heritage about Wondelgem in the Ghent collections. Fortunately, Wondelgem has a very strong local history organisation, called Heemkundige en Historische Kring Wondelgem¹³ (HHKW) which preserves a lot of objects, photos, printed material and documents."

De Zomer van de Neptune

(The summer of the Neptune)

With the demolition of the swimming pool Neptune, better known as 'the Neptune', Ghent's last real outdoor swimming pool disappeared in October 2020. In August 2021, Collections of Ghent organised the retro event 'The summer of the Neptune' as the final part of a storytelling project in which a lot of Wondelgem residents brought their memories of the swimming pool and the sunbathing area. With those memories and stories, a publication and a story for the CoGent box were born.



Credits: Photo of Ghislaine Oosterlinck with brother Hubert and son Guy, in swimming pool Neptune.

Some stories:

Rik was a top-level water polo player for many years and Carine was a water ballerina at 'The Water nymphs'. They met each other in the Rooigem and the Neptune.



"In the golden years of the Neptune, as a young girl I helped in the cafeteria, while Rik worked as a waiter on the terrace. That's how we got to know each other. It was always fun and you could easily spend an entire afternoon there. After a training of our water ballet, we usually stayed to chat and have a drink on the terrace. Truly an incredible time."

"In the 1960s and 1970s, the Neptune had its golden years. When the weather was good, thousands of people came to the Botestreet every day."

Credits: The Summer of the Neptune - Carine Vertriest (*1962)
More stories about The Summer of the Neptune via <https://raconteurs.gent/> (search term 'De zomer van de Neptune')



Quote David, project employee Raconteurs:

"The outdoor swimming pool Neptunus was an iconic place in Wondelgem for decades. Certainly in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, foreign destinations during the summer holidays were not yet well established among the general population. People simply stayed at home or at most took a day trip to the sea. That is precisely why the open-air baths with associated sunbathing areas during the summer months created a strong holiday feeling among many Ghent residents. With sun, water, a spacious terrace and an extensive sunbathing lawn, the Neptune also became a very popular destination. When the Neptune was demolished after 75 years in full covid period, we wanted to keep the many memories. Certainly with the prospect of a new swimming pool and a new destination for the site. From policy participation, it can provide interesting insights to test future developments against the past of a place."

13. More information via <https://www.hkw.be/> or <https://www.facebook.com/hkwvzw/>

Wondelgem op wieltjes (Wondelgem on wheels)



Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer from STAM Ghent:

"Until the 1990s you could find caravans in the Korenveldstraat. At one point, those pieces of land were put up for sale. The caravan dwellers had to buy up the piece of land they had rented from the farmer and build their own house, or look for a new place for their caravan. Many former caravan dwellers bought the land and went to live in a house for good. Some residents moved to the Vosmeers urban area, the only place in Ghent where caravans are allowed to remain permanently. The lack of pitches is something that transcends Wondelgem and Ghent. There is the same field of tension everywhere in Belgium. As a result, this culture and way of living is disappearing. By settling somewhere, caravan dwellers also do other jobs. In the context of Collections of Ghent, we thought it was an excellent opportunity to shed light on this piece of hidden history."

Wondelgem was a place of residence for wealthy industrialists and farmers, later also an attractive neighbourhood for families who wanted a house in the countryside. But did you know that caravan dwellers also lived in Wondelgem?

When did they come to live in Wondelgem? And where were those caravans? Why Wondelgem? And where have all those caravans gone?



Credits: Couple with baby on lap. Collection Anneke Six.

Snippet of the story:

The cheerful baby on the lap is Anneke Six. She was born in 1968. Her parents travelled around with the caravan, especially in the region around Antwerp. Her father was a street vendor and when things got tough, her mother also went on the road. Then she simply took Anneke or her sister or brother on her arm. Ah yes, because that aroused sympathy with customers when they had to sell something.



Credits: Woman plays guitar on trailer. 1940s. Collection Anneke Six.

Snippet of the story:

The togetherness was strong. When they moved, the other trailer residents often accompanied them and they took care of each other. It is in Wondelgem that the Six family finally stayed. Anneke's grandmother had lived there for some time. Here you can see her in an old photo in the Korenveldstraat, which was then called Veldslag.

Quotes after visit:



Quote Anneke, caravan dweller, after seeing her story:

"I didn't expect it to be so chic here (in the CoGent box edit). It's just like a cinema. And wow, you listened to me so well. You paid so much attention to me!"

Finally, she watches her story a second time and films it with her smartphone. Afterwards she hugs the CoGent employees.



Quote Eric, member of the local historical organisation,

Heemkundige en Historische Kring Wondelgem:

"I am very curious about the people who used to live in my house in Korenveldstraat. When I moved to the building in Korenveldstraat I found a box full of old family albums. I have handed it over to the family."

Through stories in the CoGent box

To bring the digital collections to life and to inspire and invite Ghent residents to contribute to the collections with their own stories and objects, the participating heritage institutions joined forces. They created several cross-collection stories for the CoGent box.

Historiek van Wondelgem (History of Wondelgem)



Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer from STAM Ghent:

“Without the collection of the local historical organisation, Heemkundige & Historische Kring Wondelgem, we would never be able to tell the story of Wondelgem. Their postcards and photo collections about Wondelgem show both castles and daily life. Little by little they are now digitising it. After we showed the stories and photos of the caravan dwellers in the CoGent box, more and more former caravan dwellers showed up with more stories and photos.”

Snippet of the story:

What do we actually know about Wondelgem? City archaeologists discovered that Romans and Merovingians once lived here. The oldest mention is in a charter from the State Archives from 966.

It was close to building a new Castle of the Counts¹⁴. In the 14th century there was a plan to replace the

already rather worn out Castle of the Counts with a new one near the current Maïsstraat. Things eventually turned out differently, and the Count of Flanders built the Prinsenhof in the centre of Ghent. But maybe history could have turned out differently. Then Wondelgem would now fill up with tourists.

Snippet of the story:

This is artist and puppeteer Michel Bracke, Kirremelkzieker of 2019. Or in clean Flemish, a buttermilk pisser. Sounds like an insult, but in Wondelgem it's a compliment. The title is awarded every year to a deserving resident and then the statue in De Liberteyt even briefly changes into the local 'Manneken Pis'¹⁵. But how did the people of Wondelgem come up with that nickname? For that we have to go back to when the village still looked like on the photos and postcards from the filing cabinets of the Heemkundige & Historische Kring. Wondelgem was a rural town, where sheep still grazed on Den Dries at the church. And where people fished in the Lieve. That all looks very romantic today, but the smallholder farmers of Wondelgem weren't so wealthy. They had to sell everything they could to support their large families. And that is why they went from house to house or to the Botermarkt in Ghent with milk and butter. The only thing left for them was the buttermilk. Good for porridge with rye flour or 'toatjespap', the food of the poor. That is quite stimulating for the bladder, and what went in at the top quickly came out at the bottom. The forgotten history behind Bert Herremans' sculpture in Liberteyt, that is also Collections of Ghent.



Credits: Postcard with photos of Wondelgem sights.
Rights holder: Heemkundige en Historische Kring Wondelgem vzw.

¹⁴ The Castle of the Counts is a mediaeval fortress in the city centre with charming corridors, narrow tower stairs, high rooms, and real battlements. More info via <https://historischehuizenstadgent/en/castle-counts>

¹⁵ Manneken Pis: the emblem of the rebellious spirit of the City of Brussels. His wardrobe counts more than 900 suits. More info via https://www.brussels.be/manneken-pis?_ga=2.82206614.101492045.1686829558.60450815.168682

Koffie, Coffee

Coffee, the black gold, the bag of comfort, the pick-me-up... It is impossible to imagine our daily lives without coffee. Koffie, Coffee is a story that takes you from the origins to uses of the much-loved commodity and shows in what ways coffee is woven into Ghent's cultural heritage.

Snippet of the story:

Coffee is drunk everywhere. For many people, it is a daily habit. But how we drink coffee together varies from culture to culture, from region to region and even from family to family. We all have our own coffee rituals. What all these different rituals have in common is the warmth of the cup and the pleasure of coming together. What is your coffee story? At Collections of Ghent, we are curious to hear your stories and experiences: How do you drink your coffee and what are your coffee rituals?



Credits: Advertising plaque for Chicorée De Ronne Gand. House of Alijn collection



Credits: Carnival celebrants on the Kouter in Ghent, c. 1890, Huis van Alijn Collection

'De straat op' (hitting the street)

Ghent was and is the scene of several parades and processions. Ghent people engage in them for all sorts of reasons, and often with great passion. The procession was long a fixture during the Ghent Festivities. Even today, parades and processions still pass through the streets.

Snippet of the story:

When we hit the streets, we want to attract attention, for example with music and noise. Ghent brass bands used to walk with us all the time. Flags or signs with striking slogans are also part of it. Or masks or special clothing. Ghent's museums and heritage institutions preserve all these attributes and stories about parades.

