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Vandenplas, Ruben; Picone, Ike

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Media as the great emancipators? Exploring relations between media repertoires and cultural participation in Flanders

Ruben Vandenplas
Ike Picone

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Abstract

Media convergence has afforded users an increasing amount of options regarding the media they consume, available at the click of a button. This has led some to clamor about the potential for media to bridge previously existing inequalities and decrease social stratification not just in media use, but in other realms of society as well. Skeptics have argued that while the convergence of media has given users more options in their own media repertoire, social stratification persists. Moreover, if media do increase a user's possibilities to participate in other realms of society, the persisting stratification of media use risks enacting a Matthew effect whereby the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Using data from the Flemish participation survey, this article seeks to contribute to this discussion by exploring Flemish media use by constructing media repertoires using latent class analysis and exploring their sociodemographic profiles. Following this analysis, we compare the cultural participation patterns of the six Flemish media repertoires using negative binomial regression analysis. We find that social stratification of media use persists in Flanders, with broad and 'highbrow' repertoires predominantly restricted to higher status groups. Moreover, we find a structural homology between the structure of media repertoires and cultural participation, whereby broad repertoires exhibit a similar openness to cultural practices, and repertoires tailored to highbrow media exhibit a similar preference for highbrow cultural activities. As a result, we find that social stratification persists in media use and cultural participation but argues that media repertoires offer a potential entrypoint.

Keywords

Bourdieu, convergence, crossmedia, cultural participation, Flanders, latent class analysis, media repertoire, media use, negative binomial regression, omnivore, participation

Introduction

Today's converged media landscape has granted users access to an increasing amount of technologies and texts, effectively blurring the boundaries of traditional media. The contemporary media user is mobile and always connected, enveloped at every step in a cocoon of personally curated media devices and content. This also has implications for audience research, in which media-centric approaches have been complemented – and scrutinized – by user-centric ones (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017; Webster and Ksiazek, 2012). To gauge the media practices of the population, it is becoming increasingly important to know not only which media technologies are used and to what extent but also to monitor which 'repertoires' of media practices are created by a single user (cf. Hasebrink and Popp, 2006). These repertoires can be considered as the entirety of media items, including devices, technologies, and content, that users routinely use (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006; Kim, 2016; Taneja et al., 2012). This kind of 'crossmedia' perspective has been gaining traction in the past decade (Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017, Bjur et al., 2014) and contributes to our understanding of everyday media practices as communicating vessels. According to crossmedia theories, user's media practices are considered to be interlinked, both in how users navigate through and combine them and the meanings that they ascribe to them (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006: 374).

The steep increase in media devices and content has also led authors to consider the potential for media to 'transcend the historic barriers of literacy and mobility' (Gerbner et al., 1986) by elevating popular culture to legitimate cultural activities and lowering the barriers of access to cultural products through media (Gerbner et al., 1986; Van Eijck, 1999). An area often considered to be marked by social stratification (Katz-Gerro, 1999, 2002; Mellander and Florida, 2018; Van Eijck, 1999; Warde and Gayo-Cal, 2009). Media have thus been described as mediators or gatekeepers of cultural taste, and authors have considered (cultural) media content a point of departure in exploring the emergence of cultural omnivores (Kristensen, 2019: 2).

However, authors have pointed out that social stratification still persists, despite the celebratory claims that have coincided with the convergence of the media landscape. Meikle and Young (2012: 6) point out that celebratory views on citizen's increased agency to participate in cultural production through digital media (referencing Henry Jenkins's 2006 book *Convergence Culture* in particular) are often based on generalizations of behavior of particular groups who have the economic and cultural resources to engage with media in particular depth. The required cultural and economic capital – as well as available time – still prohibits many people from joining in. Admittedly, certain forms of participation require less effort, such as the practices of sharing and liking that are strongly associated with social media. Yet still, the participatory potential offered by digital media seems to reinforce rather than bridge existing inequalities by giving more opportunities to participate, but mostly to those that are already 'plugged in' (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2017; Schlozman et al., 2010). Leading to 'meaningless multiplicity' (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 271) rather than any form of actual emancipation or diversity.

It is against the backdrop of this discussion that we will reflect on the emancipatory potential of today's media landscape in Flanders. In doing so, the goal of this article is to advance the research

agenda of media repertoire approach conceived by Hasebrink and Popp (2006). Their seminal work on media repertoires focused on the integral first steps of the approach, aimed at exploring and constructing media repertoires. However, the agenda also indicates the exploration of links between media repertoires and other spheres of everyday life as an important ‘next step’ for the repertoire approach (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006).

This article seeks to contribute to this in the following ways. First, we provide an operationalization of media repertoires, as an exponent of crossmedia studies, within the Flemish context. While similar crossmedia research is currently being conducted in Flanders through the Digimeter (Vandendriessche and De Marez, 2020), the Digimeter predominantly monitors the use of and attitudes towards digital and new media (Vandendriessche and De Marez, 2020: 11). This article sets out to reconstruct media repertoires in the broadest sense, including indicators for online and off-line media, measuring (1) frequency of use; (2) media, platform, or device preference; (3) choice of media brands; as well as (4) general, passive, and active internet use. Secondly, we seek to connect media repertoires as a concept to discussions beyond the sphere of media use itself, such as cultural participation, and the role of cultural mediators. Here, we propose media repertoires as a novel approach to consider issues on participation and cultural mediators in a crossmedia and user-centric way.

To achieve this, this article sets out the following research questions. Firstly, we will (1) examine which specific media repertoires we can distinguish among the Flemish population and (2) what their wider sociodemographic characteristics are. Subsequently, we will (3) examine to what extent media repertoires function as predictors for cultural participation. Here we formulate two subquestions to guide this exploration: first, (RQ3.1) we ask which repertoires show higher likelihoods to participate in culture, while controlling for the confounding effect of sociodemographic profile. Secondly, (RQ3.2) we explore whether these likelihoods change according to the specific kind of cultural activity under investigation.

To answer these questions, we propose a threefold empirical analysis, in which we conduct a latent class analysis (LCA) using data from a large-scale representative survey monitoring participation habits related to sports activities, club life, cultural activities, and media in Flanders. This is followed by a discussion of the resulting repertoires based on their content and sociodemographic profile. Lastly, we conduct a negative binomial regression analysis where we examine the likelihood of a user participating in cultural activities depending on their media repertoire.

