

# Supporting the Possibilities of Urban Commoning in Montréal's Champ des Possibles

Progress Report

August 2021

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## Soutenir les possibilités de mise en commun urbaine dans le Champ des Possibles de Montréal

Rapport d'étape

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This report is also available in French.

## Introduction

### A Aims

This report presents results of an online survey conducted in 2020 by researchers from Concordia University and McGill University in collaboration with Les Amis du Champ des Possibles. The survey is part of a joint research project with four objectives:

1. To document the Champ des Possibles in terms of current uses and interests as well as aspirations for its future;
2. To get a fuller sense of who is interested in the Champ des Possibles and why;
3. To explore approaches to commoning as they apply to the Champ;
4. To support Les Amis du Champ des Possibles in its aims of participatory comanagement and maintaining the Champ as a permanent public green space and urban biodiversity reserve.

A brief overview of the study context is presented in the next subsection, and is followed by a description of the methods used for data collection. Thematic analyses of the results then form the main part of this progress report, which ends with brief comments on next steps.

### B Background

The Champ des Possibles is an urban prairie that has emerged over several decades on an abandoned railyard in Montréal's Mile End neighbourhood. This well-loved civic asset and public landscape is currently in a state of transition, with site decontamination expected to begin sometime in 2021. After the borough government procured the site (previously owned by the Canadian Pacific group of companies) in 2005, various studies and planning exercises, official public consultations, and community mobilisation revealed a widely-held preference for maintaining the Champ as a 'wild' green space, with broad support for prioritising its recreational, environmental, and artistic potential. Meanwhile, a convergence of collective interest in the Champ from residents, local groups, and individuals dedicated to protecting the space resulted in the creation in 2010 of Les Amis du Champ des Possibles, a non-profit organisation with three principal aims: 'to make the Champ a permanent public green space and urban biodiversity reserve; to promote and to encourage public education on natural science, history, and art; and to promote the creation of new urban green spaces and biodiversity corridors' (free translation from Les Amis du Champ des Possibles 2020 : 4). In 2013, the Plateau–Mont-Royal borough formalised a redevelopment plan for the general vicinity of the Champ (referred to as Saint-Viateur East), including an interim strategy for the Champ. Central to this was a four-year co-management agreement for the Champ with Les Amis. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, the site was formally redesignated as a natural green space. A revised version of the co-management agreement took effect in June 2017 for

three years, but this expired during the first major wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions on a renewal were underway when this report was finalised.

This partnership project, entitled 'Supporting the possibilities of urban commoning in Montréal's Champ des Possibles', links Les Amis with two university researchers, Prof. Amy Poteete from Concordia University and Prof. Nik Luka from McGill University, both of whom have expertise in commoning, community-based design, and co-production. It is supported by a Partnership Engage Grant from a federal agency, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The university researchers are working with Les Amis to coordinate a multidisciplinary team to co-produce knowledge about the Champ. In particular, we aim to document uses of, interests in, and aspirations for the Champ through a combination of direct observation, participatory research methods (e.g., focus groups, participant observation), and assessments of individual perspectives (e.g., surveys). Given rapid changes in the Mile End and Petite-Patrie context that have increased the dynamism of socio-ecological relations, we are exploring broadly participatory and decentralised processes of commoning (Alam & Houston 2020; Federici 2012; Linebaugh 2008; Velicu & García-López 2018) through which Les Amis can reinforce their ties to the community and track changes in social-ecological relations after the partnership project has been completed.

The Champ des Possibles exemplifies the challenges associated with post-industrial sites in city neighbourhoods. Urban residents around the world regularly reclaim abandoned spaces of production and transshipment, refashioning them to reflect their own contemporary needs and values. From Berlin to Hamburg, Malmö, Dublin, Paris, São Paulo, New York, and Portland, people have transformed old warehouses into social clubs, workshops, or art galleries, and abandoned railyards into markets, parks, and new neighbourhoods (Bresnihan & Byrne 2015; Davis & Gray 2019; de Visscher 2020; Groth & Corijn 2005; Strohmayer 2018). Such shared or common spaces, however, tend to be 'saturated' (Huron 2015) with people, uses, values, and interests. The competing visions and claims present what policy analysts call 'wicked problems' (Head 2019; Rittel & Webber 1973; Termeer *et al.* 2015): inherently ambiguous situations where clear courses of action simply do not exist. In Montréal's Champ des Possibles, although the borough negotiated a co-management agreement with Les Amis that supports a relatively non-interventionist approach to the site's regeneration, these are only interim arrangements. Given rapid gentrification of the adjacent neighbourhoods over the past two decades (Désilets 2020 ; Luka 2017), actors with strong financial and strategic interests in the Champ could drown out community voices when long-term planning begins, resulting in plans that 'tame' or 'domesticate' the space. To avoid foreclosing on possibilities preferred by many community stakeholders and to defend local civic interests, this project seeks to help Les Amis develop strategies to renew their ties to the diffuse, diverse, and dynamic publics who both engage with and value the Champ on an ongoing basis. With the recent approval of a decontamination plan and subsequent site interventions that will affect the site's ecology as well as shaping future possibilities of organisation and use expected in 2022, these are immediate time-sensitive needs.

Our project responds by exploring how to develop processes to support ‘commoning’—practices to sustain shared access to and care for resources and spaces, thus offering a broadly participatory, inclusive, and flexible alternative to conventional planning and governance (Blomley 2008; Bresnihan & Byrne 2015; Linebaugh 2008; Nightingale 2020; Strohmayer 2018). While commoning can avoid the exclusion of stakeholders and the loss of context-specific flexibility, both of which often arise with standard approaches to planning or management, it is difficult to achieve (McCay & Acheson 1987; Ostrom 1990; Poteete *et al.* 2010; Schlager & Cox 2017). In response, our intent is to co-produce knowledge that will enhance the ability of Les Amis to represent community interests in long-term planning and to support ongoing participatory and inclusive co-management of the site. Our findings will also contribute to theoretical debates about commoning, landscape planning, and urban design, and inform efforts to accommodate competing interests in other post-industrial (sub)urban sites.

### C Survey design and data collection

In the spring of 2020, the project team developed an online questionnaire to collect input from everyday users of the Champ des Possibles and its area. We sought to know more about the diverse publics who use the Champ, to find out how and why the Champ matters to these individuals, and to develop a better sense of how to ensure that community interests, concerns, and aspirations guide decisions about the Champ on an ongoing basis. Individuals were invited to depict experiences with, concerns about, and dreams for the Champ by participating in an online survey, offered in both French and English, that took approximately 45 minutes to complete fully. The questionnaires and survey method were all approved by the appropriate university ethics boards. Prospective participants were reminded that participation is entirely voluntary and that they would be able to exit the survey at any time and for any reason with no negative consequences. As the exercise was time-consuming, some individuals who chose to participate only made it only part-way through; their responses were recorded unless they asked for their input to be purged.

Participants were asked to respond to a wide range of open-ended (allowing them to type out answers in free form) and closed-ended (requiring them to tick boxes and/or choose specific responses) questions. The questions covered basic demographic data about the participants and their households, their impressions of and experiences in the Champ des Possibles and the surrounding area, and their impressions of and experiences with the management of and planning for the Champ and surrounding areas. The survey was completed anonymously unless respondents opted to provide their contact information so that the research team could send information about other research activities and/or a report based on the results. Even so, the results were stripped of personal data including email addresses and computer IP addresses for the purposes of analysis. This means that it is not possible to make links between individual respondents and the input they provided.

The online survey was available to participants from the 8th of June to the 27th of July 2020 (a period of seven weeks). The team recruited participants by email, through social media, and with posters and leaflets. We first reached out to members and followers of Les Amis du Champ des Possibles by email and social media (e.g., their Facebook and Twitter accounts). Members of the research team then circulated the invitation to other social media networks by using hashtags and posting to groups related to the sector (e.g., Le babillard du Mile End, Passages sur la voie ferrée - Ways to cross the train track). In addition, we sought the participation of people who pass through or live near the Champ by posting flyers at high traffic locations through or along the borders of the Champ (e.g., along the bike path, at the entrance from Bernard, on the fence near informal pedestrian railway crossings), in grocery stores in Mile End, and along streets in the neighborhood, and by distributing leaflets to residents and cars parked along de Gaspé and Henri-Julien. Public health restrictions related to the pandemic complicated recruitment. Although the most severe restrictions had been lifted by early June, ongoing limitations on the operations of businesses deemed non-essential and encouragement to work from home reduced opportunities for recruitment through work sites or with posters at cafes and restaurants. Out of prudence, we did not recruit participants in-person (e.g., by handing out leaflets).

A total of 137 responses were received, and while many respondents expressed concern about how long and time-consuming the questionnaire was in open-ended questions toward the end of the survey, only 32 of the 137 responses were incomplete. Two-thirds of the participants responded to the French version (91 of the 137 or 66.4 per cent, versus 46 or 33.6 per cent in English). It is important to remember that the respondents were not randomly selected, nor can they be considered fully representative of the diverse publics who are (potentially) interested in the Champ des Possibles. Thus, the results of this survey cannot be generalised beyond the 137 individuals who participated.