Quotes from a local resident and musician after a visit in the Cogent box:



“I was very happy that I saw the photo of the Sint Catharina harmony in the CoGent box. My music career started there as a child. I recognize a lot of band members in the photo. As a professional musician, I played with the Francis Bay orchestra and did world tours... My neighbour in Wondelgem was the organ player Paul Rutger (stage name).”

Stories from Watersportbaan-Ekkergerem

The choice of Watersportbaan-Ekkergerem is interesting, given the complexity of the neighbourhood with the various sub-neighbourhoods and their ecosystems. It is a bold choice looking for contradictions and experiment.

The social high-rise buildings on the Watersportbaan combined with the densely populated Ekkergerem neighbourhood (with its active residents and large student population) and the lack of a decent meeting place in the Watersportbaan neighbourhood contrasted with the meeting places on the Bijloke site. In terms of knowledge, economy and innovation, there are many opportunities. Despite the fact that cultural heritage is already present in this diversified neighbourhood on the edge of the inner city on the one hand, a lot of cultural players and some organisations with heritage awareness are active on the other, many opportunities remain to be mined in terms of historical research and participatory practices. The CoGent box was present from mid-August to mid-November 2022.

Through neighbourhood exploration and research

Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer from STAM Ghent: "If you looked up digital heritage about the Watersportbaan, you would mainly find pictures of Ekkergerem, the Bijloke, and the Coupure. The heritage of the Watersportbaan was limited to the excavation. We wanted to show that the Watersportbaan, although developed after World War II, is also a historical site. That fact is overlooked by most people, because the place is mainly known for rowing and thus not as the first and only CIAM¹⁶ neighbourhood in Ghent. Therefore, after a long phase of fieldwork in the neighbourhood, we planned targeted scanning actions with residents, uploading pictures and other material ourselves. All these personal archives now give us a better picture of the Watersportbaan in all its diversity and they give the neighbourhood a face."



Credits: Marisa Vermeulen with her mother on a frozen water sports track, 1969, Marisa Vermeulen

60 years of living at the Watersportbaan

To thank the neighbourhood for their beautiful photos and stories, we created a postcard series, from old photo's taken by residents, which residents and neighbourhood organisations could send. Enjoy the story '60 jaar wonen aan de Watersportbaan (60 Years of living at the Watersportbaan)'.

16. CIAM is the abbreviation for Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). It was an international platform that left a major mark on the architectural debate in the first half of the 20th century. The platform existed from 1928 to 1959. One of the main ideas that emerged from the CIAM was the idea of 'The functional city'. In the CIAM, planned cities were propagated, in which functions such as living, working and recreation are separated from each other. This idea is also called the CIAM idea in Dutch. In Ghent, the social high-rise building neighbourhood on the Watersportbaan is the only successful example of a CIAM neighbourhood.

17. Circusplaneet: a cultural-educational youth work organisation that works on circus as an art form. More info at www.circusplaneet.be

Through encounter, activity and play

Quote Sofie, project employee Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare – Community Work: "A professional from the Circusplaneet¹⁷ was inspired by the story about the parades. He came up with the idea to hold a parade himself together with the children who followed a camp. They made a giant dragon, learned to walk on stilts and put together an act. This collaboration with the Circusplaneet made it an even better opening party and resulted in a story about the circus! The fact that a certain activity took place a number of times ensured that residents got to know the project and the project employees. In this challenging neighbourhood, it was important to first invest in getting to know each other, trust, and so on. It was a very slow process, where the process was more important than the result."

#TASTOE – game

Tastoe is a question-and-search game with drinking mugs. For five weeks, participants receive a multiple-choice question via Whatsapp (or a text message, or a visit at the door, if they don't have a mobile phone). The answers to that question are presented with towers of drinking mugs, on which a picture of the participants is printed. Thus, week after week, more and more faces swarm through the neighbourhood, each time revealing something small about themselves. For this particular edition, we asked targeted questions about heritage and the accompanying stories, linked to the digital collections from the heritage institutions.

123 local residents, from young to old, played along. The mugs were displayed in the window of the local pharmacy and night shop. All participants were invited to the closing event where they could collect their personalised drinking mug, meet each other and watch the story of the Watersportbaan unfold. After the closing event, contacts were kept warm by a local outreach worker through the #tastoe-gsm. There were not only answers to the questions, but also requests for help. From the project, we were able to link them to the right social workers in the area.



Credit: Leentje Vandenbussche



Credit: Sofie Rottiers

Quote of a resident of one of the high rise buildings at Watersportbaan: "So nice that you are doing this, it is necessary to take positive actions in this neighbourhood."

Neighbourhood picnics and workshops from the heritage institutions

Every Wednesday in September, local residents and visitors could picnic at the CoGent box. Neighbourhood workers provided the framework for the picnic, a dash of music via 123 piano and directed visitors and local residents to the workshops. Public workers from the heritage institutions provided activities. These flowed from the story 'Zet ulti', one of the stories then on display in the CoGent box (read more on that below).

Zet Ulder!¹⁸

An open activity from Design Museum Ghent at the CoGent box, where 15 design chairs from the user collection were displayed on the terrace of the box.

What makes a chair so special? Why do designers keep making new chairs in all possible materials, shapes and colours?

The visitors could look at the chairs, touch them, sit on them and ask questions. The diverse group consisted of 60 participants, including children from the Urban Initiative for Out-of-School Childcare, children

from the OKAN class¹⁹ at the local primary school, and families and residents from the neighbourhood.

This activity also resulted in an expansion of the Dutch vocabulary of the children of the OKAN class. The teacher of this class said that she had worked further on the collection in class. By combining it with the story "Zet Ulder!" in the CoGent box, the participants could look, listen, feel, and talk about different seating furniture. Many stories were shared and the participants talked about which seats they preferred.



Credits: Sien Verschaeren



On a coffee and tea visit in Watersportbaan

In this open workshop, the participants became acquainted with the dinnerware/porcelain collection of Design Museum Ghent by getting creative with it themselves. First, prints of the crockery from the collection were shown. After a short introduction, a discussion was held with the participants about their own tableware (what is your favourite cup, from which tableware do you eat/drink, how is it made/decorated,...) Then the participants got to work and painted their own cups and plates with porcelain paint. Examples were provided through books, templates, and prints from the collection of Design Museum Ghent.



Quote a participating house cleaner from the neighbourhood about one of the chairs in the user collection:

"The Panton Chair is a lot of work to clean. Today I can sit on it and enjoy the sun."



Quote young participant of the OKAN-class:

"I have a favourite spot at home and I have to make sure my brother and sister don't sit in that spot."



Quote a girl from the local primary school seeing the Gerrit Rietveld-chair²⁰:

"Hey, I know that chair from the painting by Mondriaan, about which we are learning."



Quote of a Turkis resident of the neighbourhood:

"My mother bought Russian crockery while travelling in Russia."

18. Means 'Please be seated!'

19. Welcome Class for Foreign Language Newcomers in Flanders.

20. Gerrit Rietveld: famous Dutch architect and furniture designer. More information via https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrit_Rietveld



Stools in the making

In this open workshop, the participants were introduced to the chairs from the collection of Design Museum Ghent. Stools were made with residual materials. This activity was a collaboration between community work, Design Museum Ghent, and Local Service Centre De Vlaschaard. As inspiration there was also a demonstration of chair weaving, given by the group of chair weavers from Local Service Centre De Vlaschaard. Several families from the neighbourhood, with different roots, 10 students social work and 7 young people from the local youth work organisation, based at the community centre, took part. Participants were proud to be able to assemble their own chair and were amazed at the strength of the material. The activity also attracted curious passers-by, including the bridge figure of a nearby local primary school, an employee of Gents MilieuFront²¹, and the children of Studio Malem²².

Stories:

A Ukrainian woman told interesting things about interiors and furniture from the Soviet Union: all the same cupboards, chairs, tables.

Another local resident told about the chair weaving and the woven collection pieces of Design Museum Ghent and that her mother had woven baskets for her son's birth sugars.

A mother and her two daughters folded their own designs on paper and then gave a workshop on their own initiative to 6 children.



Making viewing boxes

As a city museum, STAM tells the story of Ghent and its inhabitants. The CoGent box is located on the Watersportbaan between the high-rise buildings. You can also display this unique form of living in miniature. STAM invited local residents to get creative with shoeboxes and create their dream room.



Credits: Gillis Sacré



Credits: Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work



Quote Chloë, project employee STAM Ghent:

"In this neighbourhood, the CoGent box has fulfilled an important function as a meeting place and an accessible way of spending creative time. Many children from the neighbourhood spent a nice afternoon here, including in our workshop."

