Several years after the publication of *Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993*, this new edition of VTi’s field analysis shows how the world of performing arts has continued to evolve since 2005. Has there been further growth and hybridisation of the output? Who are the major players in an increasingly dense (co)production network that extends throughout Belgium and abroad? What is the place of individual artists within this landscape? And is it true that there are ‘no longer any seasons’?

*Ins & Outs. A Field Analysis of the Performing Arts in Flanders* describes trends that have greatly benefited the performing arts sector. Yet these trends also raise urgent questions. How should we respond to these changes? Does the current policy and organisational framework offer a good basis for a sustainable practice? Is there sufficient balance between individual players and institutions, between continuity and innovation? Numerical analyses are complemented by essays from guest contributors. All of them offer new outlines for a more sustainable practice and policy in the world of performing arts.
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Introduction

Sustainable ways forward for the performing arts

In 2007 VTi published the book Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993, a first field analysis of the evolutions which everyone had sensed, but now supported with objective data. This status report was the start of a new process, driven by the need to collect more diverse data, and also to reflect on the trends discussed. It is this process that is documented in Ins & Outs. A Field Analysis of the Performing Arts in Flanders. New data has been included in order to enrich the debate on a more sustainable practice and policy in the performing arts.

As of publication, we are looking ahead to the next multiyear round of structural subsidies within the framework of the Arts Decree (for the period 2013-2016), the chief instrument of the Flemish Community for stimulating artistic production. The Arts Decree is the policy instrument that gives shape to a large part of the performing arts sector. It is a uniform system that is applied to the practice of most disciplines of art (with the exception of film and literature, which are supported via the Vlaams Fonds voor de letteren and the Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds). In terms of both practice and policy, this is therefore an ideal opportunity to take a fresh look at the performing arts landscape, in order to ensure that it can continue to develop in a high-quality and sustainable way.

As the institute for the performing arts, VTi is willing to take up its role in the preparation for this round of subsidies. Through facts and figures, this publication provides an objective description of the current practice and policy in the performing arts in Flanders, placing it in a historical perspective and an international context. With this factual description, it provides an initial impulse for a debate about the ways forward for this performing arts practice and policy. What are potential pathways for a more sustainable practice within the performing arts and the policy that governs this?
A field analysis of the performing arts in Flanders

In Metamorphoses (2007) we analyzed the performing arts output in Flanders for the period 1993-2005 based on the performing arts database that has been carefully maintained for many years at VTi. At this time, the period under examination is much longer: we assess production data for four new performing arts seasons (2005-2006 through 2008-2009). Which productions were mounted, and which performing artists and producers were involved? We are now able to track the trends in the output for a period of 16 seasons (1993-2009), which also largely encompasses the first multiyear period of the Arts Decree, making the VTi-collection an indispensable tool for documenting the history of policy and practice in the performing arts in Flanders.

At the same time, Ins & Outs opens up new perspectives. The fact that VTi is developing these in partnership is no accident. As the artistic practice grows more interdisciplinary, increasingly working outside of the bounds of its own sector, it is necessary to situate the story of the performing arts within the wider context of the world of the arts, and to jointly develop arguments in the dialogue with the government and a broader audience. The article ‘The ins & outs of the Arts Decree’ is a joint analysis by the four arts institutes – besides VTi, also BAM, Muziekcentrum Vlaanderen and Vlaams Architectuurinstituut – in collaboration with the Agentschap Kunsten en Erfgoed. Because the arts institutes have been able to collaborate, this document presents, for the first time, a series of key economic figures about the revenues and expenditures of almost all of the organisations that were supported through the Arts Decree (period 2007-2008). How do the structural subsidies compare to the other sources of revenue for the Arts Decree organisations? (the market and subsidies from other governments)? What share of their expenditures goes to employment, and what share of this goes to artists? It is a first for Flanders that the various artistic sectors can be analyzed jointly in this way.

