

PERFORMING ARTS FLANDERS

The performing arts in Flanders are at a turning point. In recent times, the interplay between talented artists, organisers and intermediaries has resulted in a rich and dynamic performing arts landscape. But our society is in full transformation. Developments of a social, economic and cultural nature demand innovative answers and new working models.

How can we make the performing arts landscape a sustainable breeding ground for tomorrow's society? This landscape sketch of the performing arts in Flanders is an appeal to both politics and to the professional field to think out of the box and give shape to the artistic practice of tomorrow.

WWW.PERFORMINGARTSFLANDERS.BE

TRANSFORMERS

LANDSCAPE SKETCH FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
FROM FLANDERS AND BEYOND

VTi

Institute for the
Performing Arts

FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE

PERFORMING ARTS FLANDERS

TRANSFORMERS

LANDSCAPE SKETCH FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
FROM FLANDERS AND BEYOND

CONTENT

FOREWORD	11
PART 1 – LANDSCAPE SKETCH	15
After growth comes the flowering	17
Landscape sketch of the performing arts <i>VTi (Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders)</i>	
Introduction	17
A layered and diverse architecture	25
The living capital of the performing arts	65
Presenting on the public forum	82
Conclusion	98
PART 2 – BACKGROUND READINGS	103
Drama on the international market	105
The impact of the crisis on the international production and presentation of performing arts from Flanders <i>Joris Janssens, Sofie Joye, Bart Magnus</i>	
A living conversation in a wild bar	123
Or: how much participation can art bear? <i>Erwin Jans</i>	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	140
ABOUT FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE	146
COLOPHON	147





Tauberbach – Alain Platel & Münchner Kammerspiele & les ballets C de la B © Chris Van der Burght

FOREWORD

The performing arts in Flanders are at a turning point. In recent decades, the interplay between talented artists, organisers, intermediaries and policy makers has resulted in a rich and dynamic performing arts landscape. Call it a flowering, one which is internationally recognised. But this boom is not guaranteed to continue in the future. Our society is in full transformation. Developments of a social, economic and cultural nature are putting pressure on the making, presenting and sharing of performing arts. These demand answers and new working models for cultural policy as well as the field. How can we make the performing arts landscape a sustainable breeding ground for tomorrow's society? That is the central question addressed in this publication.

VTi, the Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders, has a tradition of supporting these kinds of reflections. Compared with previous field analyses (*Metamorphoses*, 2007 and *Ins & Outs*, 2011), this landscape sketch for the performing arts has a different status. Along with the institutions supporting other art disciplines, VTi was commissioned by the Flemish Community to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the arts landscape, in order to support future policy. This resulted in a landscape sketch for the entire field of the arts, with the sector analysis for the performing arts appearing as an appendix. The new Minister of Culture, Sven Gatz (Open VLD), will be making use of all of this material. In April 2015, he will be presenting to the Flemish Parliament his strategic vision for arts policy for the period 2015-2019.

However, this landscape sketch is intended to support not only politics. This landscape sketch is also an appeal to the field, which has many tools available to contribute to giving shape to the artistic practice of tomorrow. A new Arts Decree was recently passed (December 2013). Like earlier legislative frameworks, the updated

Arts Decree allows significant room for initiative from below. In October 2015, the application files are expected for multi-year subsidies for the period 2017-2021. This publication is going to press at a time when arts organisations in Flanders are busy brainstorming about their place in the arts world and the society of tomorrow.

This landscape sketch is a plea for transformation. Anchoring the current boom in the Flemish performing arts is not simply a matter of self-preservation. The point is that the field itself needs to critically examine and discuss certain self-evident practices and ways of working that were sometimes very successful in the past. Our analysis identifies a need for new models of development, creation, presentation and audience-building, new incentives for the international and intercultural dimension of the practice of the performing arts. This need is not confined to the borders of the Flemish Community. Increasingly, performing arts are created and shared in a network that transcends national boundaries. All the more reason to share this landscape sketch with an international audience.

Meanwhile, VTi itself has just completed a far-reaching transformation process. On 1 January 2015, our organisation merged with the support centres for the visual arts and music to become one organisation: the Flanders Arts Institute (*Kunstenpunt* in Dutch). This innovation is also a part of the new Arts Decree. The core tasks of the Flanders Arts Institute remain similar to what the sectoral support centres did: field analyses, support of practice, and the development of international relations. The ambition is to use our new, larger structure to make stronger syntheses for the entire field of the arts in Flanders. At the same time, we will continue to respond to the diverse and specific needs of the various artistic disciplines. In short, we will continue to dialogue with you on developments in the performing arts, the wider art world and a changing society.

Joris Janssens

Head of Research – Flanders Arts Institute





PART 1
**LANDSCAPE
SKETCH**

AFTER GROWTH COMES THE FLOWERING

LANDSCAPE SKETCH OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

VTi (Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders)

INTRODUCTION

THE PERFORMING ARTS AS A CITY

Imagine the performing arts field in Flanders as a city. There is its architecture: its floor plan, its striking buildings, its spatial arrangement of necessary functions and institutions. There is also its living capital: the merchants, entrepreneurs, creative types and developers who produce wealth and well-being and keep the city fertile. And there are its inhabitants: the large group whom all of these amenities benefit. Together, these three structures – hardware, software, and users – make the city what it is: a complex clockwork with its own dynamics. If one of these structures has problems, the entire city suffers.

The task of the mayor and his or her administration is to keep all of these wheels in motion. This requires an overview of the layers that make up the whole, and insight into the strengths and impending changes. This is what this landscape sketch aims to do for the Flemish performing arts, to support the development of an arts policy with its finger on the pulse.

The city of the Flemish performing arts is a lively space. Its foundations were built in 1980s, upon which it grew strongly in the 1990s and 2000s, facilitated by an enthusiastic policy and economic prosperity. It has a strong reputation abroad as ‘the Flemish miracle’ thanks to the many ambassadors who testify to its strengths

throughout the world. The involvement of local residents in its development has also grown steadily, as has its dense network of creative interdependencies. There is not just one large cathedral that overshadows the rest, as in many other cities. The strength of this city is precisely its scepticism for sacred cows, and its continuous horizontal interaction between large and small structures. It works from the bottom up, from the free enterprise of its living capital. This city has much to defend: prosperity, innovation, versatility, reputation.

Keeping it strong in the coming five years will require not only a sustained effort, but also a new approach. It is not only the city itself that detects frictions or malfunctions in its internal clockwork. The world around it is also changing rapidly. While it was able to weather the economic storms of recent years relatively well, the after-effects have weakened its purchasing power, and especially the resistance of the weakest. Its population is becoming increasingly diverse, yet it has no conclusive answer for this. And apart from this, there seems to be less and less shop space available for its creative production: are the results of all of its work still sufficiently on display to excite even the casual passer-by?

For the performing arts, the question is not so much how they can improve, but rather what meaningful role can they play in a changing world. You can feel the vibe on the streets and in the wings. More than ever, houses, companies and makers want to make a difference *publicly*, and to link up, regardless of the obstacles, with other social dynamics and initiatives in other sectors of society.

This in short is the story contained in this landscape sketch of the performing arts. Much has been invested in the past thirty years in the expansion, versatility and professionalism of the performing arts. With the exception of a few remaining gaps, the current architecture has been successfully installed. Now it is important to safeguard the fertile balance between continuity and versatility, and especially to reap more of the fruits for the benefit of all of society. The answer no longer lies in growth, but in transformation. Which is not only a challenge for policy makers, but also for the field itself. Laurels indeed have a downside: you can't or shouldn't rest on them. After growth comes flowering ...

ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

That future has already begun, which is what makes these times so interesting. On several fronts, the need is being expressed for a new discourse on the place of art in society. Especially in the performing arts field itself, the question concerning its relationship to the larger society has become more pressing in recent years. What do we have to offer? How can we further develop? Artists and cultural workers are looking hard for new ways to respond to or shape a society in full transformation. And society itself is also responding. Everywhere in Europe, and even beyond, the debate rages on 'the value of culture'. Each account about the future of the (performing) arts will be urged to engage in this debate.

In the research report *The Value of Culture* (2014), a team of sociologists, economists, philosophers and psychologists from the University of Groningen compiled a series of research results on the value, meaning and impact of art and culture on people and society at large.¹ In concrete figures, the report confirms the measurable effects of culture (and the arts more specifically) on health, on cognitive ability, on the social fabric, on the economy. Thus the positive impact of investments in art and culture is a scientific fact.

At the same time, the researchers put into perspective the importance of empirical evidence in supporting the value of culture. The main social benefit of culture cannot be empirically measured in summarising statistics, because culture is in essence all about meaning making, at the level of the individual level and within a community. From children learning to play the piano, to the atmosphere at the rock festival in Werchter, or discussions in the newspaper about 'our' literary canon: the cultural significance of these instances extends far beyond the cultural field alone. Culture provides a shared frame, a stock of references among the members of a society on the basis of which they can meaningfully interact with each other. In this sense, the researchers equate culture with the *measure* of society.

1. P. Gielen et al., *The Value of Culture*. Brussels, 2015.

In contrast to the sphere of *culture* as a whole, the arts allow *dismeasure* inside: artists continually call this cultural consensus into question, prying ingrained beliefs loose or broadening the aesthetic taste. They offer the public debate possible new perspectives and alternative routes. They make new instinctive connections and experiment with norms and forms. They provide other sensory experiences and enrich non-verbal communication. This is what that 'immeasurability' does: putting a spin on obvious (and therefore often unobserved) cultural practices, sharpening the critical sense.

The performing arts are particularly well placed to give form to both measure and dismeasure. Each performance creates a communal experience, but can also alienate that bond. Think of *Missie [Mission]* by kvs, a successful production about contemporary missionaries in the Congo. Or of all the productions in recent years about (sexual) violence against children, which certainly do not always defend the moral righteousness of the majority.

In a society in which the production of meaning is increasingly dependent on business and commercial considerations, this dual role appears precisely to gain in importance. The theatre – together with other art forms – is one of the few places where reasonably free reflection can take place on societal developments and moral issues. Not coincidentally, especially theatres and performing arts festivals are opening their doors more and more to discussions with scientists, such as sociologists, and politicians. They do not only offer an artistic programme, but aim to create space for larger and deeper public reflection.

This public function of the (performing) arts is under pressure today. Economic factors such as the financial and economic crisis, and strict government cost-cutting measures in Belgium and in other European countries impede the making and showing of art. This certainly applies to a labour-intensive business such as theatre and dance. While it is becoming increasingly expensive to make theatre and share it with an audience, it is difficult to compensate for rising costs on the income side. Average subsidies per company are decreasing, and economic research shows that there are inadequate solutions





specifically for the performing arts in increased box office revenues, sponsorship, crowdfunding, patronage or merchandising.

Also larger societal shifts are also challenging the traditional public role of the performing arts: for long, theatres functioned as the tokens of a homogeneous national cultural identity – the nineteenth-century model on which our tradition of government intervention is based. For some time now, these shared frames of reference around ‘the’ canon and ‘the’ repertoire have been experiencing the growing pressures of globalisation and diverse processes of migration. Today’s society is broader and extremely diverse. It raises a whole new question: how to build ‘common’-unity on the basis of difference? Political thinkers like Eric Corijn and Benjamin Barber no longer find the answer in the idea of the nation state, but within urban environments, where global issues such as diversity and ecological sustainability are very tangibly felt.²

Art and the practices of the larger cultural sector are no isolated phenomena within society. Therefore, cultural policy requires a broad outlook: how does art fit into a larger story about the society of tomorrow? The arts should not only be protected; they can also prove their value in – for instance – a government’s pursuit of better education, an attractive investment climate, or the strengthening of democracy. This is how Benjamin Barber sees it: ‘The arts are real money makers for a city, but we rightly do not want to present this as the main argument for the arts. The value of the arts is intangible. The arts contribute to the life of the community, the identity of the city, the essence of what it means to be a cosmopolitan, and a civilised space for living together.’³

Culture is not just any sector or policy area alongside all the others. As mentioned before, culture is the ‘measure of society’, a shared stock of references and as such is the foundation on which other domains such

2. B. Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. London & New Haven Yale University Press, 2014 and E. Corijn, *Kan de stad de wereld redden? [Can the city save the world?]* Brussels: VUB Press, 2013.
3. Quoted in: E. Jans, ‘Art and the city: een gesprek met Benjamin Barber’ [Art and the city: An interview with Benjamin Barber]. *Courant* 109 (2014): 15-17.

as economics or politics build. Culture ensures coherence, meaning and shared horizons. And art is the space where the critical examination of these shared stories can take place and where discussions can be raised about them. In its search for alternatives, it searches for and involves a diverse public as critical citizens. This public function is fundamentally non-instrumental, but rather finds its legitimacy precisely in its own logic and its own rules. But this autonomy of the arts only becomes productive and meaningful through its interaction with the rest of society.

If this claim is to be more than just rhetoric, the question is how will art and culture – in this case the performing arts – will respond to all social, cultural, economic and political challenges. In *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre between the Market and Democracy* (2011), theatre scholar Dragan Klaic discussed this response in a broad European perspective, for different countries.⁴ According to him, the answer lies not in imitating (sometimes-successful) commercial initiatives. By engaging in profit maximisation through predictable forms and content, at the expense of sustainable support for artistic development, theatre would precisely renounces its public role. Instead, according to Klaic, theatre must continue to cherish its intrinsic artistic values. At the same time, it must also continue to make its benefits clear to society: by developing new stories and a relevant repertoire, sustainable support for artistic careers, calling into question traditional ways of producing and presenting, developing new types of relationships with a changing public.

In an uncertain economic climate, it comes down to using such qualities as assets in tackling future challenges. Arts organisations are already working to shape that future today. In addition to and developing from their artistic work, they engage in the production of meaning, public mediation, educational and/or socio-artistic functions, internationalisation ... With versatility and flexibility, they respond to diverse expectations: artistic but also economic, political or social. How to make this dynamic sustainable? And how best to harvest its fruits?

4. D. Klaic, *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre between the Market and Democracy*. Bristol: Intellect, 2011.

A LAYERED AND DIVERSE ARCHITECTURE

Spatial planning is the basis of each city: the specific landscape in which all functions have taken shape. This context, the result of decades of large and small interventions, forms the foundation of the lively character of a city. What does this context look like for the performing arts in Flanders? Which structural and economic shifts present themselves? And which issues require extra attention?

CURRENT SITUATION

Fundamental to the Flemish performing arts is their extremely solid reputation abroad. This is much broader than the generation of the so-called 'Flemish Wave' of the 1980s, from Jan Fabre to Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, which is still very successful. Also Tg Stan and LOD, Peeping Tom and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, or the young and exciting artists supported by CAMPO and KOPERGIETERY also operate in broad cross-border networks. Abroad there is sometimes talk of a 'Flemish miracle'. This points not only to a high density of artistic quality, but also to the specific architecture of the landscape in which it originates. Flanders is especially envied for the great diversity of its houses and institutions: companies and production houses with or without their own infrastructure, art centres, art labs, management agencies, festivals, cultural centres, etc. Within this highly stratified landscape, there is also constant exchange between the different players. Its horizontal, non-hierarchical architecture provides a strong incentive for initiative, exchange, involvement and responsibility on the part of each player. This is what distinguishes the small city of the Flemish performing arts: its finely grained and flexible mobility plan. This city is constantly in motion.

Thus, its three city theatres are no longer the classic institutions that still dominate larger countries. The city theatres in Antwerp (Toneelhuis), Brussels (KVS) and Ghent (NTGent) have transformed themselves into open structures with room for many forms of art,



diverse functions and evolving relationships with a changing society. In addition to these larger institutions, midscale companies such as t,arsenaal, Antigone or Malpertuis became open production centres that establish semi-permanent relationships with a range of makers of all generations. They originated as chamber theatres in the 1950s and 1960s, today they are producing and presenting structures that originate a thriving exchange between artistic evolutions and social shifts in the cities where they reside. And youth theatre is no exception. Unlike many other countries, flagships such as HETPALEIS, KOPERGIETERY OF BRONKS do not occupy a separate corner. Many houses that focus on children and youth have an active policy of addressing makers from throughout the field and encouraging them to also create for a young audience. That says much about the mentality. The Flemish performing arts do not operate in separate compartments. The big need the small, and vice versa.

Since the 1980s, each generation of artists has added its own models to this architecture. There were art centres and festivals, breeding places for international innovation. In the 1980s, international networks and umbrella structures such as VTi (the Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders) also emerged. In the 1990s, collectives such as Tg Stan and De Roovers anchored the emancipation of the Flemish actor in independent working structures. And in the last ten years, arts labs augmented the autonomous initiatives for other functions such as presentation, distribution, public relations, management and participation. The performing arts field gradually expanded, especially dance. It is no coincidence that Flanders and Brussels today are referred to as the 'Mecca of dance'. Dance companies as well as the unique training provided by dance school P.A.R.T.S. attract individual talent from all over the world. Flanders offers the kind of versatile architecture they like to live in. There is room for imagination, humus for flowering.

Flanders simply does not have a Great Cultural Tradition like, say, France and Germany. Which appears to be a strength. The artistic innovation and do-it-yourself attitude that was possible here was not burdened by the unnecessary weight of history, while makers could

still draw deeply on diverse surrounding theatre, dance, visual arts and music traditions. Another strength is Flemish cultural policy itself, as a creative co-architect of this landscape. Politicians always picked up quickly on new developments, but largely left the initiative to the field. The Performing Arts Decree of 1993, the Arts Decree of 2006 and the new Arts Decree of 2013 successively placed the initiative of the professional field at the centre. Organisations in Flanders are given great freedom to develop their activities as they see fit. There is room for diversity, experimentation and development. The focus is on substance, not on norms and rules governing output. This evidences a mature relationship between policy and practice, an important precondition for the major, specific and dynamic architecture of the performing arts landscape. Creativity can continually flourish.

At the same time, VTi's research teaches us that a number of notable metamorphoses have occurred in the performing arts since the early 1990s.⁵ First, the range of what is on offer has become 'hybridised': much more diverse, with less pure theatre, with music and dance from 1993, and less precise alignments between these disciplines. More and more external contributions – music, film, visual arts, design, science, technology ... – marked the emergence of what we call 'performance'. Even subtle flirting with circus and comedy is no longer taboo. Walls fell in favour of greater interdisciplinary exchange.

The number of international partnerships and networks also increased. Today, 35% of the productions in Flanders are in partnership with at least one international organisation. 46% of Flemish performances tour abroad.⁶ International cooperation is on the rise. This is partly due to the emergence of a European cultural policy, but also to the magnetising influence of Flanders and Brussels. Where in the beginning co-productions were mainly one-way traffic, with

5. See J. Janssens and D. Moreels, *Metamorphoses: Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993*. Brussels: Vlaams Theater Instituut, 2007 and J. Janssens (ed.) *Ins & Outs: A Field Analysis of the Performing Arts in Flanders*. Brussels: Vlaams Theater Instituut, 2011.

6. See also the research article by J. Janssens, S. Joye and B. Magnus below in this publication.

foreign houses supporting the productions of Flemish makers, cooperation presently also goes the other way, thanks to the increased production capacity of our art centres and festivals. The world supports Flanders; Flanders supports the world. Together they form one cosmopolitan spider web.

What are these success factors that have been so critical to (international) growth? This was recently analysed by economists Bart van Looy and Ward van de Velde (KU Leuven) based on twenty cases from Flanders and the Netherlands in theatre, dance and music.⁷

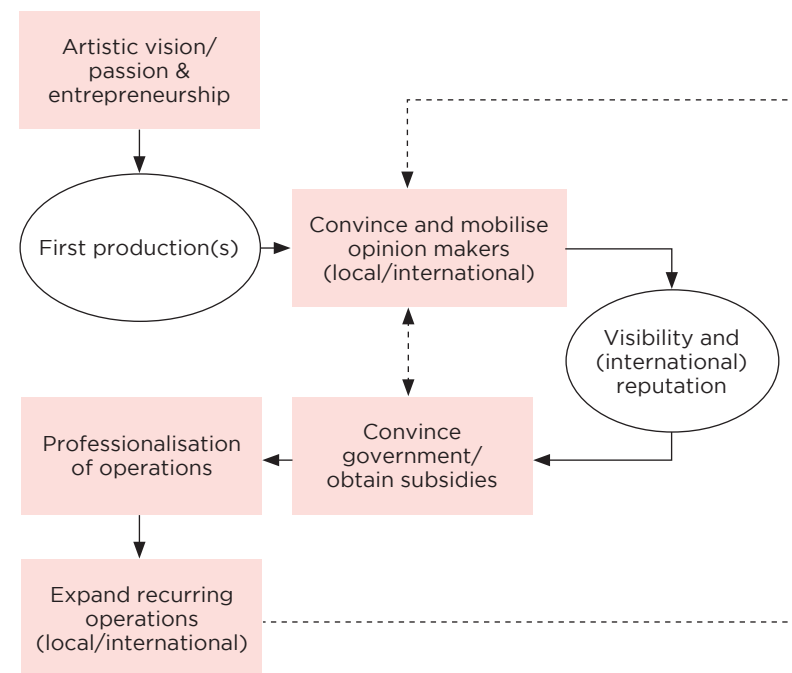
They investigated the role of artistic vision, entrepreneurship and policy support in the development of performing arts producers. The starting point for a successful practice, *artistic vision*: the passionate story of an artist (or a collective) as motor. Whether that story can be implemented is determined in the first place by selection mechanisms in the artistic field itself (critics, curators, programmers), and the *entrepreneurship* of the artist. ‘Entrepreneurship must be more broadly understood here than merely the pursuit of revenue and profits’, say Van Looy and Van de Velde. ‘It involves the ability to mobilise resources – with respect to the artistic vision – that allow a production to come about.’ Of course, *direct government support through subsidies* is also crucial, especially in the next phase of a career: ‘This role of (direct) government support is important to the continuation and growth of projects/organisations.’ Cases that no longer received government support had to stop or cut back severely.