21. Gents MilieuFront (GMF) is a regional environmental organisation from Ghent that wants to give the environment and sustainable mobility a boost through positive actions. GMF as an organisation is supported by members and volunteers. More info via <https://www.gentsmilieufront.be/>
22. Studio Malem: a place where children and youngsters can make animation films or other things in their leisure time in the neighbourhood Malem - More information via <https://www.facebook.com/StudioMalem/> Also the organiser of Shoppingcentre Malem, a project funded by the Co-creation fund from from Collections of Ghent.

Through stories in the CoGent box

Straffe toeren! (Impressive tricks)

Can contortionists, clowns, and lion tamers catch your eye? A story about the history of the wonderful world of the circus and what that history has to do with Ghent.

Snippet of the story:

Captain Jim Roose was a real talent as a bear and lion tamer. The highlight in his lion number was the kiss of death, where he kissed one of his lions full on the maw. Here Jim even performed the kiss of death with his baby on his arm.



Credits: Department Social Cohesion and Welfare – Community Work



Credits: Dompteur Jim Roose with baby – House of Alijn collection



Credits: Kandissi – Collection Design Museum Ghent

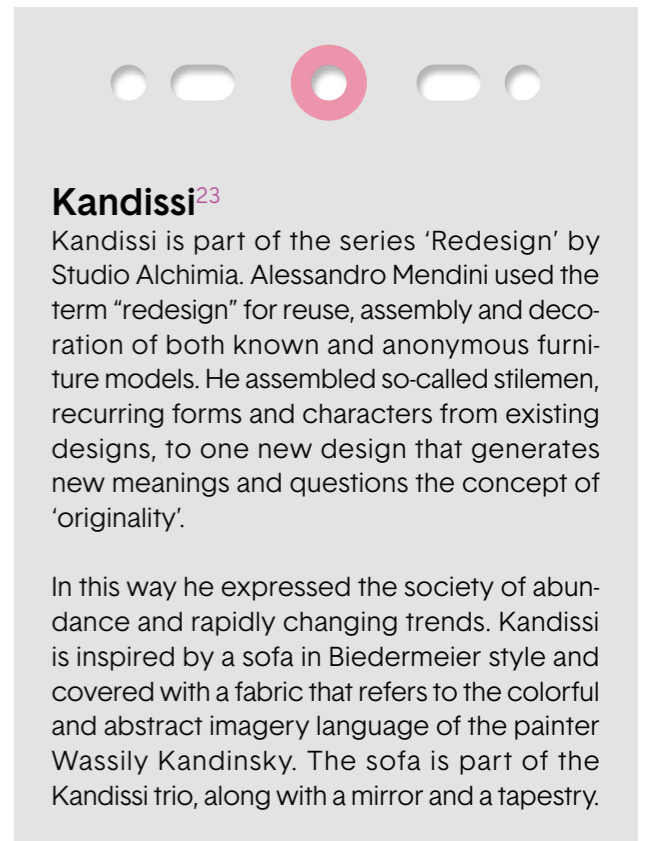
Zet ulder (Please be seated)

'Zet Ulder!' is a story about chairs in all shapes, sizes, colours, and other peculiarities. The story was written by Design Museum Ghent as part of its activities on seating furniture in the Watersportbaan. This theme emerged from conversations with local residents about the lack of cosy seating in the neighbourhood. The story was therefore also shown to the participants of the 'Zet Ulder!' and 'Stools in the making' activities and was used as a conversation starter to discuss seating, furniture, and design.

Snippet of the story:

Designers make seating furniture in different shapes, colours and materials. They design chairs and seats that are both beautiful and useful. There are specific conditions for this: folding chairs are light, portable, and water-resistant, while a chair should be soft and firm. The choices designers make have an effect on how we sit. Straight or curved backrests, with or without armrests, soft or hard materials.

23. More info via: <https://data.collectie.gent/entity/dmg:1988-0094>



Kandissi²³

Kandissi is part of the series 'Redesign' by Studio Alchimia. Alessandro Mendini used the term "redesign" for reuse, assembly and decoration of both known and anonymous furniture models. He assembled so-called stilemen, recurring forms and characters from existing designs, to one new design that generates new meanings and questions the concept of 'originality'.

In this way he expressed the society of abundance and rapidly changing trends. Kandissi is inspired by a sofa in Biedermeier style and covered with a fabric that refers to the colorful and abstract imagery language of the painter Wassily Kandinsky. The sofa is part of the Kandissi trio, along with a mirror and a tapestry.

Stories from Ekkergem

Through residency, neighbourhood exploration, and co-creation

In a participative and co-creative manner, we have developed a card game together with local residents in which the recent history and heritage of Ekkergem can be shared in a playful way in groups. The collective story 'Ekkergem in 't groen'²⁴ came from the heritage institutions. The premiere of the story was launched through a plant and cutting exchange. The neighbourhood game 'Onder de schieve toren'²⁵ was played for the first time with local residents in May and can be borrowed permanently from the Training centre for Education and Child Care (in short V.C.O.K.), located nearby²⁶.

Game 'Onder de schieve toren' (under de leaning tower)

Five open residence afternoons, two neighbourhood walks, ten interviews with residents of Ekkergem and own research lead to the game 'Onder de schieve toren'. This game is primarily intended for the people of Ekkergem, but can certainly also be played by people who want to learn more about the recent history of Ekkergem. Ten (or more) participants do not play against each other, but together with each other aiming for a common goal: to build their own tower together. The game lasts an hour and a half.

Making the game in co-creation with local residents and partners ensured a certain involvement and neighbourhood dynamics. There were many positive reactions and input via the local channels on social media, such as the Facebook group Ekkergem. Below we list just a few of those 'hidden stories'.



[All stories can be found on: raconteurs.gent](https://raconteurs.gent)



Story Arne Loccufer (The back of Ghent)



Quote:
"I have great memories of Ekkergem Fair. In the past, this was always accompanied by a cycling race through the streets in the neighbourhood. From my room window I saw the cyclists passing by. Later on, while studying for my exams, the passage also meant a welcome break."



[Read the whole story](https://participatie.stad.gent/ideas/arne-loccufer-de-rug-van-gent)

<https://participatie.stad.gent/ideas/arne-loccufer-de-rug-van-gent>



Credit: David Slosse

Story Jean Paul Pollet (wig and doll maker)



Quote:
"Our house dates from 1844 and was commissioned by the former textile baron Abraham Story. Later a canon also lived here. The former sacristy has now been converted into a bathroom with a toilet. There was even a Maria grotto in the garden, but it has been demolished."



[Read the whole story](https://participatie.stad.gent/ideas/jean-paul-pollet)

<https://participatie.stad.gent/ideas/jean-paul-pollet>



Credit: David Slosse

Story by Pascal Coppens (owner of café Dikke Boom)

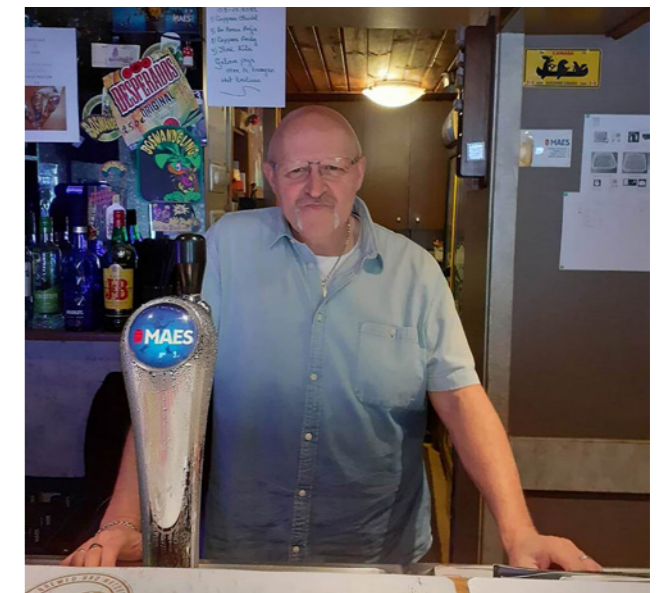


Quote: Pascal Coppens:
"Many prison guards used to come here to drink a pint after their shift."



[Read the whole story](https://participatie.stad.gent/nl-BE/ideas/pascal-coppens-van-cafe-dikke-boom-in-ekker-gem)

<https://participatie.stad.gent/nl-BE/ideas/pascal-coppens-van-cafe-dikke-boom-in-ekker-gem>



Credit: David Slosse

24. Means: 'The green of Ekkergem'

25. Means: 'Under the leaning tower'

26. Address: Raas Van Gaverestraat 67 A, 9000 Ghent

Through stories in the CoGent box

Ekkergerem in 't Groen (The green of Ekkergerem)

Ekkergerem, an oasis of greenery on the edge of the city centre in Ghent? Can't believe the neighbourhood used to look like this! The bishop Antonius Triest, who lived on the Antonius Triestlaan, lived there in a large country house. For peace. There were windmills everywhere. Did you know that the Ghent Floralties were born here?