A fabric growing more densely woven

All of this provides new insights into the practice and policy in the performing arts, along with confirming a number of observations made in the past. What is new and notable is approaching the Arts Decree as an economic fact. With regard to the different sources of income for the Arts Decree organisations, the proportions are actually completely different than is often claimed. The arts subsidies from the Flemish Community make up just 40% of the total income of the Arts Decree organisations. For every euro in Flemish subsidies, they generate half a euro in subsidies from other governments and a whole euro from the market (performance fees, coproduction contributions, sponsoring, hospitality). There are also figures on employment: out of the total expenditures of the Arts Decree organisations, 40% is spent on regular employment. If we also count independent contractors, then this rises to half. In short: if the Flemish government invests one euro in the arts sector, then the arts organisations pay out 1.25 euros to their staff. The analysis clearly demonstrates that the support is a lever with a large economic impact, and this is only looking at the direct impact. The structural resources are used to pay people who go looking for additional revenues, often enough abroad or in partnership with local governments.

In addition to this first attempt at situating the performing arts practice within a broader context – of the Arts Decree, with an eye to the relationship to the market and to local and international governments – the field analysis once again focuses on the performing arts activities. Four years ago, the first field analysis already showed how dramatically the practice of the performing arts had changed since 1993. A number of trends were spotlighted, which have since become hotly contested issues: the growth and ‘hybridisation’ of the output, the changing position of individual artists, the rise of a transnational (co)production network. The updated Metamorphoses-analysis shows how the practice in the production and distribution of performing arts has continued to evolve since 2005.

In Metamorphoses, Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 we charted the way that the production of performing arts underwent considerable growth, especially in the 1990s. The period since 2000 appears to have been a time of consolidation. A catch-up operation in terms of the subsidisation (period 2001-2003) did not lead to a further increase in the number of productions. However, we observed that once again more artistic employment was created and that the number of performing artists involved in the production of performing arts in Flanders has increased, particularly since 2004. The material for the period after 2005 confirms these trends.

The number of productions begins to increase again after 2005, but it appears that this increase can be explained largely by the noticeable increase in the number of reprises since this time. The number of creations has barely increased since the turn of the millennium. If the number of creations has risen slightly, this can be explained by the growing internationalisation: Flemish partners (festivals and arts centres) have become more active in recent years in supporting the work of companies based in other countries.

The work is also becoming more interdisciplinary. Within the performing arts, the distinction between ‘dance’, ‘text theatre’ or ‘music theatre’ is no longer clear, and the boundaries with other artistic disciplines are also explicitly being called into question. The database material on the basis of credits is above all useful for getting a view of organisational changes. The increase in the output and the involvement of ever more artists is underpinned by a fundamental change in the way in which performing arts are being produced. The production and distribution of performing arts is now taking place less in a ‘chain’ – from creation and production to distribution, presentation and contextualisation/education – but more than ever before in an increasingly dense network in which various functions are complexly interwoven.

The mutual relationships between organisations have thus changed profoundly. The figures since 2005 confirm that the increasing popularity of the practice of coproduction is only gaining ground. In the wake of the developments in dance since the 1980s, the mode of production has changed in the entire performing arts sector: We observe an ever-increasing networking and mutual dependency among organisations. Stage producers are working less and less in a vacuum. Connect and collaborate seems to be the order of the day, and this is taking place within an environment of international networks. Subsidies are no longer used exclusively to make and distribute productions. To a growing degree, they act as a lever for seeking out partners and co-producers (and that partly explains why the income from the market is so high). More and more productions are coproductions with partners from Belgium and abroad. What is highly striking since 2005 is the fact that there are more and more productions with quite a large number of different partners (five or more, even up to 18) and that it is also becoming more difficult to identify a single organisation as having final responsibility for a production.
Of course the question arises as to what kind of reality is in fact behind all these contributions to coproductions and partnerships. There can be no doubt that over the course of the period studied, there has been a greater sensitivity in the crediting and the correct acknowledgment of all those involved. In this way, more and more non-financial arrangements (such as use of infrastructure or facilities) are being marked and made visible as involvement in coproductions. There is probably also a certain fragmentation of the coproduction practice. We do not have hard figures about this, but there is no question that the financial weight of a ‘coproduction’-contribution has certainly been reduced in recent years, as compared to the past.

The data on the international tours also indicates that the internationalisation of the performing arts practice has only continued to grow in recent years. If we compare the period 2005-2009 with 2001-2005, then no fewer than 20 new countries appear on the map, so to speak, and there were 41 other countries in which more performances were given. Internationalisation has also changed: it is not only shaped at the level of organisations, but increasingly also at the level of the individual artist who is becoming more mobile. Individual artists are increasingly also independent players in this horizontal and transnational model of creation. The field analysis indicates that artists are taking a different approach to practice than in decades past: less as a member of an organisation, and more as an individual and a freelancer who in most cases, is not limited to subsidised performing arts.