Literature review

Media repertoires as a crossmedia approach

The convergence (or deconvergence) of media has greatly increased the amount of media technologies and texts that are available to users (Bjur et al., 2014: 15; Peil and Sparviero, 2017: 4). Most importantly, it has uprooted media content from the devices it was previously uniquely tied to, allowing content to be consumed on a variety of different devices and platforms (Picone, 2013). To deal with the wide range of options available to them, users choose a select amount of media practices that they integrate in their daily routines.

The constellation of habitual media practices that users thus engage with is what Hasebrink and Popp termed a media repertoire. These media repertoires are defined as ‘bi-lateral relationships between different kinds of media and content’ (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006: 374), indicating that media repertoires not only consist of frequencies of use for media devices but can be

operationalized more broadly to also include specific media products or brands (Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017: 368). However, the idea that users behave selectively in the face of an increasing array of choices or that they combine various media practices in meaningful ways throughout their daily lives is not new. Authors working on polymedia (Madianou and Miller, 2013; Madianou, 2014), media ecology (Scolari, 2012), or lifestyles (Roose et al., 2012) have similarly argued that media practices should not be considered as singular events, but that they behave as communicating vessels, since they are irrevocably entangled with one another in the everyday lives of their users.

While this convergence has left some to celebrate the newfound possibilities that such a wide variety and increasing range of media would hold to empower users (Gerbner et al., 1986; Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 261–263) or allow them to bypass the gatekeepers (Carpentier et al., 2013: 292; Jenkins and Deuze, 2008: 6), authors have pointed out that a high-choice media environment not necessarily translates to democratization (Lindell and Hovden, 2017). Crossmedia studies thus allow researchers to explore the aftermath of convergence, and question which constellations of media practices are created, and by whom, interrogating the question whether the proliferation of media technologies has served to emancipate those who were disadvantaged or created a Matthew effect for those already plugged in.

In this regard, media repertoires still show a close connection to lifestyle studies, which more closely interrogated the sociodemographic stratification of user practices. Indeed, in a later iteration of the concept, Hasebrink and Hepp (2017) sought to more closely connect media repertoires to the social sphere by not only investigating the media repertoires of individuals but social configurations as well. As a result, the issue of social stratification in media use has not evaporated under the dawn of media convergence. And the issue of unequal opportunities in media use still persists.

Media as cultural mediators

Nevertheless, media have taken center stage in the everyday lives of users. Authors have argued that media have increasingly become important agents of socialization for their users (Hjarvard, 2008; Houtman, 2006; see also Glorieux et al., 2002), competing with traditional agents such as education, the family, and religion (Genner and Süß, 2017; Gerbner et al. 1986; Prot et al., 2015). Media then act as a ‘window upon the world’ for users, providing important information on the world around them. Media have been shown to function as gatekeepers of taste, and the appearance of brands in certain media texts has been proven to positively impact sales (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 279). But authors have also looked into the relation between media repertoires and public connection (Hovden and Moe, 2017). This extends the impact that media might have beyond the realm of media use and media participation itself.

This question has also been at the center of mediatization theory, which investigates the ‘wider effects of media on institutions and practices across society’ (Couldry, 2013: 196; Livingstone and Lunt, 2014: 706). Moreover, both mediatization theory and the media repertoire approach are hardly unacquainted, as recent efforts to include media ensembles in the repertoire approach (Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017) have laid the groundwork for what Schröder terms an ‘audiencization of mediatization’ (Schröder, 2017, 2019: 164). The current article seeks to follow-up on this ‘audiencization’ by constructing media repertoires, the ‘aggregates of practices of agency’ unaccounted for by mediatization research, and interrogate their interrelation with other societal institutions (Schröder, 2019: 163).

For the current article, we therefore look at the field of cultural participation to explore the emancipatory potential of media. More concretely, we aim for our study to contribute to extant research, by (1) laying bare how the media repertoire of users might serve to aggravate disadvantages in cultural participation related to one’s sociodemographic position (2) or increase

the likelihoods of some users to participate in cultural activities despite sharing similar socio-demographic profiles.

The question as to what extent media are able to level the playing field in other spheres of society, thus persists. Moreover, as we have mentioned earlier, media might just as well be cast in the role of perpetrators of a Matthew effect that solidifies the divide between those that participate in society at large and those that do not.

Empirical study

Data collection and participants

The analysis presented in this article is based on data from the Flemish Participation Survey 2014, a large-scale representative Computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) survey of the Flemish population conducted between January 2014 and November 2014 measuring participation habits and related attitudes in sports activities, club life, cultural participation, and media use. Data were collected from a representative sample ($N = 3965$) of Flemish citizens between the ages of 14 and 85 by a market research bureau through standardized interviews of approximately 65 min. The survey had a net response rate of 58%. Interviews were on the topic of the participation habits of respondents (Lievens et al., 2015: 11–15). This survey is an integral part of the responsibilities of the Knowledge Centre on Cultural and Media Participation in Flanders, an interdisciplinary platform tasked with monitoring the participation patterns of Flemish citizens. Despite consisting of data from 2014, the broad scope of the survey makes the data set not only useful as a benchmark for both the online and off-line media practices of Flemish users but makes it exceptionally suited to investigate the relations between media practices and other fields of society.

Data analysis

This article presents a threefold analysis to explore media repertoires in Flanders, as well as their relation to cultural participation. Firstly, we conduct a LCA to cluster indicators of media use into media repertoires, as an answer to RQ1. Secondly, we explore the sociodemographic profile of these repertoires in response to RQ2. Lastly, we investigate whether media repertoires, as discrete variables of crossmedia preferences and use, can function as predictors of cultural participation (RQ3). In the following section, we provide a brief overview of the different steps in our empirical study, as well as the variables we selected for our analysis.

Latent class analysis. For our clustering text analysis, we opted to use LCA using Latent Gold. We suggest that this method is specifically suited for the exploration of media repertoires. Rather than clustering on the basis of variables, it clusters respondents based on the response patterns for the variables entered into the model (Collins and Lanza, 2009). In this sense, it stays close to the user-centered perspective that lies at the core of the repertoire-oriented approach (Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012: 759).

The method is also highly flexible by accommodating for the inclusion of both categorical and continuous variables and offers the researcher goodness-of-fit statistics to inform the selection of the ideal number of clusters (Hagenaars and McCutcheon, 2002: 2; Schreiber and Pekarik, 2014). The latter offsets some of the critiques raised at other clustering methods which are considered to rely on a more 'arbitrary manner to decide on the optimal number of clusters to be identified' (Oser et al., 2013: 94).