## Thematic Analyses

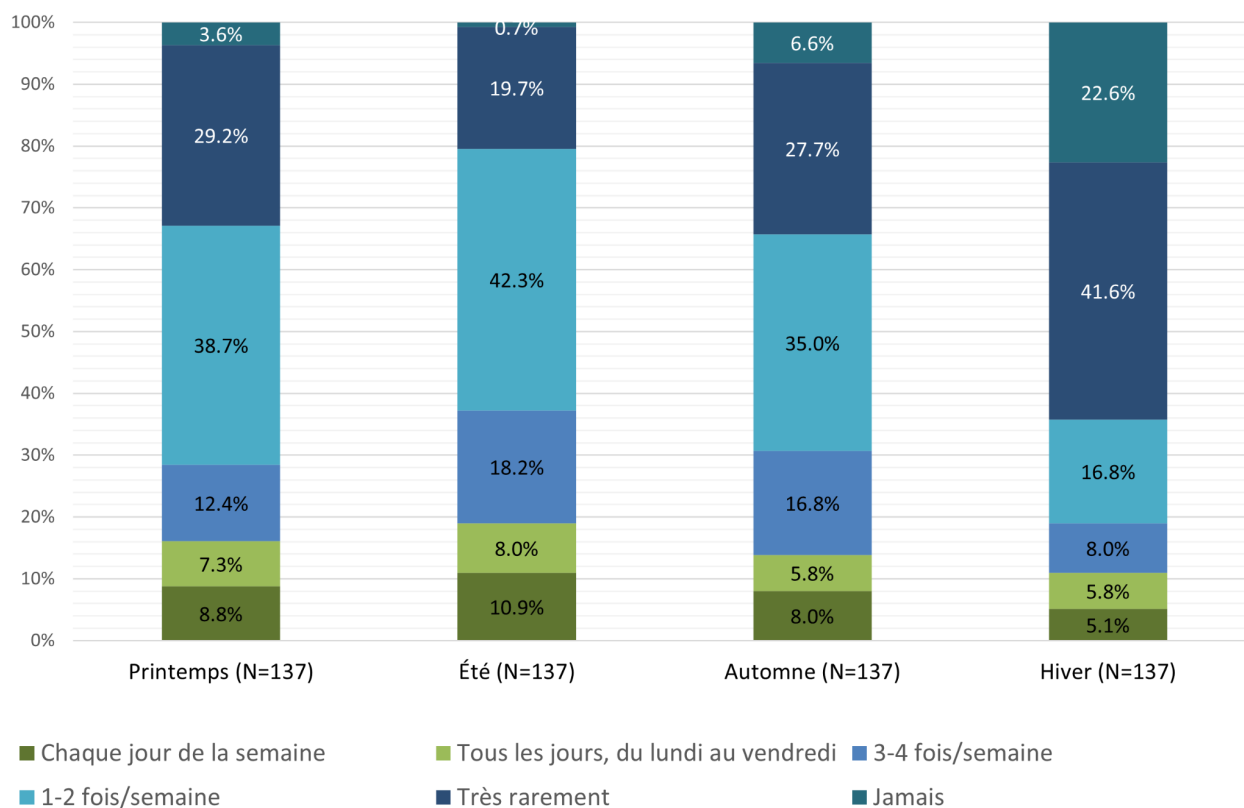
This section presents and discusses a selection of survey results related to our four main themes: (A) present and future uses of the Champ; (B) the values associated with the Champ; (C) maintenance and stewardship of the Champ as evidence of care and concern; and (D) its management and governance.

### A Present and future uses of the Champ

The first theme of 'uses' gathers some results on the frequency and duration of people's uses of the Champ, what they do when they go to the Champ, and what kinds of uses they would like to see more or less of in the future.

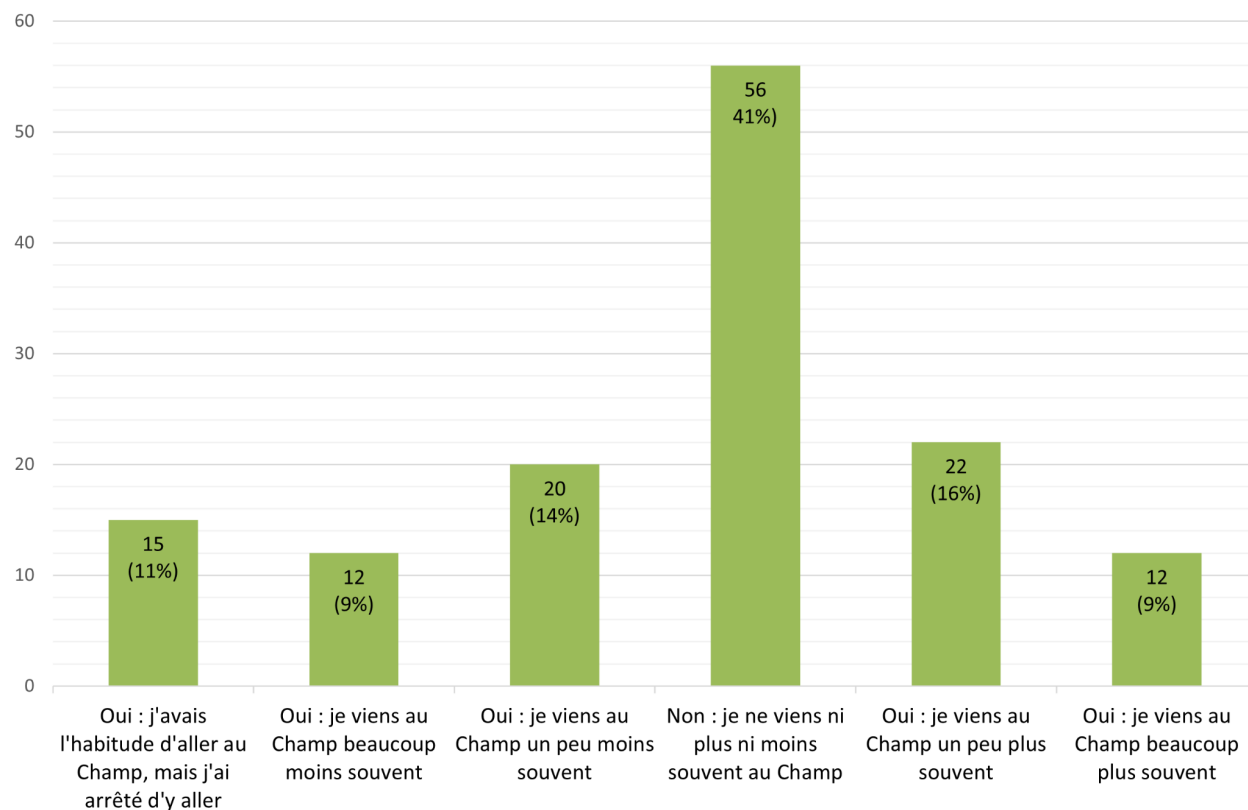


A1. In a typical week, before the COVID-related disruptions in mid-March, how often would you come to the Champ des Possibles?