Another success factor contributing to growth is a solid professional framework. ‘In addition to broadening and deepening networks and partners, a business framework in support of the artistic activity can provide opportunities for the correct handling of the administration.’ The Flemish performing arts certainly have not fallen short here. Thanks to strong professionalisation, organisations are now run by business leaders who have mastered the art of culture

7. W. van de Velde and B. van Looy, *Kritische succesfactoren van de Vlaamse kunsten. Cases uit de muziek-, dans- en theatersector.* [Critical success factors of Flemish art: Cases from the music, dance and theatre sector]. Leuven: KU Leuven, 2013.

management, or how to keep the engine of the organisation running: the artistic ambitions of the artist. Together with the artist, successful organisations succeed in obtaining recognition and income from international activities – according to the research a final important factor that explains the success of the Flemish arts and arts policy since the 1980s.

Figure 1: Steps in the development of performing arts producing organisations



From a study of twenty cases in music, theatre and dance, Leuven economists distilled the following factors as determinative for the development of an organisation within the performing arts.

Source: W. van de Velde and B. van Looy, *Kritische succesfactoren van de Vlaamse kunsten. Cases uit de muziek-, dans- en theatersector.* [Critical success factors of the Flemish arts: Cases from the music, dance and theatre sector]. Leuven: KU Leuven, 2013.



Summarising, Van Looy and Van de Velde state that structural subsidies and the associated development of a professional framework are essential to the continuity of artistic initiatives. The artist-driven approach to Flemish arts policy was also found to be crucial. By valuing the artist's own initiative more than strict performance requirements, Flanders is even able to allow its arts to perform more and better than in countries that chiefly measure output. Not only artistically, but also economically. Recent studies teach us that the income earned by multinational organisations typically is much higher than the legally required standards.⁸ The internationally acclaimed 'Flemish model' builds on the changed role of subsidies. The previous 'compensation for a deficit' has evolved into a lever: core funding that makes it possible for an organisation to develop the necessary continuity and go in search of additional resources via partners at home and abroad.

'Continuity and growth appear to be possible only by combining artistic vision (uniqueness) and entrepreneurship (including its professional support) with structural subsidies 'conclude Van Looy and Van de Velde. 'Evolving in the direction of operations that are fully supported by the "market" (ticketing, buy-out fees, patronage, sponsorship) seems only possible if one resolutely leaves behind artistic niches and opts for a broad, accessible repertoire. But even if this path is taken, a profitable operation (combined with certain economies of scale) is not easy (see in this regard the findings from the market cases). Note in this regard that when this happens, artistic organisations also give up their creative, "meaning creating" role, which can be seen as an impoverishment with respect to innovation.' In short: banning the performing arts to the market means a substantial impoverishment for society.

We read a confirmation of this conclusion in the recent 'Cultuurverkenning [Culture Exploration]' (2014) by the Dutch Council for

8. Janssens, (ed.) *Ins & Outs: A Field Analysis of the Performing Arts in Flanders*. Brussels: Vlaams Theater Instituut, 2011 and D. Hester (ed.), *Kunstzaken. Financiële en zakelijke modellen voor de kunsten in Vlaanderen [Art business: financial and business models for the arts in Flanders]* Brussels: KWARTS, 2013.

Culture, which examines the effects of the new Dutch cultural policy after subsidy cuts of 200 million euro to the arts budget. 'The public resources available for the arts and cultural heritage have declined. The hope was that this would be offset by greater private resources. But despite great efforts, this has not happened. The trend (also internationally) is that sponsorship of art and culture is declining, and that cooperation between business and art institutions is becoming more complex. Private donations are decreasing, but patronage and crowdfunding seem to be growing somewhat. In general, however, the picture of private funding is anything but positive. [...] Incentives such as the Gift and Inheritance Tax Act have not been able to compensate for this.'

NOTABLE TRENDS

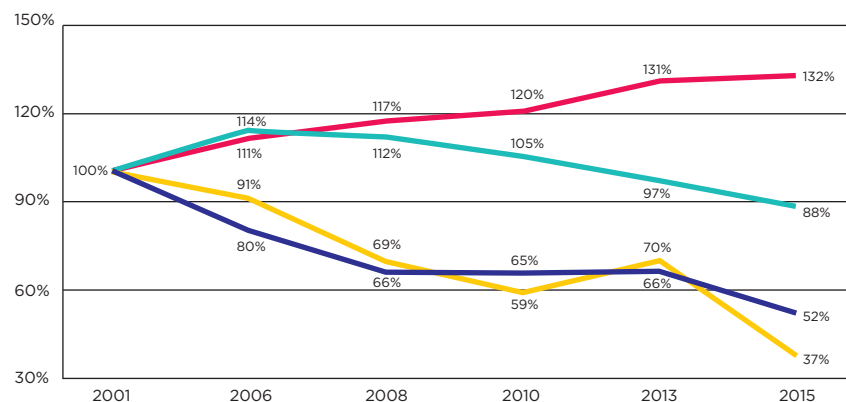
The mentioned success factors of the Flemish arts are today under increasing – especially economic – pressure. This can be seen especially in the production curve. After increasing growth in the 1990s, the curve slowed and consolidated after the millennium change, with economic fluctuations (cf. p. 102). The purchasing power of many organisations also decreased at precisely the same time. Overall subsidy support for the performing arts remained more or less guaranteed, but recent policy decisions resulted in the financial strength of performing arts organisations falling sharply. Thus in 2015, the government supports more performing arts organisations than ever via the Arts Decree (45% more than in 2001). At the same time, the average subsidy amount has dropped significantly. At the end of September 2014, the Flemish Government announced a linear reduction of 7.5% for most organisations covered in the Arts Decree. This means that the average subsidy amount (median) in absolute figures is now 32% smaller than in 2001 (and even 48% smaller if we include the rising cost of living via

9. Raad voor Cultuur, *De Cultuurverkenning. Ontwikkelingen en trends in het culturele leven in Nederland. [Culture exploration: Developments and trends in cultural life in the Netherlands]*. The Hague: Raad voor Cultuur, 2014: 19.

the national Consumer Price Index). Fragmentation threatens, especially at the bottom of the pyramid: the purchasing power of the smallest subsidy amount fell by 63% between 2001 and 2015.

Project subsidies are also no longer sufficient to make production possible, as they were in the 1990s. They must be supplemented by (increasingly smaller) co-production funds from ever more players while, these players themselves are having increasing difficulty. The market is becoming very competitive.

Figure 2 and table: The declining purchasing power of structural subsidies 2001-2015



	2001	2006
number of organisations	73	84
total subsidy	€ 41,051,762.62	€ 48,245,000.00
median subsidy amount	€ 446,208.34	€ 395,000.00
lowest subsidy amount	€ 99,157.41	€ 100,000.00
highest subsidy amount	€ 2,376,059.43	€ 3,000,000.00
Value CPI (2013: 100)	76.14	84.54

Especially internationally, the financial and economic crisis is resulting in shrinking production and programming budgets, so that more and more partners are needed to finance productions. At the same time, the contribution in the case of a ‘co-production’ has become much less. This is not strictly a Flemish phenomenon, but also international. Co-production contributions increasingly consist merely of ‘higher buy-out payments’ or compensation in kind, in exchange for credits in the communications. Growth in the number of foreign presentations of Flemish productions halted a few years ago, as can be seen in the analysis of the figures based on the VTi database later in this publication. After a sharp drop in 2009-2010, the numbers are again increasing, but are still below the level of 2008-2009.

This table and graph illustrate the evolution of the multi-year subsidies for performing arts organisations since 2001. The number of performing arts organisations is increasing faster than the total budget; furthermore, cuts were made in 2010 and 2011, and a linear reduction of 7.5% is planned for 2015. The graph applies a correction based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to the absolute figures from the table. This shows that the average purchasing power of a performing arts organisation (at least via the Flemish subsidy) has dropped significantly since 2001. After the increase in 2013, the lowest subsidy amount drops after the recent decisions in 2015 to a record low.

Source: Vlaams Theater Instituut and Agentschap Kunsten en Erfgoed.

- median (correction CPI)
- highest amount (correction CPI)
- lowest amount (correction CPI)
- evolution in CPI compared to 2001

	2008	2010	2013	2015
number of organisations	87	100	94	107
total subsidy	€ 50,732,178.32	€ 57,775,000.00	€ 54,687,000.00	€ 52,071,025.00
median subsidy amount	€ 341,690.48	€ 350,000.00	€ 382,500.00	€ 305,250.00
lowest subsidy amount	€ 80,463.31	€ 70,000.00	€ 90,000.00	€ 48,100.00
highest subsidy amount	€ 3,098,364.81	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 2,775,000.00
Value CPI (2013: 100)	88.92	91.54	99.37	100.72

The diversity in venues and the number of countries where Flemish companies present are also decreasing. In the 2008-2009 season, Flemish productions played on 595 different stages, in 354 cities in 50 different countries. One season later, they played on only 545 stages, in 340 cities in 40 different countries.

Certainly the developments in neighbouring Netherlands deserve attention. The Netherlands had always been the most important sister country for Flemish performing arts. At that time, exchange with the Netherlands was a significant inspiration and driving force behind the 'Flemish Wave' of the 1980s. Our figures, which unfortunately do not go back to that mythical period, show an alarming trend in the export of Flemish work to the Netherlands. Between 2001 and 2012, the number of Flemish performances in the Netherlands decreased by one fifth, the number of venues by one fourth, and the number of cities and municipalities by more than a third. This is clearly an impoverishment. At the same time, there are more co-productions with Dutch organisations than ever. Heavy cost cutting in the Netherlands has much to do with this. The current pressure on production and programming budgets in the Netherlands makes co-production not only more attractive for Dutch companies, but also necessary. Moreover, such Flemish-Dutch partnerships occur very often in 'multinational' ventures, sometimes with the support of European cultural programmes.

In short, we see a downward trend in the international touring of Flemish productions. Contributing to this is not only foreign cost cutting; domestic cost cutting in the project-based international resources of the Arts Decree (from 2010) probably also had an impact. More than 1.3 million was distributed in 2007; in 2010, this budget shrank to below 700,000 euro (in 2012 it rose again to 966,530 euro).¹⁰ Yet there is a need for a more focused *substantive* vision of the international dimension of art and culture. In 2012, a policy letter on international cultural policy was issued by the Minister of Culture, but it

10. The sources for these figures are the annual reports of the Agency for Arts and Heritage, which can be found at www.kunstenerfgoed.be.

was limited to rather technical and administrative suggestions. How does the government view the international reputation of the performing arts in its full policy?

An equally acute concern for producing organisations is touring in Flanders. Especially the link to the network of cultural centres – a unique characteristic of Flemish performing arts architecture – is starting to weaken. Performing arts presentations in Flanders take place in two circuits, each of which is supported in a different way. Theatres, art centres and festivals are supported by the Arts Decree, and these in turn both produce and present. Most Arts Decree organisations are located in the larger cities (Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp). The cultural centres on the other hand can be found in thirteen other cities and many smaller cities and towns. Their activity is largely financed by cities and municipalities, and in part by the Flemish government through the Local Cultural Policy Decree. Their mission is more than the mere presentation of art. It also encompasses participation and community building.

Although conclusive data on the global distribution of the performing arts is not yet available, we know that companies with multi-year support in the period 2010-2012 presented almost one third of their performances abroad, a third of their domestic performances at Arts Decree organisations (theatres, arts centres, festivals), and slightly more than one fifth in a cultural centre. However, the distribution of dance is quite different from that of theatre and music theatre. Dance structures present 72% of their work outside of Flanders, and only 3% in the cultural centres (see Figures 3a and 3b). Thus, initiatives that promote the presentation of dance in the cultural centres are highly recommended.

Figure 3a: The distribution of presentations of multi-annually funded performing arts organisations 2010-2012 (for theatre, dance, and music theatre)

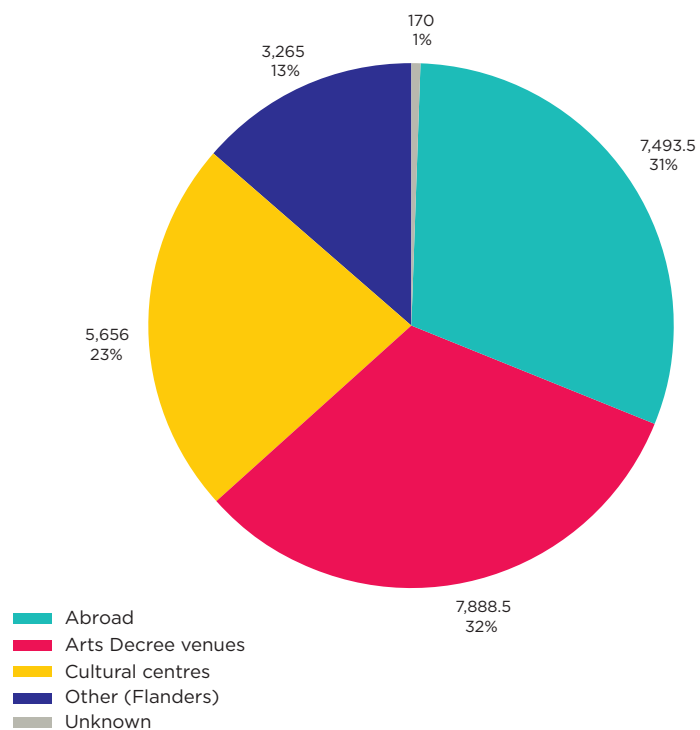
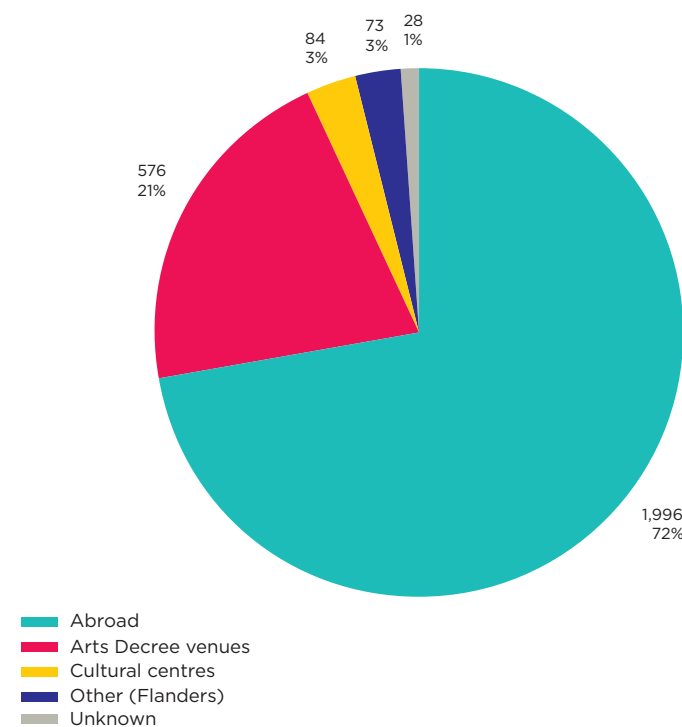


Figure 3b: The distribution of presentations of multi-annually funded dance organisations 2010-2012



Where did the multi-year subsidised performing arts organisations (dance, music, theatre) present their performances in 2010-2012? This graph shows the proportion of the Arts Decree venues, the cultural and community centres, other Flemish locations, and those abroad. The distribution of dance productions differs significantly from the distribution of the whole of the performing arts, where the sub-sectors and music theatre count heavily. Dance structures present 72% of their performances outside Flanders. They are seen to a lesser extent in the cultural centres (3%), where music theatre and theatre are very active. While there are more and more interdisciplinary productions, differences between the traditional sub-disciplines remain.

Source: Agentschap Kunsten en Erfgoed. These figures cover the public performances of multi-year supported theatre, dance and music theatre for the period 2010-2012. They are based on data collected by the Ministry for Culture (Agency for Arts and Heritage) and were provided by the multi-annually subsidised companies in the context of their legally required reporting via the annual operating reports.

But also many theatre organisations are seeing their performance series in the cultural centres shrink so significantly for 2014-2015 that some fear for the end of the distribution model that has developed in Flanders over forty years. An even stronger decline is predicted for the 2015-2016 season. Diverse factors play a role. Cultural centre programmers are faced with an abundance of choices and not enough time to follow multiple sub-disciplines. Often their programming budgets are dwindling while performance fees are on the rise. This increases the pressure to break even with each performance, at the expense of the risks associated with young and lesser-known work, or more hybrid works that do not meet the once dominant format of the full-length performance. On-location projects are often found to be interesting – in part because they can excite different audiences – but their performance fees are high and the production requirements heavy. In all areas, TV personalities offer greater certainty. Even more certainty than the traditionally trusted companies in the cultural centre circuit such as t,arsenaal or Zuidpool.

A paradox threatens with respect to government policy. New developments precisely promoted by the Arts Decree and the arts centres (Flemish government level) are less often chosen by the network of cultural and community centres (local policy level). This makes it difficult to reach audiences outside the larger cities to the same degree.

Artists and companies are looking hard for solutions to the dwindling opportunities to present, especially if they are financially dependent on sufficient venues. A limited number of larger companies are still able to offer a diverse range of productions for small, medium and larger venues. The distribution difficulties are felt less in this segment. Others are investing more in international activity. Still others are themselves creating opportunities to present. Thus in recent years, more and more theatre companies are making their infrastructure available for presenting the work of colleagues. And younger artists are organising presentations themselves and creating informal presentation platforms, sometimes even in people's homes.

But these solutions do not immediately increase their visibility among the mainstream public at the cultural centres. It is expected that a few companies will face problems in the coming years.

CHALLENGES, ALSO FOR POLICY

1) A diverse and layered performing arts landscape

One of the main issues is safeguarding the internal dynamics, flexibility and versatility of the performing arts, while past financial growth scenarios are no longer possible to the same degree. In fact, precisely these economic pressures threaten to weaken the strengths of the Flemish performing arts architecture. How to maintain a balance between the big names, the influx of new talent, and that which lies between? Between management of proven quality and stimulating new developments and models? Choosing more carefully between the 'good' and 'bad' seems a logical answer, but that luxury is scarcely possible in Flanders. It is no exaggeration to say that today, making choices comes down to choosing between 'strong work' and 'strong work'. (Earlier assessment procedures showed that there was not enough budget to support all of the positively valued initiatives. This is more than ever the case after the recent cost cuts.)

What is clear is the goal: sustainability over continued growth and the pressure to perform. As in society at large, in the arts there is a call for moving slowly, as a prerequisite to investigating new creation, production and presentation models, and to test other relationships to society. Transformation begins with time and space, with oxygen. The future is uncertain, the path unknown. In other words, transformation demands uncertainty, risk, inefficiency, serendipity. It's up to players in the sector to engage in sufficient self-questioning and criticism at both the artistic and organisational level. But it is government that must help provide the space and conditions for this.



POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *'Landscape maintenance' as a guiding principle:* in order to maintain the dynamics and layering between mainstream and niche, it is important that not every organisation in the field must meet the same criteria. It is better to recognise the different players for their unique qualities and contribution to the whole of the performing arts landscape, and to apply the full set of criteria to *the landscape itself*.
2. *Create room for slower processes and self-questioning:* above all, there must be sufficient room for slow processes and for spaces that can operate without a specific format, direct visibility and the need for efficiency. And for all organisations, the possible need for self-questioning and structural change will require time (and therefore resources), without the guarantee of a successful outcome. It would be good to explicitly translate these principles into the strategic vision for the arts policy and the evaluation framework for each new subsidy round.
3. *A twin-track policy for structures and projects:* both in the field and in policy there is a need for an ethic that ensures that each supported initiative receives enough support to deliver quality. In 2011, this principle was already contained in a charter between then Minister of Culture Joke Schauvliege and the arts sector for the previous Arts Decree assessment round. It called for effective interaction and a two-track policy between projects and structures. But when taking decisions concerning the two-year funding round 2015-2016 (in June 2014), resources from the project fund were used to subsidise an increasing number of operations at a level that on average was 20% lower than that recommended by the Agency. On top of this, in September, new culture minister Sven Gatz announced a linear reduction of 7.5% for all organisations covered by the Arts Decree.

How to safeguard this intended twin-track policy? Structural operations must be given sufficient resources to both support projects and maintain sustainable relationships with artists. Project support also needs to be re-examined, especially now that the target of 10% for the project fund has been reduced to 7.5%, and the new Arts Decree provides for the possibility of multi-year projects. This requires a shift in the global allocation of resources. At the same time, the result may not be that after the disappearance of the two-year structural subsidies, smaller groups are automatically forced into multi-year projects. Structures and projects have a fundamentally different duration and objective.

4. *Musical policy with a vision:* to make a break with the largely inconsistent decisions in recent years concerning subsidy requests by *Musical van Vlaanderen*, and their unexpected impact on the resources of the Arts Decree, it is necessary for all parties that the government develop a clearer vision concerning possible support to the commercial music theatre industry in Flanders, with or without supporting instruments.
5. *Encouraging mobility between institutions of the Flemish Community and the broader performing arts:* the new Arts Decree makes it possible to recognise new structures 'as an institution of the Flemish Community'. Such a possible expansion is best the subject of public debate in the Flemish Parliament. This discussion must concern not only the possible role of institutions within Flemish government policy, but especially also the desired function of these institutions within the different sub-sectors of the performing arts. In this landscape sketch of the performing arts, the dynamic exchange between big and small, between centre and periphery, emerges as a great asset. The – already recognised and possibly new – institutions of the Flemish Community can also engage in this dynamic.

2) Incentives for internationalisation

'I note with great concern that a halt has come to the internationalisation of art', said festival maker Frie Leysen in May of 2014 in *De Standaard*. 'It's like a room with the windows and doors closed. After two days, it starts to stink.' International collaboration is not only artistically and commercially interesting, it especially provides new perspectives. In the light of societal trends such as increasing globalisation and super-diversity, it is impossible to stimulate the place of art in society without fully taking into consideration its international dimension. And also because the international success of the performing arts in Flanders is not absolutely guaranteed in the future, there is a need for a more substantive and proactive international arts policy, based on a corresponding vision and investment.

We are not talking here of a precondition, but of a structural challenge: a top-down policy *alongside* the time-honoured bottom-up approach via the Arts Decree. The Arts Decree makes it possible for many artists and arts organisations to develop their own international initiatives. Larger structures need not make separate subsidy requests for their international work; such funding is already a part of their total subsidy, which makes it possible to work flexibly and to achieve good results. But Flanders is missing an additional top-down policy, in which the government itself takes additional development initiatives to strengthen the international dimension of the arts. This lack weakens the international position of Flemish performing artists. Other countries continue via diverse institutions to actively contribute to travel and accommodation costs – even in times of crisis.

But resources alone will not suffice. There is especially a need for an underlying vision that offers answers to a number of adverse economic developments in the international market of co-production and presentation. Not only for the companies involved, but also for the Flemish public. If performance series are shorter, commitments less and mainly economic principles dominate, much work that makes Flanders the envy of other countries is likely to be even less visible outside our own major cities. On the other hand, there is

remarkably little youth theatre from abroad to be seen in Flanders. How would an international cultural policy relate to this?

A particular challenge therefore is to anchor the many international activities locally. The field has already taken diverse initiatives to establish more sustainable relations between international work and local audiences, artistic scenes and civil society. Thus, international cooperation is evolving beyond mere import and export to include residences, creations with artists from multiple countries, workshops abroad, etc. We see local – and thus more environmentally responsible – *recreations* of foreign productions with Flemish (amateur) performers, such as the presentation of the work of Rimini Protokoll in Brussels or Enrique Vargas in Turnhout. These often include local support and more diverse audiences. This practice can only further develop with the support of policy. What does Flemish international cultural policy have to say on ecological issues, interculturalism, local cultural policy, development cooperation?

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *A strategic vision on international policy*: on 1 April 2015, the new culture minister, who took office in the summer of 2014, will present to the Flemish Parliament his strategic vision on arts policy for the new legislature (2015-2019). Concerning international arts policy, this would be the perfect time to make a link between artistic content and broader societal drivers, and thus to allow the intrinsic importance of working internationally to take precedence over the purely economic effect. How to make the current artistic boom sustainable? Crucial to this is the continued importance of less visible but deeper forms of international cooperation, such as those in the context of European networks and exchanges with a more process-oriented focus. They are not a mere side effect of 'the real work', on the contrary.

2. *Additional clout for the international activity of organisations:* envelope funding via the Arts Decree allows organisations with operating subsidies of more than 300,000 euro to design their own international strategy. However, their lower purchasing power makes it increasingly difficult to fully realise this. How can the government again do justice to the principle that recognised organisations and (multi-year) projects also must have enough resources to maintain their quality?
3. *Deployment of new international instruments:* the new Arts Decree (adopted at the end of 2013) provides some interesting additional measures to support working internationally. There is a policy guideline in which the Flemish government supports presentation venues abroad. In this, a balance is recommended between interventions at prestigious festivals such as Avignon or Edinburgh and strategic locations in emerging regions. The balance between multi-year agreements and one-off opportunities should also be monitored. Concerning new residence opportunities for the performing arts, it would be good to target institutions with very specific know-how and logistics or less obvious regions with development potential (such as Beijing, Hong Kong or São Paulo). Another innovation is the support of international ‘break-throughs’: artists or organisations can appeal to this support once in their career to give a decisive boost to an international career. In its further development, this new instrument should meet diverse needs: from presence at showcases to network development or translation. Project-based support for co-financing of international art projects within European programmes, another innovation, requires a maximum threshold amount and appears to offer less potential than the previous instruments.
4. *An active role for the Flanders Arts Institute in international relations:* within a more extensive international arts policy, a key role is reserved to the *Flanders Arts Institute* [Kunstenpunt], the merger of the Institute for Performing Arts (VTi) with the support centres for art and music. ‘International communication, promotion and cooperation’ are some of the key tasks of this new organisation. It can set up specific projects at home and abroad to focus the international spotlight on the Flemish performing arts. It can contribute its field knowledge and expertise in the choice of venues and residences in the context of international initiatives in the new Arts Decree, in conversation with other policy areas.
5. *Bridges with other policy domains:* without needing to instrumentalise, the artistic quality of Flanders can be better valorised in the economic and diplomatic objectives of government policy via greater consultation with other policy domains. Such a comprehensive vision also requires additional policy incentives for cooperation with the Netherlands (via the Flanders-Netherlands Cultural Agreement, De Brakke Grond, deBuren, etc.), with the French-speaking Community (via concrete implementation of the recent Cultural Agreement) and with cultural diplomacy, via the network of Flemish Representatives abroad.
6. *Coordination with other policy levels:* with the artistic and cultural policy of cities showing increasing international ambitions, more consultation is desirable between the various levels. What can cities mean for a reception policy with respect to foreign artists? How can they include artistic exchange in their relationships with foreign sister cities? Such close coordination could strongly promote the local embedding of international activity.



3) A new balance between production and presentation

In untangling the knots concerning touring in Flanders, the field itself has a primary responsibility. In the first place, this requires a different conversation between producers and venues. Not only about the numbers, but also about more structural and innovative forms of cooperation such as co-production and co-creation, joint communication efforts, the involvement of artists in audience development and educational activities, etc. Collective forms of dialogue could give rise to greater regional coordination and more visibility for niches in the cultural centres. For instance, VTi and LOCUS (the supporting organisation for local governments, libraries and cultural centres) meet with the relevant players regularly to seek and combine their insights.¹¹ This resulted among others in diverse collegial working groups and in an initiative called Circuit X, which facilitates young makers in touring the cultural centres (www.circuitx.be).

At the same time, policy also has a role to play at both Flemish and local level. Especially the coordination of the Decree on Local Cultural Policy and the Arts Decree requires an update, certainly after both of their revisions, and certainly in view of the intention of the Flemish government to transfer Flemish local cultural policy resources to the cities and municipalities. How can Flemish and local governments discuss and develop complimentary policies to invest in the intrinsic value of the (performing) arts, and its place in society? How can the strong focus in Flanders on creation be complemented by greater attention to presentation? What leverage does Flemish cultural policy still have to ensure that this creativity is also shared with the diverse public reached by local venues and cultural centres?

11. See for example, a special edition of the VTi periodical *Courant* on the distribution issue (*Courant* 94 August 2010) and the memorandum by VTi and LOCUS, *Naar een betere afstemming van productie en spreiding in de podiumkunsten* [Towards better coordination of production and distribution in the performing arts]. Brussels, 2011.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Integrated strategic policy vision on production and distribution:* the strategic vision statement by the Minister of Culture is the perfect place to present a coherent vision for consistency in the different functions within the performing arts (training, creation, production, reflection, presentation, audience development, education ...). Regarding the issue of distribution, this is an opportunity to build a bridge between the Arts Decree and the Decree on Local Cultural Policy, two relatively separate instruments of cultural policy, but also and especially to coordinate the different levels.
2. *Coordination of the policy levels and complementary arts policy:* the new Arts Decree also gives cities, municipalities and provinces the possibility to present their own ambitions on arts policy to the Flemish government. The new Flemish coalition agreement transfers the resources of the Decree on Local Cultural Policy to the Municipalities Fund. The dialogue between the Flemish level and local governments is therefore an increasingly important lever for coordinating production and presentation in the performing arts. This conversation not only provides opportunities to strengthen the artistic function locally, but also to promote community development or social embedding of the arts.
3. *Balanced attention to different functions via the Arts Decree:* the Arts Decree offers the possibility of (project) subsidies not only for creations, but also for reruns and tours – an option that continues to receive too little attention. Thus, the assessment committees could give greater recognition to initiatives that not only facilitate production, but also allow productions to be performed more often, or provide for more sustainable anchoring in local contexts.

4. *Commitment by local governments and cultural centres to artistic growth paths:* the local cornerstones of the performing arts (eco) system, such as cultural centres, must continue to follow up the artistic growth of makers and companies, and continue to take risks in the direction of less obvious work. Programmers of course play a key role in this mediation with the public. Ideally, they should not be looking for work 'that the public finds good' but for work 'that the audience will find good.' With respect to the arts, they need to be more a missionary than civil servant. Is it not desirable to make such an 'ideal programmer profile' discussable?
5. *Follow-up of austerity measures at the local level:* The sometimes-substantial cost savings implemented by several local governments also require attention at Flemish level. Since starting in 2014, local governments no longer need to draw up a separate cultural policy plan. As a result, the Flemish government is able to monitor much less the quality of local cultural policy and the internal allocation of resources. This has resulted in warnings that attention and care for culture is particularly vulnerable in several municipalities.

4) Incentives for interculturalisation

A major challenge for the performing arts field is an architecture that provides space for new cultural expressions. For the performing arts to fully claim their public function, they must develop greater sensitivity to the current migration processes and the growing ethnic and cultural diversity, especially in the big cities. Not merely due to the involvement of more and more makers and audiences with complex origins, but also because their stories can provide new perspectives on what art can mean in a changing society. Indeed, the ethnic and cultural diversity of Flanders is not a threat, but a possible additional breeding ground for the arts and society that is too little explored. The arts can certainly be a good safe haven for this search.

This challenge is not new. In the 1970s, theatre maker Tone Brulin founded TIE 3, the so-called 'Theatre of the Third World in Europe'. He did so after previous experience with theatre in the Belgian Congo, South Africa, Malaysia and Curaçao. The intensity of these attempts to deal with the diversity in society has increased greatly, especially in the last twenty-five years. The beginning of the 1990s was clearly a turning point. The first 'Black Sunday', when the far-right Vlaams Blok exceeded ten percent of the Dutch-language vote in federal elections, was a significant moment for culture and civil society. Since then, themes such as social exclusion, intolerance, populism ... have always been on the agenda. Slowly, attention shifted from the ethnicity of minorities to tacit exclusion mechanisms in the cultural sector itself. Since then, ethnic and cultural diversity has been a pressing issue for many city theatres, ensembles, opera houses, training programmes, arts centres, etc. At the same time, we recently have also seen the emergence of a number of activities with an intercultural focus, often with talent development as goal: KunstZ, Zebrart, Mestizo Arts Festival, Gen2020, etc.

Yet there remains work to be done. Except for school performances, theatre audiences are still very white. The same goes for the personnel, board members and volunteers of arts organisations. Is the standard programming of receptive houses and the difficult influx of artists with different roots a cause or an effect of this? The fact remains that little seems to be moving with respect to the codes with which artistic expressions are judged to be relevant or valuable. A first step therefore might be that organisations should focus more on other networks: an investment in information, acquaintance and exchange.

Because there is no one recipe for success, as we have learned from the diverse experiences of artists and arts organisations with processes of interculturalisation.¹² However, they do share a number of qualities. Artists and organisations who wish to tackle diversity in

12. See, for example, the analyses of practice in the publication *Tracks. Artistieke praktijk in een diverse samenleving* [*Tracks: Artistic practice in a diverse society*]. Berchem: EPO, 2007 (by An van Dienderen, Joris Janssens and Katrien Smits).



a changing society, start from a basic attitude that does not shy away from challenges. They try to absorb the complexity of society in their own processes, and make mutual dialogue a starting point. Yet interculturalisation continues to require an approach tailored to the individual circumstances. Depending on its own activity and mission, each organisation itself must choose what type of commitment is feasible. 'Time' too appears to be a major factor. Interculturalisation is a complex process, which necessarily entails risks. Therefore, too often a choice is made for a project-based approach, which does not always touch the heart of the process. However, this is necessary to really make a difference.

How can policy contribute to the intercultural dimension of the performing arts? Then Flemish Minister of Culture Bert Anciaux introduced an Interculturalisation Action Plan in 2006 with a top-down approach that, for example, made use of quotas and the earmarking of resources. His successor, Minister Joke Schauvliege, changed tack from 2009 and followed a bottom-up strategy, including encouraging organisations to make a declaration of commitment to diversity. It is now important to take a critical look at both points of view, and to seek effective levers for change. Demographic trends in the major cities do not allow much time for principled discussions. Moreover, the talent is available. It is eagerly looking for a stage and is developing its own circuits. It is important for the institutional field to take better advantage of and support this potential.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Revaluation of the criterion 'interculturalism'*: while interculturalisation has been an evaluation criterion in the Arts Decree since 2008, some organisations feel that their efforts concerning cultural diversity are being punished rather than rewarded. Committees must see interculturalism as a process, rather than a matter of finished products. Visible results are less important than the quality of the learning process.

2. *Attention to diversity at landscape level*: not all producers need to focus on interculturalism, while organisations with a public function might indeed be expected to make it an active concern. Room needs to be made available especially at field level for activities that promote the intercultural dimension.
3. *Expertise and coaching Arts Decree evaluators*: in all evaluation committees, people with interculturalism expertise should be contributing to the conversation. Coaching of all evaluators is also desirable, so that they are aware of the relativity and the source of their own preferences.
4. *Supporting change processes in organisations*: statements of commitment are important, but not sufficient in themselves for real structural changes within organisations. To begin to really overcome the existing barriers to interculturalisation, greater proactive government support for bottom-up dynamics is necessary. Possibilities include training for employees and directors of non-Western origin, initiatives for network development (think of the former *Netwerk CS* in the Netherlands) or a pool of coaches and mentors who closely guide artists and organisations. Quotas based purely on ethnicity are not enough.
5. *Supporting sustainable policy*: incentivised support for intercultural initiatives – for example via the Participation Decree or the Migration Policy Incentive Fund – is helpful, but ideally, especially complementary. In addition, policy should be focused on sustainability, structural anchoring and the long term. Participation Decree projects in fact have a limited horizon of three years, and afterwards have difficulty becoming anchored in regular policy frameworks.
6. *Encouraging cross-sector partnerships*: to offer additional opportunities for artists with a multicultural background who do not enter through the regular channels, more cross-sectoral partnerships within and outside the arts are needed: with welfare, education,

youth work, Flemish refugee organisation *Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen*, local cultural policy, etc. Local policy levels seem well placed to develop these kinds of cross-cutting partnerships.

7. *Exemplary role of government*: an incentive policy on the part of government can only convince if the government itself takes visible steps to interculturalisation.

5) Sustainability and care for cultural heritage

‘Sustainability’ is a contemporary buzzword that is subject to many interpretations, even in the discourse on the performing arts and cultural policy. Connected to sustainability is a notion of ‘time’. Those who think and act sustainably, start from the past and look to the future, also in the long term.

Applied to the performing arts, to start with, ‘sustainability’ is about how a sector organises itself. To what extent is there attention to slow growth, continuity, diversity in audience development, to transformation? In this sense, ‘sustainability’ is a focus within all topics that are discussed in this landscape sketch: from internationalisation or local anchoring to the sustainable support of artists’ careers and investment in expanding one’s audience.

A second meaning concerns the ecological dimension of sustainability. In recent years, the arts, and by extension the cultural field, have taken major steps in thinking and acting ecologically. Ten years ago, the debate on ecology in the arts was limited to practical aspects of, for example, building management, joint purchasing and (international) mobility. But the understanding grew that the arts, as a relatively autonomous space for imagination, have a more fundamental role to play in system change and a broader transition to a more sustainable society. Since then, the cultural field in Flanders has been increasingly regarded as a partner within the wider civil society.

If sustainability is about ‘time’, it’s not just about the future, but also about heritage. Each city must not only look forward, but also backward. How to preserve the past for the future? This is a very

specific question for the performing arts. They do not deal in stone or permanent works of art; their art is ephemeral. Is it falling behind in the growing interest in cultural heritage? More and more makers are well aware of the importance of passing on their knowledge and skills to younger generations – with a book about their history, with re-enactments of classics with Rosas and Jan Fabre, or with the development of applied techniques and theories – but caring for one’s archive remains a huge challenge in the performing arts sector.

For multi-year subsidised organisations, archiving and caring for one’s collection are contained in the Arts Decree. But often they lack a viable plan to effectively invest energy in heritage conservation alongside their artistic and administrative work. Are extra support measures or cooperation models conceivable? In any case, there is a need for tools to address basic questions such as: how and what to keep, where do you start, why take care of your archive and collection(s) anyway? The efforts that the government asks here must always take into account the fact that artists in the first place create art. Artists and arts organisations are not heritage institutions, and it is by no means the aim that they should work according to this logic.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Make use of bottom-up sustainability initiatives*: The performing arts field stimulates debate and also takes concrete and practical steps via initiatives such as Jonge Sla, Pulse and the local ‘Green Track’ platforms in different cities, where vision is developed, knowledge shared and concrete projects started. For a policy that aims to promote sustainability, there are opportunities to seize on the momentum of such initiatives. The policy may choose to support such bottom-up initiatives and to provide anchors that are more structural.

2. *Creating partnerships and an overview in the field of heritage conservation:* concerning heritage, the needs of each performing arts organisation are different, but the chances are great that the core of these needs matches that of other players in the broad cultural field. For example, a theatre maker who often works with an art centre may have more in common with a similar working visual artist than a big city theatre. Therefore, it is important to further deploy and network existing support for heritage conservation – such as Het Firmament (expertise centre for the cultural heritage of the performing arts) or the new tool TRACKS that contains instruments and guidelines for archiving and heritage conservation in the arts sector). In this, however, the aim is not for the heritage sector to impose a set of rules on the arts sector, but to dialogue with the arts field concerning a minimal level of care.

3. *Attention to digitisation, to preserve the performing arts heritage and make it widely available:* With respect to the digital, PACKED (digital heritage expertise centre) and viaa (the Flemish institute for archiving) play a crucial role: PACKED as an expert for basic digital care, viaa as a partner in the sustainable preservation of the digital heritage of the (performing) arts. In this, the Flanders Arts Institute can act as ‘harvester’ of material from the arts sector. When makers or organisations wish to archive their work, it can provide for both central sustainable preservation at viaa and an additional opportunity to unlock the memory of the art practice through education and libraries.