Table 1. Overview of indicators of LCA.

Variable	Type	Possible values
Latent class analysis		
News sites	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Television channels	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Radio channels	Binary	Not used, used weekly
Newspapers	Binary	Not used, used weekly
Media devices (used monthly)	Binary	Newspaper: Yes, no Radio: Yes, no Television: Yes, no PC or Laptop: Yes, no Console: Yes, no Smartphone or Tablet: Yes, no
Internet	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Active internet use	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Passive internet use	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Facebook account	Binary	Yes, no
Facebook use	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Twitter account	Binary	Yes, no
Twitter use	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Paid music or film streaming	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily
Free music or film streaming	Ordinal	Not used, weekly, daily

LCA: latent class analysis.

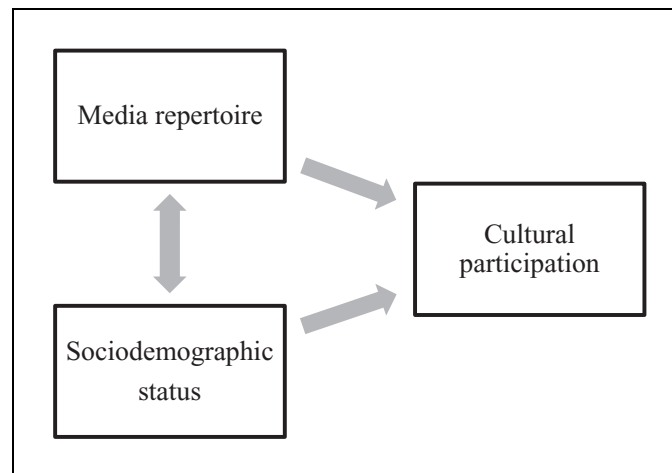
When it comes to the selection of media repertoire indicators, specifically, ‘The repertoire-oriented approach leaves open the question of what the exact empirical indicators of relevant components are’ (Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017: 368). Still, most operationalizations include variables that measure actual ‘behavioural contact’ such as frequency of use, as well as indicators measuring ‘preferences for certain kinds of media, (. . .) or brand loyalties’ (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017: 368). Following the empirical indicators outlined by Hasebrink and Hepp, we construct media repertoires based on indicators measuring (1) frequency of use; (2) media, platform, or device preference, and (3) choice of media brands. With regard to (4) internet use, we equally distinguish between general, passive, and active internet use. Where general internet use broadly measures whether users indicated using the internet for any activity during the last week, we distinguish between passive online activities such as browsing websites, shopping or using search engines, and active online activities including sharing content with peers, uploading and sharing user generated content, or posting product reviews. As media repertoires measure habitual media practices, we have opted to select weekly use as a cut-off point in line with previous operationalizations of media (Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017; Schröder, 2015; Yuan, 2011) or channel repertoires (Heeter, 1985), including daily use where possible to differentiate repertoires on the basis of frequent use of specific brands. However, this was not always possible as we worked with an existing data set. In Table 1, we provide a short overview of the different indicators we used in the LCA.

After conducting a LCA on these variables, we selected a six-cluster model (see Table 2 for an overview of parameters used for model selection). In accordance with previous literature on LCA,

Table 2. Overview of parameters for model selection.

	L2	BIC (L2)	AIC (L2)	P (L2)	Class.err	Entropy
1	157,050	125,095	149,333	4.9 [^] 30,164	0	1.0000
2	141,339	109,864	133,737	4.7 [^] 26,886	0.0172	0.9349
3	136,568	105,573	129,082	1.3 [^] 25,923	0.0548	0.8781
4	133,349	102,835	125,980	3.6 [^] 25,289	0.0586	0.8930
5	131,577	101,543	124,323	3.6 [^] 24,960	0.0697	0.8885
6	130,137	100,584	123,000	2.1[^]24,701	0.0648	0.9071
7	129,128	100,054	122,106	1.8 [^] 24,533	0.0781	0.8964
8	128,256	99,663	121,351	6.6 [^] 24,395	0.0866	0.8906
9	127,407	99,294	120,617	6.1 [^] 24,261	0.0950	0.8916

Note: Bold values represents the selected model and respective parameters.

**Figure 1.** Correlation structure of media repertoire, sociodemographic profile, and cultural participation.

our selection was based on (1) relative model fit due to a limited decrease in Bayesian (BIC) and Akaike information criterion (AIC) values for the subsequent cluster models (Collins and Lanza, 2009: 86–89), a higher relative entropy, lower relative classification errors (Vermunt and Magidson, 2002: 98), as well as (2) the interpretability of the model (Collins and Lanza, 2009: 82).

Negative binomial regression. The six constructed media repertoires were then entered into a negative binomial regression model. In this step of our analysis, we explore the question to what extent media repertoires, as socializing agents, might predict the cultural participation of their users (RQ3).

However, previous research has argued that both cultural preferences and practices (cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Christin, 2012; Purhonen et al., 2010; Weingartner, 2020), as well as media practices specifically (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006; Taneja et al., 2012), are predicted by the sociodemographic profile of users. We have controlled for the confounding effect that the sociodemographic profile of users might have on the relationship between media repertoires and cultural participation (See Figure 1, above). For this, we use age, gender, education, and income as these variables are

Table 3. Overview of variables in the negative binomial regression analysis.

Variable	Type	Possible values
Predictor variables		
Clusters (Media repertoires)	Nominal	Repertoires 1 (ref), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Gender	Binary	Female, male (ref)
Age	Ordinal	15–17, 18–34, 35–54 (ref), 55–64, 65+
Subjective income	Ordinal	Hard to get by, medium (ref), easy to get by
Education	Ordinal	No education (ref), lower education, secondary education, higher education
Outcome variables		
Classical concerts and festivals	Count	
Popular concerts and festivals	Count	
Art museums	Count	
(Nonart) museums	Count	

commonly used for the assessment of a user's social position (Hasebrink and Popp, 2006; Taneja et al., 2012). To account for possible nonlinear effects that *Age* might have on different kinds of cultural participation, age was recoded into a categorical variable. As all of the predictor variables are on a categorical scale, we recoded these into dummy variables to be entered into the regression model. In Table 3, we provide an overview of the reference categories we selected.