‘Sorting out’: Ways forward for the performing arts

Without a doubt, the trends described here have been of great benefit to the sector. The transnational network model has certainly made a growth scenario possible. The networking and mutual dependency is currently creating a very broad platform, because agreements on coproductions are also at the same time agreements about distribution, and artists can also tap into the symbolic capital of quite a few foreign partners. Nevertheless, all of this calls for profound reflection. There are two faces to the medal, and they are becoming increasingly clear.

The position of individual artists

After all, how resistant and sustainable are the networks and how is the position of the artist within them evolving? With the changes in the production practice and the professionalisation of the sector, various functions within the performing arts world – production, distribution, management support, research & development – are becoming more specialised and isolated, so that they can be combined in different ways, in function of the artistic processes of the artists. However, there is a risk that a great deal of the energy of individuals and organisations may be spent reassembling the functions and budgets which were previously split up (‘fragmentation’), without much added value being generated. An extensive supporting apparatus has been developed, and in order to be able to create, the artist often needs to reconnect the various functions himself. The position of theatre and dance makers is becoming ever more precarious. In order to survive in the ‘performing arts jungle’, they are forced to profile themselves as networkers and entrepreneurs.

Within a system of this type, it is not self-evident to develop an artistic process. Or as Diederik Peeters, who describes himself as a ‘generic individual artist’, expresses it below: ‘Of course that jobhopping is a way to earn a living in a system that demands that kind of flexibility. But in fact it seriously gets in the way of my view of future prospects. Try building something up when you are hopping from project to project. Instead of having to reinvent myself for each project all over again, right now I wish I could just concentrate on my work. In other words, I would like to see a better balance between that accrued flexibility that is constantly demanded of me, and a minimum of continuity and stability.’ The latter is not self-evident in the current system. The shaky balance between flexibility and continuity for artists is the major mantra heard in Ins & Outs. At the same time, this individualisation is the story of an entire sector. We need to look for a new way to link up the existing tools – projects, organisational forms, policy instruments – and make them ‘click’ so that we can find a better way to support the artistic practice.

Growth and sustainability in a transnational co-production network

The fact that the performing arts are increasingly being made and distributed in a transnational network environment has certainly led to many positive effects for the performing arts world. When it comes to the performing arts in Flanders, there is growth and flourishing, both quantitatively and qualitatively. VT-staff are showered with questions from abroad about the ‘secret’ of the Flemish ‘system’. Then we explain that for decades, we have had exceptionally talented performing artists working here and also gifted organisers who were gradually able to build up the conditions enabling the development of the artists’ practice. Look at the dance sector, for example, which in the 1980s – in the absence of a culture policy at the Flemish level at the time – was able, through international networking to ensure that production could at least be made possible. The coproductions later also offered the opportunity to work on a larger scale. What is crucial is that these artists and organisers were also able to have the policy ‘upheld’, and with the Performing Arts Decree (1993-2005) and the Arts Decree (since 2006) were able to develop a decree-based framework that fully allows the performing arts practice to further develop this way of working. The transnational network model has certainly made the growth scenario described above possible. Yet the figures suggest a risk of fragmentation. How many (co)producers will be required tomorrow to realise a production? Are performing artists today not already turning to coproduction shopping? Should the policy equip the artists for this or in fact counteract this fragmentation?

The internationalisation also raises questions. Increasing possibilities for international connections are making Flanders/Brussels an attractive hub or base camp in the transnational production space, which branches out worldwide, as the poster in the annex clearly illustrates. The question of the ecological impact of all that travelling is becoming an increasingly urgent one. It is the issue Benjamin Verdonck is dealing with in his ‘manifesto for the active participation of forming artists working here and also gifted organisers who were gradually able to build up the conditions enabling the development of the artists’ practice. Look at the dance sector, for example, which in the 1980s – in the absence of a culture policy at the Flemish level at the time – was able, through international networking to ensure that production could at least be made possible. The coproductions later also offered the opportunity to work on a larger scale. What is crucial is that these artists and organisers were also able to have the policy ‘upheld’, and with the Performing Arts Decree (1993-2005) and the Arts Decree (since 2006) were able to develop a decree-based framework that fully allows the performing arts practice to further develop this way of working. The transnational network model has certainly made the growth scenario described above possible. Yet the figures suggest a risk of fragmentation. How many (co)producers will be required tomorrow to realise a production? Are performing artists today not already turning to coproduction shopping? Should the policy equip the artists for this or in fact counteract this fragmentation?