This story was created with Ghent Archives.

Snippet of the story:

Horticulture became a booming business in Ghent in the 19th century. Ekkergerem also occupied an important place in this. But even before that, the neighbourhood was known for its farms. The people of Ekkergerem are therefore nicknamed 'Koolkappers'. The Koolkappersstraat still reminds us of that period. In the 19th century this street was called the Hoveniersstraat or Rue des Jardiniers. This drawing shows rural Ekkergerem with farmland on the front. The large white building in the background is the Grater house.



Credits: Gent: Casino: Floralien, before 1909 - From Ghent Archive Collection

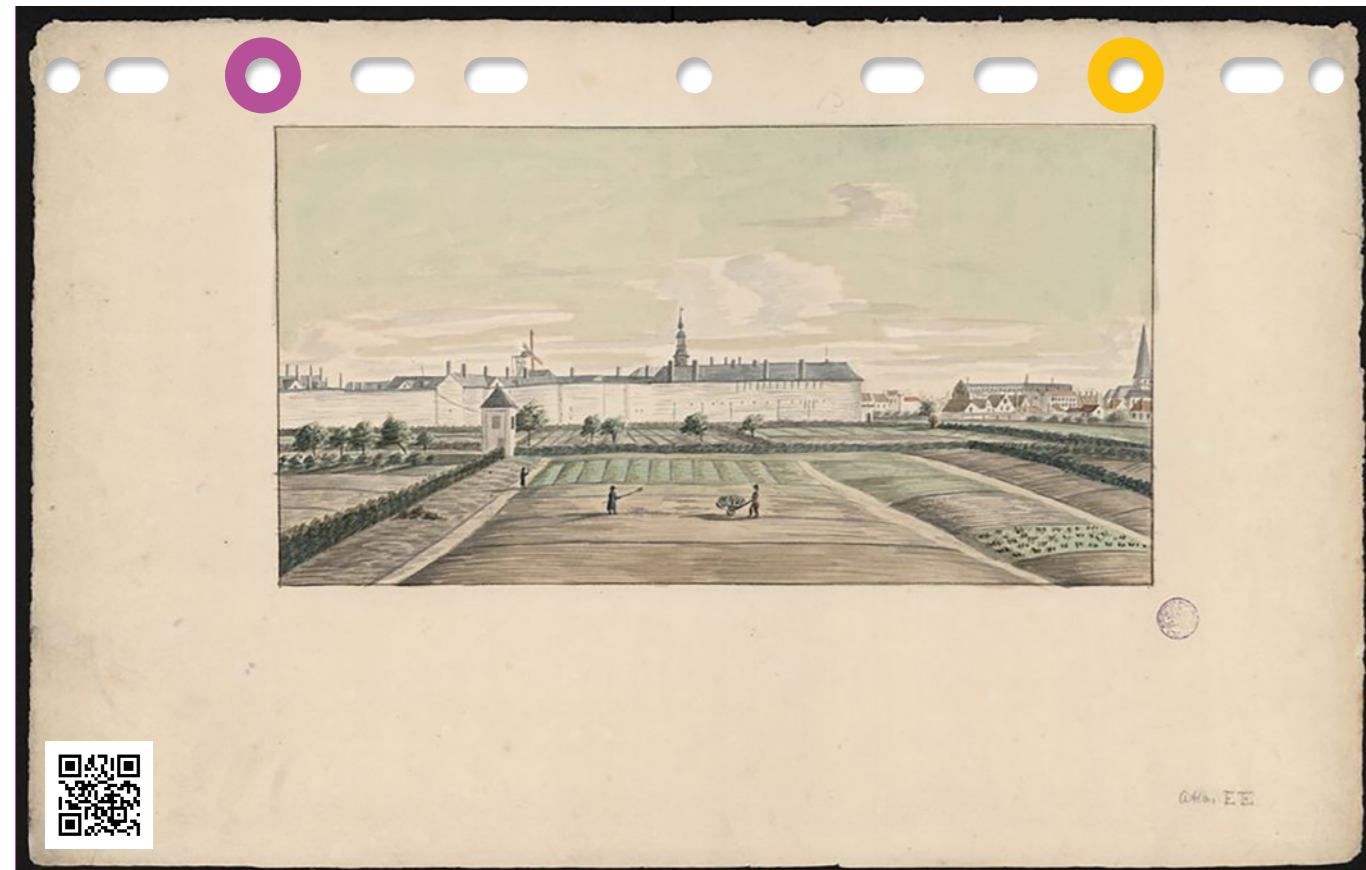


Image: Rural Ekkergerem with Rasphouse (centre in picture) and St Martin's church (far right)
Credits: Collection of Ghent Archives

Stories from Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham

The choice for the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood is a logical one in terms of co-creation and participation. It is a compact neighbourhood with 3 distinct sub-neighbourhoods. A neighbourhood that is under great pressure from numerous renewal projects, without this even having led to a comprehensive urban renewal project so far. Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham is also a very diverse neighbourhood, with numerous communities, including several Turkish and Bulgarian ones. The district is historically interesting given the presence of industrial heritage (the former harbour docks, the ACEC site with several factories that make electrical appliances and electric motors), the Holy Christmas Church and organisations with heritage awareness, the existing temporary reused locations, the new residential areas and so on. Various places in the neighbourhood have already been historically investigated, but more in-depth work can still be done.

Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham scores high in terms of cultural participation, the presence of the cultural midfield and various active residents' initiatives. The neighbourhood is a mishmash of local residents, various civil and cultural organisations, creative industry and knowledge (admittedly limited) who often work and exist side by side despite their proximity in location. The arrival of the CoGent box can help meet, connect, and collaborate.

The CoGent box was present from mid-November 2022 to mid-February 2023.

Through encounter, play and activity

Quote Hava, project employee Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare – Community Work: "We were looking for what concerns the residents themselves. What are they doing and what triggers them to get started with cultural heritage? We organised low-threshold, pleasant encounters, with extra attention for the vulnerable residents. At some point, these encounters automatically became the subject of hidden and unknown cultural heritage. When winter came, people could come and warm themselves during the opening hours of the CoGent box."

In this last neighbourhood we resolutely opted for in-depth cooperation with neighbourhood partners. That meant fewer opening hours for the CoGent box and fewer individual activities, but a process-based and sustainable approach through trajectories that resulted in show moments at one of the four major activities: the opening and closing party, the Winter Festival, and the Festival of lights. These four major activities were thematic in nature and were linked to milestone moments from our shared heritage and/or the neighbourhood. The Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work was given the mandate as the driving force. The other partners hopped on it with their offer and expertise.



Out for a walk with neighbourhood explorer STAM Ghent in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood.



Image: Three women in a living room on Christmas or New Year's Eve, ca. 1966
Credits: Collection House of Alijn

Opening party

The official opening of our time in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham was celebrated with the collected stories in the CoGent box until now, music, animation, food, and drinks. There was a local DJ playing some nice tunes. Together with the organisation Komaf Koffie, we invited visitors to tell their own stories and memories about coffee, or other themes.

The cooperation with Komaf Koffie²⁷ became more intense during our process and led to the game 'Grab and win'. Participants were allowed to fish an object out of the bag and discuss it with each other. As a prize they received a biscuit with their hot coffee, tea or chocolate milk. In addition, The House of Alijn was present with their outreach lab 'Strange Objects' where they invited visitors to discuss the strange collection pieces they brought with them.

Because we were present in the area in the fall and it was already getting noticeably colder, we had provided an extra indoor space in the cafeteria of the Sportcomplex Tolhuis.

27. Komaf Koffie: a mobile coffee bar where the drinks are served by professional baristas, more specifically newcomers who followed barista training and thus get the chance to practise their Dutch. More info: <https://komafkoffie.gent/>

28. JES vzw is a youth work organisation for all children and young people in Antwerp, Brussels, and Ghent. We support them in the areas of leisure, education, work, training, and well-being.

29. Ingegno Maker Space is an organisation that supports and develops STEM labs, where STEM stands for science, technology, education, and mathematics. More info via <https://ingegno.be>

Creative trajectory 'Game On!'

With 'Game On!', project partner iDROPS, in collaboration with Jes vzw²⁸ and the community workers, organised four Wednesday afternoons at the CoGent box for young people from Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham.

To connect heritage from the past with the present and the future, young people set to work themselves with a 3D printer, laser cutter, and other machinery. They invented and prototyped themselves, under the guidance of iDROPS and Ingegno Maker Space²⁹.

After an extensive brainstorming session and a dive into the collection, the theme of sport, boxing in particular, was chosen. They designed a board game where your opponent tries to knock you out as quickly as possible. The game was presented at the closing party, where you could also learn how to box yourself and follow an inspiring talk of the Ghent-based game designer Monkeyshine Games.