In our exploration of the relationship between media repertoire, sociodemographic profile, and cultural participation, we chose to include different categories of cultural participation. To explore the occurrence of a structural homology between patterns of media practices, socio-demographic profile, and cultural practices, we include both participation in artistic heritage (museums) and performance arts (concerts and festivals), as well as both 'fine arts' (classical music, fine arts museums) and 'popular' arts (popular music, museums with a primary focus other than arts). Previous research found that older age-groups gravitate toward fine arts, while younger age-groups exhibit more 'omnivorous' tastes (Van der Stichele and Laermans, 2006). This would lead us to hypothesize that media repertoires that have an overrepresentation of mostly younger or older age-groups would exhibit similar cultural participation patterns. Following the same structural homology thesis, we could hypothesize that users with a repertoire more oriented toward highbrow media items would exhibit a similar orientation toward highbrow forms of cultural participation such as fine arts museums or classical concerts (cf. Coulangeon and Lemel, 2009).

Results

Overview of Flemish media repertoires

In Table 4, we summarize the results from the first step in our empirical analysis, in which we constructed media repertoires using LCA.

Repertoire 1: Television oriented. Users of repertoire 1 exhibit the lowest overall media use compared to users of all other repertoires. Due to their limited use of internet, online media (such as news

Table 4. Overview of different media repertoires based on main characteristics.

	Repertoire 1 Television oriented (18.7%)	Repertoire 2 Dabblers (21.8%)	Repertoire 3 Budding enthusiasts (19.4%)	Repertoire 4 Entertainment seekers (14%)	Repertoire 5 Allrounders (15.2%)	Repertoire 6 Quality seekers (10.9%)
News sites						
De Redactie	--	--	±	--	++	+
Het Nieuwsblad	--	±	+	+	++	++
De Standaard	--	--	--	--	++	±
Het Laatste Nieuws	--	±	++	++	++	±
Het Belang van Limburg	--	+	+	+	+	--
Gazet van Antwerpen	--	--	+	±	+	--
De Morgen	--	--	--	--	++	-
De Tijd	--	--	--	--	++	-
De Wereld Morgen	--	--	--	--	±	±
Apache	--	--	--	-	-	--
Knack	--	--	--	--	+	-
French-speaking news sites	--	--	--	--	±	±
Newspapers						
Het Laatste Nieuws	+	+	++	--	±	-
Het Nieuwsblad	+	+	++	--	+	-
Het Belang van Limburg	+	+	+	--	-	--
Gazet van Antwerpen	+	+	+	--	+	--
De Standaard	--	-	-	--	++	++
De Morgen	--	--	--	--	++	++
De Tijd	--	--	--	--	+	-
Metro	--	--	+	--	+	+
Television						
VTM	++	++	++	++	-	--
Een	++	++	+	+	++	--
Ketnet	--	±	±	±	--	--
Canvas	+	++	-	-	++	+
Vier	+	+	++	++	+	--
2BE	--	±	++	++	--	--

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

	Repertoire 1 (18.7%)	Repertoire 2 (21.8%)	Repertoire 3 (19.4%)	Repertoire 4 (14%)	Repertoire 5 (15.2%)	Repertoire 6 (10.9%)
OPI2	--	±	±	±	±	--
Vijf	-	-	-	±	--	--
Acht	--	--	-	-	-	--
Vitaya	+	+	+	+	--	--
Regional broadcasters	++	++	-	-	-	--
Music channels	--	--	+	+	--	--
Sports channels	+	+	+	±	±	--
Thematic channels	--	+	++	++	±	--
Media devices						
Newspapers	+	++	++	--	++	+
Radio	++	++	++	++	++	++
Television	++	++	++	++	++	++
PC or Laptop	--	+	++	++	++	++
Console	--	--	+	+	--	--
Smartphone or Tablet	--	-	++	++	++	±
Radio channels						
Radio 1	--	±	--	--	++	++
Radio 2	++	++	--	--	+	--
Klara	--	--	--	--	++	++
MNM	--	-	++	++	--	--
StuBru	--	-	++	±	++	+
QMusic	--	+	++	++	--	--
Joe FM	--	±	±	±	-	--
Nostalgie	--	±	±	±	±	--
Internet						
General use	--	++	++	++	++	++
Active internet use	--	--	+	++	+	-
Passive internet use	--	-	+	+	++	±

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

	Repertoire 1 (18.7%)	Repertoire 2 Dabblers (21.8%)	Repertoire 3 Budding enthusiasts (19.4%)	Repertoire 4 Entertainment seekers (14%)	Repertoire 5 Allrounders (15.2%)	Repertoire 6 Quality seekers (10.9%)
Facebook						
Account	--	-	++	++	++	+
Use	--	--	++	++	±	--
Twitter						
Account	--	--	+	+	+	--
Use	--	--	-	-	-	--
Music and film streaming						
Paying	--	--	±	±	±	--
Free	--	--	++	++	+	±

sites, social media networks) or online video or music streaming are absent from this repertoire. Their media use is mostly oriented toward television viewing and gravitates towards regional broadcasters as well as more established Flemish media brands for media content, in particular those owned by the Flemish Public Broadcaster (VRT).

Repertoire 2: Dabblers. Similarly, the media practices of repertoire 2 users are more limited than other repertoires. Contrary to repertoire 1, however, these users also incorporate online media practices into their repertoires. As a result, they exhibit a limited use of news sites, and contrary to repertoire 1 users, *Dabblers* regularly use the internet as well. When it comes to media brands, *Dabblers* occasionally dip into Regional Broadcasters as well as commercial media brands, although the core of the repertoire remains focused on brands associated with the Public Service Broadcaster, VRT.

Repertoire 3: Budding enthusiasts. Users in repertoire 3 exhibit a much wider repertoire of media practices compared to the previous clusters. These users make regular use of gaming consoles and online media, including social network sites and music and video streaming. When it comes to their selected media brands, *budding enthusiasts* gravitate toward commercial brands, although they still occasionally dip into channels related to the Flemish Public Broadcaster. While not engaging in as broad a range of media practices as the *allrounders* discussed below, the predominantly younger *budding enthusiasts* exhibit more openness to different media practices than users of other repertoires.