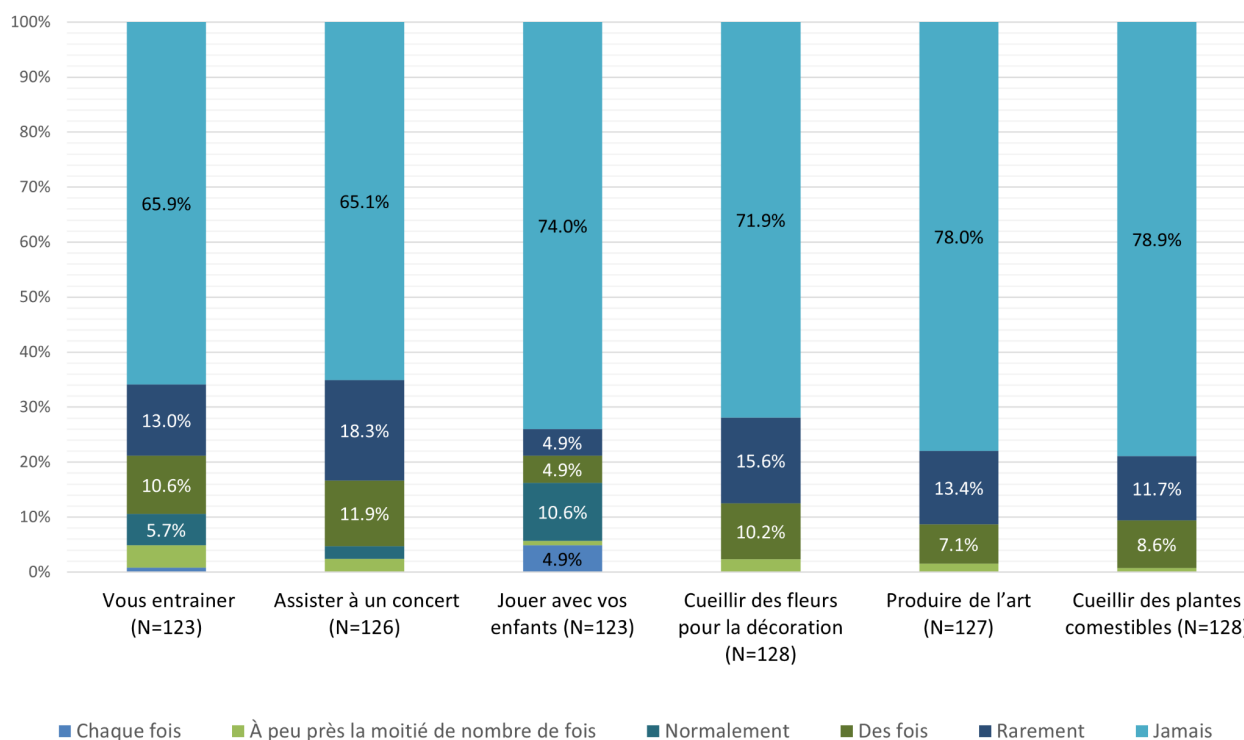
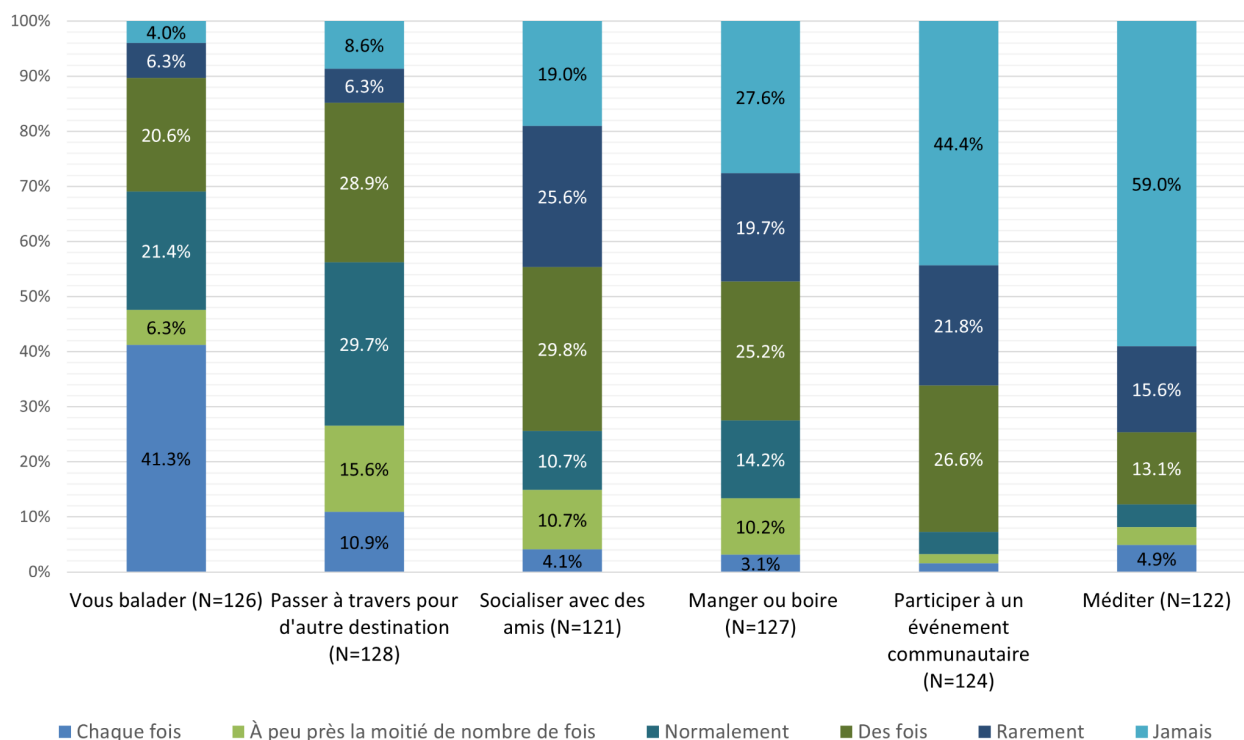
Survey participants were first asked about the frequency of their visits to the Champ before and since the pandemic. Although many respondents (41%) reported in Question A2 no difference in the frequency of visits to the Champ in the early period of confinement in Montréal, more respondents indicated that the frequency of their visits had decreased overall—either simply to a slight degree or totally to zero—rather than increased. The decrease in visits reflects the prominence of non-residents and commuters in the Champ among survey respondents, as recorded in Questions F1.1 and F1.2 (see Technical Appendix). Question F1.1 (N=100) indicates that over a third of respondents (39%) live somewhere other than Mile End. Question F1.2 (N=100) further elaborates on the question of proximity and asks how long it takes to walk to the Champ. Nearly a third of respondents (34%) indicated that it takes them more than ten minutes to walk to the Champ from where they live. The results for Question A2 also suggest a perennity or stability in the frequency of visits regardless of exogenous events like the pandemic, even if the individuals who are in the Champ are not the same—*i.e.*, some visit less often, but their absence is filled by others who visit more often.

*A2. In a typical week since the COVID-related disruptions in mid-March, has the frequency of your visits to the Champ des Possibles changed?*

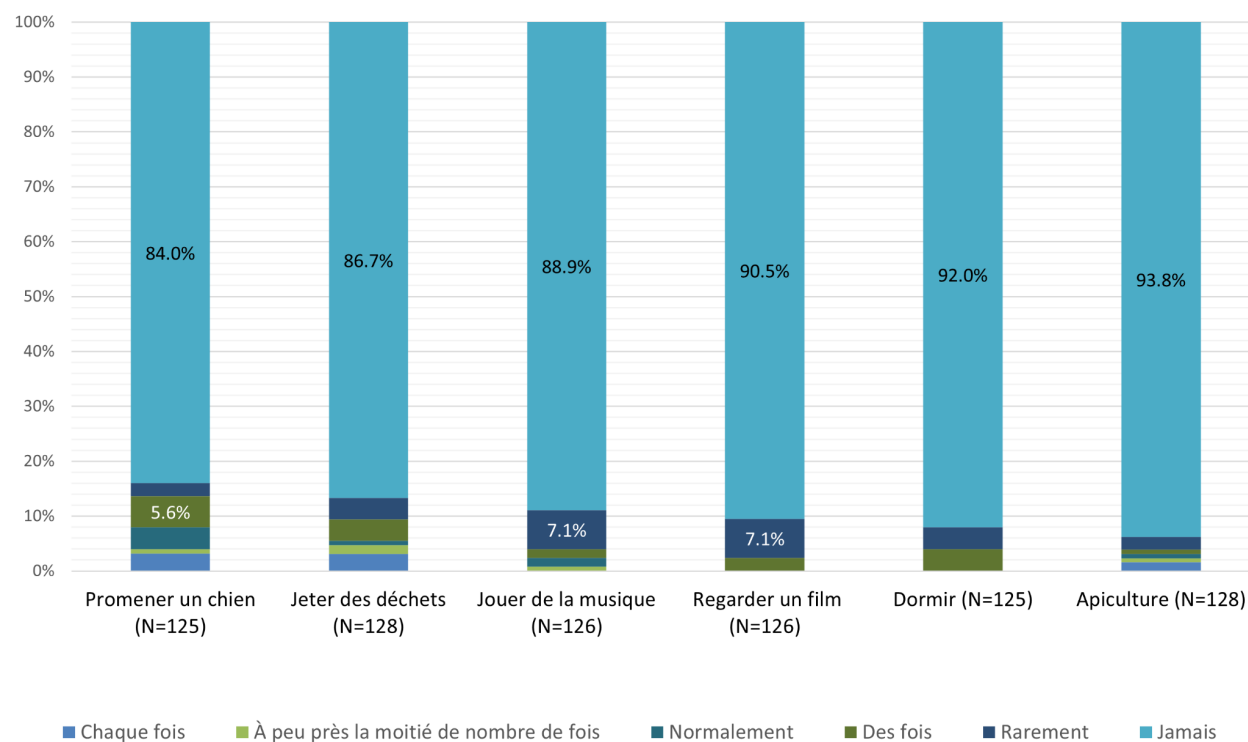


Respondents were asked in Question A5 about how often they do some of the commonly-seen activities in the Champ, from walking and playing, to playing music or picking flowers. The activities that respondents tend to do on every visit to the Champ, that is, with the most significant frequency, include strolling (41.3%), traveling through to reach other places (10.9%), meditating (4.9%), playing with kids (4.9%), and socialising with friends (4.1%).

A5.1. When at the Champ des Possibles, how often do you do the following?