THE LIVING CAPITAL OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

A diverse architecture and sophisticated spatial planning mean nothing without highly motivated and powerful developers who inhabit these daily and keep things running. Structures without life remain dead matter. In the performing arts as well, it is not the stages, but the artists who bring vitality to the field, and give it a face in society. If this interaction is to cause the entire city to flourish, then the investment in human capital is crucial. What is the place of performing artists in the landscape? How to achieve the much needed strengthening of their position?

CURRENT SITUATION

In the VTi field analyses, attention was paid to the changing position of artists in the performing arts. The production database reveals that in the last twenty years, more and more artists have become actively involved in Flemish productions: from 2,141 in the 1993-1994 season, to 2,601 in the 2012-2013 season.¹³ Especially an extra investment of 12.5 million euro in the Performing Arts Decree around the turn of the millennium provided for a huge overall boost in the employment of performing artists. At the same time, however, we could observe an increase in fragmentation in the employment opportunities of artists. The number of productions per artist registered in the database is decreasing. Not only are there more and more artists who contribute to Flemish productions only once (often foreign artists, artists from other disciplines, or amateurs), equally striking and more worrying: the group of artists who continually contributed to the performing arts in Flanders (with a participation in at least two new productions per season) declined from 352 in 1997-2001 to 165 in 2009-2013. As artistic employment in the performing arts has become fragmented, it is becoming increasingly difficult to develop a continuous career in the performing arts.

13. See p.114.

The time that performing artists could be neatly divided into actors and directors, or dancers and choreographers, who operate in company structures with ensembles, is already long behind us. Today 'makers' and performers tend to operate in temporary, project-based relationships. Artists in the performing arts are increasingly engaged for the duration of a production, and tend to construct their own individual pathway, working various organisations, often in diverse disciplines, increasingly in an international context. While in 1993-1997 some one thousand artists worked with more than one organisation or company, this number doubled in 2005-2009, compared to one thousand artists still involved with just one company. In the wider society long-term employment with one employer is still the norm, hence the arts sector demonstrates still a rather 'atypical' form of employment.

The 'individualisation' of the performing artists' position as described in the previous paragraph lead to a striking diversity of working models in which artists operate today. Together they characterise a complex landscape with a multiplicity of artistic pathways in which 'the individual artist' cannot simply be reduced to one homogeneous group. There are of course still makers who determine the artistic direction of their own (structural) company: as an individual (e.g. Meg Stuart with her company Damaged Goods) or collectively (e.g. Antwerp-based theatre collectives like SKaGeN or FC Bergman) (although one should remark that this does not necessarily mean that they are employed by such structures year round). Many performers work with multiple companies on a freelance basis, and only a small minority are permanently affiliated with an ensemble (NTGent, for instance, is one of the rare examples of a company which upholds an ensemble). Many (collectives of) makers also have their own structure, but use it mainly on a project basis.

Alongside this diversification of pathways of individual artists, the relationships between artists and organisations in the field have started to take many forms. Alongside the more classical companies that realise the work of a particular artist or collective, several companies opened up to work with several artistic groups or structurally

support emerging artists or companies. The city theatres such as Toneelhuis in Antwerp offer beautiful examples. There are structures that operate as 'production house' and support the work of younger and older makers as fully as possible for a certain period and in a manner tailored to individual needs – such as music theatre company LOD or FABULEUS, the theatre and dance company from Leuven with a focus on young audiences and talent development. The art centres and art labs in turn play a central role as co-producers and facilitating organisations for artists working on a project basis. In addition, there are numerous companies that perform diverse services for related independent artists with great regularity in ways maybe less systematic and therefore often less visible. The Flemish performing arts field can safely be called one large dating service. Since 'the emancipation of the performer' in the 1970s and 1980s, the field has flexibly – and more intricately than in other countries – developed around the ever-changing artistic needs of new generations of makers. It therefore makes little sense to conceive of the Flemish performing arts sector as made up of 'structures' vis-à-vis 'independent individual artists'. The field can more rightly be considered an integrated system where artists and organisations continuously redefine the relations they have with each other.

As diverse as the different individual trajectories of artists are the attitudes and experiences with which they move around. While one artist hops from project to project by necessity, due to the lack of a permanent ensemble, the other does so out of conviction. While one maker prefers a different context for each new project, the other seeks a permanent structure to build steadily on an oeuvre. Some artists only work as directors or choreographers throughout their lives, some only a performer on stage, and many combine both roles (in one and the same project or in consecutive projects). They may be the artistic leader of one project, and in the following, work 'at the service' of a colleague. How does one keep this multiplicity of relationships exciting and thriving, and fit to the ever changing and diverse needs of artists?



NOTABLE TRENDS

The human capital of the performing arts is not only their engine, but also their most vulnerable flywheel. We have already pointed out the increasing fragmentation of employment opportunities. The numerical analysis below in this publication shows the impact of budget cuts and the financial and economic crisis on the employment of artists: artistic employment fell by 15% in one season (2009-2010). The financial turmoil in organisations is often felt first by artists, because today they are less protected by the buffer of a longer-term employment, and the artistic costs of organisations are the most variable. It is this combination – economic pressure on the entire architecture and ‘individualisation’ of artistic work within this – that requires special attention.

The tendency towards more and more flexible employment in the artist’s existence is partially based on a structural feature of the performing arts: live art is very labour intensive, while little efficiencies can be gained by replacing labour by mechanised processes. This makes it expensive, and the attempt to control wage costs logical. When organisations’ incomes do not rise in line with wage costs, they often find themselves forced to cut the number of artists involved and/or to limit the duration of contracts. Of course and as already mentioned, many artists also choose to work as ‘freelancer’ in order to take advantage of the inspiring variety of colleagues or working models. Precisely this autonomy of the ‘emancipated player’, breaking loose from ‘rigid structures’ has been one of the pillars of the success of Flemish performing arts since the 1980s, with their characteristic horizontal processes and many collectives.

Actors and dancers have evolved into the typical ‘post-Fordist’ worker of the twenty-first century, with ‘boundary-less’ or ‘protean’ careers (after Proteus, the Greek mythical god who constantly changed shape). These careers are typically nurtured by a spirit of free enterprise and are not bound by one employment context. But precisely because of this, these artists are faced with the constant pressure to make choices, with uncertainty, and greater demands for

mobility, flexibility and networking skills. In parallel with the emergence of facilitating organisations such as art labs and alternative management agencies – that aim to offer individual artists project-based and ‘modular’ support in a tailor-made fashion –, many coordination tasks have increasingly become the responsibility of the artist. This is a major paradox today: there are more organisations that specifically support the individual projects and trajectories of artists, but the fragmentation of resources and the ‘inflation’ of co-productions cause artists themselves to put increasing energy into networking, business matters, discussions with potential partners, etc. – ‘in-between time’ that no one pays for.

Recent scientific research confirms that more and more artists ‘are multiple job holders’: in order to make a living, they augment their artistic income with art-related activities or other jobs.¹⁴ A recent survey by Ghent University studying the socioeconomic position of the actors in Flanders teaches us that among the Flemish actors, their most frequent paid activities consist of television production (73% of respondents), acting in subsidised theatre or musical productions (61%), voice-over work (47%) and acting for commercial assignments (41%). In November 2013, 43% of the actors worked for multiple companies or producers, 32% were affiliated with one company/producer, 14.5% did not act, and 8% worked only via occasional performances. Three fourths of the surveyed actors also had income from other activities related to acting: teaching (42%), directing (41%) or writing (28%). In addition, 22% earned money among others by making music, working in the hospitality sector, communications training and coaching. Thus, ‘working as an actor’ appears to be an increasingly broad concept.

14. J. Siongers and A. Steen, *Acteurs in de spotlight. Onderzoek naar de inkomens en sociaaleconomische positie van professionele Vlaamse acteurs*. [Actors in the Spotlight: Research on the incomes and socio-economic position of professional Flemish actors]. Ghent: Research group Cudos – Department of Sociology, University of Ghent, 2014.

Alarming is especially the level of financial compensation received for this multiplicity of assignments. International research shows that artists earn less on average than other professions with a similar level of education, training and experience¹⁵. In Flanders, few specific figures exist, but the Ghent research confirms in any case that the actors surveyed are worried about their financial situation. They usually find the remuneration received from separate jobs satisfactory, but they consider their total income inadequate. Much depends on the length of time between jobs. 57% of the actors who do not uphold or take up other employment between jobs rely on unemployment benefits via their so-called 'artist status' (a specific set of regulations as part of the unemployment system for employees which is tailored to the working conditions of performing artists), almost 30% on savings, and 15% on the income of their partners.

Their financial situation makes 60% of the surveyed actors (very) dissatisfied with their future prospects. Women in fact report significantly more job insecurity, while precisely more women than men graduate from theatre programmes.¹⁶ The low income of individual artists is a complex policy issue to tackle, which cannot be solved by solely increasing the total arts budget. As long as the total amount of funding flowing into the arts continues to be distributed to more and more individual artists, individual artists on average will continue to live in difficult circumstances. (see the fragmentation illustrated in Figures 5a and b, and also Hans Abbings book *Why Are Artists Poor?: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*).

15. See H. Abbings, *Why are Artists Poor?: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002, and D. Throsby and A. Zednik, 'Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: some empirical evidence'. *Cultural Trends* 1, 2011: 9-24.

16. K. van Langendonck, B. Magnus, M. Bresseleers and L. Degraeve, *Vrouw-manverhoudingen in de podiumkunsten. Een genderstudie van 1993 tot 2012* [*Women-men ratios in the performing arts: A gender study from 1993 to 2012.*] Brussels, 2014.

Not only the wages, but also the social conditions surrounding the work make artists vulnerable. Especially the situation of the many international choreographers and performers who are attracted by the lively Belgian dance scene needs special attention. Their situation resembles that of 'guest workers': they have difficulty accessing the relevant information about e.g. residency and work permits or unemployment benefits in Dutch and French (the language of the international artistic community is English), their temporary employment in different countries complicates the accumulation of social benefits, and when problems arise, their local social network most often extends no further than their professional and artistic environment. Precisely because these artists are internationally mobile and not collectively organised, no sector organisation or governmental body is or feels fully responsible or apt to look after their interests.

The interaction between structures and individual makers also remains a concern. The steadily growing supply of interesting artists is coming ever more clearly into conflict with stagnating or even declining resources in organisations that are expected to offer them a platform. Therefore, artists have the feeling – rightly so or not? – that the years of professionalisation in the performing arts sector has resulted in organisations actually being less in service of the autonomous work of makers, and that their artistic budget has constantly decreased relative to the total budget. Put bluntly: are production and presentation structures still in service of the artist's story, or are artists intended mainly to serve the houses' own profile? Organisations are aware of this tension and strive to keep the artist central in their operations, but unfortunately efforts to make cuts in overhead and staffing often go unnoticed. Greater transparency and an open dialogue with the artists about the decisions made in the organisations here would help counter the increasing polarisation between artists and organisations.

In any case, there will always be a tension between facilitating sustainable artistic paths, with slow and deliberate support of established makers, and providing opportunities for young artists. Each organisation must be aware of its vision and relation to this tension,

and try to find answers to this issue. Moreover, these answers cannot but be developed collectively, on the level of the field as a whole.

A priority concern is the influx and circulation of artists with roots from elsewhere. Paradoxically enough, while the international dimension of the Flemish performing arts has increased significantly, there are high barriers for artists who have come to Flanders as refugees. One of the main difficulties they face is the lack of network to gain access to the field, which artists inhabiting the international western artistic scene face less. Their mobility is precisely initiated by projects and opportunities for collaboration, while the forced mobility of refugees to the contrary often leads to the cutting off of previously existing ties.

Also young talents who have grown up in Belgium in ethnically and culturally diverse families often have difficulties finding their way into the professional sector. The reasons for that are complex and diverse, as VTi examined in the publication *In nesten*, on talent and interculturalism in the Flemish performing arts. One important barrier lies in the fact that many of these youngsters often have had less chances to take part in part-time art education while being child or in professional art education later on.¹⁷ The young artists with non-Western roots we see coming up in the Flemish performing arts field therefore are often self-educated and need to make extra efforts to make up for the lack of network in the field which their colleagues who did follow professional arts education built through school.

It's not just a matter of entrance in the field, but also of continuity. While career continuity is a problem for many other performing artists, steady careers on the part of non-Western makers are more the exception. Here additional sensitivities come into play. A non-Western origin sometimes opens doors, but there are often hidden traps, for example due to stereotypical expectations. Also typically, many of these artists still are first referred to socio-artistic and welfare

17. G. Simons, M. Maréchal, D. Hesters and J. Gadeyne, *In nesten: onderzoek naar talentontwikkeling en interculturaliteit in de podiumkunsten [In nests/In a jam: Research into talent development and interculturalism in the performing arts]*. Brussels: Dēmos, VTi and BKO, 2013.

funds because policy makers and programmers continue to too easily associate their work with social, rather than artistic, ends. Also, theatres too easily hope that their creations will automatically attract 'other communities'. But if artistic autonomy is a success factor for the Flemish performing arts, this should apply to all artists alike.

Given the different specific thresholds they face, we can observe a trend towards self-organisation among makers of non-Western origin. In the cities, new scenes are developing in various artistic disciplines, outside the sometimes highly streamlined offer of art labs, cultural and art centres. In the future, the sector should be ready to grant these initiatives sufficient legitimacy and symbolic capital, and interact with them.

CHALLENGES, ALSO FOR POLICY

1) Sustained support of artistic careers

The performing arts are artist-driven. Therefore, caring for the landscape means caring for the conditions in which the artist can work. Such a support policy goes beyond a vision of scholarships or project support, also further than mere financial measures. The aim is to continue to develop a wide range of policy tools that strengthen the interconnected system of work environments of our diverse artists – in the field as a whole.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Support for self-organisation initiatives*: when artists themselves develop new models of cooperation, they deserve full support. In recent years we see an increase in new types of self-organisation initiatives. They differ from the traditional collective because they do not necessarily gather around one artistic story, but – as a response to all forms of fragmentation – together create a more solid context for separate artistic pathways. Artists increasingly work together structurally for business support of their work,

but also in order to stimulate debate and reflection among artists (e.g. SPIN), to tap into new audiences (e.g. Sincollectief), to promote joint interests of artists in the field and in the larger society (e.g. State of the Arts), to present their work (e.g. Volksroom) or to create residencies (e.g. Overtoon) ... Often they do not focus solely on their own needs, but also explicitly address pressing societal issues in relation to economics, ecology and community. They give off signals of a society *and* a sector in transition, and lead the way in evolutions throughout the knowledge economy. Hence, to improve the position of artists and to offer oxygen to the transition of the field as a whole, such initiatives should be strengthened. Government support for these initiatives is equally important to ensure that there remain sufficient contexts in which artists themselves define the conditions in which they work, also beyond a traditional company structure.

2. *Joining forces in the sector*: in addition to facilitating artist-run organisations, it is also important to make existing facilitating organisations accountable for the specific problems of individual working artists. In the coming years, the sector itself, supported by policy, must give priority to working (together) on developing more flexible and coordinated work models, which relieve artists of the need to handle the coordination.
3. *The appropriate allocation of project and structural subsidies*: now that the new Arts Decree has again deepened the gap between project-based funding and structural support (now only for five years, while before structural subsidies existed for two or four years), artist initiatives and smaller organisations run a greater risk of being forced into a project logic. Such a divide can break up the interconnected reality of the landscape. It would be even worse if this were to push artists into situations of even greater uncertainty, impose on them an increased administrative burden in the hunt for project

resources, or make them less likely to conclude long-term partnerships. Consequently, policy makers must be very wary of such undesirable effects. The difference between structural and project-based activity must be determined by a difference in intent and objective, not by the size or nature of the player.

4. *Proactively strengthen the position of artists of non-Western origin*: to create a more intercultural landscape, policy may not just focus on structures: the empowerment of makers is also crucial. A long-term investment is needed in makers and companies with the potential to add diversity to the practice of the performing arts. This can take place through direct support with grants, project or structural subsidies under the Arts Decree, but also indirectly, by strengthening the breeding grounds that focus on talent development, initial support, coaching programmes, etc. At the same time, it is important to give a greater diversity of makers more freedom to develop new forms of production and presentation. This requires additional resources, but also active scouting and cross-over initiatives with other policy domains, and a long-term commitment. New diverse talent rarely flows into the sector of its own accord.
5. *An atelier policy for performing artists*: in addition to the (selective) production space at art labs and art centres, there is also a need for adequate physical spaces where artists can develop their own practice. Such a permanent 'atelier' is an obvious need for visual artists, but for performing artists without infrastructure, they are non-existent. Some find a temporary location in empty office buildings or apartments, but artists relying more on physical work, such as dancers, certainly need better infrastructure in order to work safely. In consultation with the (central) cities, the Flemish government could develop an 'atelier policy' for performing artists.

2) Strengthening the socio-economic position of artists

In the Ghent University survey cited above, Flemish actors were asked what the government should especially focus on. For 56%, remuneration was the top priority. Followed by 'job insecurity' and the 'status of the artist'. Pension and social benefits close out the top five. Naturally, these priorities are not just a matter for the government. The dire socio-economic conditions of many performing artists should be a concern shared by the entire field. To this end, the first challenge is that the most flexible amounts – the artistic budget – be spared from further cuts. Measures such as the artists rebate (when hiring artists), supplementary pension for artists and measures that increase purchasing power through VIA 4 (Flemish Intersectoral Agreement) remain relevant to addressing the precarious socio-economic position of (performing) artists.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Safeguard artistic budgets with a view toward fair remuneration:* while organisations continue to creatively seek a healthy balance between overhead costs and artistic expenses, this search has its limits. Even when employers in the arts sector attempt to provide proper remuneration for makers and performers – for all of the time worked and with the proper legal status – the reality of declining purchasing power and increasing numbers of strong performing artists dictates that this intention is often limited to freelance fees. This keeps the average income from artistic work low. It is then up to the Flemish government to not only continue to point out to organisations their responsibilities towards artists, as the engine of the performing arts, but also to provide them with sufficient funding. This is an explicit request. If this means that fewer organisations can be supported, this is a logical and acceptable consequence. We also advocate constructive support of organisations that thoroughly rethink their activity with and for artists.

The answers for the future of organisations – as is the case for the whole of society – lie more in 'different' than in 'more', in transformation rather than growth.

2. *More insight into 'multiple job holding':* the government could strengthen the combinability of jobs through further research and a simplification of the conditions for holding multiple jobs. Strictly speaking, these conditions fall outside the remit of the Flemish government, but the Minister of Culture could enter into discussion with his colleagues at the federal level. Moreover, insights into the employment of artists and new models to provide solid ground for their flexible career pathways could benefit the entire labour market and population, given the pressure towards more and more flexibility on the larger labour market. In this context, the creative sector can be seen as a 'test case'.
3. *Further refinement of the 'artist status':* while the so-called 'artist status' – a set of adapted rules for artists within the federal unemployment scheme – is an appreciated safety net for the diverse working practices of freelance artists, a number of concerns remain. It is important, for example, that all players in the performing arts sector – organisations, artists and policy makers – not view this 'status' as alternative 'compensation' for artistic work. Until further notice, unemployment benefits remain a replacement income for times when work is not available. Moreover, even after a revision of the status in 2014, a major problem remains: to be entitled to support, only artistic activities count and not, for example, teaching in part-time art education or art colleges. The combination with the self-employed status as secondary activity is also far from obvious, so that 'multiple job holding' and artistic independence are strongly discouraged. Therefore, this status must be further modified in the future.



PRESENTING ON THE PUBLIC FORUM

Investments in the architecture and the creative potential of a city are wasted if they do not also benefit the residents. This population is not a single mass. It consists of citizens, consumers and audiences. Furthermore, these groups have very different needs and convictions, have various incomes, educational levels and cultural backgrounds. But they all belong to one diverse community. If their composition changes, the city itself changes. And this goes double for the performing arts, because without audience, no theatre. More than ever, this public resonance must be the focus of policy and the sector. Not for the figures, but for the community itself. How to win over the public to the performing arts, and the performing arts to 'the public'?

They have much to offer on another. 'Culture is an important provider of meaning' say the researchers behind *The Value of Culture*. 'Indeed, it is even the only provider of meaning in a human life. So those who diminish the autonomy of culture, block the possibilities – through socialisation, qualification and especially subjectivation – to give meaning to their own existence.' For this reason, cultural policy is sometimes used to promote social cohesion. But this is not the only contribution culture can make to a society in full transformation. Art can bring about changes in attitudes among the public, cause paradigms to shift, or present relevant new perspectives. This is of great *social* significance, especially when simplistic us/them schemes sometimes gain the upper hand.