Credits: iDrops



Quote Pieter, project employee iDROPS:

"How to introduce young people to the collection in an accessible way? Ask them for their street name, and see if they can find their own house, on photos and maps of 100 years ago. Or ask them if they remember which board games their parents or grandparents used to play!"



Quote participating youngster from JES vzw:

"I really enjoyed playing all these old board games and gaming for the first time in VR. We drew our own ideas with the computer and made our boxing game from scratch. I would like to do that again!"



Credits: iDROPS





Credits: Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work

Writing session 'From DING with Love'

Because not everyone is lucky enough to receive a handwritten greeting card during the holidays, Design Museum Ghent developed a letter writing campaign in collaboration with residential care centre Domino, which is located in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood. Anyone who bought postcards in the museum's pop-up shop could choose an extra card and immediately write down wishes for the residents of the residential care centre. Design Museum Ghent delivered them to the residents of Domino, who hardly ever receive mail. The letter-writing campaign also made its way to the CoGent box at the Winter Festival. A total of 30 playful greeting cards were written.

Quote visitor:
 "That performance by the children of the Friends of Ukraine was touching. Glad I came!"

Quote 'From DING with love' postcard writer:
 "I like to write a card for a resident of the residential care centre. In our time there were scenes with ice skating children on it, these cards are kind of funny."

Winter Festival

The program for the Winter Festival was put together by the following partners:

- Friends of Ukraine³⁰ with their workshop 'Decorating Mugs'. They also provided delicious warm Ukrainian soup and a gymnastics performance.
- De tuin van Kina³¹ (located next to Sportpark Tolhuis) opened its doors to visitors and gave free guided tours for the exhibition 'Spiders and Spins'.
- Animation by Airkesmachine (music), the puppet theatre by De Wolk vzw, and a dance by Laila.
- Design Museum Ghent with 'Make your own greeting card' and 'From DING with love' (writing session)

We highlight the activity of Design Museum Ghent:

Make your own greeting card

Collections of Ghent brought heritage objects to life. Or in this case to postcards. In the pop-up workshop at the CoGent box, families, local residents, and CoGent employees made their own greeting cards using collage technique. Sixty people participated in this activity. They used printed items from Collections of Ghent and cut, drew, and wrote festive messages.

Quote neighbourhood carer from Local Service Centre De Thuishaven:
 "It's great to get to know the partners in a different way instead of just at meetings."

Quote visitor:
 "Delicious Ukrainian soup, can I get the recipe?" The waffles were also delicious!"

30. A Ghent organisation that works on the crisis in Ukraine.

31. De tuin van Kina means the Garden of Kina and is the oldest botanical garden in Flanders. This garden is part of De wereld van Kina, a Ghent nature museum for children and young people.



Credits: Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work

Festival of lights

We celebrated Candlemas³² with a new story and - as an old custom in this region - with homemade pancakes! Nice detail: we used stencils from the digital collections to decorate the pancakes. A fine collaboration between the Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work, the House of Alijn, and Design Museum Ghent.

Together with the visitors, Design Museum Ghent made candlesticks out of clay and brought along the 'Light' user collection, consisting of all kinds of lamps and other light sources, for inspiration. The visitors engaged in a conversation about the collection, but also about lighting in general. Especially between the residents of the Residential Care Centre Het Heiveld, beautiful and intimate conversations arose. We also welcomed several classes from primary school De Mozaïek and Dokata, where the youngsters discussed design solutions within the theme of light.

- Quote one of the participating children of the primary school Dokata:**
 "I modelled a foot as a candlestick for my candle because I discovered today that you call the lower part of a candlestick a foot. Very funny."
- Quote one of the participating teachers of the primary school Mozaïek:**
 "This tangible and concrete approach to heritage works very well for these students with diverse backgrounds. Nice how much they have told today."
- Quote the carer of a group of elderly with dementia:**
 "A lamp in the shape of a sun brought back the best memories. Suddenly we could all dream away together."
- Quote Lies, Employee Policy participation at Groene Briel:**
 "At first nobody wanted to model with us. After they had listened to a story in the box they wanted to drink a coffee and leave. But in the end they joined the modeling session and stayed. And they liked it too!"



Image: Game design of working group 'festival of lights' designed by Saar Vandeweghe
 Credits: Jasmin van Chase



Credit photos 1, 2 & 3: Patrick Henry
 Credits photos 4 & 5: Sien Verschaeren



Credits: iDrops

Atelier Circulair

A hole in your stockings? Don't throw them away, repair them! During CoGent box's stay in the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood, Collections of Ghent joined forces with lots of local organisations, including sewing workshop 't Ateljeetje, a local group that stitches and embroiders for fun. During the meeting moments of 't Ateljeetje, we organised three work sessions, each around a different technique: darning socks, knitting and crochet. This led to a lot of saved socks, transferred knowledge about textile, sewing, knitting, and crochet techniques and a lot of new contacts between local residents.

Quote Gerda, one of the seamstresses and founder of 't Ateljeetje:
 "I crochet cuddly toys, boxes, and other nice things every week. I take them to the community health centre so that children who go to the doctor can choose a nice present afterwards."



Image: Girls during sewing class, school in Sint-Lievenspoortstraat in Ghent.
 Credits: House of Alijn

Repair Café

Following the example of Atelier Circulair, where sustainability and repair techniques go hand in hand with heritage and stories, the Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work also organised a Repair Café. This is a free activity where volunteer repairers help repair all kinds of items such as clothes, electrical appliances, furniture and bicycles. This concept has been around for a while, but we thematically linked it to cultural heritage and what's in the digital collections of Ghent. There was no need to register, just show up with the broken object. It became an overwhelming success.

From waiting time to repair, every moment is the perfect opportunity to strike up a conversation about their objects and accompanying stories. Once again, Komaf Koffie was on hand as a partner.



Quote Dries, project employee Department of Social Cohesion and Welfare - Community Work - Repair Café:

"Repair cafés are ideal activities to start talking about cultural heritage with people who are not immediately enthusiastic about cultural heritage, using their broken objects as a conversation starter. I believe that via this activity you can get to know your neighbours better."



Image: Photo of local residents who had their bicycle repaired.
Credits: Hava Kara



Image: Aresan Bahman, studied art history and restoration in Tehran. He also restores paintings. Here he repairs a carpet.
Credits: Matias Laga



Image: Repairers at work and a happy visitor.
Credits: Matias Laga



Credits: David Slosse

Memory game wedding rituals

An intergenerational game for children (juniors) and seniors (seniors), aimed at an exchange of knowledge and experience on various marriage rituals of the past and present. The elders tell how a marriage used to be, while children tell how they themselves view marriage rituals. The game covers the themes of courtship and engagement - wedding attire - wedding party and engagement - wedding meal and drinks - party music and dance - wedding gifts - honeymoon - wedding keepsake.

After playing the game, we made another duo portrait of the players and conducted a short interview to capture the essence of the conversations.



Quote Flore, project employee of House of Alijn:

"The existing collection of wedding rituals in the House of Alijn has up till now been filled with rather one-sided photos and videos of traditional Flemish marriages. Many Ghent residents no longer recognize themselves in that image today. So we interviewed a number of mothers with a migration background, of children from the Dokata primary school in Sint-Salvatorstraat. They talked endlessly about their marriage and spontaneously shared their photos, which we included in the memory game and which the House of Alijn can include in its collection."

Quotes from children from De Mozaïek primary school:



Mert:

"Later I will propose to my wife in a hot air balloon in Turkish Cappadocia. And also as a honeymoon I will take her there in a hot air balloon."



Irem:

"I want to get married in Bulgaria. My dress can have many colours: blue, pink, and green. Or I buy different dresses, each with a different colour."

Through neighbourhood exploration and research



Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer STAM Ghent:

"We have a lot of heritage about the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood. This is not only due to its industrial past, but also due to its proximity to the centre of Ghent. In addition, it is a working-class neighbourhood where many small and precarious working-class houses can be found. Both the collections of the Industry Museum and the House of Alijn come in handy in the neighbourhood. Here we are also confronted with the gaps in the collections with regard to diversity. Although Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham has been known as a neighbourhood with Turkish communities since the 1960s, we do not find much of this in the digitised heritage. But that is a challenge that transcends CoGent. Several valuable projects³³ and methodologies³⁴ have already been done, but the search for diverse heritage continues. In Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham we are dealing with very historically self-aware residents, who also claim their role in the history of the neighbourhood for themselves based on their expertise and background. The neighbourhood belongs to, or is formed by, among others, textiles, boatmen, (Turkish) entrepreneurs, Turkish migrant workers and their children, seamstresses and hippies. We made a story in the box about each of these groups (except the hippies)³⁵. In Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham we therefore scanned much more precisely than in the previous neighbourhoods. We started from the research that Tina De Gendt did seven years ago for the exhibition 'Blijven plakken'³⁶ and the book 'Turkije aan de Leie'. So we already had several storylines from which we could draw inspiration."