*A5.1. When at the Champ des Possibles, how often do you do the following? (continued)*



When it comes to physical features that respondents would like or not like to see as part of the Champ in the future, the results for Question D4 (N=106) broadly indicate low support for options that involve permanently installed structures or that would permanently transform the Champ in some way. These include standard park benches (21%), mobile food kiosks (17%), permanent toilets (16%), exercise or fitness equipment (9%), jungle gyms or other playground equipment (8%), and stages for live events (4%). Instead, a majority of the respondents prefer that the Champ remain free of permanent structures. The results indicate moderate support for options which would not alter the landscape of the Champ in the long run. These include a limited number of chairs (35%), picnic tables (34%), and other objects to sit on (27%), mobile stages or screens for events (27%), and seasonal toilets (25%), all of which are easily removed.

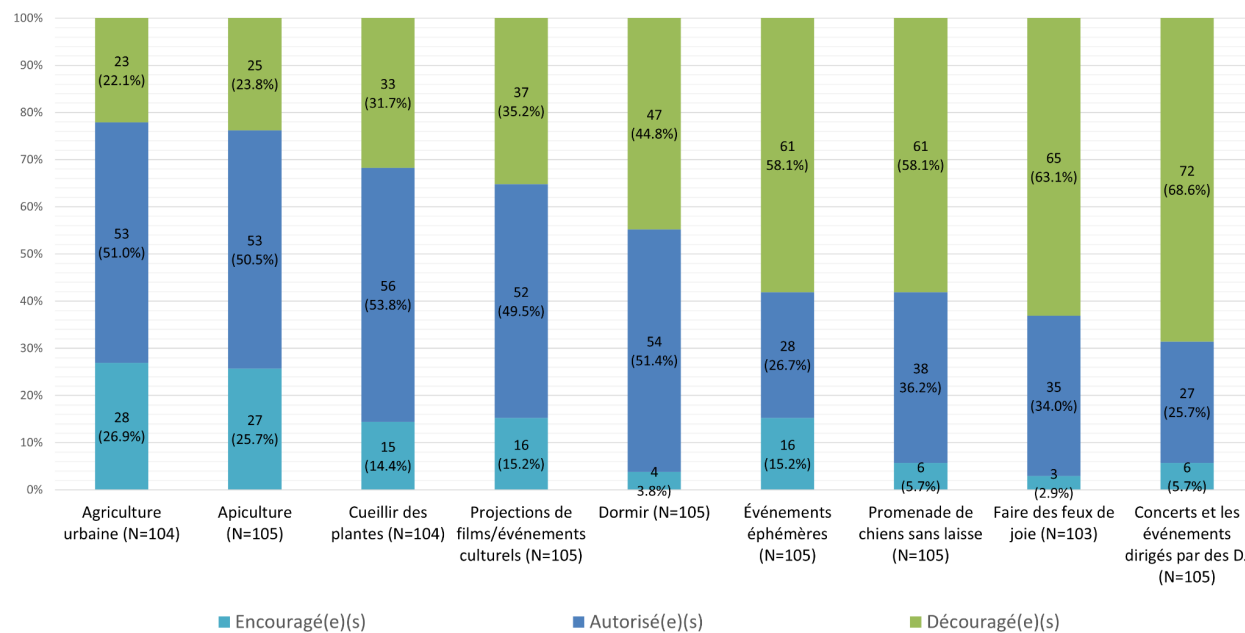
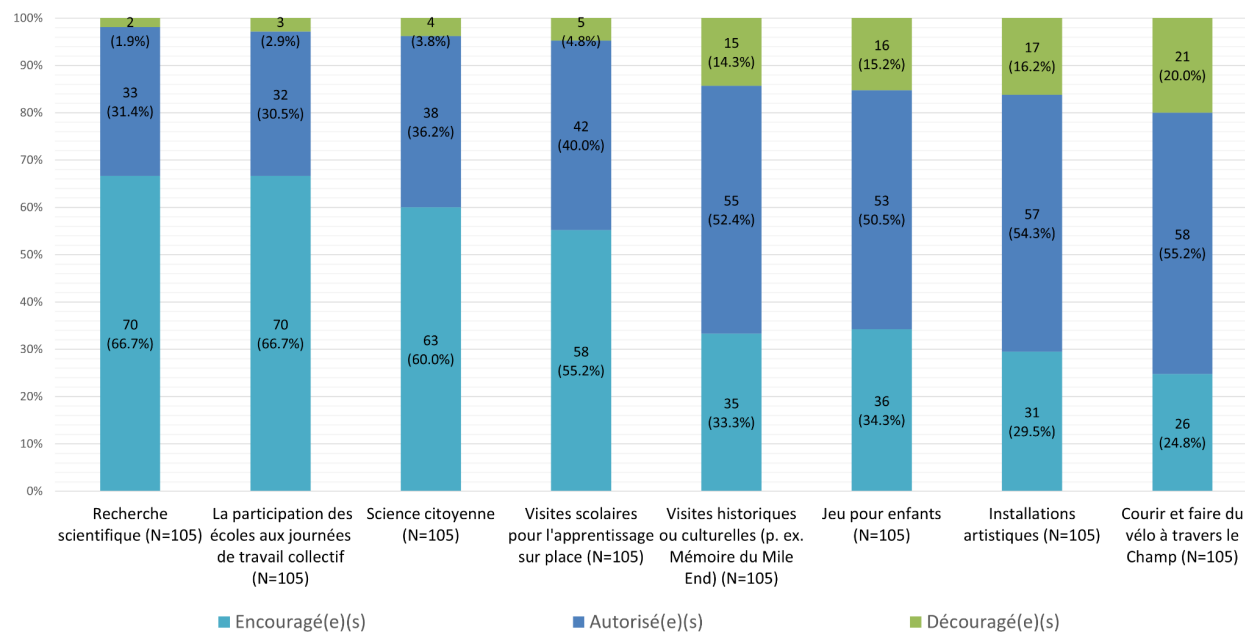
When asked in Question D7 about particular formalised uses of the Champ in the future, respondents indicated support for options that respect and conserve the site's vegetation and biodiversity, and low support for options that threaten these qualities. For instance, more than half of the respondents indicated that uses like scientific research (66.7%), participation of schools in collective work days (66.7%), citizen science (60.0%), and school visits for on-site instruction (55.2%) should be encouraged.

*D4. Which of the following would you like to see in the Champ des Possibles? Please select all that apply.*

Level of interest	Feature	Individuals (n=106)	Per cent
<b>Strong</b>	No permanent equipment or installations at all!	57	54 %
<b>Moderate</b>	A limited number of chairs and places for sitting	37	35 %
	Picnic tables	36	34 %
	Large lounge-type benches/platforms	29	27 %
	Seasonal/mobile stages/screens for events	29	27 %
	Seasonal (temporary) toilet facilities	26	25 %
<b>Weak</b>	Standard park benches	22	21 %
	Seasonal/mobile food stalls	18	17 %
	Permanent toilet facilities	17	16 %
<b>Very weak</b>	Equipment for exercise/fitness	10	9 %
	Playground equipment	9	8 %
	Permanent stage for events	4	4 %

At the same time, more than half of the respondents indicated that uses like concerts and DJ-led events (68.6%), bonfires (63.1%), the presence of off-leash dogs (58.1%), and pop-up events (58.1%) should be discouraged. These preferences might indicate an anxiety about disruptions to the current “looseness” of the Champ, about uses which would devalue and degrade the site, both symbolically and ecologically.

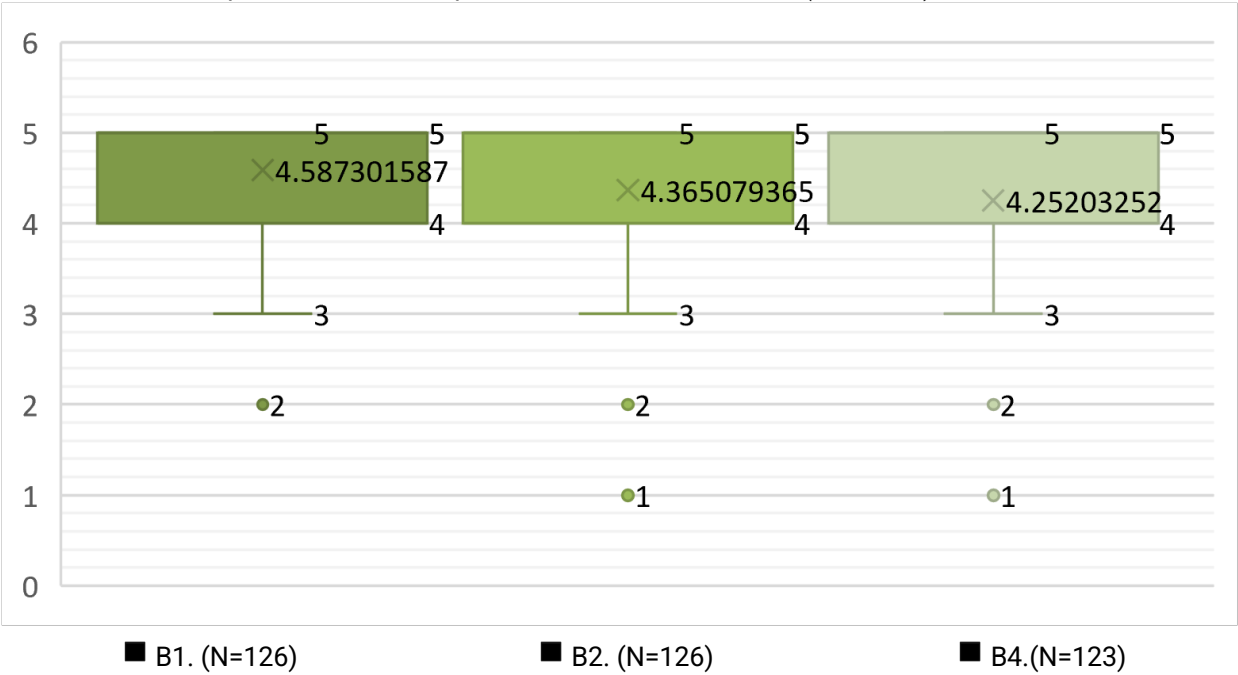
*D7.1. Please tell us how you feel about the following possibilities of how the Champ can be used in the future.*