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caveats. The functioning of the performing arts must have a lot to do with this. However, there are various 
functioning leads to vulnerability; it appears increasingly difficult to initiate projects without a growing
number of partners, it is more difficult to appoint a producer with final responsibility and there
is a risk of fragmentation. He is calling for a relocalisation of performing arts practice and for
starting networks out of considerations of content, not out of financial necessity. In order to build
a meaningful relationship with society, it is valuable to establish partnerships with other sectors.

The sector-specific analysis based on the performing arts database suggests that the international
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The support consensus and the legitimation debate

The story about sustainability doesn’t stop at the borders of the performing arts world. There is a
debate going on about the shifting place of the arts within society and the so-called ‘support con-
sensus’. The situation in the Netherlands (not unjustifiably referred to as a ‘slash and burn’) shows
what a populist arts policy looks like, but is perhaps also indicative of a systemic shift in the rel-
between government and artistic practice which may be echoed in other countries. In
times of belt-tightening, the legitimisation of subsidies for the arts comes under increasing pressure.
What’s more, the hard won entitlements for the arts sector no longer appear to be self-evident.

This lack of political ‘supporting consensus’ may well be connected with the way in which the
networks in the performing arts currently function. ‘That often cited international art scene some-
times seems to me like a slow but elaborate little spaceship hovering low over planet Earth, within
which special codes apply, but where ladders are no longer provided for the mere earthlings.’
That is what David van Reybroeck said at the conference on international operations Joining the
Dots, organised in 2010 by the arts support points mentioned above. Guy Gypens draws a con-
nection between the way in which networks within the performing arts function, and the gap that
there is, within a no longer politically compartmentalised society, between the artistic and politi-
cal systems: ‘In a globalised, increasingly mobile world, horizontal networks, whereby actors
sometimes come together from a great distance, are strong assets. But there is another side to this
coin: the gap between civil society and the policy – or between the citizen and the political – has
been enlarged by it. The political bloc as a practice zone for democratic decision-making has not (yet) been replaced by an efficient horizontal alternative.’ In what way can the arts revitalise
their relationship to the political within a society that is no longer politically compartmentalised?

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The sector-specific analysis based on the performing arts database suggests that the international
functioning of the performing arts must have a lot to do with this. However, there are various

caveats. To start with, the impact of the economic crisis has not yet been felt in the figures. In his

contribution, Bart van Looy discusses the ‘market failure’ within the performing arts practice. It
is precisely the specific nature of the ‘complex cultural services’ that the living arts develop that
makes us need to be realistic. Although a lot of extra income is generated, there will never be
an effect of earning back the basic subsidy. So the demand for the social legitimisation of this art
subsidy remains relevant.

The financial economic crisis has added tension to the debate, as demonstrated by the Neth-
erlands and England, as well as by recent debates in Belgium. From that perspective, going
the economic route for the arts is not self-evident, argues Klaas Tindemans in ‘Theatre after the
Lehman Brothers’. The performing arts are at risk of losing their legitimacy: ‘Those who in this
way unreservedly go along with a narrative in which market economy and government support
are treated as equivalent partners, risk losing a piece of their legitimacy. Their legitimacy within
the artistic system, because the demand for return inevitably threatens the artistic independence,
and their legitimaty outside of the system, because the criteria whereby artistic productivity can
be measured are scarcely (allowed to be) discussed in the prevailing economic discourse.’

The bottom line

In short, both internal and external analyses show that the (performing) arts are currently in a
transition phase. Both its own mode of production and legitimisation within a broader societal
context are under pressure.

The practice has successfully developed and been organised since the 1980s, in a way that has
also been translated (via the Performing Arts Decree and later the Arts Decree) into an array of
appropriate policy tools that is the envy of other countries. But this it is under pressure. The way
in which the policy tools are currently being deployed is still based on a concept of a traditional
growth scenario for artists or companies, whereby during and shortly after training, one acquires
one’s first work experience, which can then lead to project-based support, potentially by arts
centres and finally to graduating on to structural support. But in practice, such growth scenarios
are increasingly unrealistic (how many of the internationally acclaimed PARTS-students have been
able to move on to a structural subsidy?). What then are the alternative ways for the practice to
be organised and for a policy to be geared towards it? How can we gain a more sustainable
practice in the performing arts that safeguards the existing dynamic for the future? How can the
supporting consensus for the arts be reinforced?