At the same time, it is obviously ridiculous to link to this a single normative relationship between art and public. In the performing arts, audiences can be large or small. There is a very wide spectrum between performances in which spectators experience theatre on an individual basis (e.g. in some pieces by CREW or Ontroerend Goed) and mass spectacles in the public space (from Royal de Luxe to the Zinneke Parade in Brussels). In performances of the Dutch theatre group Discordia in Antwerp's arts centre Monty, primarily an audience of fellow makers seek inspiration while at *Theater op de Markt*,

the street theatre festival in Hasselt, even the casual tourist can taste the wonders of (circus) theatre. But in all cases, performing arts are a live encounter, a transfer between artists and audience. In a highly digitalised and mediatised world, this is becoming more and more exceptional, and thus a situation to be cherished.

CURRENT SITUATION

In Flanders and Brussels, in parallel with all organisational and artistic developments, a faithful and committed public has been developed. Ask the foreign makers who come here to present their work. They are full of praise for the open curiosity, discernment and critical sense of audiences in Flanders and Brussels. While visitor numbers are declining in many other countries, both editions of the Flemish Participation Survey observed precisely a decrease in the group that *never* goes to theatre and dance, while the segment 'frequent participants' increased.¹⁸ 'Empty theatres' are a myth.

Yet this rich attention can never be taken for granted. Not only are the artistic offerings continuously being renewed, so is the audience. Audience building is a never-ending process. While a part of the traditional theatre audience is ageing, the cultural behaviour of young people is changing ever faster, and in the cities an ethnically and culturally diverse population is growing that does not recognise itself in what is considered 'the canon'. This makes cultural consumption less predictable: traditional repertoire, programmes and communication strategies no longer have the same meaning or effect. And in this, in its struggle for sales, certainly the media landscape is showing itself to be less of an ally in informing diverse audiences. Even the Flemish public broadcasting company no longer gives cultural emancipation the priority it once had. Conversely, the social media are growing in importance, but they also demand very different expertise that many

18. J. Lievens, J. and H. Waeye, *Participatie in Vlaanderen. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2009* [Participation in Flanders: Initial analyses of the participation survey 2009]. Leuven/The Hague: Acco, 2011.

institutions still need to develop. Things are no longer self-evident in the digital age.

One thing remains unchanged: the strong link between cultural participation and social parameters such as educational level and the socio-economic position and level of cultural participation of parents. Also in culture, not everybody is equal at the start. The old barriers are still there, and are perhaps even strengthened by the increasing social inequality thematised by economists such as Richard Wilkinson and Thomas Piketty. After two decades of conscious promotion of participation – ranging from a wide variety of policy initiatives in different domains in the 1990s, to more specific cultural policy instruments in the 2000s such as a socio-artistic policy or a Participation Decree – this is a sobering analysis. How to involve more (disadvantaged) people in the arts?

Already since the political theatre of the 1970s, and with a new surge in the 1990s, the field itself has taken initiatives to make theatre and dance more democratic. Today, this attention has reached a new high, for diverse reasons. One is probably the more pronounced social scepticism concerning the legitimacy of subsidised arts, driven by populist politicians like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. Also in Flanders, support for the arts has been a hot political issue since a couple of years. Yet there are also less defensive reasons. For many theatre companies, such as Martha!tentatief or Luxemburg, the urban space (with its diverse audiences) has already become an additional challenging context. At the same time, a new generation of makers has emerged such as Simon Allemeersch or Thomas Bellinck, who work with illegal immigrants, prisoners or residents with the same ease with which they work with professional actors. And apart from this, there is a trend away from the classical theatre: ranging from small-scale, committed on-location theatre and urban interventions in working class neighbourhoods to large scale experience theatre at public festivals like Theater Aan Zee in Ostend.

Even based on purely artistic convictions, the range of audiences reached appears to be growing. Today, socio-artistic practice takes place in a much wider context of participatory projects that experiment with

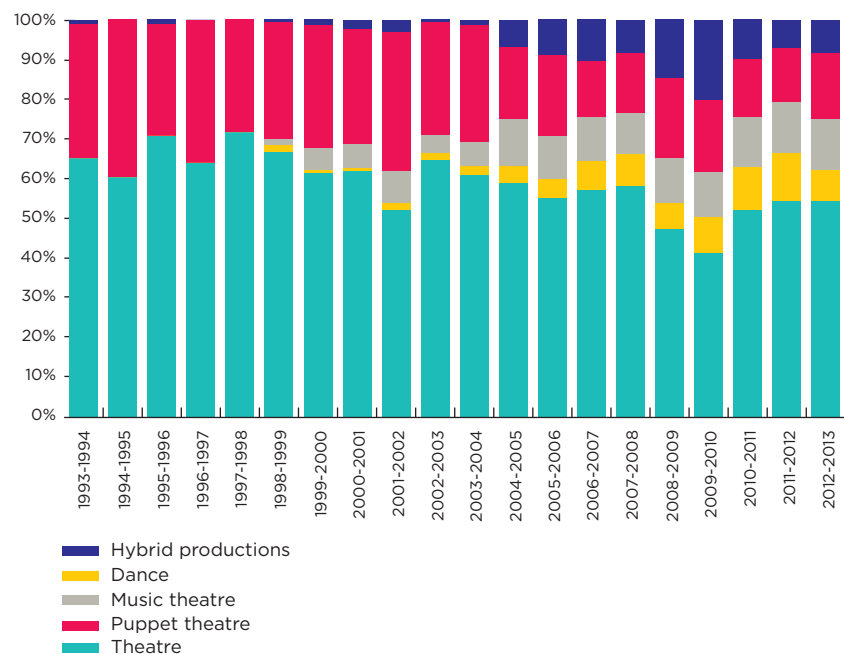
traditional relationships between artists and audience. Sometimes this takes place via slow processes that remain under the radar, sometimes via highly visible one-off events in the public space. Or a combination of both, as in the Vooruit's City Residents project (www.stadsresidenten.be) or the *Tok Toc Knock* project in which the Brussels city theatre kvs installed new creations in diverse neighbourhoods in the city during the 2013-2014 season. Social notions such as empowerment and community building are no longer taboo in the arts.

What these very diverse projects have in common is that they start from the passion of artists to give theatre a public function in civil society. They approach people not as consumers or spectators, but as critical citizens who are actively involved in processes of meaning creation. 'There is a growing ethical awareness within the arts', conclude researchers Guy Cools and Pascal Gielen in the recent publication *The Ethics of Art* (2014). 'In the way in which art relates to the larger social, political and economic challenges, and in the way art reflects on its production and distribution.'¹⁹ This demands a significant investment on the part of institutions wanting to reassess their position in society. They must abandon existing procedures and formats, develop new programmes and approaches, and build sustainable partnerships and networks, also outside the arts.

This need is explicit within the performing arts for children and youth. They are at the forefront of the increasing diversity of society. Through their close cooperation with schools and cultural centres throughout the country, the children's arts are faced – much earlier than the sector that focuses mainly on adults – with changing cultural behaviour patterns and frames of reference in the audiences of the future. This sheds a new light on the increasing interdisciplinarity of children's arts: which is an attempt to present new stories to a new audience in a different, less linguistic way. This is exciting and challenging, but also makes this part of the sector vulnerable.

19. G. Cools and P. Gielen (eds.), *The Ethics of Art: Ecological Turns in the Performing Arts*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014.

Figure 4: The hybridisation of the performing arts for children and adolescents, 1993-2013.



This graph shows the evolution of the genre labels that performing arts productions for children and adolescents (0-17 years) received in the VTi performing arts database. Where the 1993-1994 season mentioned almost exclusively 'theatre' or 'puppet theatre', twenty years later these two genres represent 70% of what is on offer. First, music theatre and dance have gained in importance (from season 1998-1999), but a significant share also goes to performances that combine multiple genres, which we call 'hybrid productions'. These may involve different stage genres, but also performing arts in combination with music, video or other artistic disciplines. In addition to artistic choices, financial or communicative motives also play a role in this evolution. Visual, non-language-specific productions can appeal to a wider, more diverse audience at home and open the door to international tours.

Source: Vlaams Theater Instituut (<http://data.vti.be>). For more on this graph, see *Performing Arts Flanders. Perspective: Young Audiences* (2014): 28-29.

Diverse theatre for a diverse audience requires an extensive commitment on the part of an entire chain of artists and producers, art educational players, programmers and venues, schools, teachers and teacher education, parents, the media and the various authorities ... Not all links in this chain are equally well oiled. Thus, the market situation (restrictions on buy-out fees, shifts in local cultural policy and education, with limited opportunities to present as a result, increasing the competition from cheaper and commercial offerings) inhibits innovation and experimentation.²⁰ The financial and economic crisis is also putting considerable pressure on the internationalisation of this segment of the performing arts.

Another important partner in the quest for sustainable networks and partnerships is art education and mediation. This is becoming increasingly important in the operations and staffing of companies and houses. Sometimes the focus is on 'learning' (pedagogy, schools, formal), sometimes on 'forms' (social studies, producing, non-formal). Art education is certainly not limited to children and youth. Learning and training can be lifelong, both passive and active. Thus, dancer/teacher Dafne Maes describes dance education as an ideal combination of active doing, receptive looking and reflexive thinking.²¹ More and more organisations have even built up expertise around this mediating role. In addition to formal learning in school, today, thanks to the impulse provided by the first Arts Decree (2004), there are many art educational players actively playing a bridging role with the amateur arts, youth work and local cultural policy.

The fact that arts education is spread across so many policy areas is sometimes seen as a weakness ('fragmentation'), but opportunity also lies in their complementarity. Within this broad palette, a

20. *In Performing Arts Flanders. Perspective: Young Audiences*, we went deeper into recent developments in this segment of the performing arts. The article by VTi's researcher Delphine Hesters contains a detailed statistical and qualitative analysis of the ecosystem of the arts for young audiences.

21. D. Maes, 'Dansen dansen! Onbekend is onbemind: Een onderzoek naar dans-educatie' [Dance dance! Unappreciated until understood: A study of dance education]. *Courant* 104 (2013): 57-61.

specific artistic approach has great value because artists inject new perspectives, always tailor their work to their audience, and never base themselves on standardised formats. A precondition for this is more and better cooperation. The transfer of ideas and methods between policy, research and the field is not always easy, due among others to conflicting visions by cultural workers, researchers and teachers. However, in the field itself, much work is already being done in the area of cross-sector collaboration. Especially children's and youth theatre reaches the diverse potential audience of the future through wide networks with schools and local youth work, and perhaps has gone the furthest in the quest for artistic languages that also appeal to groups that are less white.

Yet barriers remain, say Lode Vermeersch and Loes Vandenbroucke in their SWOT analysis for the *Cultural education field report* (2011).²² Especially financial and time constraints in education, the inadequate equipping of schools, and ignorance on the part of teachers concerning what's available, sometimes hinder the three success factors of cooperation between education and art (education): the open and informal approach to learning, the centrality of the experience of students, and the challenging methods of art education experts (often professional artists). Even after the policy proposals 'Groeien in cultuur [Growing in culture]' and 'Doorgroeien in Cultuur [Further growth in culture]' by ministers Pascal Smet (education) and Joke Schauvliege (culture), an improved policy framework for sustainable interaction between formal and non-formal art education at all levels of education appears to be indispensable. It is important that this cross-sectoral cooperation between culture and education also be extended into the new legislature (2014-2019).

Via arts education, the arts indeed have much to offer the learning environments of our knowledge economy. They enrich creativity: the only commodity that Western societies have in abundance and

that can secure their accumulated prosperity. Creativity in this view is a production force. Artists question prevailing stories and appeal to the public at different levels, especially if such artistic activity is active. The arts in this way can create new possibilities for the future of learning (and vice versa): co-creation, sensitive and less rational skills, meaning creation through individual and social learning processes. Creation processes in which artists work with participants from diverse social – and therefore also non-dominant – groups place participation at the centre of the practice of art. A future project for Flanders could make good use of these insights.

NOTABLE TRENDS

However, public accessibility to the performing arts is not only a problem of an unserved audience. Visibility among existing audience groups is a major challenge, precisely due to the aforementioned phenomenon that performance series are becoming shorter and venues scarce. According to the cultural centres, the causes are a growing number of artists and productions and increasing buy-out fees.

However, the distribution issue is more than an economic discussion concerning matching 'demand' and 'supply'. If we assume that the (performing) arts have the potential to play a strong role in society, as concluded by the research report *The Value of Culture*, the key question is how demand can be stimulated, rather than blaming the supply side of 'overproduction'. In an economy whose main starting point is the innovative drive of artists, this above all is a matter of developing a lasting audience for new artistic developments. Investing in productions that have limited opportunities to be presented and shared with an audience, is simply not sustainable. Makers should have the opportunity to set a course that first is addressed to a core audience, then – when they are ready, and for some this is quite quickly – to share their work with other audiences in less obvious venues. In this sense, the distribution issue is primarily a qualitative discussion: how to share the right work with the right audience?

22. L. Vermeersch and L. Vandenbroucke, *Veldtekening cultuureducatie: beschrijvende studie met evaluatieve swot-analyse* [Cultural education field report: Descriptive study with SWOT analysis]. Leuven: KU Leuven, 2011.



Today, however, there is great pressure on venues, and many presenting structures are increasingly faced with a *quantitative* evaluation of their programmes. Due to cost-cutting pressures, local governments are increasingly basing their reasoning on budgets and audience figures. While profits from the presentation of commercial or popular work previously provided a breathing space for programming less obvious work, now ticket revenue prevails for *each* production in more and more cultural centres. In the commercial segment, productions increasingly involve a cut of the receipts, to the benefit of the producer. This means that programmers easily fall back on known brands such as productions with TV personalities. In such an environment, the work of artists receives fewer opportunities for development and the public fewer opportunities to follow new artistic developments.

How to give more space to lesser known artists or more challenging artistic work? Part of this issue is addressed via alternative presentation formats. Thus, receptive venues more often are resorting to thematic programming, often using festival formulas. Recent research into the number of performing arts festivals in Flanders showed an increase from 62 performing arts festivals in 2003 to 98 festivals in 2012.²³ Some focus on a specific discipline or the work of certain makers. Others programme around social themes such as ecology, poverty, gender, technology, etc. This indicates an essential shift. While previously, meaning creation was mainly the task of artists and companies, now art centres and other institutions themselves often engage in meaning creation. More than ever, programmers are acting like curators.

This has advantages and disadvantages. Many theatre makers mention as disadvantage the fact that their artistic project is less often the starting point of a programme, requiring them to join in an external story, or resulting in their work being potentially less consistently

23. F. Tielens, *Festivalitis in de podiumkunsten: een analyse van het aanbod en de functies van podiumfestivals*. [Festivalitis in the performing arts: An analysis of the offerings and functions of performing arts festivals]. Antwerp: University of Antwerp, 2013.

followed – if it is presented at all. The advantages are mainly for the audience, says Dragan Klaic in *Re-Setting the Stage*, his posthumously published book on ‘public’ theatre. Substantive themes are recognisable even to a non-initiated public, which sometimes is unable to see the forest for the trees. Thus, an institution can appeal to new groups and develop structural relationships with partners outside the arts. Sometimes this even helps to obtain additional financing, but it mainly allows an art house to contribute to the renewal of the local cultural climate.²⁴

CHALLENGES, ALSO FOR POLICY

1) Reaching out to new audiences

To get the most out of the social benefits of dance and theatre, it is important that organisations and artists make themselves more visible in the civil space, to there, in diverse ways, appeal to a wide range of citizens and spectators with their alternative look at human communal existence. This requires the smooth interplay of diverse forces, in the field itself as well as in policy, in the media and in education.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Promoting participation via cultural policy*: the new Arts Decree (2013) introduces a functional approach to looking at the arts. In addition to ‘development’, ‘creation’, ‘presentation’ and ‘reflection’, ‘participation’ is also a function to which artists, organisations and projects can subscribe. The difference with the previous Arts Decree (2004) is that art educational or socio-artistic methods are no longer explicitly mentioned. On paper, this new feature ‘participation’ is a powerful tool to support many types of organisations in their active reaching out to society. The function ‘participation’ can be used in the evaluation process to stimulate vulnerable and

24. D. Klaic, *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre between the Market and Democracy*. Bristol: Intellect, 2012.

experimental processes that can deepen the relationship with new audiences. At the same time, this function should not be narrowed to only socio-artistic and art education practices, or producers with a focus on makers with other backgrounds. Participation is a cross-cutting story, to which in principle any organisation can qualitatively contribute. It is important that the strategic vision statement of the new Culture Minister address this.

A similar broad integration of the participation idea could also be used to improve cultural policy, for example via additional coordination between the project-based Participation Decree and the more structural, long term aim of the Arts Decree and the Decree on Local Culture.

2. *Connections with education, welfare, youth and local cultural policy*: research also shows that levers for participation must be embedded not only in the arts or cultural policy, but also in a broader policy framework, in relation to education, welfare, youth ... Successful participation policy is deep and wide. Furthermore, interculturalism must be a crucial element of this.

Cooperation between different 'sectors' is not always efficiently stimulated by policy, even though change is gradually taking place with recent policy notes on joint policy initiatives by culture and education. Yet innovative partnerships between different sectors (culture, youth, welfare, education) are still too rare. Here lie also opportunities for the conversation between Flemish and local policy levels, precisely because local arts and culture can be embedded in a social story. Local cultural policy is well positioned to enable new types of cross-sector partnerships.

3. *Quality of audience mediation over audience numbers*: for additional investments in public participation to really pay off in the long run, it is important to appreciate experiments for their qualitative aspects, rather than solely based on their quantitative results. If the success of arts organisations and cultural centres is mainly based on audience numbers, policy in principle

simply confirms the market and the necessary innovative models are nipped already in the bud. This key principle, however, may not become a defensive justification for the field to only work in the margins. The key question should be: how to share the right work with the right audience? This requires in the first place good interaction between producers, booking agents, management agencies, distribution projects, programmers, art and cultural educational players and even schools. No audience quotas.

4. *A cultural component in media policy*: from a key player in the expansion of public support for the arts, the mainstream media threatens to degenerate into mere promotional machinery for individual art events. Moreover, in newspapers, on radio and television, selection mechanisms are used that increasingly conflict with thought-provoking ideas of innovation projected by the (performing) arts. Recognisability is preferred based on commercial considerations: big names, known institutions, spectacular events – those that can already promise the largest audiences.

Politicians know how difficult it is to get their substantive story communicated to the general public via the mainstream media. Therefore, a corrective media policy is more than desirable, also for the cultural sector. When recruiting new audiences, it comes down to not only insisting more that the public broadcaster take up its responsibility – in all of its broadcasts – to continue to provide sufficient depth and diversity, but in parallel, to look for possible tools with which also the popular media occasionally can expand their cultural focus beyond local media personalities. At the same time, the perspective of Flemish media policy can be broadened to include new and more independent online players, who despite their fledgling production capacity are indeed developing a wide audience, and by nature promoting missions with greater social engagement.

2) Continued investment in existing audiences

In addition to disseminating the value of the performing arts to new audiences, continued attention is needed to existing distribution models. Due to economic, technological and demographic developments, they will need to renew themselves in order to maintain their large and loyal art following in Flanders. In particular, the distribution issue, an ageing population, 'dilution' (an increasing number of single people) and the impact of digitisation, demand a flexible policy response in the new legislature. Preconceived notions regarding access to audiences appear less and less obvious.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

1. *A transition policy for distribution:* in addition to the above-mentioned considerations on the distribution issue, it is important to challenge and support both producers and presenting structures in the development of new models to reach their audience. What should become of the regular seasonal brochures of the cultural centres that increasingly are out of step with the cultural behaviour of young people and families? How best to experiment with longer performance series? How to convince school boards and teachers of the quality of the art offerings available? What alternatives are conceivable for the seemingly self-evident evening programming that deters some seniors? The coming years will require greater variety in the presentation of performing arts, at both micro and macro level. While a stimulus policy can already do much, the answers must come from the field itself.