**B Values associated with the Champ**

The second theme of ‘values’ gathers some results on the importance of the Champ, its perceived value for the area and for the city at large, the importance of particular activities in and uses of the Champ, and concerns and hopes about the future of the Champ. Respondents were asked in Questions B1, B2, and B4 to rate the importance of the Champ, for themselves personally, for the neighborhoods that surround the Champ, and for Montréal broadly, from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) stars. For respondents (B1, N=126), the results indicate a highly favourable personal valuation of the Champ—70.6% assign a five-star rating. This is not a surprise given that those who participate in a survey like this are more likely to feel a personal stake in the matter under analysis. In the view of respondents, the Champ declines in importance as the point of reference shifts from themselves to the area and then to the city. Nonetheless, their evaluations remain decidedly positive. The distributions of the 1-to-5-star ratings are provided for Questions B1, B2, and B4 in the Technical Appendix.

- B1. How important is the Champ des Possibles for you? (☆☆☆☆)
- B2. How important is the Champ des Possibles for the surrounding neighbourhoods? (☆☆☆☆)
- B4. How important is the Champ des Possibles for Montréal? (☆☆☆☆)

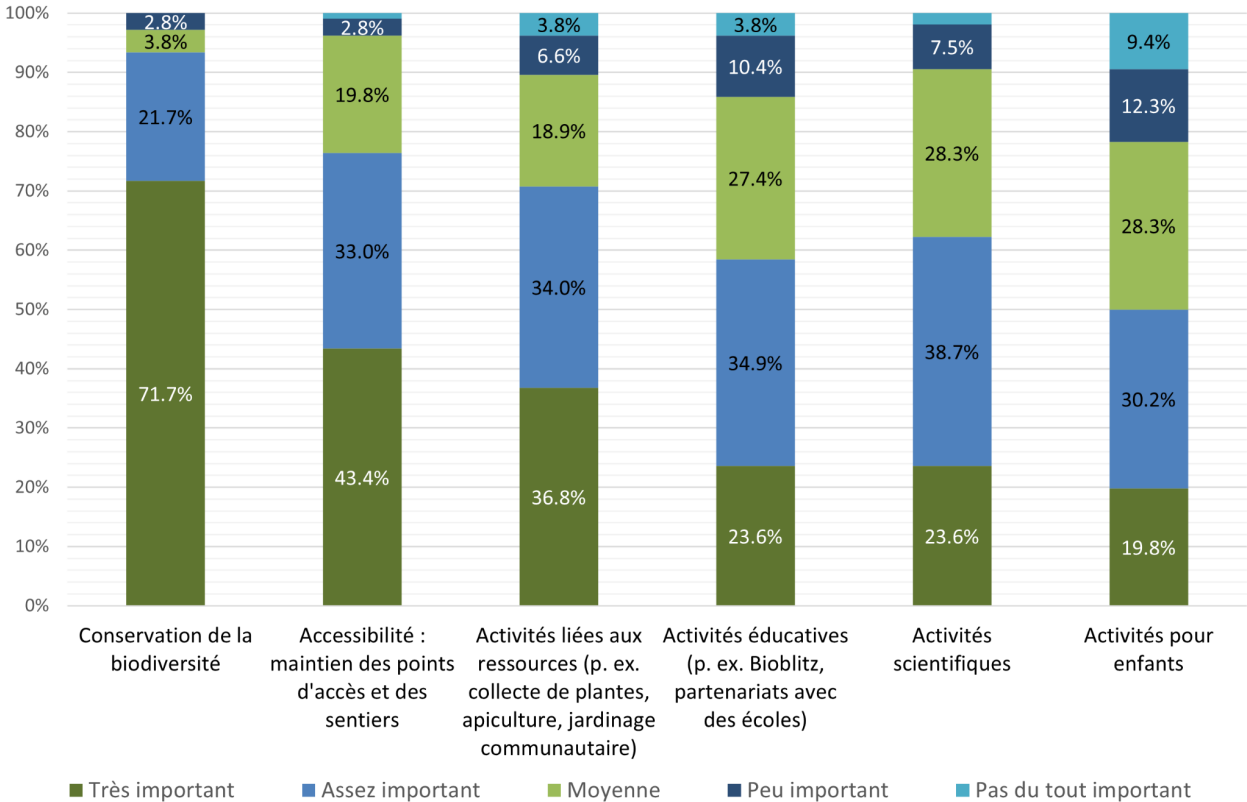


The above chart illustrates the dispersion of the data, with the boxes indicating the range of the first quartile (25th percentile) to the third quartile (75th percentile) of the responses to the question. An “X” inside the box identifies the median or halfway point in the distribution. The whiskers illustrate the maximum and minimum values less than or equal to 3 Standard Deviations from the median. The dots outside the whiskers depict responses that are statistical outliers, i.e. more than 3 Standard Deviations away from the median. This chart does not illustrate the quantity or distribution of responses within the ranges.

Part B of the Technical Appendix also contains word clouds based on comments left for Questions B1, B2, and B4. Where comments were provided, respondents underscored the ecological importance of the Champ: that it provides ‘nature’ in a borough whose densely built-up fabric has excluded so much of it. Access to green space where one can be up close with shrubs and trees and insects and birds is, for many respondents, an undervalued necessity for life in an urban landscape. Many also cite the Champ’s ‘wildness’, both in terms of its physical makeup and its communitarian development and management, as an exemplary feature, applicable (as a kind of model) for the city of Montréal at large.

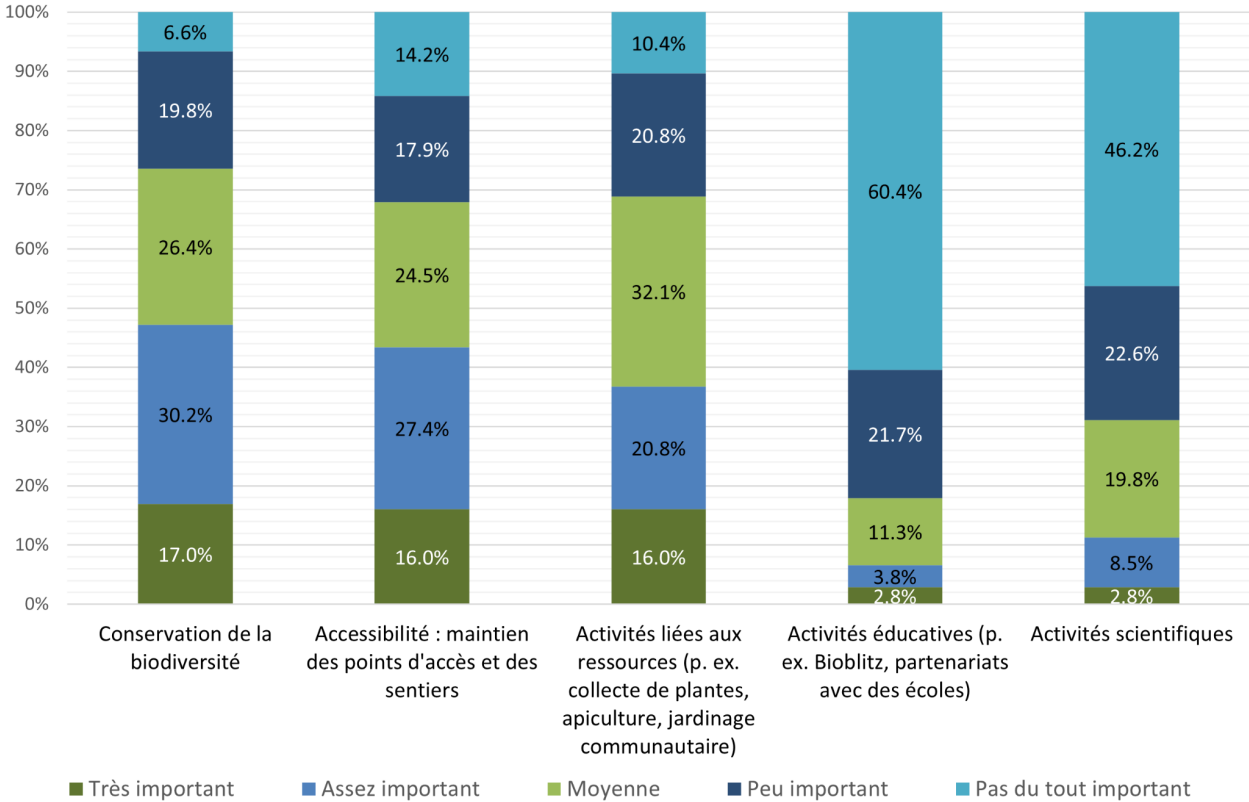
Responses to Question D3.1, which asks about the importance of specific activities in and uses of the Champ, offer a glimpse into what people value both about the Champ itself and about similar park-like places. Respondents emphasised matters related to biodiversity and the ‘natural’ aspects of the Champ—biodiversity conservation, activities related to resources like gathering plants, beekeeping, and gardening, and on matters related to education, discovery, and access.