Repertoire 4: Entertainment seekers. This is similarly the case for the *entertainment seekers* in repertoire 4, whose repertoire equally includes a wide variety of different media practices and devices and is heavily rooted in online media practices such as social network and streaming sites. Contrary to the *budding enthusiasts*, however, off-line news practices are scarce in the repertoire of *entertainment seekers*. When they do seek out news, these users turn to online news sites rather than newspapers. Moreover, *entertainment seekers* engage in ‘active internet use’ (e.g. sharing and posting self-made video’s, audio, or blog posts online) more often than other repertoires, including the *budding enthusiasts*. Regarding their selection of media brands, *entertainment seekers* and *budding enthusiasts* exhibit similar taste patterns, orienting themselves mostly toward commercial brands.

Repertoire 5: Allrounders. Repertoire 5 groups users with the most varied media practices. *All-rounders* exhibit a frequent use of all kinds of media devices, excluding game consoles. They also make frequent use of the internet, although they exhibit less *active internet use* than the *entertainment seekers* or even *budding enthusiasts*. When it comes to their brand preferences, *all-rounders* have a higher conditional probability of using ‘quality’ media brands, including broadsheet newspapers (De Standaard, De Morgen), radio channels with a focus on classical music (Klara), or television broadcasters with a primary focus on documentary and culture (Canvas).

Repertoire 6: Quality-seekers. Users in repertoire 6 exhibit a much more narrow repertoire, more akin to *dabblers* and *television oriented*. Their repertoires are more singularly oriented toward the use of news media and radio, with some occasional dips into television and online media. Aside from their use of broadsheet newspapers, they use almost all media in their repertoire less frequently than other users. Moreover, these users appear to be unique in shunning regular television use from their repertoires. When it comes to their preference in media brands, *quality seekers* orient themselves almost exclusively to ‘quality’ media, such as the aforementioned broadsheet newspapers.

Table 5. Sociodemographic profiles of media repertoires.

	Repertoire 1	Repertoire 2	Repertoire 3	Repertoire 4	Repertoire 5	Repertoire 6
Gender						
Female	58.8 _a	47.6 _b	51 _{b,c}	56.4 _{a,c}	36.6 _d	50.3 _{a,b,c}
Male	41.2 _a	52.4 _b	49 _{b,c}	43.6 _{a,c}	63.4 _d	49.7 _{a,b,c}
Age						
15–17	0.1 _a	0.7 _a	11.7 _b	12.9 _b	0.7 _a	3.9 _c
18–34	0.9 _a	5.3 _b	51.6 _c	48.1 _c	24.7 _d	25.3 _d
35–54	16.1 _a	39.4 _{b,c}	30.1 _d	32 _{c,d}	43.2 _b	36.9 _{b,c,d}
55–64	20.5 _a	28.6 _b	4.9 _c	4.7 _c	17.7 _a	21.3 _{a,b}
65+	62.3 _a	26 _b	1.7 _c	2.3 _c	13.7 _d	12.5 _d
Education						
No education	3.8 _a	0.3 _b	0.0 _b	0.7 _b	0.2 _b	0.5 _b
Lower education	27.9 _a	6.7 _b	1.2 _c	4.0 _{b,d}	0.8 _c	1.9 _{c,d}
Secondary education	59.0 _a	59.6 _a	62.3 _a	64.9 _a	27.1 _b	39.4 _c
Higher education	9.3 _a	33.3 _b	36.6 _b	30.4 _b	71.9 _c	58.2 _d
Subjective income						
Low	14.3 _a	6.7 _{b,c,d}	5.2 _d	9.9 _{a,c}	4.2 _{b,d}	7.5 _{b,c,d}
Medium	63 _a	51.9 _b	48.6 _b	50.4 _b	37.0 _c	43.7 _{b,c}
High	22.7 _a	41.3 _b	46.2 _b	39.7 _b	58.9 _c	48.8 _b

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of cluster categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the 0.05 level.

Sociodemographic profiles of media repertoires

Now that we have identified the media repertoires within the Flemish population, we can turn to our second research question and explore their respective sociodemographic profiles (see Table 5). Earlier in this article, we argued that socioeconomic factors have frequently been used in research as an explanatory factor for the cultural participation of respondents (Bourdieu, 1984; Hasebrink and Hepp, 2017). Similarly, the following paragraphs will explore the socioeconomic profile of the different repertoires by comparing them on the basis of (1) level of education and (2) income, in line with research by Oser et al. (2013). Lastly, we have also compared the different repertoires on the basis of (3) age.

Gender. When it comes to gender differences within media repertoires, we find that repertoires 1 (television oriented: male = 41%, female = 59%), 4 (entertainment seekers: male = 44%, female = 56%), and 5 (allrounders: male = 63%, female = 37%) exhibit large differences in gender. As users in repertoire 1 are marked by the lack of online media activities, these findings align with previous research on the digital divide (Joiner et al., 2015), for which age and gender (among others) are important predictors. While technologies and media have become more accessible, authors report that divides on the basis of usage still persist. Men exhibit a ‘broader use’ of the internet than women (Joiner et al., 2015); we might find an explanation as to why users of repertoire 5 (the ‘broadest’ media repertoire) are predominantly male.

Age. Age remains an important divider when looking at Flemish media repertoires. Users in repertoire 1 are significantly more likely to belong to older age-groups (65+: 62%) compared to other repertoires. While the age divide for media access appears to be closing, research shows that older cohorts still exhibit less positive attitudes toward technology (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). This might explain why users in repertoire 1 appear to shun most digital technologies from their everyday routines and are more uniquely oriented toward ‘traditional devices’ such as television and radio as their primary media source. Repertoires 3 (*budding enthusiasts*) and 4 (*entertainment seekers*) on the other hand appear to be more strongly rooted within younger age-groups, with more than half of the respondents in these repertoires being younger than 35. Lastly, repertoires 2 (*dabblers*), 5 (*allrounders*), and 6 (*quality seekers*) are mostly used by users between ages 35 and 54.

Education. Regarding level of education, we find a significant difference between repertoire 1 (*television oriented*) and the other repertoires; 28% of users in repertoire 1 are lower educated, and almost 4% have no education. This is most strongly contrasted with repertoire 5 (*allrounders*) and 6 (*quality seekers*), which are mostly used by higher educated users (respectively, 72% and 58% of users). These also uniquely include ‘quality’ or ‘highbrow’ media, such as broadsheets, classical music, or television channels with a primary focus on documentary, arts, and culture.