There is a need for new answers from practicing artists and policymakers, but they are not easy
to find. We are dealing with processes that we do not yet completely understand. Nevertheless
the answers are in the process of being developed and as a support point for the performing arts,
VTI sees itself playing a prominent role in helping to formulate them in the future. This publication
is therefore not an end point, but a step in a long-term process. The numbers and the analyses
in this publication cannot stand alone. They are strictly tools for initiating a discussion between
policymakers and those working in the field, a starter’s shot to launch the debate.
Facts & figures
Metamorphoses revisited
Sixteen seasons of stage productions
(1993-2009)
Joris Janssens

Introduction
The numerical analyses we presented four years ago in the study Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 (VTi, 2007) clearly revealed how profoundly the production of performing arts in Flanders has changed in recent decades. To start with, the performing arts world has grown considerably. More productions are premiering, and they are being made by slightly more performing artists and by quite a lot more organisations. At the same time, the borders of the sector have become more blurred. Many international artists and organisations are currently active in the performing arts in Flanders. Also, the borders between the subdisciplines appear to have been blurred and there have been more cross-overs with other disciplines. International collaboration increased.

These conclusions are based on the performing arts database of VTi, which contains research-ready data on professional performing arts productions in Flanders starting from the season 1993-1994. In the first edition, we examined the data over a period of 12 seasons (1993-1994 through 2004-2005), roughly the period in which the Performing Arts Decree was in force. Today, we can assess how the ‘metamorphoses’ have continued since then. Has production continued to increase after 2005? How many artists and organisations are contributing to the production, and in what ways are they collaborating with each other? What about the relationships between the various subdisciplines within the performing arts, and what ties are being established with other sectors? Has the internationalisation of performance practice continued?

This document discusses the data for a total of 16 seasons: the period 1993-1994 through 2008-2009. In terms of decrees, much has changed. The period that has newly been examined (2005-2006 through 2008-2009) broadly speaking coincides with the introduction of the Arts Decree, from January 2006. This makes it possible to focus below on a number of innovations within this instrument, in addition to a number of aspects of the way in which the Arts Decree has been put into practice. At the same time, we must be careful of interpreting the trends that we observe as chiefly being the effect of policy instruments and policy decisions. Not only because the field that we examine below is a lot broader than the subsidised production in Flanders, but above all because performing arts productions are still created and produced in the first place by artists and organisations, from Belgium and abroad. This article will confirm that Flanders’s arts policy is one junction within a complex network.
The lexicon of the study

Scope of the data collection

Subsidised productions
Performing arts productions are the basic elements of the performing arts database that has been maintained daily over the years at VTi. Producers and theatres send us flyers, brochures, posters, (digital) newsletters and other documentation that forms the basis for an extensive digital data collection that is available to the general public via http://data.vti.be. For older productions, the information has been copied from the Theatre Annuals, which were published up until the late 1990s in book form. The paper information for the period after 1993 has been digitalised and verified. The information on the Web is currently being supplemented. We have made use of all of this data for the study. They were prepared for research for a period of 16 seasons: 1993-1994 through 2008-2009.

This data collection is relatively complete for the ‘subsidised’ performing arts field. This term is used in an inclusive sense. Far more productions are listed on data.vti.be than simply the works of companies or producers that are supported (on a project basis or structurally) by Flanders. Productions in partnership with subsidised producers, festivals, arts centres, worksites or cultural centres are also eligible for inclusion. In the past few years, the doors have been opened even wider: also productions that are not coproduced, but only worked on by a subsidised institution at least once are included in the database. But entry into the database is not carried out by the Spanish Inquisition: these criteria are applied very flexibly by the VTi-staff.

Because the criteria have apparently shifted, in some cases, over time, we applied an important filter to the material from data.vti.be. Specifically for this study, the pool has been restricted to the productions of organisations that, during the period 1993-2009 at least in a minimal way came into contact with the Flemish subsidy system1. The productions of organisations that received money from the Flemish government during this period were certainly selected. In addition, we also look at the production of organisations which, over this entire period, collaborated at least once with a ‘subsidised’ organisation of this type. All of the productions of a company that were coproduced with a subsidised institution at least once are included in the pool. This means that quite a few productions have been included that were created without subsidies.