2. *Putting digitisation to use:* while for the moment 'the digital turn has had a less drastic impact on the performing arts field than on books, music and film' – given the essential live character of theatre and dance –, opportunities and challenges in adapting to changing communication behaviour are presenting themselves. Possible actions range from support in garnering expertise on social media use or archiving at institutions, to applying the existing policy on e-culture to the performing arts. At artistic level too, it is possible that compelling virtual forms of theatre and dance will continue to develop in the coming years.
3. *Promoting reflection:* the above-average focus in Flanders on the creation and presentation functions requires that the reflection function – the identification and analysis of all of this artistic work – catch up. Now that the mainstream media are taking up this task less and less, a gap threatens in reliable (institutional) criticism and background reflection. Companies and journals are trying to fill the gap, but often they have limited resources and energy to communicate their reflection beyond a niche audience. Yet there is a societal demand for commentary. Opportunities are also sometimes missed abroad: an appeal for a translation policy regarding the reflection function.
4. *Continue to focus on arts for young audiences:* if we want art and cultural participation to be self-evident throughout society, it is best to bring people in contact with art at a very young age. It is therefore important that there is a policy in place to fully support these practices. Interculturalism, internationalisation and wide distribution are important here.

CONCLUSION

Cities, like the whole of society, are faced with an exciting dynamic. If the involvement of citizens is to be greater, the scope of one's own strengths broader, combined production capacity strengthened, then broadly speaking, two choices present themselves. Either you go with the flow and learn to cope as well as possible with the resources you have: first, do your calculations well and then efficiently streamline by eliminating all that appears to be useless, increasing your speed, and above all, meeting the capricious demands of your surroundings and submitting to the will of the economy. This is a choice for the survival of the fittest: those who are able, can ride the wave. There is a good chance that your city will soon obtain better customer satisfaction results.

Or you bet on the future, based on a few unique and fundamental priorities, even if this means going against the flow. These priorities include the still rather vague sounding wishes for a new society, which since the banking crisis are resurfacing in very diverse places in the civil space: a *sharing* community, slowing down in service of quality, reduced socio-economic inequality, environmental sustainability for our children, cross-over dialogue and cooperation, etc. You then commit yourself to values, more so than to strong action, and facilitate the development and application of new models at as many places as possible. You lay a new foundation for your city, in order to be ahead of the game.

The economic situation means that there will be no easy choices for policy makers and the arts. The easiest is to go with the flow. Except that then the performing arts will become an experience culture rather than a participation culture, a focus on merely known and established artists rather than also on *good* artists, internationally successful management instead of a policy of international development, sophisticated customer loyalty instead of democratising public mediation, etc. Visibility then becomes more important than depth, competition more important than cooperation, a hardening

of positions more important than change, and administrative interventions more important than vision. That is a possible choice.

But such a choice will scarcely engage the potential of the performing arts within a broader social story: a unique kind of creativity and critical thinking, sculpting the immeasurable, sharing underexposed stories – and all the other powers espoused by the research report on *The Value of Culture*. The challenge faced by cultural policy is giving shape to and disseminating these values, more than simply considering new rules and counting the pennies. Aim in the 'State of the Art' for Flanders at a cultural turn in all of policy. In an increasingly digital and rationalising age, such other values are precisely a possible strength, not nostalgic conservatism or a 'leftist hobby'.

Two things are essential to such an integral transformation. Government will need to make additional links between multiple policy domains: from welfare and youth, to education, media and science. And artists and organisations will need to employ greater imagination, even concerning organisational issues. After all, calling the self-evident into question is their strength. Mere corrections to the system, which has worked for forty years, will probably no longer suffice.

If work is to be made of real 'public theatre', new creative approaches to production, distribution, audience building ... will be required. And a change from self-promotion to network capacity. Let this be the watchword for the coming funding round. Harvesting the power of the performing arts is at the same time protecting its core fruit from the economic virus and allowing its pollen to be carried by the winds of change. After growth comes the flowering.

LIBERA PLANKO SPACO PO PORKO
kun la escepto de semas

vivas pezo (kg)	m ²
≤10	≥0,15
10-20	≥0,20
20-30	≥0,30
30-50	≥0,40
50-85	≥0,55
85-110	≥0,65
>110	≥1,00



DIREKTIVO 2008/120/EK

Enlitigante minimumajn normojn necesajn por la protekto de porkoj

Oficiala Jurnalado Ne. L 47,
18/02/2009 P. 0005-0013



PART 2

BACKGROUND READINGS

DRAMA ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON THE INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION OF PERFORMING ARTS FROM FLANDERS

Joris Janssens, Sofie Joye, Bart Magnus

In its earlier field analyses *Metamorphoses* (2007) and *Ins & Outs* (2011), VTi examined trends in the production and international distribution of the Flemish performing arts. These previous analyses showed how drastically the practice of the performing arts has changed since the early 1990s. The main trends were the growth and 'hybridisation' of production, the changing position of individual artists, and the emergence of a transnational network of partners who increasingly work together in producing and presenting performing arts. This article is an update of these figures (from the 1993-1994 through the 2012-2013 seasons). It examines the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the production and international distribution of the performing arts.

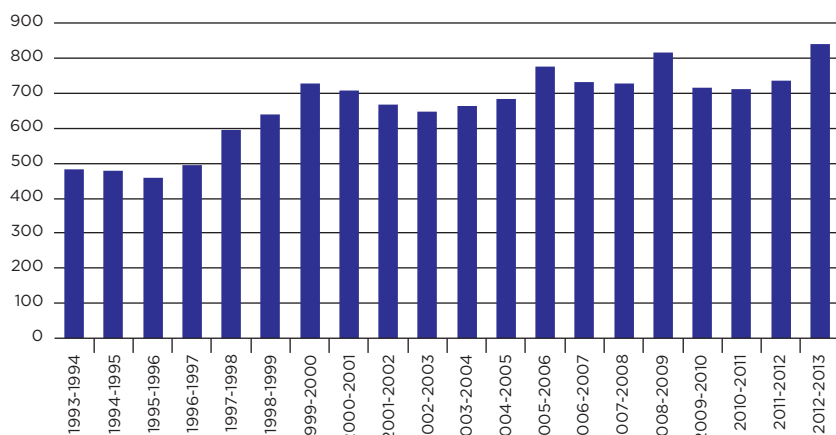
What effect do austerity measures in diverse European countries have on a production model increasingly based on international collaboration? Have the across-the-board budget cuts in Flanders – a painful instrument for many artists and organisations – affected our performing arts production or distribution? And finally: can shifts be detected in the position of the artist in the performing arts landscape?

STAGNATING GROWTH

Previous field analyses indicated growth in the production of the Flemish performing arts. Is this evolution continuing? Graph 1 depicts the number of productions on show during each season. The vertical blue bars show the number of productions per season with at least one Flemish organisation as main or co-producer. These productions contain both new creations and reprises from previous seasons.

The number of productions per season has almost doubled since 1993: from 481 productions in 1993-1994, to 842 in 2012-2013. Which is not to say that there has been a steep growth curve since 1993. We concluded in previous field analyses that the growth in the number of productions was strongest in the 1990s, especially in the second multi-year period of the Performing Arts Decree (1997-2001). At the time, the new Performing Arts Decree (1993) provided an impulse, even though corresponding budgets for such were not available. It is noteworthy that many more productions were realised then, but with smaller casts. Subsequent growth was steady. Budgets became increasingly available from 2001. Then Culture Minister Bert Anciaux injected an extra 12.5 million euro into the Performing Arts Decree.

Graph 1: Number of productions per season



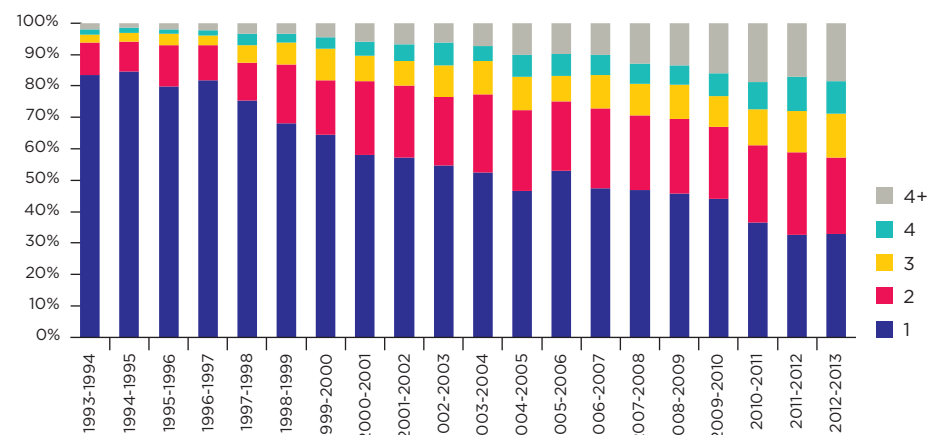
This did not result in an increase in the number of productions, but did give a boost to artistic employment, earlier field analyses pointed out. Casts again became larger. Growth has continued since 2001, but has become much more irregular. After a peak in 2008-2009 we recently noted a relatively strong decline in the number of productions. The financial and economic crisis may have played a role here. Remarkably, the performing arts production recovered quickly from this dip, with a new high in the number of productions per season in 2012-2013.

WORKING TOGETHER IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

The updated figures from the VTi performing arts database also show an increasing number of co-productions and partnerships.

Graph 2 shows that an increasingly greater number of the productions are being made by several organisations. Each season is represented by a bar with different coloured areas. The absolute number of productions is not visible on this graph. What can be seen is the percentage of the productions per season made by a given number of organisations. The blue part indicates the percentage of productions

Graph 2: Number of partner organisations involved in productions



made by only one organisation. Twenty years ago, this applied to more than 80% of the cases, but this is no longer the standard: now 70% of productions are a co-production. The red area shows the percentage of productions with two partner organisations, the yellow with three, the green with four, and finally grey indicates the productions in which more than four organisations were involved. We see that the increase in the latter category (more than four partner organisations) is the strongest. In twenty years, the number of partner organisations involved in a production, increased from an average of 1.2 to exactly 2. Romeo Castellucci's productions *The Minister's Black Veil* and *On the Concept of the Face, regarding the Son of God*, involved no less than 21 organisations, including International Arts Campus deSingel (Antwerp). There is an increase in producers and partnerships. The positive side to this story is the fact that co-productions frequently also include agreements concerning opportunities to present (and thus contribute in this way to better distribution of productions).

The downside is a fragmentation in production capacity. In recent years, the making of a production requires the contribution of an increasing number of organisations, each of which is responsible for an ever-smaller share of the production process. The value covered by a co-production – financially or in kind – has become much less. More and more co-productions are 'increased buy-out fees', in exchange for a listing as co-producer in the communications, a premiere location or exclusivity for a specified region. So, what at first sight seems a story of increasing cooperation also indicates an economic necessity. Policy choices in Flanders and abroad have resulted in shrinking production and programming budgets in various foreign countries, increasing the need for financial partnerships. Shrinking budgets require more and more partners to cover the costs. Increased pressure on resources also makes greater visibility in the landscape more important. Various respondents said that sensitivity to credits in the programme brochures and flyers has increased in recent years, even resulting in inflation.

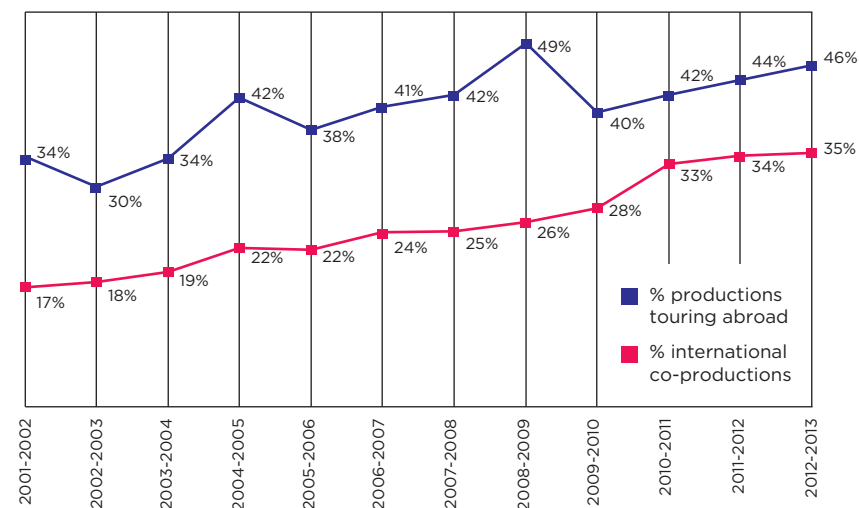
DRAMA ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET

Since the 1990s, there has been increasing collaboration in a transnational network for co-production and distribution, with Flemish performing artists and producing and presenting organisations as important players. How does the growing trend in co-producing relate to international touring? Does the fact that there are more co-productions also result in more opportunities to present internationally?

Graph 3 shows that 17% of productions were internationally co-produced thirteen years ago. Today this is the case for 35% of productions. The blue line indicates that ten years ago, one-third of the productions toured internationally. This has risen to 46% today.

Around the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis, however, we note something special on the graph. Where for 2008-2009, the blue and red lines indicate a similar trend, we see that productions with an international tour suddenly fall back sharply. Several respondents stated that at the outbreak of the crisis, programmers

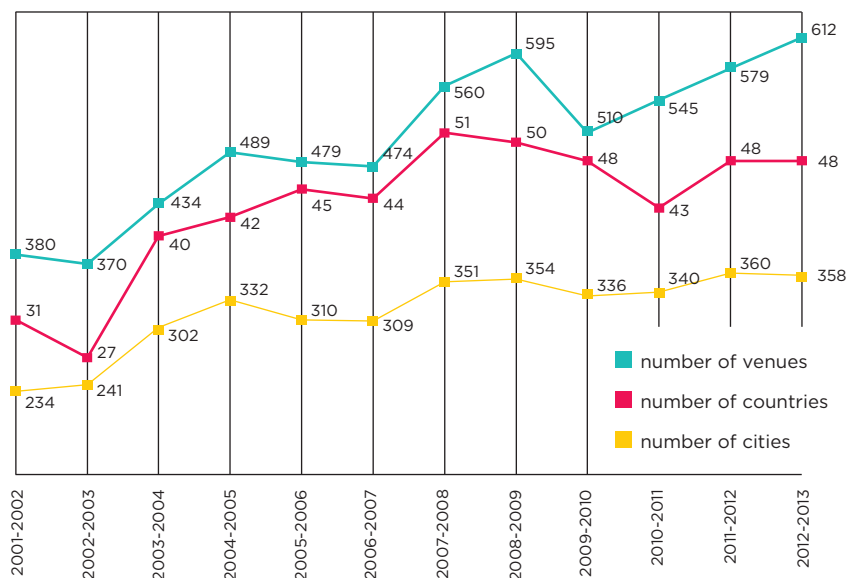
Graph 3: Productions touring abroad and international co-productions



were reluctant to book productions in anticipation of the effect of the austerity measures on the performing arts. This may have contributed to the decrease in the number of Flemish productions abroad. Recovery appears to have taken place in subsequent seasons, but we are still not at the 2008-2009 level of 49% productions with an international tour.

It is remarkable that during the 2009-2010 season, the start of the crisis period, the practice of co-producing internationally increased more strongly than ever before. The question is whether this increase in international co-productions is a response to the downturn in international touring productions in 2008-2009 – seeking co-producers because production budgets had further decreased. We must also take into consideration the fact that foreign cost cutting was not the only factor here. The budget for supporting international initiatives

Graph 4: Countries/cities/venues per season presenting Flemish productions



via Arts Decree has since 2010 also been cut. More than 1.3 million was distributed in 2007; in 2010, this budget shrank to below 700,000 euro (in 2012 it rose again to 966,530 euro).

What does this evolution mean for the distribution of the Flemish performing arts in the world? We will dig deeper into this question by taking a closer look at the geographical distribution of international performances.

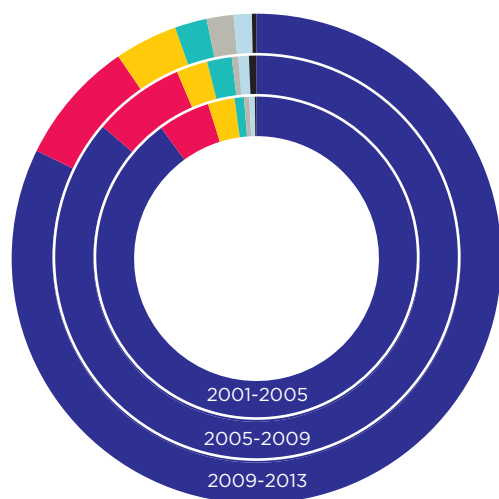
Graph 4 shows the evolution in the number of countries, cities and venues where Flemish performances could be seen worldwide. Over the entire period, there is a marked increase. After the 2008-2009 season, however, the trend changes significantly in the number of countries and venues, and to a lesser extent in the number of cities. This confirms what we saw in the previous graph. The number of productions touring internationally has fallen sharply since 2008, which also translates into the absolute figures on the number of places where Flemish performances can be seen. The dip in the graph recovers remarkably quickly. In contrast to the number of cities and venues, which today is equal to or even higher than the level before the crisis, this is not the case for the number of countries. Growth in the number of countries where Flemish performing arts can be seen has (temporarily?) reached an end.

Where can all of these productions be seen? Graph 5 divides Flemish performances abroad into clusters of four seasons. The different countries were clustered into continents. Within Europe, we distinguish between the historical core of the EU-15 countries and the rest of Europe²⁵.

25. The EU-15 countries are the 15 countries that made up the European Union in 1995: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. This group of countries coincides most strongly with Western Europe, which originally was also the most natural biotope for the international spread of the Flemish performing arts.

Examining the global distribution of Flemish performances, we note a slow but steady decrease in the distribution in the EU-15 countries. Although the number of performances in the EU-15 countries still grows between 2001-2005 and 2005-2009, the number of performances in the EU-15 region has dropped since then (from 8,129 to 7,386). Over the entire period, the share of EU-15 countries drops from 90% to 82%.

Graph 5: Distribution of productions across continents



	number of performances 2001-2005	number of performances 2005-2009	number of performances 2009-2013
EU-15	6,695	8,129	7,386
rest Europe	386	689	736
North America	198	234	373
Asia	70	185	190
Oceania	40	41	159
South America	40	80	108
Africa	12	63	27

At the same time we see a strong increase in Flemish performing arts outside of Western Europe. The increase in other countries is rather evenly spread across the different continents. In the period 2005-2013, more Flemish performances especially take place in Oceania, Asia and North America. A number of larger tours by a limited number of companies have a fairly large impact (e.g. Ontroerend Goed in Australia or Eleanor Bauer in New York). Only Africa is an exception to this rule. The initial growth (from 12 to 63 performances) does not continue in 2009. On the contrary, the number of performances drops to 27.²⁶

AND IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES?

In many European countries, the economic crisis led to government cost cutting. This has an impact on the arts. The relative decline in the EU-15 countries, however, is a remarkable new phenomenon. When we focus on the international distribution of Flemish performances, we see that our foreign tours are still most often presented in the neighbouring countries of France, the Netherlands and Germany. Graph 6 compares the distribution in these three countries with the rest of the world in absolute numbers.

The grey line confirms the growing worldwide distribution of performing arts from Flanders. More productions have been presented since 2006-2007 in the rest of the world than in any of the above-mentioned neighbouring countries. Between 2001-2005 and 2012-2013, the number of performances grows by no less than 250%.

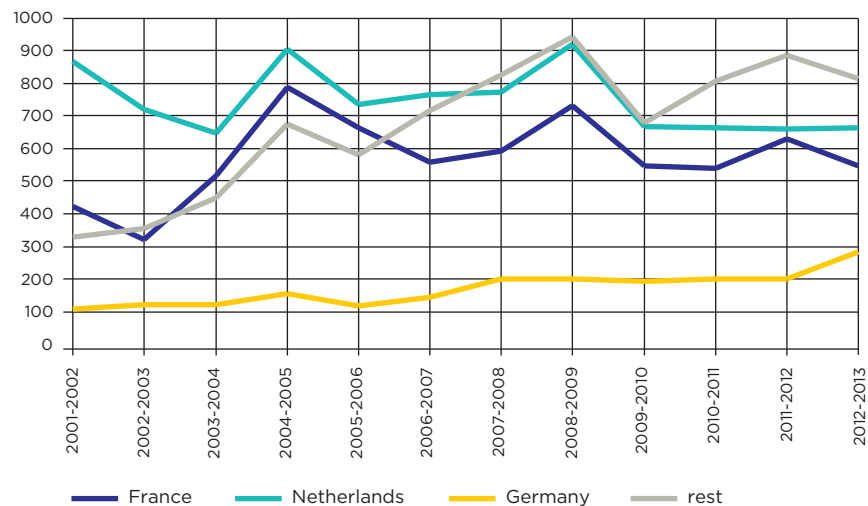
Similar growth does not take place in the neighbouring countries. However, the number of Flemish performances distributed in France doubles between seasons 2002-2003 and 2004-2005: from 320 performances in 2002-2003 to 787 in 2004-2005. Although the number

26. An important caveat here is that in this analysis of the figures, we are forced to limit ourselves to productions. This ignores the numerous artistic collaborations that focus on development and that are not necessarily working towards a stage production as result.

of Flemish performances in France since 2004-2005 fluctuates and decreases, there is still some growth across the entire period (graph 6). France also increased considerably with regard to the geographical distribution of Flemish performances. Since season 2002-2003, the number of cities where Flemish performances were presented almost doubled (graph 7). The increased presence of Flemish makers at hotspots such as Festival d'Avignon perhaps played a role here. Jan Fabre was a central guest there in 2005. Since then, there has been active Flemish government support for the the Festival d'Avignon. The festival also acts as a hub for leading international work, which in turn provides a boost in the sale and distribution of Flemish performing arts in France.

