



Summary of LSE Podcast #30 – Noise management & urban planning policies for concert cafés in France with the Collectif Culture Bar-bars

This episode of the Live Style Europe radioshow featured Chloé Le Bail from the Collectif Culture Bar-Bars (CCBB), the French federation of cultural bars, cafés and clubs. This episode, focusing on the noise management & urban planning policies of CCBB members, was recorded in French, and we propose here a short written summary in English.

What is the Collectif Culture Bar-bars ?

Collectif Culture Bar-Bars (CCBB) is a French association gathering managers of bars, concert cafés and clubs on the French territory. The association was born in Nantes and gathers 520 members. These members represent bars, cultural cafés and live music clubs which are places of conviviality. CCBB members have culture as a driving force, all types of cultural, and can organise some concerts.

CCBB's main functions are to:

- Defend their members and allow them to pursue their activities in the most optimal conditions (cultural and party activities);
- Help their members navigate through regulatory challenges and represent their interests towards policy-makers;
- Develop the places they represent as being the first stage for many artists: amateur, professionals, emerging and international;
- Develop partnerships between their members and other cultural events such as dance or music festivals, shows for children, Record Store Day, etc;

You can visit CCBB's website here: <https://www.bar-bars.com/>

What are the main sources of noise for bars and concert-café in city centers?

CCBB was able to identify two objective sources of noise:

- The music, when concerts are happening, especially the bass frequencies. These can be monitored to decrease noise disturbances perceived by neighbours.
- The sound emitting from the clients (bursts of laughter or voice), especially when there is a big terrace or when it is late in the evening.

CCBB points out that noise disturbances felt by neighbours are very subjective, and most of the time individual cases: only 1 or 2 neighbours are complaining whereas the other neighbours are not. It depends really on the individual.

Have noise complaints risen since Covid, among CCBB members?

CCBB did not notice a rise in the numbers of complaints since the end of Covid restrictions, but rather a different spread of the cases. There are still some cases in big urban centers, as before, but now there also some complaints in new neighbourhoods that were not so residential before COVID as well as in middle-sized cities. Indeed, after COVID lockdowns there were massive migrations of populations from city centres to more residential areas, which is what triggered this spread of noise complaints against bars and concert-café.

Moreover, CCBB have noticed a rise in opening of new bars and cultural cafés recently, and also a change in habits for the customers: they come less to just have a drink but rather seek cultural events: concerts, exhibitions, show where they can come with their kids...

How do CCBB members manage the relationship with neighbours and sound management in general?

It's quite a simple answer: through privileged meetings and regular contact with their customers and neighbours. When a concert or event takes place, the neighbor can contact directly the bar or café manager if they are disturbed by the noise.

In some cases, when there is a real noise problem identified, the managers make some construction work to improve the soundproofing of the building. It can go from massive work (changing of windows, soundproofing the walls) to simple solutions such as felt-pads for chairs to avoid that they make too much noise when they put them away at the end of the night, or, do concerts a little bit earlier than usual, for the sound to not continue after 21:00 or 22:00.

CCBB accompanies individually each of their member, if needed. Each case is different and the solutions found need to be tailor-made to the particular issues faced by their member.

CCBB also looks at what is done in terms of sound management and sound policies in other European countries, and they try to make links with other similar organisations abroad, in a spirit of cooperation, inspiration and exchange.

Are CCBB and their members generally involved in urban planning policies?

Today, in terms of public policies in cities or metropolies, CCBB and their members struggle to have nightlife included in urban policies and public spaces management issues. However, CCBB was able to achieve, two years ago, at national level the passing of a law on the *principe d'antériorité* [precedence principle]. It is a principle which already exist for other sectors, such as the agro-alimentary domain. The idea is: today, if someone comes to live (rent or buy) in an accommodation near a cultural, touristic or sports place, they cannot file complaints in a relentless way while the cultural place does its part in terms of sound and noise management. Today, this principle is inscribed in French law.

Is CCBB optimist regarding the evolution of public policies which would better protect bars, cultural cafés and clubs from noise complaints?

CCBB is optimist because they are more and more integrated in public policies, and also more recognized as Political actors (which is engaged in the city). They are not considered anymore only as places of debauchery and alcohol or drugs. They are fully considered as social, cultural and economic actors and can have a say in urban planning policies and policies which have an impact on their members' work.

A big thank you to Chloé for accepting this interview!