IFLA Green Library Project Award 2022 Submission

Adopt a plant at your public library!

The *Plantotek* project











The *Plantotek* Project

The ongoing *Plantotek* project has been created in 2021, in the two public libraries* located in Jette (Brussels, Belgium). It was based on three observations:

- Plants have a demonstrated effect on stress reduction¹, increase well-being²
 and lower pain and fatigue³
- The COVID pandemic and especially the lockdown has shown that people
 need a contact with nature⁴ especially in urban areas
- Even though many organizations (including the Jette's libraries) offer free seeds, **growing plants from seeds is not easy for everyone** (know-how, material, etc.)





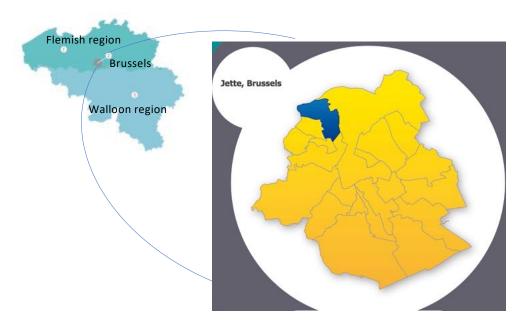








The *Plantotek* in context



- 5 km² (3% of Brussels' total surface)
- *ca* 52.000 inhabitants (4% of the total population of Brussels)
- · Residential area, with families and elders
- · Low and medium incomes
- Some parts of the area are densely urbanized

Map adapted from Françoise Audag-Dechamps, *Belgium at a glance*, Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, 2015 and Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse et Observatoire de la Santé et du Social de Bruxelles-Capitale (Commission communautaire commune), *Zoom sur les communes : Jette*, 2016.

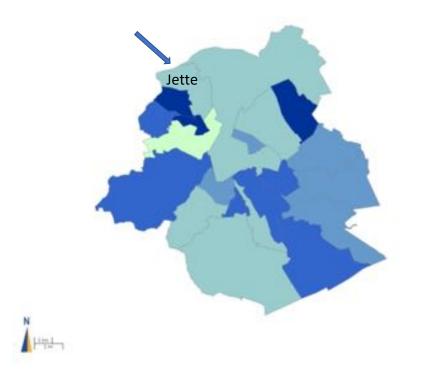








The *Plantotek* in context





Moyenne régionale : 81,75

Part of the population with nearby access to a green public area in Brussels (2012)

Jette (77,34%) is **below** the regional mean (81.75%).

Sources: Bruxelles Environnement; Statbel (Direction générale Statistique - Statistics Belgium) (Registre national)

Mondoring der Quartiers - IBSA © Brussels ErickS (BO)

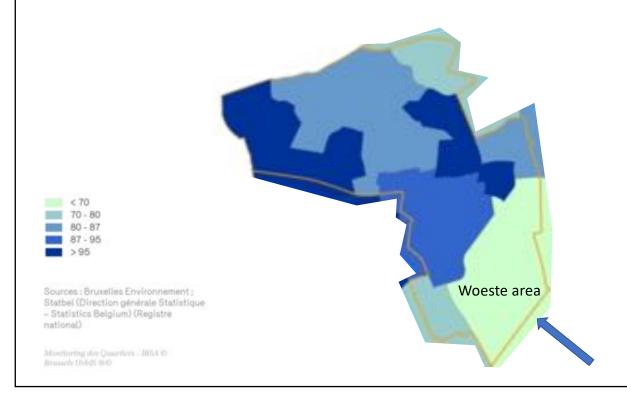








The *Plantotek* in context



The south-east part of Jette
(Woeste area) has the **lowest rate**of access to a green public area
(67,50 %)

There are **inequalities** regarding access to green public spaces, not only in Jette but in the whole Brussels area⁵ and can be correlated with **other inequalities**.









One *Plantotek*, two libraries

- Dutch-speaking
- 42.760 books
- 1.743 numbers from 98 journals
- 11.493 DVD and CD
- 4.665 readers
- 90 classes
- 76.493 loans*





Photo: Stéphanie Weisser, 21 February 2022

- French-speaking
- 89.665 books
- 2.219 numbers from 105 journals
- 1.112 CD/DVD (documentary films and audiobooks
- 6.602 readers, coming from north-west area of Brussels
- 96.463 loans*









^{*} Pre-COVID numbers (2019)



What's Plantotek?

The *Plantotek* project offers the possibility, for everyone, to **adopt and bring back home** plants, for **free** and **without counterpart**.

It is for now limited to 2 indoor plants and 3 outdoor plants per person and per year. However, **more** plants can be adopted if the adopter **donates** pots, cuttings, or plants, in order to stimulate the **exchange dynamics**

Workshops are also organized in order to teach people to take care, propagate and grow plants from seed and/or cutting.



Workshop *Semis en famille* [Family sowing], 18 June 2021. Photo: Stéphanie Weisser









Why Plantotek?

With this project, we aim to give access to plants to everyone, and to contribute to provide a non-commercial access to the living.

Growing plants help people to develop **awareness** about questions such as **sustainable plant production**, the place (and lack) of **nature in urban areas** and the conservation of **biodiversity**.

The *Plantotek* project was entirely created and is still managed with a near-zero budget and recycled resources only, making it possible for any institution to set up.