33. Blijven plakken (STAM city museum Ghent), Straffe Gasten (Industry Museum), Nevroz (House of Alijn), De vierkante kilometer (STAM city museum Ghent and Heritage unit)

34. For example, House of Alijn organises discussion tables in small existing groups on various topics such as food and marriage to see which heritage is alive and what the meaning behind it is. The Industry Museum organises meeting days with textile makers from various factories and communities.

35. The pace at which we made stories in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham was intense. In two weeks, witnesses were tracked down, interviewed, photos scanned, uploaded, metadated, the story was recorded and made. Due to time pressure and after mutual consent, the story about the hippies was dropped. That was a logical selection since they already appear in the story about the children of small and precarious working-class houses.

36. 'Blijven plakken' means keep sticking around.

Stories of the seamstresses and entrepreneurs



Quote David, project employee Raconteurs:

"Heritage sometimes leaves traces in the streetscape many years later. For example, we discovered an illuminated advertisement of a lingerie brand on the sidewall of a present-day Turkish bakery and even an intact preserved shop interior of a textile shop that closed its doors more than twenty years ago. We were still able to interview and portray the two proprietors, both over ninety. A resident turned the story of one of them into a podcast. By reviving the forgotten story of the local seamstresses of bridal wear, especially bargees, we were able to spin a beautiful thread to the rise of the Turkish bridal shops in the Sleepstraat today."

Results and stories (after the activity)

The story of Eleonora of textile shop 't Wit Lam was inspiring and prompted a resident to create a separate podcast about this extraordinary entrepreneur.



The podcast of local resident Mieke can be listened to via : soundcloud.com/mieke-gesquiere-539131335/finaal-eleonora-buurtportret-mieke-gesquiere-finaal-master



Quote Yvette Geiregat of the former textile shop 'In 't Lindeken' in the Sint-Salvatorstraat:

"We sold all kinds of textiles, but were especially known for our range of high-quality underwear. You can still see that today on the side wall of the premises. There hangs an illuminated advertising of Evada, then a well-known brand of underwear. And did you know that La Petite Martine from the eponymous brothel around the corner regularly came here to buy new sheets and bathrobes for her girls of pleasure?"



Quote Eleonora de Keyser of the former textile shop 't Wit Lam' in Sint-Salvatorstraat:

"Bargee skippers formed our biggest clientele. They came mainly for our English jumpers, made of unwashed wool. Miniscule holes were knitted into the shoulder flank, indicating the size. But our flannel sheets were also popular. These were smuggled to France by some skippers, by spreading them on board in several layers over the beds."



The stories of Eleonora de Keyser from 't Wit Lam and Yvette Geiregat from 'In 't Lindeken' are also quoted in the story of 'Dit is mijn wijk: naaisters (This is my neighbourhood: the seamstresses)'.
[Discover the full story](#)



[Discover the full story](#)



Image: Eleonora de Keyser of the former textile shop 't Wit Lam' in Sint-Salvatorstraat. Credit: Steve Van Opstal



Image: Eleonora de Keyser of the former textile shop 't Wit Lam' in Sint-Salvatorstraat. Credit: Steve Van Opstal

Photo shoot wedding portraits and stories of older skippers



Quote David, project employee Raconteurs:

"As the name of the Local Service Centre 'De Thuishaven' suggests, the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood has a rich bargee past. Boatmen met each other in the local dancing or in one of the many pubs, which often doubled as a post office for correspondence between skippers. In many cases, bridal attire was tailor-made by seamstresses/couture shops in the neighbourhood. By setting up a pop-up photo studio in the Local Service Centre, the skippers/retired bridal couples could have their bridal portrait remade. Based on an interview conducted by a Raconteur and an employee of the House of Alijn, the couples could share their memories of their marriage and record them."

A total of seven couples and one lady participated in the photo shoot. Most were really made up to the last detail and some even brought a bridal bouquet. A few weeks after the activity, a thank you moment followed. The participants received a print of the portrait with a sturdy bridal cake and a glass of bubbly.



Image: photo shoot and interviews older bridal couples Local Service centre De Thuishaven.



Quote Jeanine Uyttendaele

(married François Govaert in 1971):

"The ships on the Muidesas were decorated with flags from front to back. My wedding dress was custom made by couturière Françoise Lepinoy. On the day of our wedding, she personally accompanied me all day to hold my veil and keep everything in order. We had no wedding list. The people gave what they wanted. That's how we ended up with 106 drinking glasses, 7 cake dishes and 4 pepper mills!"



Quote Livinus Van Acker

(married Hedwina Colman in 1959):

"I was about 23 years old, and she was 20. That's how we started. Hedwina had gone sailing with her family to Nimy, and I then received a card with 'Bon baisers de Nimy'. I'll never forget. She wrote to my regular address, and I to an address in the Muide where their mail was collected. We dated for three years that way. We finally got married on June 27, 1959, next year it will be 65 years!"



Credits: Wedding cake, made by Hotelschool Gent, as a festive finale to the neighbourhood walks and the wedding portrait photo shoot, in collaboration with Huis van Alijn, for Cogent-festival.



Credits: End stop of the neighbourhood walk around marriage at the House of Alijn, with reception and explanation by curator Sam

Stories in the CoGent box



Quote Neslihan, neighbourhood explorer STAM Ghent:

"In Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham we focused on the multi-layered nature of the neighbourhood. In the 19th-century belt, characterised by small and precarious working-class houses and factories, the idea of lost glory often prevails. That contrasts with what the neighbourhood looks like now: more multicultural. The shops are still there, but they now also sell Turkish pastries, African beauty products and halal meat. The shops have not moved. They now just have a different, and in some cases even a wider, range of products. In this neighbourhood we told its history from different points of view. We refuted the discourse of past glory and also focused on continuity. The neighbourhood was known to the skippers as the Valhalla of bridal wear and that is still the case today with the Turkish boutiques. The migration history in the neighbourhood was not cast in a separate story, but was discussed in almost every episode. In this way, we have not treated migration history as something that happens in a vacuum, but as something that affects labour, housing, entrepreneurship, civil society, and so on. Each episode focused on the following question: To whom this neighbourhood belong? The neighbourhood was claimed by textile workers, skippers, children of small working-class houses, seamstresses, and entrepreneurs."

This is my neighbourhood: Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham

Today there are 11,668 inhabitants in this neighbourhood, but on whose shoulders do we actually stand? Who made this neighbourhood? Collections of Ghent asked skippers, workers, entrepreneurs, hippies, seamstresses... from the neighbourhood.

In 'This is my neighbourhood', the history of the Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham neighbourhood is shown in a continuation of five episodes with photos, images and audio. This series was created together with Tina De Gendt³⁷, historian in residence for 'The Square Kilometre'³⁸, a trajectory of STAM City museum Ghent and the Heritage Unit Ghent.

37. Tina De Gendt is currently STAM's story collector, and 'historian in residence'. She involves local residents and enthusiasts in her research, and together with them she unveils forgotten histories and traces lost archives.
38. STAM (Heritage unit and City Museum Ghent) has been bringing the history of Ghent to life since 2010. The huge aerial view of the city in the first room has been a crowd favourite for many years. Each tile of the aerial image corresponds to one square kilometre in real life. In the coming years, STAM will uncover the hidden stories of the city tile by tile under the name 'The Square Kilometre', together with a local story collector who involves residents.

WORKERS

Pauly Verhoene was born and raised in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham. He lived and went to school there. He also worked there in the Usines Cottonière de Belgique or 'Gesfabriek' in the vernacular. He gives his vision of the past of this neighbourhood.

Snippet of the story:

Starting at 14, Pauly has worked in the factory all his life. To him, the Tolhuis neighbourhood is the neighbourhood of workers and factories. But is that actually true? And if it's right! In fact, this neighbourhood is the cradle of the textile industry and the mother of all textile factories: the Carthusian Monastery of Lieven Bauwens. At the end of the 18th century, Lieven had seen a fantastic machine in Manchester: the Mule Jenny, a mechanical spinning reel. Of course, the English didn't want him to take it with him, so he smuggled the machine in sugar barrels to Ghent and had it assembled in the Carthusian's abandoned monastery. An idea that quickly caught on in this neighbourhood full of empty monasteries.