*D3.1. Decisions will soon need to be taken about how to take good care of the Champ and what activities can take place there. How important is each of the following options to you?*





D3.1. Decisions will soon need to be taken about how to take good care of the Champ and what activities can take place there. How important is each of the following options to you? (continued)



These activities share a common preoccupation with the welfare of the Champ and those who inhabit it, and they are methods by which citizens can advocate for and serve the site. The activities which respondents indicate as completely unimportant, which is to say, outside of the ideal vision of the Champ, include temporary or overnight stays at the Champ, physical exercise requiring permanent equipment, and cultural events like concerts and films.

The responses to open-ended questions (C1.2, C1.3, C2, and C3.1) about ‘values’—about what is appreciated in the Champ and what’s to be avoided—illustrate what appears to be an incongruity in desires. What many respondents like most about the Champ is, as mentioned above, its wildness in contrast to the megastructures that surround it. This wildness is what provides the area with necessary greenery, a break from the city, and natural beauty, but it also represents what many respondents dislike about the Champ: a lack of or inadequate management structure. These responses capture the particular knot that the Champ is tied in: the very wildness which makes it a valuable place in the city also spurs behaviours that make it suffer, such as littering and illegal dumping, lighting campfires, making noise, and destroying some plants. These attitudes are reflected in the open-ended comments for questions C1.2, C1.3, C2, and C3.1, presented as word clouds below.





C3.1. What concerns do you have, if any, about the future of the Champ des Possibles?



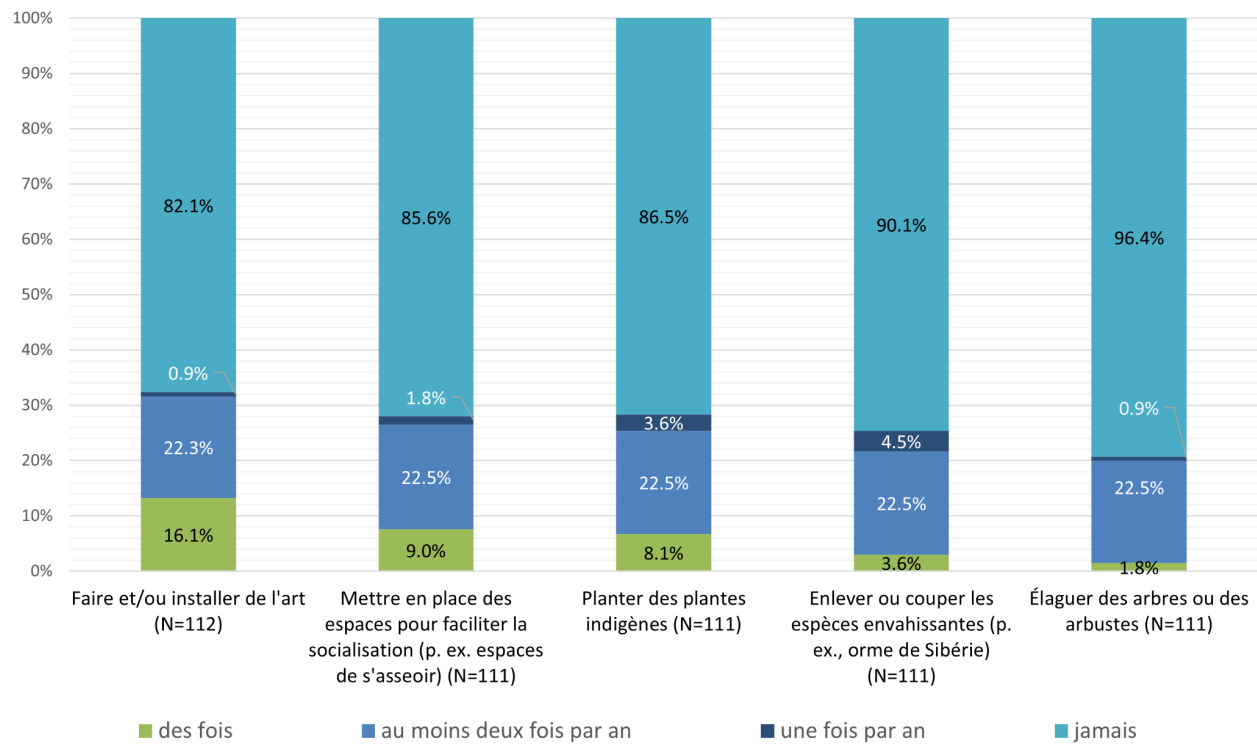
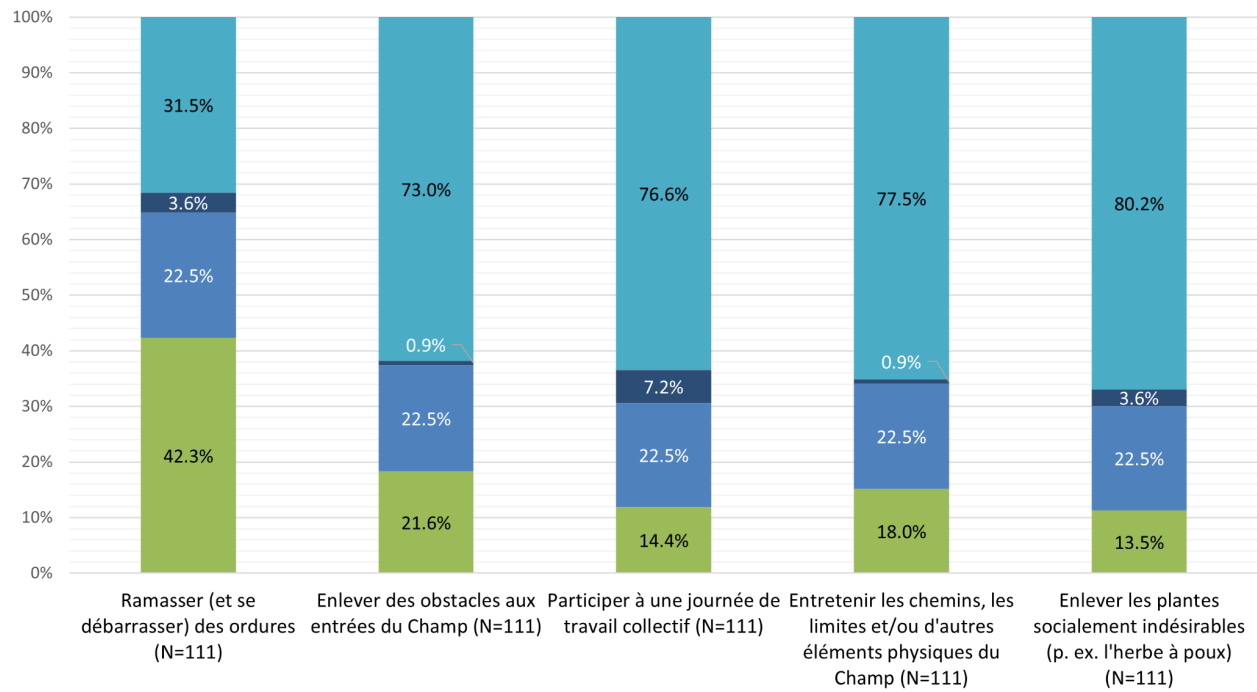
*There were 73 responses in French, and 40 responses in English. This word cloud is only based on the French responses.*

## C    Care and stewardship

The third theme of 'care' gathers some responses related to the kinds of actions people take to care for the Champ, their desire to participate in stewardship of the Champ, and what this stewardship looks like.