Things are different in Germany, which does not welcome nearly as many Flemish performances as France or the Netherlands, but is the third largest export destination for Flemish performing arts. We first see a gradual increase in the number of performances, then – even in times of crisis – a very stable period, and in the last season

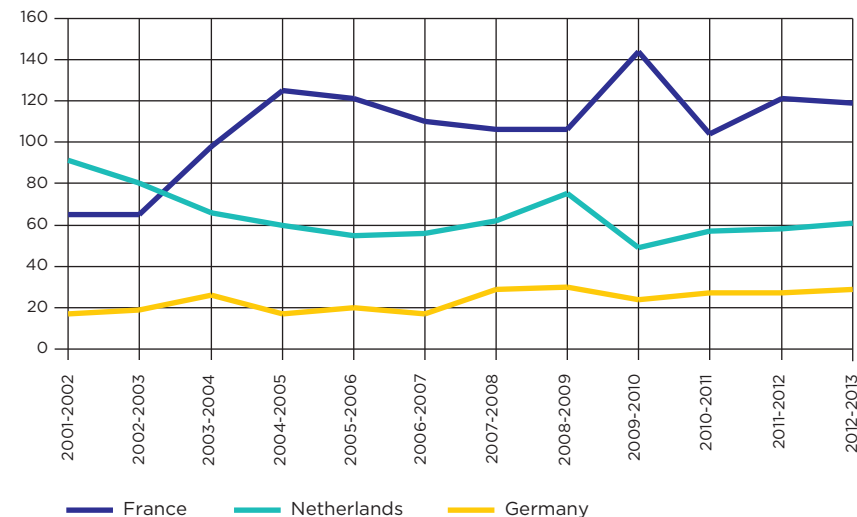
Graph 6: Performances France/Netherlands/Germany/rest



even a significant increase (graph 7). This may be indirectly influenced by the presence in Germany of a number of leading figures with a past in Flanders. From 2011, for example, we see an increase in performances at the Münchner Kammerspiele (Johan Simons). In 2013, performances at Hebbel am Ufer (Annemie Vanackere) also increased significantly.

The Netherlands is the only neighbouring country in which the number of Flemish performances declined between 2001 and 2013. Since the 2008-2009 season, this decline has been as high as 30% (graph 6). The number of venues also decreased by a quarter, and the number of cities and municipalities in the Netherlands where Flemish performing arts were presented declined by more than a third between 2001 and 2013 (graph 7). Thus not only are there fewer productions presented in the Netherlands, their distribution is also less diverse. When you consider that the Netherlands is the absolute leader in staging Flemish performances, the impact that such a decrease in the international presentation of Flemish performing arts represents should

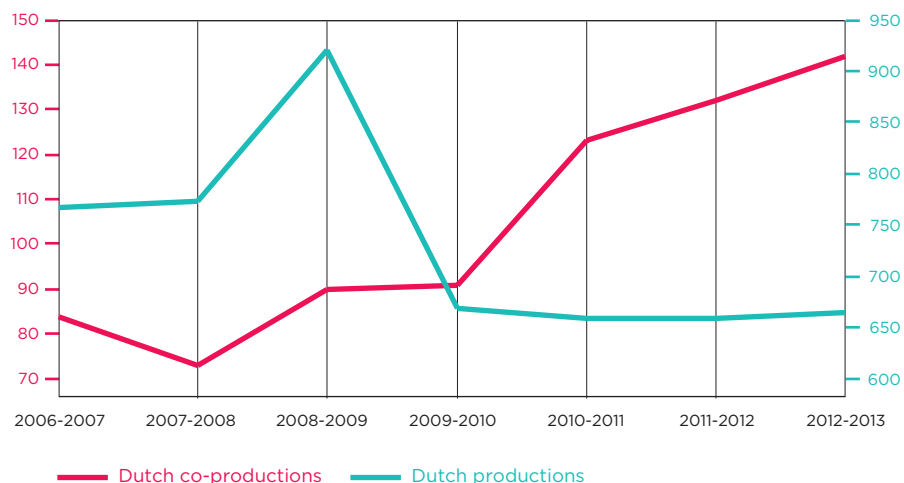
Graph 7: Number of cities France/Germany/Netherlands



not be underestimated. We can speak of an impoverishment, since not all companies are focused on global distribution. A lot of them focus mainly on touring in Flanders and the Netherlands. For them, it is becoming increasingly difficult to show their work.

When focussing on the exchanges between Flanders and the Netherlands, an important observation is that co-production not necessarily leads to increasing opportunities for international touring. Graph 8 illustrates this. Despite a surge in the number of Dutch co-production credits, the number of performances in the Netherlands decreases. The increase in the number of Dutch co-productions is explained by the pressure on arts budgets in the Netherlands. Until recently, Dutch companies had a budget for distributing productions, which gave them a competitive advantage. Thus, the need for co-producing was less than in neighbouring countries. The current pressure on production and programming budgets makes co-production not only more attractive but also necessary for Dutch companies. This explains the growing presence of the Netherlands in international

Graph 8: Productions in and co-productions with the Netherlands



co-production networks (sometimes supported via EU funding). This catching up by the Netherlands translates into a significant increase in the number of Dutch co-productions. The pressure on programming budgets in the Netherlands also hinders the import of international work. The Dutch case shows that collaboration is increasingly a survival strategy for companies in times of crisis.

THE CHANGING POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS

Previous field analyses by VTi revealed much about the changing position of artists in the performing arts field. Above, in the landscape sketch for the performing arts, we explain in more detail how artistic and institutional changes affect the careers of artists. Performing arts organisations today operate more as flexible production units that maintain a semi-permanent relationship with artists. These artists are increasingly engaged for the duration of a production, and then go their separate ways with various organisations, often working in different disciplines and increasingly in an international environment.

How many people are involved as artists in Flemish productions? How active are they in this sector? The yellow line in graph 9 shows the number of artists per season involved artistically in the creation of a production. (Reprises are not counted here.) The green line indicates the number of ‘credits’ artists receive for their contribution to the creation of a production. A personal credit represents the involvement of one person in a creation. In this, we count only one credit per person per creation.²⁷

We see that the number of people artistically active in the performing arts in Flanders increased in 2001-2002: the number of artists involved in an artistic production increased in the 2001-2002 season

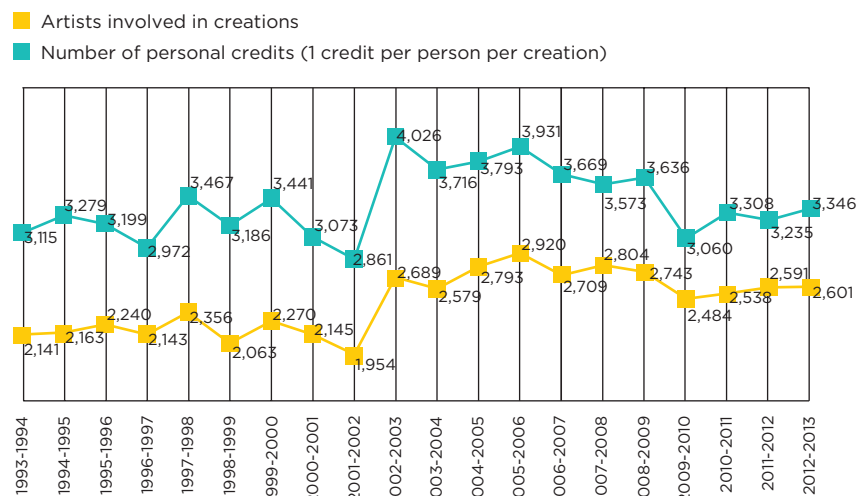
27. A person with two different functions within the same production – for example, ‘directing’ and ‘scenography’ – is only counted once. However, if this person works on three creations during the same season, he/she receives three credits for that season.

from 1954 to 2,689. This was due in part to the rise of the budget for the Performing Arts Decree with 12.5 million euro in 2001. We see an almost proportional increase in personal credits during this period.

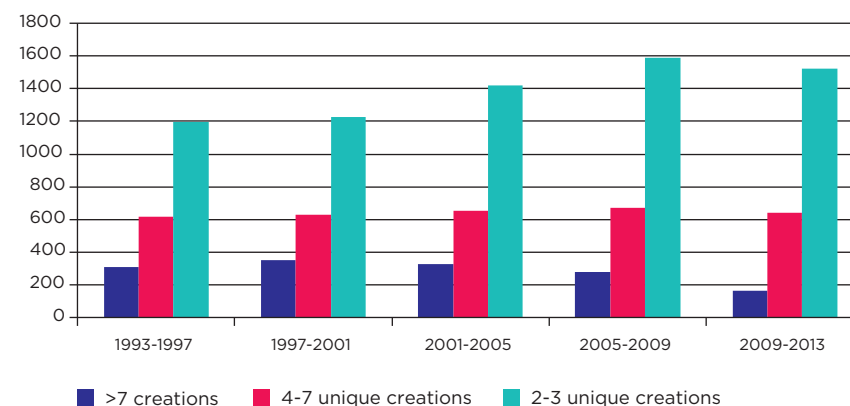
However, this trend does not continue in subsequent years. Between 2002-2003 to 2008-2009, the number of artists involved in an artistic production remained almost identical, while the number of personal credits dropped. The result is a decrease in the average number of productions per artist per year. This negative trend bottomed out in 2009-2010 with 3,060 personal credits, by 2,484 artists.

This evolution indicates a fragmentation of careers, which is also reflected in graph 10. Particularly striking is the fact that the group of artists making a continuous contribution to the performing arts in Flanders (at least 8 productions in four seasons, so minimum 2 creations per season) more than halved: from 352 in 1997-2001 to 165 in 2009-2013. Although more money has been available via the Arts Decree since 2001, it appears that it is more difficult for a core of active artists to work in the performing arts with great regularity.

Graph 9: Number of artists and personal credits per season



Graph 10: Number of creations per person



CONCLUSION

International work has yielded tremendous benefits for the Flemish performing arts in recent decades. We can still speak of a boom today, and the performing arts in Flanders enjoy a solid reputation abroad. However, the Flemish performing arts are under increasing – especially economic – pressure. Both internationally and domestically, the financial and economic crisis is resulting in shrinking production and programming budgets, so that more and more partners are needed to finance productions. Also, growth in the number of international performances has halted. After a sharp drop in 2009-2010, the numbers are again increasing, but they are nowhere near the level of 2008-2009. The diversity in venues and the number of countries where Flemish companies present their work are decreasing. While there are increasing opportunities in other continents, touring within (Western) Europe is under pressure. Especially developments in the Netherlands demand attention. Between 2001-2002 and 2012-2013, the number of Flemish performances in the Netherlands decreased by one fifth, the number of venues by one fourth, and the number of cities and municipalities by more than a third.

Finally, the figures show that budgetary pressures impact the employment of artists. The economic pressure is often first felt by artists because many feel less protected today by the buffer of an established structure, and the fact that the artistic costs of organisations are the most variable. It is this combination – economic pressure on the whole of the performing arts landscape and within this the ‘individualisation’ of artistic work – that currently demands special attention from both the professional field and cultural policy.

The data for this analysis comes from the VTi performing arts database (<http://data.vti.be>). It contains information on all professional Flemish stage productions since 1993 that were directly or indirectly supported by the Flemish government. The basic units of the performing arts database are productions from the subsidised performing arts field. Based on flyers, brochures, websites, newsletters and other documentation that the companies provide VTi, our staff create daily production datasheets containing the title of the production, artistic staff and their function(s), producers and co-producers, the genre of the production, the date and location of its premiere, season and foreign series. The ‘subsidised’ field is to be interpreted broadly. Not only productions subsidised directly by the Arts Decree (on a project basis or structurally) enter the database, but also productions that resulted from a partnership with subsidised organisations (among others festivals, art centres, companies, arts labs, art educational or social-artistic organisations). When in doubt concerning the correctness of the data, the producers are asked to supply additional information, and at the end of each season they are explicitly invited to correct or supplement the data where needed.

This text analyses the twenty consecutive seasons for which the VTi performing arts database has research-ready data. In line with the structure of our database, a season begins on 1 July. Sometimes series follow this seasonal scheme, but increasingly this is not the case. When Ward/WaRD and Ann van den Broek begin touring in September with *The Black Piece*, a production that premiered in June, it will receive a second datasheet. This will indicate that the production touring since September is a reprise of the first.

The meaning of the word ‘Flemish’ also requires clarification in this context. Flemish artists and organisations increasingly are only one link in a transnational production network. This means that a lot of ‘Flemish’ productions are in fact international collaborations. For example, a production with only one Flemish co-producer is also included in our study in order to obtain the fullest possible view of the activities of makers and organisations in Flanders.





A LIVING CONVERSATION IN A WILD BAR

OR: HOW MUCH PARTICIPATION CAN ART BEAR?

Erwin Jans

Ten years ago, under the revealing title *How Much Globalization Can We Bear?* (2003), German philosopher Rudiger Safranski wrote a still relevant essay on the many confusions or entanglements associated with the process of globalisation. He describes this entanglement using the metaphor of being lost in the woods. According to Safranski, those who are lost have three options. They can retrace their steps and look for the point where it all went wrong. This is done by those who turn away from contemporary challenges and believe that they can find their identity in the past and in tradition. The lost can also continue hiking, in the blind faith that at a certain moment they will stumble upon the right path. This attitude takes refuge in the future, convinced that the present crisis is a necessary phase in the path to be travelled, and with the belief that the answer lies in the future. However, Safranski recommends the third option: the lost can sit down where they are and create a 'clearing', an open space, to better reflect on their present situation. Safranski thus pleads for slowing down and reflecting, for concentrating on the here and now, as an alternative to a romanticised past or an idealised future, both of which in their own way can lead to fundamentalism and extremism. Yet it is strange that he uses the metaphor of the woods to point out our contemporary entanglement. Because after all, doesn't this entanglement have more to do with the city and its growing complexity? Indeed, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and

this number continues to grow. Cities exercise a huge attraction. At the same time, the urban challenges are gigantic. Stefan Hertmans describes it like this: 'a deep humanitarian significance – one that may never be lost sight of – continues to cling to the concept of the city. The city is the territory of man-made communication par excellence, in its most advanced form.' The arts too are developing more emphatically in relationship to this urban context: in the meantime terms and concepts such as audience participation, cultural diversity, education, social-artistic projects, ecological awareness, urban engagement, social participation, art in the public space, neighbourhood action ... have become an integral part of the vocabulary with which the arts reflect about themselves and their functioning.

FREE-FLOATING ART

It is no exaggeration to say that a paradigm shift is taking place in defining the place of the arts in society. Until now, this place was marked by autonomy. It is this notion that is in crisis at the beginning of the twenty-first century, or at least in need of redefinition. This crisis is closely linked to the crisis of two other forms of autonomy: that of the individual and that of the state. Nineteenth century civil culture was based on a dual development: that of the individual and that of the nation. There is undoubtedly a connection between the autonomous individual, the autonomous nation and autonomous art. The three notions emerged around the same time – the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The terms 'individual' and 'individualism' in their socio-political and psychological meaning appear in France only around 1825. They are introduced to England in 1833 via a translation of de Tocqueville, and included in the German encyclopaedias only in 1838. These terms refer to the distinction between individual conscience and public opinion, between personal experience and general ideas. The 'individual' has become one of the central categories of modernity. Modern society is made up of indivisible beings isolated from one another. Europe's national states form during the same period: indivisible nations isolated from one another. Individualism belongs to state

formation and nationalism. The individual citizen is in the first place the citizen of a nation. In this social context of an assertive bourgeoisie and developing market capitalism, art emerges as an autonomous domain with its own rules of production, distribution and reception. It breaks away from all servitude to church, nobility or bourgeoisie, despite the fact that literature, art and music play an important role in the formation of national awareness at certain moments. Modern art is characterised by what we can call a form of 'social free-floatingness'. It is no longer associated with a specific worldview and is no longer supported by a clearly delineated religious, political or economic elite. It develops independently of institutionalised social expectations and cultural prohibitions. It shows little interest in the demand for intelligibility, beauty or entertainment. Moreover, it is highly self-reflective. In its avant-garde variant, modern art is provocative, subversive and shocking. This notion of autonomy has become the core of art's functioning since the early twentieth century.

WE ARE THE ENTANGLEMENT!

However, in the process of globalisation, the autonomy of the individual and of the nation state – the cornerstones of modernity – have been weakened and cut back. Both the individual and the nation, each at its own level, have been incorporated into a network of relationships. Which does not mean that they no longer exist or have become completely powerless, but rather that they function in a way that is radically different than before. The nation state no longer has its former sovereign power, and must share its power with transnational institutions and organisations. The main characteristic of networks is that they do not have a centre. The United States is also no longer the central power behind globalisation. This was made more than clear by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt with their concept of 'empire': a decentralised and de-territorialised administrative apparatus that gradually incorporates all of the world into its open, continuously expanding borders. Within this network, nation states are only nodes and no longer controlling actors.

Individuals have also become nodes in a network that includes not only our relationships with other people but also and mainly our embedding in or 'logging in to' a mediated society. In a network society, the *inter*, the between, becomes more important than the *intra*, the inner. In this perspective, we above all are *di-viduals*, 'two-seers', instead of in-dividuals, a term that literally refers to our so-called indivisibility. Philosopher Henk Oosterling puts it as follows: 'We are entwined in networks. We are not entangled. We are the entanglement.'²⁸ But does this mean we will be forever entangled, and that entanglement is our sad fate? And is the unravelling of our life the same as leaving this entanglement behind? However interesting these questions may be, they only skim the matter and do not touch its core. In my opinion, we have always been entangled. Entanglement is our human condition.' Oosterling states that the confusion and entanglement of the post-modern person, eagerly in search of strong stories instead of Great Stories, is bound by culture and time: 'The foundations of the oppositions between which the tightrope has been strung for 150 years, have been eroded. High and low in culture, right and left in politics, good and evil in morality, true and false in science have now finally become, like beautiful and ugly in art less than a century ago, empty terms. Quality presents itself elsewhere.' The contradictions at the foundation of modernity seem to have had their day.

DISMEASURE

It is obvious that the art world is also affected by this 'entanglement', this 'networking' of society. For some, the end of modern autonomous art is already almost a fact. For American historian Wendy Steiner, for example, the 20th century is the century of 'autonomous' art, which she calls 'sublime'. The 21st century on the other hand is for her the century of heteronomous art, which she associates with 'the beautiful'. In her vision, the sublime stands for

28. Oosterling here makes use of a wordplay in Dutch involving 'in de knoop', to be entangled or confused, and a 'knoop' or a node in a network.

wrenching, disturbing and alienating art that seeks no recognition from a specific audience or a specific community, while the beautiful stands for communication, consolation, openness and dialogue with the audience. However, (thankfully) things are not this simple and black & white. The point is not the contrast between subversive and affirmative art. It is important that art preserve its quality of being 'dismasure' (a term of Paolo Virno): a 'dismasure' that repeatedly questions and challenges the 'measure' of culture. However, it is important to interpret the 'dismasure' of art much more broadly than the provocative, subversive and nihilistic gesture of avant-garde art. It fundamentally concerns searching for a new relationship between art and society, where it is also crucial to make a distinction between the individual artist and the artistic institutions. Participation is broader than community arts and educational practices in the sense that it points to a broader trend within the arts to deal differently with their audiences and involve them more as active partners in the processes of creation and the production of meaning.