Subjective income. To measure subjective income, users were asked to indicate how comfortable they felt they could live off of their current income. In line with the distribution of education levels among the repertoires, we find a significantly higher percentage (59%) of users with a high subjective income within repertoire 5 (*allrounders*). This again contrasts most with repertoire 1 (*television oriented*), which has a significantly higher percentage of lower subjective income users (14%).

Summarizing these results, we can describe the sociodemographic profile of the repertoires as follows. Repertoire 1 (*television oriented*) consists of mostly older women with a lower education and income, while the broadest repertoire (repertoire 5: *allrounders*) is used by mostly higher educated, middle-aged men with a higher relative income. The difference between repertoires 1 and 5 is perhaps the most distinct in the sample. For the other repertoires, their sociodemographic profile is mostly based on a single variable, rather than a distinct cluster of variables. Repertoires 2 and 6 are both home to more mature users but differentiate themselves from one another through their level of education, with the latter exhibiting a significantly higher percentage of higher educated users (58%), while most of repertoire 2’s users have not completed any higher education (67%). In turn, repertoires 3 (*dabblers*) and 4 (*entertainment seekers*) distinguish themselves from the other repertoires through their higher representation of younger age-groups. Between them, however, these repertoires are nearly indistinguishable aside from a marginally higher percentage of higher educated and higher income users in repertoire 3. This further solidifies our argument that the constellations of media that users create can be highly disparate, despite their proximity in sociodemographic profile.

Cultural participation by media repertoire

In the previous section, we summarized the results of our LCA of media repertoires and described these repertoires based on their sociodemographic profile. This highlighted how despite the availability of contemporary media, social stratification still persists in a converging and increasingly crossmedia landscape. ‘Highbrow’ or ‘quality’ media items are restricted to the repertoires of users with a higher education and income level. Moreover, we found that the limited

repertoire predominantly centered on television is more often used by a lower educated, less affluent, and older segment of the population.

In the following section, we seek to leverage these results to further investigate whether the convergence and ubiquity of media has led to a democratization or decrease in stratification of cultural participation. However, as media repertoires appear to remain socially stratified, the ‘perceived opportunities’ that might be gained from them could be crippled by the same social stratification (Weingartner, 2020: 9). Weingartner highlights how ‘usage patterns vary according to education level, socio-economic status, gender, and age’ (Weingartner, 2020: 9). However, the results described in the previous sections show that very different media repertoires occur within a similar sociodemographic profile. This might indicate that the internal structure of a media repertoire, its composition and internal dynamics, might offer an important clue to a user’s cultural participation patterns, where their sociodemographic profile alone cannot. In this section, we therefore introduce two subquestions to RQ3 to structure this investigation. Firstly, (RQ3.1) we ask which repertoire clusters show higher likelihoods to participate in culture, while controlling for the confounding effect of sociodemographic profile. Secondly, (RQ3.2) we explore whether these likelihoods change according to the specific kind of cultural activity under investigation. To answer this question, we make a distinction between cultural activities on the basis of two (theoretical) axes (see Figure 2): (1) whether the activity has a primary focus on art or classical music; (2) whether it is an activity related to performance arts or museums. The decision to include various forms of cultural activities was informed by the conclusions of previous research which indicated that significant sociodemographic demarcations exist regarding cultural participation in ‘highbrow’ cultural activities (Christin, 2012; Lizardo and Skiles, 2008).

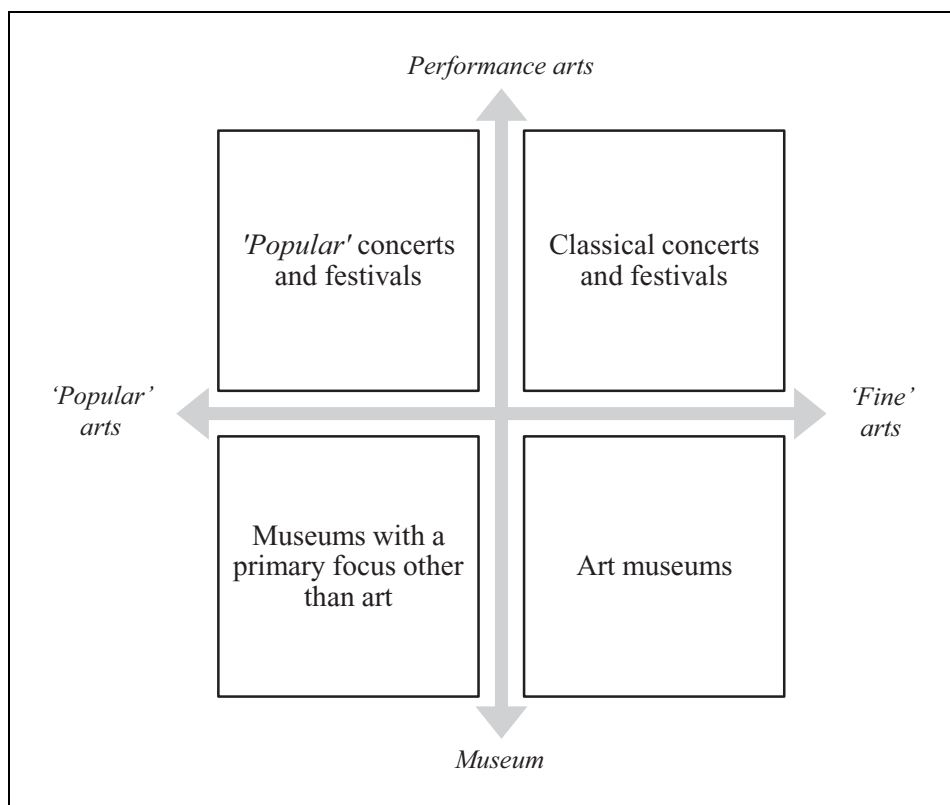


Figure 2. Indicators of cultural participation.

Media repertoires as predictors for cultural participation. In the following tables, we summarize the findings from our negative binomial regression analysis. We explore the relations between media repertoires and different types of cultural participation, relative to the reference category (*television oriented*). Our analysis indicates that all repertoires exhibit higher likelihoods than the reference category to participate in every kind of cultural activity we investigated. This shows that *the television oriented* repertoire, which was also the most narrowly structured repertoire we found, has the lowest likelihood among repertoires to participate in cultural activities.