Respondents were asked in Question D1 about the activities they do to take care of the Champ, and how often they do them. The most frequent and common action taken is the disposal of garbage. Other common actions include removal of physical barriers to the site itself, and relatedly, the maintenance of paths, boundaries and other physical features. The most infrequent actions take more effort and require people, for instance, to prune trees and shrubs, cut away invasive plant species and plant native species.

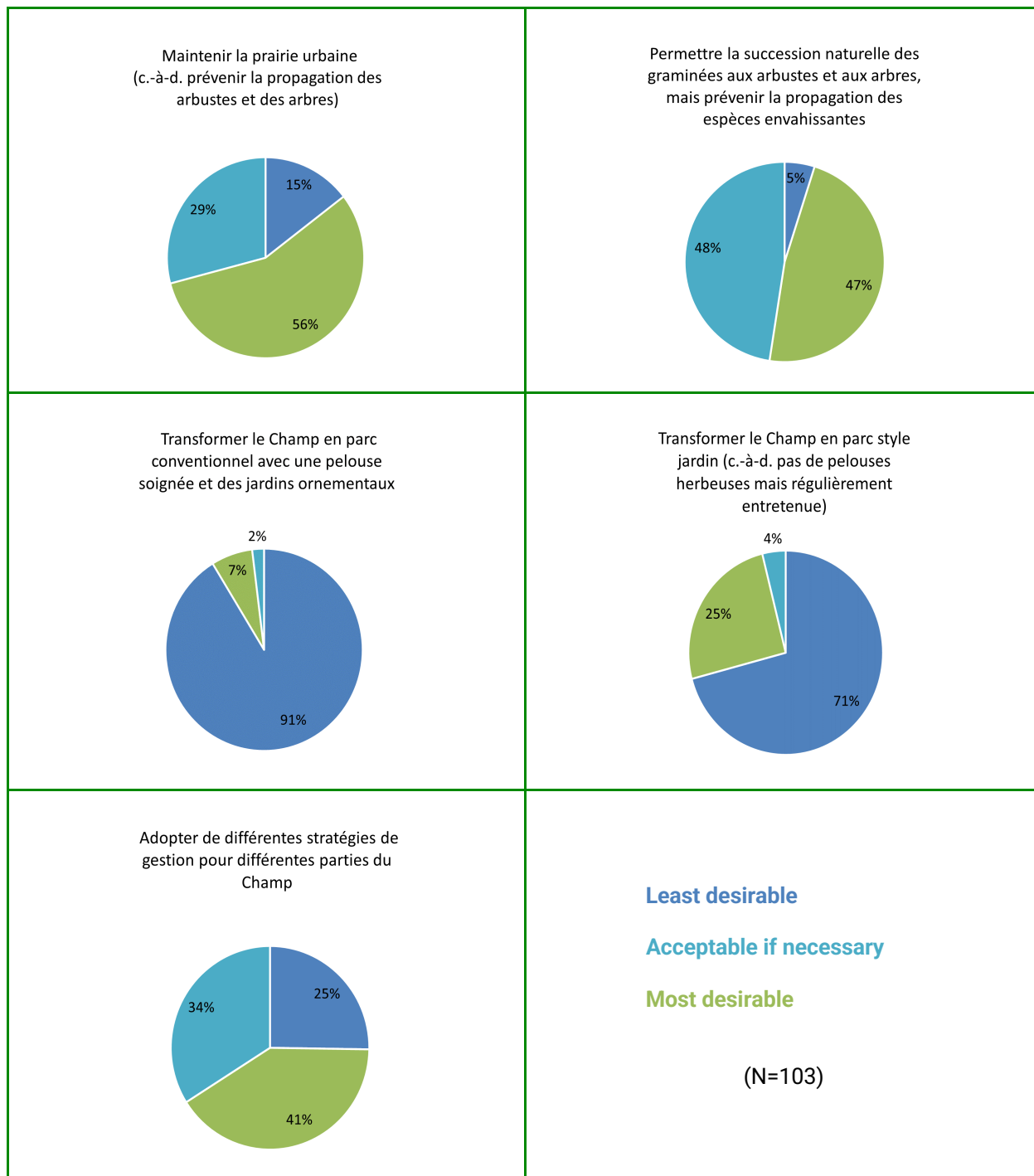
*D1.1. Please tell us how often you do each of the following to care for the Champ des Possibles.*



The ways in which people take care of the Champ seems tempered by the complexity of the action itself. The more involved the act of care, the less frequently individuals engage in it. This touches on a common issue with public participation and stewardship: the provision (or lack) of more-or-less formal channels through which citizens can act. Responses to Question D2 (see Technical Appendix) underline this issue; when asked whether they would like to participate in stewardship of the Champ in the future, nearly half of the respondents (48%) answered 'Maybe'. Whether this ambivalence indicates a personal lack of interest, limited capacity to participate in such activities, or rather a conditional hesitation—*i.e.*, that a person would participate if an opportunity were presented—remains to be seen.

In Question D8, respondents were asked about different management strategies for the vegetation within the Champ—different ways that we can care for, or not care for, the urban prairie. The results indicate that the most widely-desired strategy is to allow a succession from grasses to shrubs and trees, but to prevent the spread of invasive species, while the least widely-desired strategy is the 'conventional' one of manicured lawns, accented with decorative plants. These results suggest that respondents understand stewardship of the Champ as an abstention from any heavy-handed top-down approach (the Champ must be allowed to grow as it will grow), and a rejection of the regimented landscape strategies typically on offer in urban areas (garden-style lawns with ornamental greenery). It is a conception of stewardship that, at the very least, retains the possibilities of collective action as part of its enterprise.

*D8. The Champ des Possibles is currently an urban prairie with hedgerows (borders) and clusters of trees and shrubs. In the absence of active management, the shrubs and trees will spread and crowd out the grasses. Please tell us what you think of the following options for managing the vegetation within the Champ, and its general appearance.*



## D    Management and governance

The fourth theme gathers some responses related to the ‘how’ and ‘who’ of decisions made about the Champ, and to respondent involvement in and knowledge of the Champ’s management. Respondents were asked in Question D9.2 and D9.3 to elaborate on what they think works about the Champ’s management structure and about what does not. Although some respondents articulated specific opinions about the way decisions are made about the Champ, many more admitted to an overall lack of awareness of how such decisions are made, of who makes them, and even that any decisions are taken in the first place. As one respondent succinctly put it, *Quelles décisions ?* Whether this reaction stems primarily from an individual naïveté about matters of management in the public realm, a lack of appreciation for decisions that have been taken, or from a more systemic exclusion is an important question to be answered.

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Examples of responses to D9.2 and D9.3 (open-ended questions concerning management)

*D9.2. What do you like about how decisions are made about the Champ des Possibles?*

- **Quelles décisions ?**
- **Je ne sais pas assez précisément comment se fait la prise de décision pour avoir un avis. Mais j’apprécie qu’on prenne l’avis des citoyens par un questionnaire comme celui-ci.**
- **Je ne suis pas assez informée, mais j’ai pu observer l’évolution du lieu et le maintien de sa propreté et je déduis que de bonnes décisions ont été prises.**
- **Until today I wasn’t even aware it was a managed space**
- **Community-led, hands off approach**

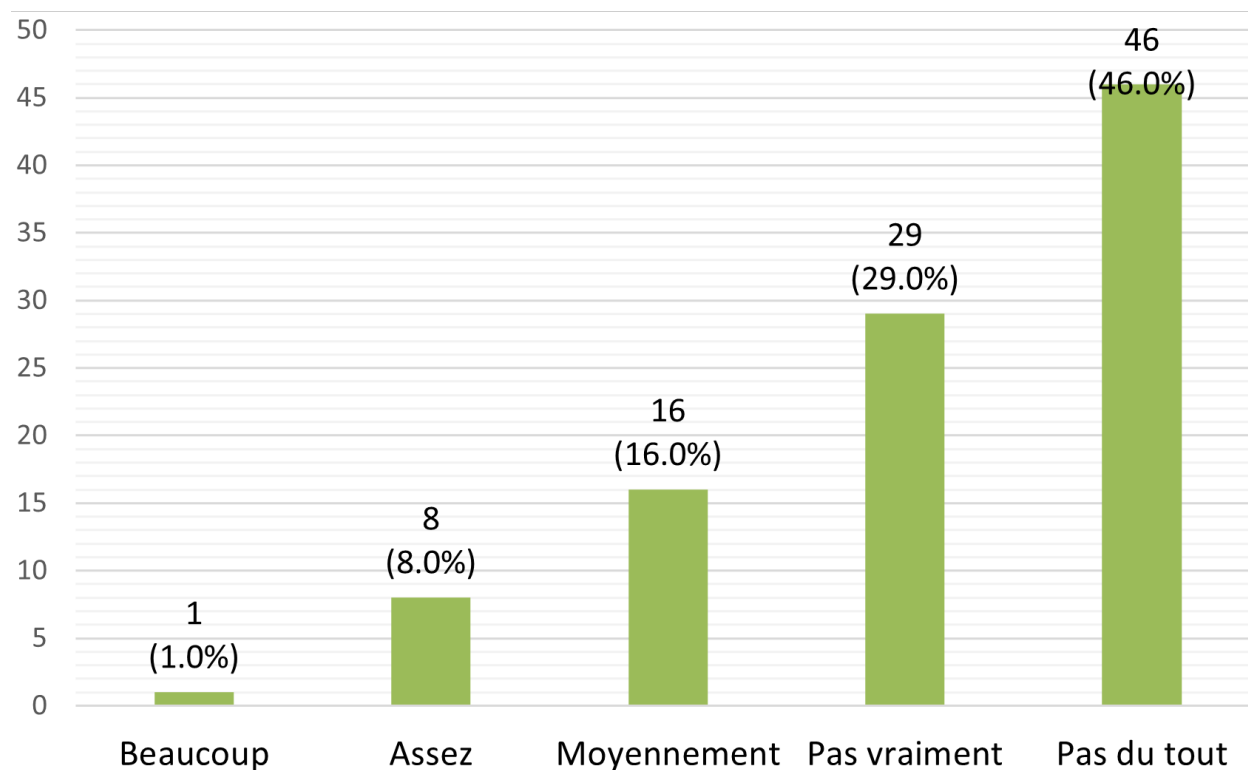
*D9.3. What do you dislike about how decisions are made about the Champ des Possibles?*