The comment of art critic Anna Tilroe brings us a little further. She asks for a revision of the notion of quality as well as the notion of art history: 'The discussion concerning what quality is and what quality has must be conducted more broadly and via a different approach. The art historical project initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century can no longer be considered as the only one. We need to acknowledge that multiple art histories exist and can be written about.' Tilroe pleads for greater openness and attention to developments taking place outside the art world, but also within art itself 'from the VJ and website culture to partnerships of artists, architects, designers, fashion designers, researchers and commercial undertakings'. These new developments, together with the growing cultural and ethnic diversity in cities, force a repositioning of cultural and artistic practices. The evolution of media technology, commercialisation, the impact of popular culture, the demands for recognition of minority groups, the debate on participation ... undeniably have an impact on art, the artist, art institutions and the experience of art.

A RAW, WILD BAR ...

In his *State of the Union* at Het Theaterfestival 2009, Tim Etchells (Forced Entertainment) poetically appeals to the image of a new type of artistic institution: 'I think we need a theatre that, after it is broken, is only partially glued back together, by those who need it and in the manner that they wish. The unused pieces are left behind on the ground for those who can use them later, or for the early morning dustcart. It doesn't matter. We are not obliged to hold on to something that is no longer useful. We can best view it as a living conversation, a raw, wild bar ..., a street corner, as an opening in time and space, and not as a museum.' Etchells' ideal is that of a theatre broken and broken open. In a poetic and metaphorical text full of summaries and juxtapositions, Etchells evokes the image of a theatre dealing with every possible aspect of life and precisely because of this is broken and fragmented. Fragments (of a history, of a tradition) that can be used freely by anyone who needs them. Continuous self-questioning, keen self-awareness, experiment, capriciousness, ambiguity, are the keywords of a theatre that is as agile as the world in which it is established: 'Theatre that criticises its own language while still using it. Theatre that undoes its own rules, that lays bare its own authority. Theatre that divides its audience. Theatre that can also 'bring together' an audience, even when criticising that expression and its meaning. Theatre that is constantly breaking out of its own boundaries, immersing itself in performances, installations, events, the void.' In short: Etchells gives theatre a very hybrid but generous interpretation. Theatre that is open to new impulses from within and from without, artistic as well as social.

TO PLANT 7000 OAKS

In a lecture from 2007 *How to Grow Possibility: The Potential Roles of Academies*, Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, introduces the term 'engaged autonomy' to clarify his position on the autonomy issue: 'Engaged autonomy defines the necessity

of an agonistic (as well as antagonistic) response to the issues at hand – be they economic, political, aesthetic or even curatorial. To this extent, engaged autonomy needs to be specific in its address – to a certain public, a certain condition, a certain geography or a certain interest group. Artists would need to know to whom they want to show or speak, not to presume the old bourgeois public for lack of any other.' The artistic practice is about the creation of an authentic space for discussion (agonistic, but also antagonistic) in relationship to the important issues of our time. This is necessarily situated in time and space, and always addressed to a specific public. Esche here raises the idea of universal art and again localises it in a specific time and place. Charles Esche goes one step further by detaching the term 'engaged autonomy' from the art object, and interactively linking its quality to the context and the viewer. Art in this way becomes a form of behaviour: 'For me, the term becomes even more interesting if it can help to map out a set of relationships between art and public that is less invested in the quality of objects but more in states of being and action. We could call this "Exchange" perhaps, or what Kaprow refers to as "Un-art". His idea of art as a behaviour that allows you to be self-critical, that permits you autonomy in relation to your context, that is held in your head and allows you to be an autonomous individual within the system.' Autonomy here shifts from a quality inherent in the work of art to the critical, autonomous attitude of the individual, among others and perhaps in the first place, of the individual spectator. What Esche here calls 'Exchange' is the core of what we understand by 'participation'.

This is in keeping with Joseph Beuys' *erweitertes Kunstbegriff / broadened concept of art*, which assumes creativity as the basic dynamic for every conceivable society. For Beuys, art is at the heart of all human labour and each form of collective activity: law, economy, governance, education. One source of inspiration for Beuys was Rudolf Steiner, who viewed the experience of art – aesthetic contemplation – as a part of the social organism and as a lever for the development of freedom, equality and solidarity. The concept *soziale Plastik / social sculpture* devised by Beuys summarises this link between social philosophy and art. A good example of this is his



last great performance as artist during *documenta 7* Kassel in 1982: the *7000 Eichen* project. 7000 oak (and other trees) were planted between 1982 and 1987 in Kassel, and next to each oak, a pillar of basalt. Beuys planted the first oak; his widow and his son the last. Beuys initially encountered opposition from the Kassel petite bourgeoisie, but in the end, he succeeded – mainly via associations, neighbourhood committees and schools – in generating considerable enthusiasm for his project. Beuys aims to go further than Marcel Duchamp, who at the beginning of the 20th century, with the *ready-made*, launched the attack on a concept of art understood too institutionally. Beuys breaks free from the museum, and focuses on the anthropological possibilities of an expanded idea of creativity – an artistic approach to all material objects originating in the human mind. The work of someone like Benjamin Verdonck is close to this. The work of Thomas Bellinck with illegals is also a moment of ‘soziale Plastik’. They are artistic practices that go in search of their own limits, and in doing so enrich and expand the notion of art.

ART AS PUBLIC SPACE

The public urban space is a particular challenge for the artistic practice. It is the place par excellence where the conflicts and opportunities of the globalised world present themselves. The neighbourhoods and streets of the big cities are ‘the contact zones’ of the world, in which cultures and people who until now were separated by geography, history, race, ethnicity, etc. are forced to live together – always in the context of power and unequal relations – in the same space, and thus forced to engage in a form of translated relationship with one another. Art lends itself to giving physical form to these translated relationships, but in this case the relationship between art and public space must be fundamentally reorganised. Henk Oosterling raises questions concerning the traditional interpretation of art in the public space: ‘The old idea of art in the public space retains only a limited effect, partly because architecture has undergone such aestheticism, partly because the idea of a statue in the public space no

longer squares with our hyper-mobile and layered experience of the space. (...) We need to move from the notion of art *in* the public space to that of art *of* the public space and art *as* public space. Artists have the creative expertise to appropriately reflect social interactions in the public space. You can also think of art *as* a public space in which the creative process and the participation of all stakeholders are central. The artist does not work towards a finished product, but considers as his or her material the creativity and inventiveness of, for example, the residents who make use of a specific public space. The artist puts the creative process in motion, but does not know in advance what the result will be. Even though there is indeed a commitment to realising a specific project.’ With the idea of ‘art as public space’, we return full circle to Safranski’s ‘clearing’ with which we opened this article, only it now concerns a ‘collective clearing’ in the middle of the city.

INTER-EST

Where do the above ideas and examples lead? To a practice of art that is no longer along side or opposite society, but rather is interwoven or networked with it. This applies both to the work of the individual artist and to the artistic institution. For both, the moment of autonomy – ‘the dismeasure’ – remains the point of departure, but there is already an openness at their core, the possibility for what Etchells calls ‘a living conversation’. Concepts such as ‘engaged autonomy’, ‘erweitertes Kunstbegriff’ and ‘art as public space’ include the possibility to redefine artistic practice based on an idea of participation without (fully) abandoning the achievements of autonomy. Henk Oosterling uses for this the term ‘inter-est’ (literally to ‘be between’) and defines it as ‘self-interested involvement’. Interest as between-ness as well as active concern or participation. He prefers ‘inter’ to ‘multi’ (intercultural, interdisciplinary, interactive) because it emphasises the relational. When I use ‘interest’ here, it is with the same meaning as ‘participation’.

An artistic practice characterised by ‘interest’ is involved with its social, urban, political, ecological, educational ... context. Just like schools are increasingly developing into ‘community schools’, so too will artistic institutions need to become more ‘communal’, with greater interest for their surroundings. Artistic institutions as well as individual artists must search ever more intensely for the ‘invisible cities’ within their city. This of course is a reference to Italo Calvino’s book of the same name, in which Marco Polo describes to the Kublai Khan the same city – Venice – in dozens of ways. In the context of this article, the ‘invisible cities’ stand for those urban dimensions that often, all too often, are in danger of being missed by artistic institutions: specific audiences that are not represented, specific neighbourhoods located beyond the artistic radius, specific practices that are not included in the programme, etc. But the (now still) ‘invisible cities’ also stand for the future of cities.

THE STRINGS OF ERSILIA

One of the cities described by Marco Polo is Ersilia. As material city, Ersilia has disappeared. Its walls and buildings are no longer standing. What remains are innumerable colourful strings that are strung throughout the city, which indicate the relationships the people of Ersilia had with one another. In other words, the network of strings makes the ‘inter-est’ of Ersilia visible. It might be a good idea to draw maps at the level of the city or the region showing the strings of interest. Where are the artistic, cultural, social and educational institutions and organisations located in an urban context? What are their relationships? How intense are these relationships? Where are the gaps? Where are the audiences that are never addressed? Where are the organisations that have never been contacted? Where are the schools that have little or no participation in artistic life? Reflecting on ‘participation’ (‘interest’) at urban or regional level cannot be done without such sociological analyses and sociological maps. The realisation of being a node in a larger network also means involvement in the entire network and in the overarching responsibility for

this network. Not every artistic institution in a city must take on the same duties and responsibilities. This can be negotiated. It is important that at urban or regional level, a ‘living conversation’ takes place between the different institutions and individual artists on their collective and mutual interests, on the strings that may or may not connect these institutions.

RESETTING THE STAGE

What would such a ‘living conversation in a wild bar’ actually look like? In his book *Resetting the Stage*, Dragan Klaic develops the practical aspects of the notions ‘participation’ or ‘interest’. He calls upon the performing arts themselves to examine their programming, their communication, their advertising, their networking, their local integration, their public activity planning, their international ambitions, their artistic leadership, the composition of their boards of directors, etc. He calls for a critical and creative examination of all levels, recognising that innovation is possible and necessary everywhere. In this exercise, the ‘public’ character of subsidised theatre must be the focus. In a leisure sector that has become much more complex and competitive than it was several decades ago, subsidised theatre more than ever must emphasise its uniqueness, its ‘accessibility’: its critical approach to the tradition, its continuous pursuit of innovation, its attention to experiment, its sensitivity to radical demographic and cultural shifts, its interest in all forms of verbal and non-verbal expression, its capacity to integrate new technological developments, its potential to communicate with the public in surprising ways, its community building power, its local and international networking, its artistic diversity and polyphonic character, etc.

Klaic suggests among others organising more in thematic clusters in order to make the abundance of what’s available transparent to the public. Theatres must also organise their own ‘mediatisation’ and no longer be dependent on dwindling media attention. Each theatre must redefine itself based on its own history and its own local character. Dragan Klaic also points to the importance of focusing on a

young audience, but also the importance of attention to an audience older than fifty that constitutes a large part of the population. They too can still play an important role. For him, the development of the arts is most deeply connected with the emancipatory processes in modern democracy, with the defence of the public space and public discussion, and with the opposition to global consumption and spiritual superficiality. Intimately associated with this is the idea of continual learning, for young people but also for adults. Art institutions provide a special context in which to organise ongoing learning (interest) in a non-dogmatic way.

PLAY

Inter-est primarily means living among unruly tensions. It involves frictions, interactions, surprises, encounters, reflections, etc. To describe our relationship to reality, Indian cultural critic Homi Bhabha uses the expression: 'beyond control, but not beyond accommodation'. We are no longer able to control, but we can adapt. We are no longer master of the game, but we do have play, in the sense of room to manoeuvre. I purposely use the word 'play' here. The possibility to play might just be that which makes us human – the *homo ludens* of Huizinga. If a definition of 'play' is needed, then I suggest this: playing is the possibility to open up the context and thus make possible a different game. Ultimately, it is about asking ourselves whether our capacity to play is enlarged. Culture is in principle this (room to) play. In it we shape our identity, our history, our future desires. In our multicultural cities – 'the contact zones of the world' – we have more cultural players than ever before, with more histories, more stories, audiences, sensibilities, aesthetics, etc. Art is not militarising but socialising; it is not made for a public, but it creates a public. It is not up to art to launch a revolution as was still the case with the avant garde, but to implement specific forms of 'conviviality'. Art creates a type of respite or breathing space, necessary conditions for any collective slowing down.

It is extremely important to create mental and physical (rooms to) play. Breathing space. A clearing. Groups and individuals all too often remain 'out of play'. The artistic and cultural rules of the game are too often defined by the 'white' majority without taking into account the many minorities in search of a voice. Recovery of accessibility stands or falls with the creation of new places capable of giving cultural and artistic expression to the new urban reality and its still untapped potential. These places are the material translation of an intercultural 'ethos'. Only then can we achieve a new vision of culture that does not see culture within ethnic lines, but as a radically unfinished social process of self-definition and transformation.

In support of the landscape sketch of the arts, at the request of BAM, VTi and Flanders Music Centre, Erwin Jans wrote an essay on art and participation. Erwin Jans is dramaturge with the Antwerp city theatre Toneelhuis. He writes on theatre, literature and culture.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbing, H. *Why are Artists Poor?: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002.
- Bamford, A. *Kwaliteit en consistentie: Kunst- en cultuureducatie in Vlaanderen [Quality and Consistency: Art and Cultural Education in Flanders]*. Brussels: Agentschap voor Onderwijscommunicatie, 2007.
- Barber, B. *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Bishop, C. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso Books, 2012.
- Cools, G. and Gielen, P. (eds.) *The Ethics of Art: Ecological Turns in the Performing Arts*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014.
- Corijn, E. *Kan de stad de wereld redden? [Can the city save the world?]* Brussels: VUB Press, 2013.
- Dienderen, A. van., Janssens, J. and Smits, K. *Tracks: artistieke praktijk in een diverse samenleving [Tracks: Artistic practice in a diverse society]*. Berchem: EPO, 2007.
- Gielen, P., Elkhuisen, S., van den Hoogen, Q., Lijster, T. and Otte, H. *The Value of Culture*. Brussels, 2014.
- Hesters, D. (ed.) *Kunstzaken. Financiële en zakelijke modellen voor de kunsten in Vlaanderen. [Art business: Financial and business models for the arts in Flanders]* Brussels: KWARTS, 2013.
- Hesters, D. 'Alles kits? Eigenheden en evoluties van de kinderen jongerenpodiumkunsten in Vlaanderen [Everything OK? Characteristics and evolutions in children's and youth performing arts in Flanders]'. *Courant* 108 (2014): 5-33.
- Hillaert, W. 'Cultuur in de centrumsteden [*Culture in the central cities*]'. <http://www.rektoverso.be/dossier/cultuur-de-centrumsteden>.
- Hoeven, Q. van der. *Van Anciaux tot Zijlstra. Cultuurbeleid en cultuurparticipatie in Nederland en Vlaanderen [From Anciaux to Zijlstra: Cultural policy and cultural participation in the Netherlands and Flanders]* The Hague: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2012.
- Jans, E. 'Art and the city: een gesprek met Benjamin Barber [*Art and the City: An interview with Benjamin Barber*]'. *Courant* 109 (2014): 15-17.
- Janssens, J. and Moreels, D. *Metamorphoses: Performing Arts in Flanders and Brussels since 1993*. Brussels: Vlaams Theater Instituut, 2007.
- Janssens, J. and Moreels, D. *Survival in de podiumjungle. De loopbaan van performers in de podiumkunsten 1993-2005 [Survival in the performing arts jungle: The career of performers in the performing arts 1993-2005]*. Brussels, Vlaams Theater Instituut, 2008.
- Janssens, J. (ed.), *Ins & Outs: A Field Analysis of the Performing Arts in Flanders*. Brussels, 2011.
- Janssens, J., Joye, S. and Magnus, B. 'Drama op de internationale markt. Impact van de crisis op de productie van de podiumkunsten' [Drama on the international market: Impact of the crisis on the production of the performing arts]. *Courant* 110 (2014): 13-24.
- Klaic, D. *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre between the Market and Democracy*. Bristol: Intellect, 2012.
- Lievens, J. and Waeghe, H. *Participatie in Vlaanderen. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2009 [Participation in Flanders: Initial Analyses of the Participation Survey 2009]*. Leuven/The Hague: Acco, 2011.

Langendonck, K. van, Magnus, B., Bresseleers, M. and Degraeve, L. *Vrouw-manverhoudingen in de podiumkunsten. Een genderstudie van 1993 tot 2012* [Women-men ratios in the performing arts: A gender study from 1993 to 2012]. Brussels, 2014.

Maes, D. 'Dansen dansen! Onbekend is onbemind: Een onderzoek naar danseducatie [Dance dance! Unappreciated until understood: A study of dance education]'. *Courant* 104 (2013): 57-61.

Performing Arts Flanders. Perspective: Young Audiences. Brussels: VTi, 2014.

Raad voor Cultuur. *De Cultuurverkenning. Ontwikkelingen en trends in het culturele leven in Nederland* [Culture exploration: Developments and trends in cultural life in the Netherlands]. The Hague: Raad voor Cultuur, 2014.

Schauvliege, J. and Smet, P. *Doorgroeien in cultuur: conceptnota cultuureducatie* [Further growth in culture: Draft proposal for cultural education]. Brussels, 2013.

Schauvliege, J. and Smet, P. *Groeien in cultuur: conceptnota cultuureducatie* [Growing in culture: Draft proposal for cultural education]. Brussels, 2012.

Simons, G., Maréchal, M., Hesters, D. and Gadeyne, J. *In nesten: onderzoek naar talentontwikkeling en interculturaliteit in de podiumkunsten* [In nests/In a jam: Research into talent development and interculturalism in the performing arts]. Brussels: Dēmos, VTi and BKO, 2013.

Siongers, J., Van Steen, A. *Acteurs in de spotlight. Onderzoek naar de inkomens en sociaaleconomische positie van professionele Vlaamse acteurs* [Actors in the Spotlight: Research on the incomes and socio-economic position of professional Flemish actors]. Ghent: Research group Cudos – Department of Sociology, University of Ghent, 2014.

Tielens, F. *Festivalitis in de podiumkunsten: een analyse van het aanbod en de functies van podiumfestivals* [Festivalitis in the performing arts: An analysis of the offerings and functions of performing arts festivals]. Antwerp: University of Antwerp, 2013.

Throsby, D. and Zednik, A. 'Multiple job-holding and artistic careers: some empirical evidence'. *Cultural Trends* 1 (2011): 9-24.

Velde, W. van de, Van Looy, B. *Kritische Succesfactoren van de Vlaamse Kunsten. Cases uit de muziek-, dans- en theatersector* [Critical success factors of the Flemish arts: Cases from the music, dance and theatre sector]. Leuven: KU Leuven, 2013.

Vermeersch, L. and Vandenbroucke, L. *Veldtekening cultuureducatie: beschrijvende studie met evaluatieve swot-analyse* [Cultural education field report: Descriptive study with SWOT analysis]. Leuven: KU Leuven, 2011.

VTi and LOCUS, *Naar een betere afstemming van productie en spreiding in de podiumkunsten* [Towards better coordination of production and distribution in the performing arts]. Brussels, 2011.

Wilkinson, R. en Pickett, K. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.



ABOUT

Since 1 January 2015, VTi, the Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders, has been officially merged into the new **Flanders Arts Institute** (*Kunstenpunt* in Dutch). Together with the support centres for visual arts (BAM) and music (Flanders Music Centre), we are a new organisation in service of the arts. The Flanders Arts Institute is the new reference for all your questions about art in Flanders. Our core functions include a focus on research, international activities and supporting the practice of art. We collect and distribute knowledge and expertise daily about and for the arts in Flanders in an international context. The institute is the ideal contact point for foreign art professionals in search of information on the performing arts in Flanders. We provide tailored information on relevant research, directions and trends in the Flemish performing arts sector, up-and-coming names and must-sees, visitors' programmes ...

Contact:

Flanders Arts Institute
Square Saintelette 19
1000 Brussels
Belgium
+ 32 2 201 09 06
info@kunsten.be
www.performingartsflanders.be

About Arts Flanders

Arts Flanders informs art professionals, policy makers and other interested parties concerning the rich arts sector in Flanders. This includes a calendar of important cultural events abroad. To learn more about our Flemish artists abroad, visit the website www.artsflanders.be and register for our monthly newsletter.

www.artsflanders.be

COLOPHON

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivative Works 2.0 Belgium License. A copy of this license can be viewed at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/be/deed.en>.



ISBN 9789074351478
D/2014/4610/2

Editorial staff: Marijke De Moor, Delphine Hesters, Joris Janssens, Sofie Joye, Bart Magnus, Annelies Van den Berghe, Nikol Wellens

Editor in chief: Joris Janssens

Translation: Dan Frett

Picture editing: Sofie Joye

Layout: Gunther Fobe

Print: Graphius



VTi – Vlaams Theater Instituut
Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders
Saintelettesquare 19
1000 Brussels
Belgium
+32 2 201 09 06
www.performingartsflanders.be

Brussels, December 2014