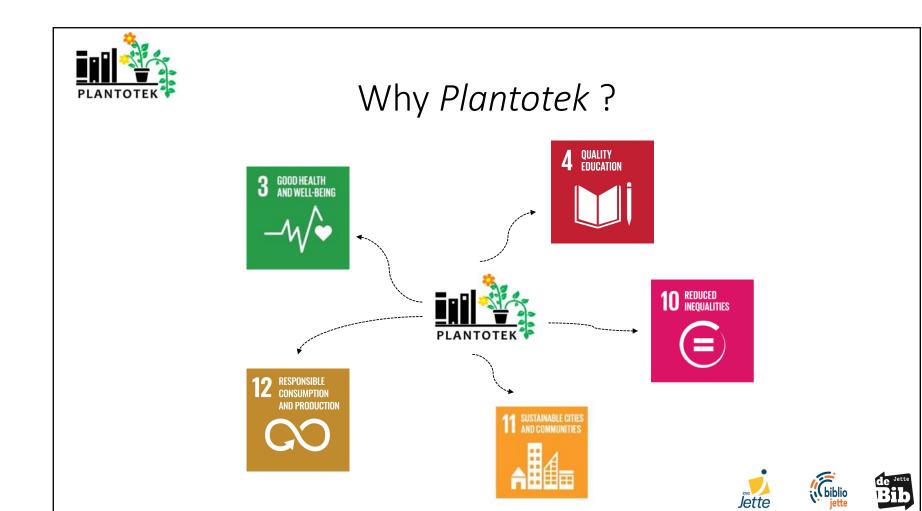
Labels of plants ready to be adopted. Information regarding light and water needs are provided. Barcodes are used for inventorization and adoption management.

Photo: Stéphanie Weisser (2021)











The *Plantotek* in numbers

- 5 months of existence
- 303 plants adopted
- **168** adopters
- 84 donations
- 5 workshops (limitations due to Covid)





Left: Opening of the *Plantotek*, 7 October 2021. Photo: Vincent Vanderstokken. Right: workshop with a class of 7-8 years old children (November 2021). Photo: Florence Janssens (right)









The *Plantotek*: press coverage

Adopteer eens een plant uit de bib

maand kan je in de Nederlandstalige en Franshet Kardinaul Mercierpleix in Jette je eigen plant adopteren. Onder mogen leden van de bibs tot vijf planten per jaar



Het Laatste Niews, 21 October 2021 [online version], 22 October 2021 [paper version]



Story by TV station BX1 (in French). Original version: https://bx1.be/categories/news/la-plantotheque-de-jette-des-plantesparmi-les-livres-de-la-bibliotheque/

With English subtitles: https://youtu.be/Y584gZwXA6A









The *Plantotek*: press coverage





Salle des

Inauguration

17

Appel Parcours d'artistes 23

Envie de plantes?



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Et si on n'a pas la 'main verte' 7

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lieu : une bourse d'échange de plantes (plant evap) et un atélier d'inklobion parent-enfant au semis et au rempotage. Ces acti-vités ont rencontré un franc succès !

Announcement of the launching of the Plantotek in the house-to-house publication Jette info (October 2021)









The *Plantotek*: future developments

- Recycle waste (plastic pots and withered plants) from local plant shops
- Set up a compost and a rainwater
 harvesting system in the library
- A network of *Plantotek* in public libraries in Brussels, in order to contribute to fight inequalities in access to nature in Brussels



Withered *Primula* found in the trash of a plant shop in February 2022. It is in good health and could be adopted after repotting. Photo: Stéphanie Weisser













Gifts by donors. On the left : from the Jette's service of plants in public areas (November 2021). On the right : from a plant-lover (May 2021). Photos: Stéphanie Weisser



Branch of a *Crassula ovata* donated in December 2021. As this plant is very easy to propagate, several new plants will be made available for adoption from this single donation. Photo: Stéphanie Weisser















Mother plants of the *Plantotek* are not available for adoptions but kept for future propagation. Photos: Stéphanie Weisser

Three of the six shelves of the *Plantotek* in the BiblioJette (Frenchspeaking library). January 2022. Photo: Stéphanie Weisser











Outdoor plants of the *Plantotek* in November 2021. Autumn is the perfect season to plant fruit trees and plants such as rhubarb, gooseberries and raspberries, even if they look not-so-much alive. Photo: Stéphanie Weisser













Plantotek in the Reference Room. Photos: Stéphanie Weisser, 10 March 2022











Cuttings from mother plants are placed in water to root.

The duration of the process depends on the season: slower in autumn-winter, much faster in the spring.

Photo: Stéphanie Weisser, 21 February 2022

In Belgium's climatic and light conditions, indoor plants that are easy to propagate and maintain are:

- Epipremnum Aureum (pothos)
- Begonia (they can grow from a single leaf)
- Coleus
- *Chlorophytum* (spider plant)
- Tradescantia
- Sansevieria









References

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- ² Tina Bringslimark, Terry Hartig & Grete G. Patil (2009). "The psychological benefits of indoor plants: A critical review of the experimental literature". *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29 (4), p. 422-433. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.05.001.
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- ⁴ Angel M. Dzhambov, Peter Lercher, Matthew H.E.M. Browning, *et al* (2021). "Does greenery experienced indoors and outdoors provide an escape and support mental health during the COVID-19 quarantine?". *Environmental Research* 196, 110420. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2020.110420.
- ⁵ Philip Stessens, Ahmed Z.Khan, Marijke Huysmans & Frank Canters (2017). "Analysing urban green space accessibility and quality: A GIS-based model as spatial decision support for urban ecosystem services in Brussels" *Ecosystem Services* 28 (C), p. 328-340. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2017.10.016









Acknowledgments

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Thanks to the many donors and adopters who make the *Plantotek* project alive!