- **Pour un bénéficiaire du parc non impliqué, il semble ne pas avoir de direction claire, un peu du n’importe quoi.**
  - **Rien ne se passe jamais. Pas d’événements, pas d’aménagements, pas de campagne de communications. Vous semblez avoir des défis d’équipe à l’interne. Peut-être que d’engager une ressource pourrait vous aider à faire avancer les projets. Depuis 10 ans que je côtoie le champ, et les seuls aménagements qui ont été fait ont été fait par les promoteurs immobiliers locaux...**
  - **manque de transparence, lenteur du processus, moyens financiers déficients**
-



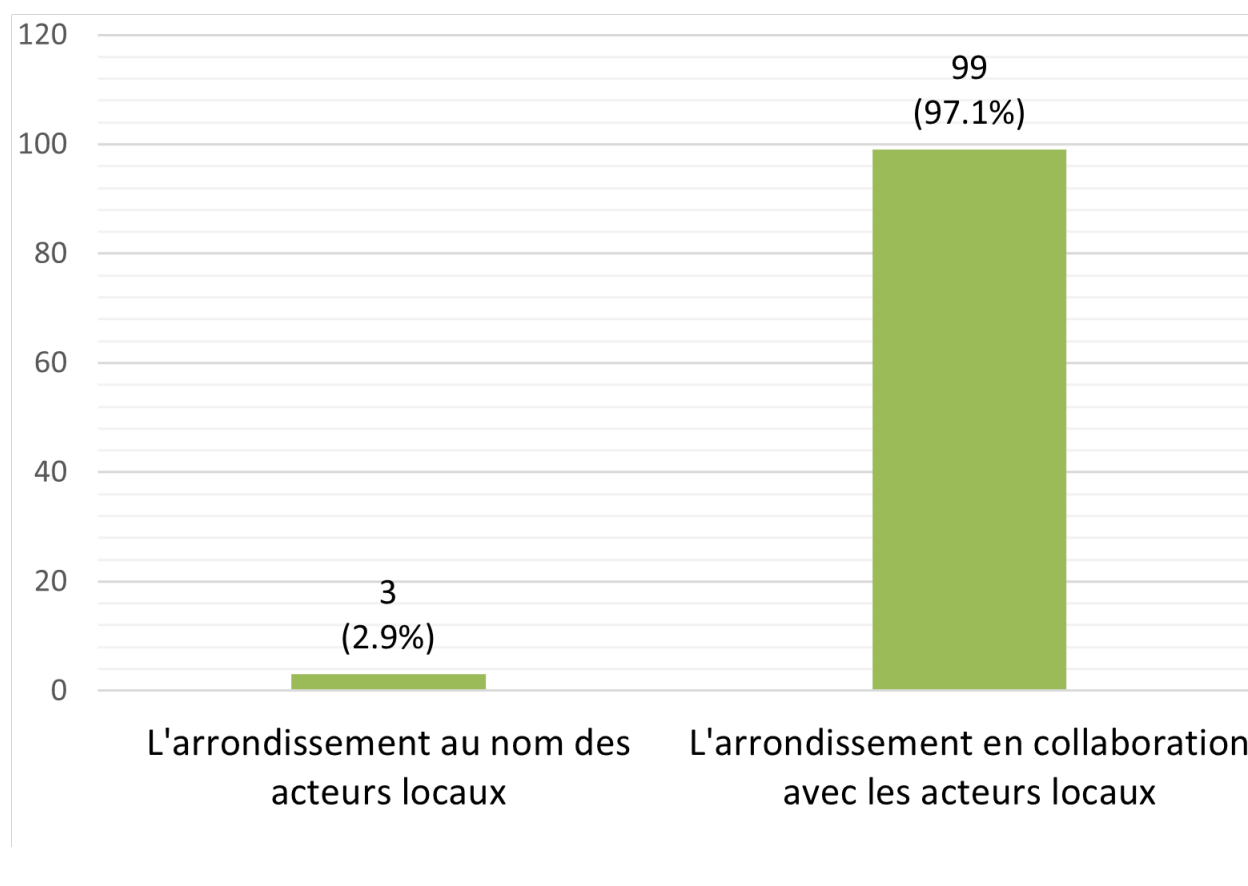
Many cite the participatory, community-led model advocated for by Les Amis and the arrondissement as a strength of the current management process. Others indicate conversely that this collective structure is not taken far enough, or that it does not deliver on its promise of collective governance because of a lack of communication and transparency.

*E1. How familiar are you with the current arrangements for making decisions about the Champ des Possibles?*



A parallel can be drawn between responses related to governance and management and those concerning more immediate acts of stewardship discussed in the previous section on 'care'. Though there is an obvious sense of duty to and fondness for the Champ, there is an ambivalence and/or unawareness when it comes to its management, and involvement in civic affairs broadly. When respondents were asked in Question E1 (N=100) about their familiarity with the way decisions are made about the Champ, nearly half (46.0%) indicated that they are *not at all* familiar, while another third (29.0%) indicated that they are *not so* familiar, and just one claimed to be very familiar. Questions E2 to E5 (see Technical Appendix) provide some context for these results, which indicate minimal involvement in local affairs in general, for the Champ or otherwise.

D10. In your opinion, who should make decisions about the Champ des Possibles?



It is worth considering the responses to Questions D10 and D11 in tandem. When asked (in D10) who should make decisions about the Champ, respondents expressed broad support for a collaborative arrangement between the arrondissement and local actors (which includes citizens, civil-society groups, businesses and other collectives that reside in the vicinity of the Champ). At the same time, nearly half of respondents (49%) indicate (in D11) that they have confidence that 'others' will responsibly make such decisions.

### Concluding thoughts and next steps

The results of our thematic analyses confirm that the Champ des Possibles is a space for which respondents show strong interest and significant care. While not based on a representative sample, and thus not generalisable, the survey results reveal strong support for the continuation of some sort of partnership between civil society and the borough, and strong opposition to subjecting the Champ to conventional landscape treatments (*i.e.*, ornamental gardens with expansive turf lawns).

Our online questionnaire yielded useful information about the Champ in terms of current uses and interests as well as aspirations for its future. Collective action will be important for realising these aspirations. Further work is needed, however, to develop a clearer sense of who is interested in the Champ, to explore how processes of commoning might mobilise a critical mass of individuals around shared values, and the ways in which Les Amis can pursue its mission of participatory comanagement to ensure that the Champ remains not only a public green space, but also a relatively unregulated green space that acts as a reserve for urban biodiversity.

This report presents findings for only the first of several crowdsourcing activities undertaken in 2020 and 2021. Over the last 12 months, our research team organised several focus-group discussions with diverse stakeholders and conducted detailed field observations of patterns of use and activity in the Champ. This material will be analysed in the coming months. We also anticipate pursuing several additional forms of research in collaboration with Les Amis du Champ des Possibles, including a more focused online questionnaire for local residents and employees, additional focus groups, and in-depth interviews with key actors who have influenced decision-making of the Champ, whether through social mobilisation or policy-making. The COVID-19 pandemic rendered impossible the participatory methods that we had planned for the warm season of 2020. With a one-year extension of the project timeline and the easing of public health restrictions, we look forward to undertaking more participatory forms of research in the Champ itself in the autumn of 2021. We anticipate that our multi-method research will generate important insights for Les Amis as well as others who care about the Champ and other informal public spaces. Certainly the results reported here will inform our planning for the final phases of this research collaboration. Ultimately, we hope that the results of this joint project will enhance public discourse, professional practice, and policy by empowering Les Amis to represent a broader range of community interests in municipal decision-making about the long-term future of the Champ.

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