We also found that meaningful relations exist between the repertoires of users and their cultural participation patterns. This is perhaps best reflected in the case of the *allrounders*, whose openness to a wide range of media practices appears to extend to cultural activities as well, as they consistently exhibit the highest likelihoods of participating in any cultural activity when compared to the reference category (*television oriented*). In some cases, the likelihoods to participate in a certain cultural activity shows striking similarities to the structure of the user's media repertoire. The *budding enthusiasts*, who more commonly use media items related to popular music and exhibit a 'budding' openness to a wide range of media, exhibit a high likelihood ($B = 1.082$) to participate in popular music concerts and festivals. Second only to the *allrounders* ($B = 1.361$). Similarly, the *quality oriented* exhibits a high likelihood of visiting fine arts museums ($B = 1.909$), even overtaking the *allrounders* ($B = 1.669$). Again, the cultural participation patterns of *quality seekers* seem to reflect the way in which they structure their media repertoire, which is uniquely oriented toward 'highbrow' or 'quality' media content. Users with repertoires that indicate an openness to a variety of media items thus appear to exhibit a similar openness to different kinds of cultural activities. By comparison, repertoires that are structured in a way that is primarily oriented toward a specific kind of media content, such as highbrow content in the case of *quality seekers*, appear to be similarly selective with regard to the cultural activities they participate in.

In Sociodemographic profiles of media repertoires section of our analysis, we found that users with a similar sociodemographic profile can exhibit very different media repertoires. Moreover, in our regression analysis, we find that these different media repertoires can exhibit very distinct relations to cultural activities. While the users of the *allrounder* and *quality seeker* repertoires exhibit very similar sociodemographic profiles, we find clear differences in their likelihoods to participate in different cultural activities. The same goes for *budding enthusiasts* and *entertainment seekers* as well. This strengthens our argument that media repertoires can provide a valuable contribution to sociodemographic variables as predictors of cultural participation.

However, due to the correlation of media repertoire and sociodemographic variables, it is necessary to control for the possible occurrence of a confounding effect due to the exclusion of sociodemographic variables in the regression analysis. Indeed, our results indicate that in most cases, a confounding effect of sociodemographic variables is present. This is evidenced in the decreasing coefficients when including sociodemographic variables in the second model presented in Table 6. Nevertheless, media repertoires remain significant indicators in both models of our analysis. This indicates that the exclusion of sociodemographic variables in model 1 leads to an overestimation of the relation between media repertoires and cultural participation, seeing as media repertoires can be seen as a type of cultural preference which is itself related to socio-economic status (see Figure 1). However, despite this confounding effect, media repertoires retain significant likelihoods for cultural participation throughout our analysis. This indicates that while media repertoires and the sociodemographic profile of users are correlated, both together can provide a valuable contribution to understand differences in likelihoods or cultural participation *within* the same sociodemographic profile.

As a result, we found that the structure of media repertoires can be an indicator for the way in which users participate in cultural activities. Moreover, media repertoires can highlight differences in cultural participation between users where sociodemographic variables alone cannot. In this regard, of sociodemographic variables can be considered important markers for the habitus of a user, we argue that media repertoires can be considered an important part of this puzzle, perhaps even hinting at the presence of a ‘media habitus,’ indicating the way in which users position themselves in and navigate the world.

Discussion: Media, socially constructed socializing agents

In the current article, we sought to answer which media repertoires can be distinguished among the Flemish population (RQ1) and what their wider sociodemographic characteristics are (RQ2), as well as investigate their relationship to different forms of cultural participation (RQ3). In doing so, this article strived to question whether wide availability of media today has brought about what some have thought to be media’s potential to be a democratizing force.

In our answers to RQ1 and RQ2, we found that the social stratification of media use still persists in the six types of media repertoires we identified in Flanders. This echoes conclusions from studies on media literacy and the digital divide, which argued that while the primary divide of access has closed, but that a secondary divide in usage remains (Cho et al., 2003; Hunsaker and Hargittai, 2018). We see this reflected in the strong sociodemographic demarcations of media repertoires. By looking at the entirety of media that a user regularly consumes, media repertoires allow researchers to more profoundly investigate the habitual media practices of users. Yet even when adopting a crossmedia perspective, we found that media repertoires in Flanders today are still clearly marked by social stratification. Users of the broadest repertoire (5: *Allrounders*) appear to be predominantly male, while an older cohort of women retains a much narrower repertoire by comparison (1: *Television oriented*). The results for the gender distribution in media repertoires are surprising, considering women have been shown to exhibit higher likelihoods for omnivorous tastes (Purhonen et al., 2010) and highbrow cultural activities (Christin, 2012). Similarly, repertoires that navigate ‘highbrow’ or ‘quality’ media (e.g. broadsheet newspapers, classical music) on a more regular basis appear to be predominantly used by higher educated users. While access might become increasingly universal, we find that the specific constellations of media practices that users create are still strongly tethered to their sociodemographic profile and remain marked by social stratification.

In line with previous research, we find very distinct media repertoires occur within the Flemish population, as well as within similar sociodemographic profiles. Some repertoires are structured around a specific medium (e.g. repertoire 1), while others are tailored toward a specific type of content (e.g. repertoires 3, 4, and 6). Moreover, in line with previous research on cultural lifestyles in Flanders (Roose et al., 2012), we found that both ‘snobbish’ and ‘omnivorous’ repertoires are used by higher sociodemographic profile users. This connects to two important paradigms regarding the relation between socioeconomic status and cultural preference/participation: (1) Bourdieu’s cultural homology thesis (Bourdieu, 1984), which states that there is an ‘isomorphic relation’ (Coulangeon and Lemel, 2009: 47) between the social position of users and their cultural tastes, and (2) Peterson’s omnivore thesis (Peterson & Kern, 1996), which argues that high-status groups are increasingly exhibiting an openness toward a wide variety of cultural items (Veenstra, 2015). Following our analysis, we find evidence that both models are not mutually exclusive but occur simultaneously. We base this conclusion on the following grounds. The first

Table 6. Estimates for media repertoires and cultural participation.