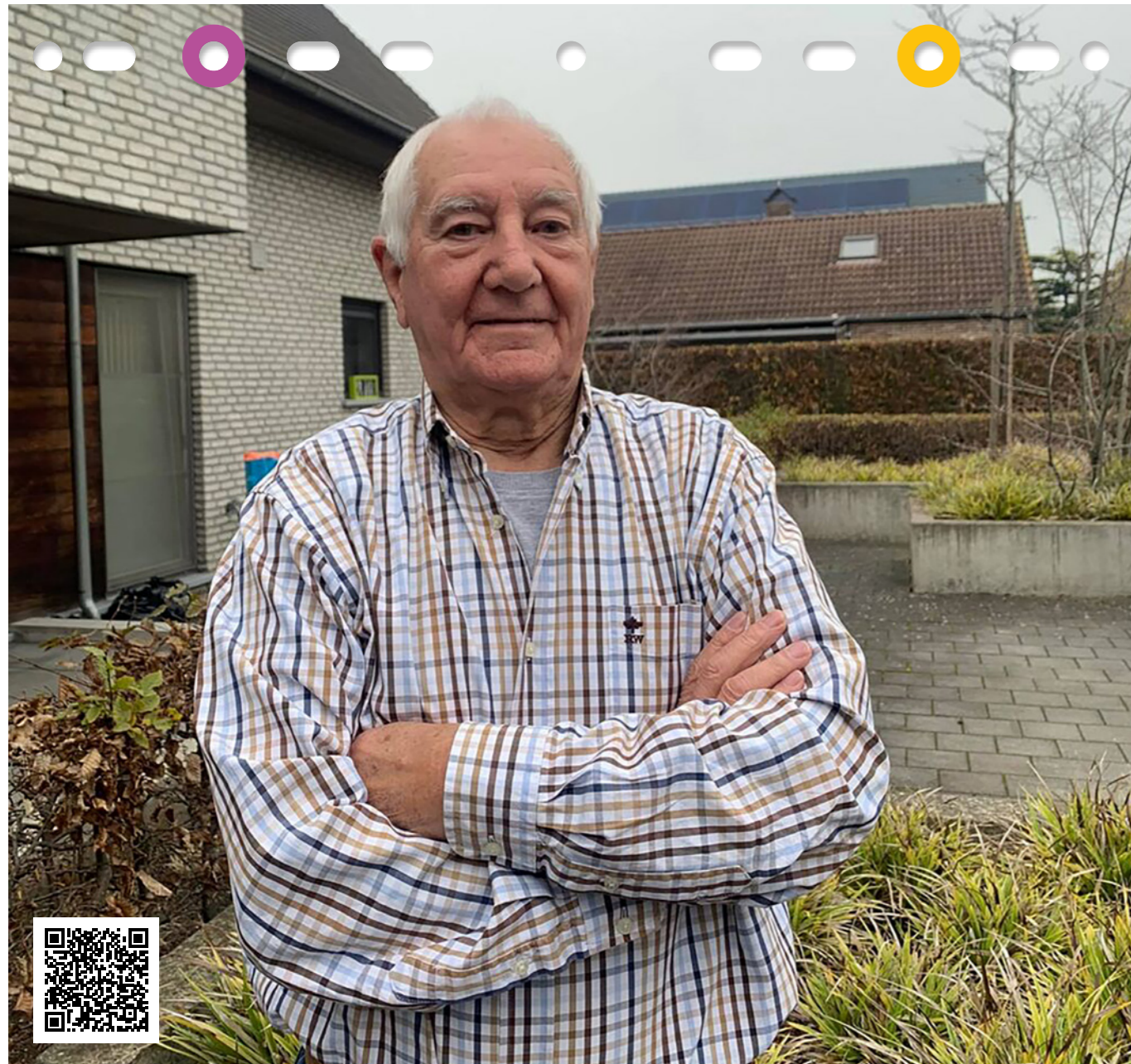


Image: Pauly in front of his home in Sint-Amandsberg
Credits: Neslihan Dogan



Group photo of a family in front of café Fluvial
Credits: Augusta Van Messem

SKIPPERS

This photo shows Gusta posing with sisters, brothers, nieces, children and grandchildren in front of Café Fluvial. The café was operated from the 1920s by Gusta's grandmother and she herself helped run the café for seven years. Café Fluvial (today's Bar Oswald) was operated by Gusta's family for four (!) generations. Collections of Ghent talked extensively with Gusta and made this amazing story.

Snippet of the story:

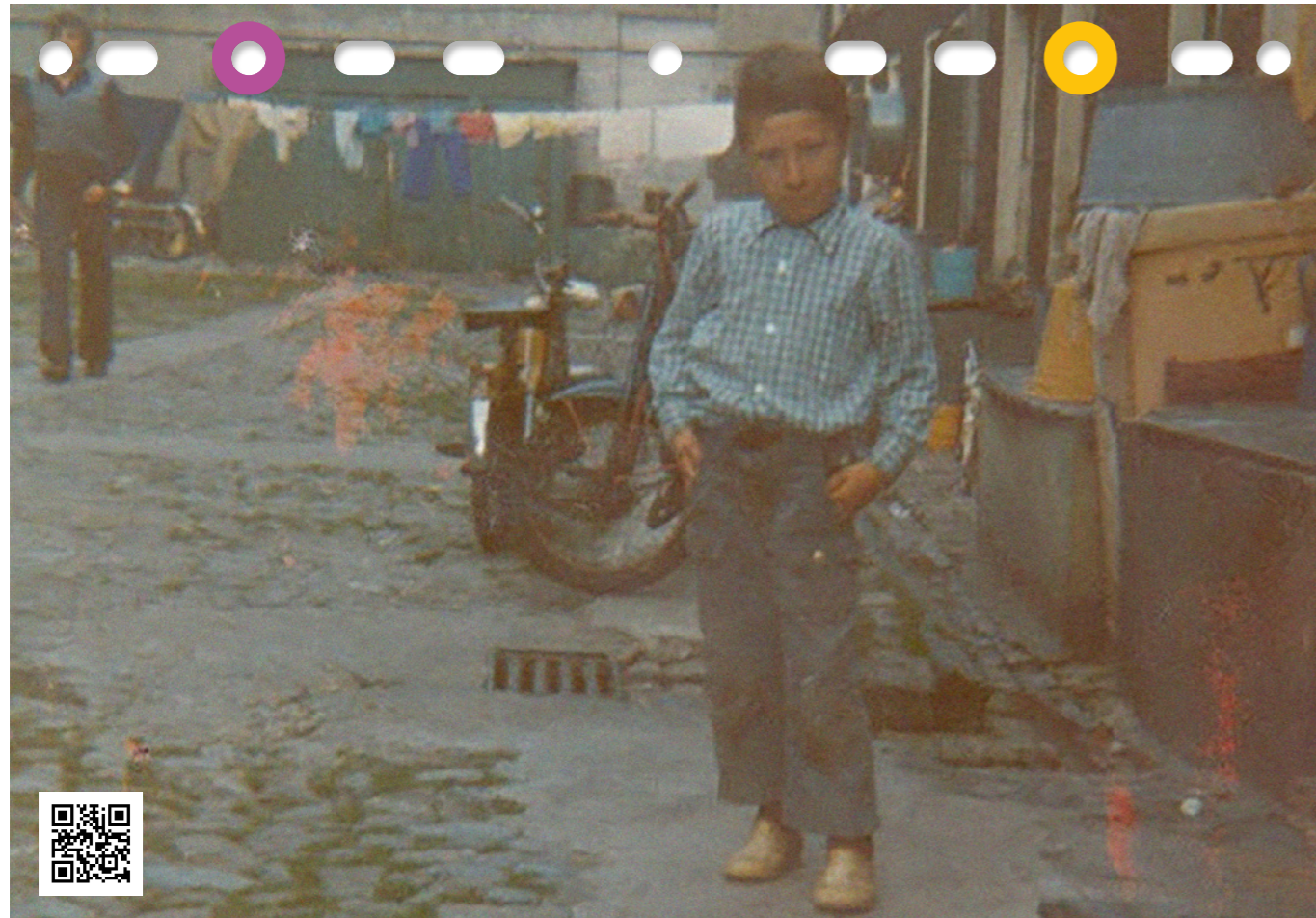
Skippers who have been travelling for weeks come ashore in Ghent and they are... thirsty. In the 1950s there were no fewer than 28 cafés around Neuseplein, such as Café Madrid, Café 't Scheepke, Schipperswelzijn and Café Sport. The boatmen not only came there to quench their thirst, they also put on a dance, they made their phone calls in the call booths and they collected their correspondence. Café Fluvial was without a doubt the most famous café: run for four generations by the Van den Abeele-Van Messem family.

CHILDREN OF SMALL AND PRECARIOUS WORKING-CLASS HOUSES

We know by now that Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham with all its factories and waterways is the neighbourhood of workers and boatmen, but when the workers start toiling at the looms and the boatmen start sailing, the children take over the streets. In this story, Saban Gök tells his story as a child of the small and precarious working-class houses, how they lived and played and what influence the hippies had there.

Snippet of the story:

For the children from the small and precarious working-class houses, those houses have never been a temporary emergency solution, because they grew up there. The children with a migration background, such as Saban, came to live there from the 1960s, because their parents migrated to Ghent to work in the textile industry. In the 1960s, the textile industry went through a tough time. The emergence of better paying industries, outdated technology and workers leaving, prompted textile bosses to seek workers in Italy, Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Spain, and Greece. These found shelter in the small and precarious working-class houses, where Ghent workers had been housed since the 19th century.



Saban Gök, Children of small and precarious working-class houses, Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham
Credits: privécollectie Saban Gök, AMSAB ISG



Collections of Ghent | Interior photo of sewing workshop, 1919
Credits: Joseph Buyens, House of Alijn

SEAMSTRESSES

Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham is also the neighbourhood of the seamstresses. This video tells the story of Arife, Meryem, and many more.

Snippet of the story:

There were quite a few seamstresses who had not studied for the profession, nor were they professional seamstresses. They did this work in their own homes, out of friendship and often without earning anything from it. It was much harder to find these seamstresses, as this was seen as domestic labour. But this obvious labour out of love for the family and others was also very important. In this neighbourhood, there were a lot of women who retouched clothes for neighbours, friends and relatives, made handicrafts for their daughters' outfits or made clothes for their children.

Quote Arife, one of the seamstresses from the video:

"Although Meryem had never been to school in Turkey and initially could not read or write, she still managed to make clothes. She had taught herself to count so taking measurements suited her well. She also drew the patterns herself. She preferred to make the garments on the women themselves. This is the best way to see what fits someone. Meryem makes dresses, skirts, shirts but her deux-pièces are especially famous. She then makes a shirt and skirt or trousers in the same print."

ENTREPRENEURS

Whoever walks down the Sleepstraat, looking for a restaurant or a new wedding dress, knows the neighbourhood mainly as the neighbourhood of entrepreneurs. But how exactly did that happen? How did this shopping street originate as a chic shopping neighbourhood for skippers and then evolve into the Turkish shopping street? We dove into archives and collections and went for a walk in the neighbourhood to find the answer to this question.

Snippet of the story:

Today Sleepstraat is known beyond national borders as the Turkish street of Ghent. But before the 1970s you could not only shop in the Sleepstraat, but also on Sint-Salvatorstraat and Voormuide. Those shopping streets were known as a second kind of Veldstraat³⁹. The location of the street was nice. The main street cut right through the neighbourhood and was surrounded by side streets in which the workers in their small and precarious houses lived. In addition, it was not far from the centre, but the retail properties were still affordable for entrepreneurs. It was also located in the skippers' neighbourhood and the bargees were of course the regular customers of the many shops in Sint-Salvatorstraat.

As in all neighbourhoods and small villages, many local shops have disappeared in Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham over the years. Older residents can certainly speak to that.

Quote from shop owner Jeanine:

"It used to be full of activity here too. With Voormuide-sleepstraat-Sint-Salvatorstraat as a straight central commercial axis. The trading guides from the 1950s don't lie. The share of textile and clothing stores was considerable: corsetteries, chemiseries, bonneteries, stocking shops, new chaste, textile fibre shops, a house of confidence for women's ready-to-wear, underwear and men's shirts, waterproof work clothes, and so on."



Image: Collections of Ghent | Window display of clothing shop Dunya Couture in Ghent



Shop owners of '1 Wit Lam' are standing in front of their shop. The shop '1 Wit Lam' in Sint-Salvatorstraat was founded by Joseph Deimolle, in 1875. In 2002, Eleonora de Keyser closed its doors for good. This must have made it one of the oldest shops in Ghent. Photo from the collection of Eleonora de Keyser



Image: ACEC-site 2022

Credits: Photo by Martin Corlazzoli, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

METAL STORY

The Acec site, you may remember them as Carels, or simply as Dok Noord. Where hipsters now merrily stroll, not so long ago people toiled at lathes in one of the region's most impressive metal construction workplaces. What stories does this site harbour? What was made here? And what role does our colonial past play here? In the metal story, you will discover how steam engines gave way to diesel engines and how an industrial hotspot reinvented itself time and again only to extinguish itself.

This story was produced in collaboration with the Industry museum.

Snippet from the story:

I still knew that stoves were heated on coke. Then again, in summer it was very hot with that metal on the lathe. Acec was more than just work. For instance, there was a football club and a billiards club or you could join the photo club or the chess club or the orchestra.

Quote a resident from Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham after seeing the stories from 'This is my neighbourhood' at the Cogent box.

"The stories made me reflect on the perspective of the other residents of my neighbourhood. I didn't always know their story. How women (as seamstresses) or entrepreneurs in Sleepstraat have built this neighbourhood opened my eyes."

39. Veldstraat is the main shopping street of Ghent nowadays.



A blast of a closing party

After a beautiful, adventurous and very captivating tour of three Ghent neighbourhoods full of warm and open-hearted people, the CoGen box concluded this journey with a closing party.

Quote Pieter-Jan, strategic project coordinator:
 "Together with the residents of the three neighbourhoods, we searched into how we can actively use cultural heritage in function of social cohesion. We talked to every visitor: young and older Ghentians, newcomers, Ghentians who have lived in the area for a long time or who have recently moved. We linked everything that came up during the many encounters, activities and trajectories to digital stories that bridge the gap between the neighbourhood and the cultural heritage from our various museums. All these efforts were shown in full glory one last time at the closing event. A best of, as it were. What a ride, what an adventure and how great is our gratitude!"



Finally

With the CoGent box, we toured three neighbourhoods. But the ambition of Collections of Ghent was to invite all inhabitants of Ghent to get to work with the digital collections and add stories, photos and objects to the collections. "What's in the collection?", one of the stories in the CoGent box provided the necessary inspiration, the Co Creation Fund the necessary space.

Collections of Ghent connects and makes accessible collection items from 5 Ghent heritage institutions (Design Museum Ghent, the House of Alijn, STAM city museum Ghent, Ghent Archives, and Industry Museum Ghent) on data.collection.gent. We chose a selection of the funniest, most beautiful and fascinating collection pieces for you and show you them in the story "Wat zit er in de collectie? (What's in the collection?)".



Beeld: Ghent harbour (without date)
Credits: Ghent Archives

Snippet of the story:

All Ghent collections contain beautiful, majestic or fascinating objects. We asked our project staff to introduce their favourite piece from the collection to you. The photographer of this photo from the Ghent Archives was a noble unknown for a long time, because his signature could not be deciphered for years. Thanks to thorough research, he was eventually linked to the Belarusian photographer Nikolaï Kossikoff. Kossikoff came to Ghent after the Russian revolution and recorded Ghent's industrial landscape from the 1930s onwards. The port of Ghent was one of his favourite subjects and he managed to portray the imposing ships in an almost elegant way.

Sometimes we discovered stories, with the potential to deepen further but already interestingly enough to elaborate and share through the general communication channels of the City Ghent. The story of watchmaker Eric Antrop of Ekkerghem was one of those.



Quote Eric Antrop:

"My dream was to become a hairdresser. You wouldn't say that now. But my doctor advised against that because I would be standing all day. I have a deformity in my back. I couldn't have done that, so I didn't and did just the opposite. Instead of standing up, I went sitting and I'm still sitting."



[Full story: Watchmaker Eric Antrop from Ekkerghem speaking](#)

Interested in more stories?

Be sure to read the stories of '1000 years of Gentsekoop'⁴⁰, or listen to the stories of Schroot/hoop⁴¹, watch the documentary 'Whose street is it?'⁴² or 'Stories and testimonials of the Moroccan pioneers in the Ghent textile industry'⁴³, or visit Shoppingcentre Malem⁴⁴, to give just a few examples.

You can find all the stories and more on the story platform of the Raconteurs, www.collectie.gent, on YouTube and on the social media channels of Collections of Ghent.

40. 1000 Jaar Gentsekoop went in search of a remarkable story among 25 local merchants in Ghent that links cultural heritage (objects) from the Collection with their business, building and/or neighbourhood, and therefore also with the local economy in Ghent. www.gentsekoop.be

41. The podcast series Schroot/hoop by De Zieke Steur in which 10 seemingly replaceable and functional objects are saved from the scrap heap by capturing their story and their 'soul' <https://open.spotify.com/show/216eNLRW6KKR4RSS2pbaEY>

42. In 'Whose street is it?', the think tank STRAAT and documentary maker Laura Zuallaert went in search of unique experiences and stories about the neighbourhood, the street and public space in general in the streets of Ghent.

43. A documentary by IQRA about the textile industry with stories and testimonials from the Moroccan pioneers in the Ghent textile industry.

44. A new store in Malem, where the old Malem with its many shops was creatively brought to life by the local residents in a contemporary way. More info: <https://www.shoppingcentermalem.be/>

Colophon

This inspiration booklet is a subcomponent of Collections of Ghent: www.collections.gent collectie@gent.be

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