Parameter	Popular concerts and festivals		Museums		Classical concerts and festivals		Art museums	
	B	Significance	B	Significance	B	Significance	B	Significance
Model 1								
(Intercept)	-1.319	***	-1.823	***	-1.758	***	-1.766	***
Repertoire 2	1.151	***	1.022	***	0.627	***	1.000	***
Repertoire 3	1.980	***	1.045	***	-0.730	***	0.724	***
Repertoire 4	1.614	***	0.538	***	0.080		0.487	***
Repertoire 5	2.277	***	1.685	***	1.378	***	1.983	***
Repertoire 6	1.721	***	1.540	***	1.302	***	2.155	***
Repertoire 1	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
Model 2: All								
(Intercept)	-2.439	***	-2.603	***	-5.149	***	-3.042	***
Repertoire 2	0.695	***	0.831	***	0.663	***	0.836	***
Repertoire 3	1.082	***	0.963	***	0.496	*	0.785	***
Repertoire 4	0.771	***	0.494	*	1.266	***	0.623	***
Repertoire 5	1.361	***	1.309	***	1.578	***	1.669	***
Repertoire 6	0.955	***	1.228	***	1.432	***	1.909	***
Repertoire 1	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
Female	-0.392	***	-0.138	*	0.131		0.110	
Male	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
15-17	-0.206		0.660	***	-0.261		0.807	***
18-34	0.411	***	-0.168	*	-1.193	***	-0.092	
55-64	-0.396	***	0.097		0.944	***	0.430	***
65+	-0.793	***	0.407	***	1.594	***	0.722	***
35-54	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
Lower (primary) education	1.906	**	0.306		1.219		0.135	
Secondary education	1.971	***	0.578		2.017	*	0.603	
Higher education	2.302	***	1.234	*	3.087	**	1.486	**
No education	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
Low subjective income	-0.419	***	-0.352	*	0.049		-0.507	***
High subjective income	-0.149	**	0.163	**	-0.106		0.145	*
Medium subjective income	0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a		0 ^a	
(Scale)	1 ^b							
(Negative binomial)	1 ^b							

^aSet to zero because this parameter is redundant. ^bFixed at the displayed value.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

steps of our empirical analysis indicated that very distinct media repertoires occur within similar sociodemographic groups. This is perhaps most clear in the case of repertoire 5 and 6, respectively, termed the *allrounders* and *quality seekers*. While the media use of *Allrounders* offers support for Peterson's thesis that high-status groups engage in more omnivorous forms of cultural practice, evidenced in their wide range of both media and cultural activities, we find that the opposite is the case for *quality seekers*, which exhibit a more 'snobbish orientation' (cf. Roose et al., 2012) regarding their media practices. While fitting within the same sociodemographic profile as the *allrounders*, the repertoire of *quality seekers* is noticeably more narrow in its preference of a limited set of 'finer' media practices. However, in line with previous research (Rimmer, 2012), we find that omnivore taste patterns are not restricted to high-status groups alone, as the younger *budding enthusiasts* also appear to exhibit omnivorous tendencies in their media practices, albeit to a lesser extent than the *Allrounders*.

When we combine this with the results from our regression analysis, however, we equally find support for the homology thesis, which suggests that 'class positions throughout the class hierarchy are accompanied by specified cultural tastes and specialized modes of appreciating them' (Veenstra, 2015: 135). While the *allrounders* exhibit overall higher relative likelihoods for cultural participation, the *quality seekers* overtake the *allrounders* when it comes to their participation in art museums. Our results thus indicate that there is a homology between the structure and composition of media repertoires and the cultural participation patterns of users. For instance, we found that the openness to various media items exhibited by the *allrounders* equally translates to an openness toward all kinds of cultural practices. This is strongly contrasted by the *quality seekers* of repertoire 6, who distinguish themselves through their taste for a handful of 'highbrow media practices,' which in turn translates to a much higher relative likelihood to visit fine arts museums. We thus find support for the homology thesis, albeit with one important caveat: the homology we find does not occur on the basis of the social position of users but presents itself in an equivalence between the media practices that users create and their cultural participation habits.

With regard to RQ3, which sought to examine to what extent media repertoires might function as predictors for cultural participation, the structural homology between media repertoires and cultural participation supports the argument that media repertoires can be valuable predictors for cultural participation. Moreover, these results might hint at the possibility of a 'media habitus' of sorts (cf. Bourdieu, 1984): an emanation of a 'configuration of properties' that express the differences in 'conditions of existing' (Bourdieu, 1984). The concept of a media habitus also alleviates some of the tension between sociodemographic profile and media repertoires (see Figure 1) as the habitus is both 'a structuring structure, and a structured structure' (Bourdieu, 1984). Authors have indicated that media repertoires can be structured in very distinct ways, preferencing a specific device or type of content, or exhibiting an openness to a wide variety of tastes. The way in which repertoires are structured, and which media orbit at the center of the constellation, might thus flag how users behave in other realms of society, in this case cultural participation. Hovden and Moe, for example, have similarly argued that the use of certain media can 'flag' the public connection of users (Hovden and Moe, 2017: 404), and Van Eijck and Lievens have found significant relations between musical repertoires and attitudes concerning social integration and found that omnivorous musical tastes were negatively related to social isolation and slightly positively related to solidarity (Van Eijck and Lievens, 2008: 238), finding a similar equivalence between a user's 'openness' toward musical tastes and social integration. In line with these studies, media repertoire research can provide a valuable contribution by reconstructing a user's 'window upon the world,' and offering researchers a first glance into how these users might behave and

position themselves within it. Offering a point of departure for interventions aimed at closing cultural participation divide.

Lastly, this study has a few limitations. Although the Flemish participagion survey is uniquely suited to answer the research questions considered in this article, the last iteration of the survey was conducted in 2014. However, considering the participation survey is a longitudinal project, we argue that this study offers a blueprint for future research to monitor the relation between media repertoires and cultural practices longitudinally. Moreover, our results are specifically focused on Flanders, the Dutch language northern region of Belgium. Similar data sets can be used for comparative research, for instance between language-regions within Belgium, but also internationally.

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Author biographies

Ruben Vandenplas is a PhD Candidate at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and a member of research group imec-SMIT-VUB and the Knowledge Center Culture and Media Participation. His research explores media participation and everyday media practices in a cross-media landscape.

Ike Picone is Associate Professor at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and coordinator of the Journalism, Trust and Participation unit at imec-SMIT-VUB, and promotor at the Knowledge Center Culture and Media Participation. The thread within his research is the study of news use practices within the broad field of journalism studies. He is particularly interested in disruptions on the crossroad of journalism, technological innovations and democracy.