1. We also applied this filter in Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993, but then in connection with a shorter study period of 12 seasons. That fact – and the fact that the material in the database has continued to be worked on in the past four years – means that for the period 1993-2005 we are working with a slightly different production pool, compared to four years ago. The absolute numbers discussed further in this study differ slightly from the figures in Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993, but all of the trends and relationships remain the same.

Flemish and international

With regard to the scope of our pool of productions, one note on national identity should be added. The focus in data.vti.be is on the Flemish performing arts output. Here too, we use the broadest sense. It is a question of productions in which Flemish organisations are involved. It is not always – and less and less – a matter of ‘exclusively’ Flemish productions. Foreign organisations are increasingly involved, as illustrated in the poster in Annex. International collaboration works in many directions. We count productions in which Flemish companies are supported by foreign partners. But we also keep information about productions of foreign makers and companies with whom Flemish arts centres, festivals or worksites collaborate as coproducer. We shall discuss this in detail below.

Information on the productions

If you look up a production file on data.vti.be, you will quickly get an idea of the type of information that we keep on productions:

→ production (title, premiere date, season)
→ artistic staff
→ producers and co-producers
→ genres
→ performances abroad

As mentioned, this data is entered based on a highly diverse material: flyers, brochures, all kinds of information. Information about the 16 seasons studied has passed through different hands. Various measures have been taken in order to limit error. In the case of doubt or ambiguity, we try to make contact with the producer at the premiere in order to be sure of obtaining the most recent information. At the end of the season, organisations are systematically invited to review the information about themselves and verified data is marked. Specifically for this study, the producers carried out a systematic check of the data for the period 2005-2009. At the same time, data collection of this type remains a human pursuit, and a certain margin of error must also be taken into consideration in reading this data.

Seasons and reprisals

In our record-keeping system, seasons are always counted as starting on 1 July. Each performance date that falls within another season means that a new file is opened and it is considered a new production. Also, different language versions and reprisals with a modified cast are recorded as separate productions. Reprisals are linked with the original production.

‘Credits’

Based on the production files on data.vti.be it is possible to create simple overviews of all of the individuals and organisations, with a link to the productions. Once we have this long alphabetical list, we use the analysis to bring the data into relief. The first step is to highlight the persons and organisations lists according to frequency, like an index in an encyclopaedia. This is what we work with in the analysis.
Credits for producers: ‘executive producers’ and ‘partnerships’

The contribution that organisations make to a production is described in various ways. Over the period of 16 seasons, productions in (often internationally geared) partnerships have been one of the strongest growing phenomena. In addition, the exact meaning of the terms used is not always straightforward. What does a ‘coproduction’ mean? And what does it mean if the production is created ‘in collaboration with’ a certain organisation? The meaning of such terms has probably shifted over the years. One hears the comment that coproductions are not what they used to be.

In order to determine the exact nature of all the joint operating agreements, one would have to read the contracts, and that is of course impossible within the scope of this research. But there is something we can do. To start with, we can look for the responsibility in terms of production. An orchestra or regular group of performers is also counted. Only the polite but meaningless ‘with thanks to’, is disregarded. This allows diverse forms of partnerships to be included: contributions in kind, increased performance fees, agreements about premiere series, various financial arrangements and genuine joint production. In order to organise this in hierarchical form, we make a distinction between the ‘executive producers’ – not only companies, but also the executive producers with final responsibility – and all other partnerships. Wherever possible, for each production we attempt to identify a single executive producer with final responsibility.

‘Artistic credits’ for artists

In the total list of the people involved, we isolate those who received specifically artistic credits. Only these data are available for the entire period, because the printed Theatre Annual formerly used makes a distinction between technical performance and artistic authorship. It is the latter that we are looking for in this study. Of course, we take this to mean the work of performers and creators, directors and actors, choreographers and dancers, but we interpret it very broadly. Artistic authorship, in this exercise, encompasses anyone who is onstage, and in addition, all other artists involved, authors and designers (video, photography, text, music, etc.).

Genre labels

For the organisation credits and individual credits, we work from the printed annuals or from the information provided by the organisations (companies, cultural centres, arts centres, impresarios etc.). For the listing of the genres, a different approach is taken: here, the interpretation of the VTi-database staff clearly plays a role. Further in this document, where we have grouped the productions by genre, we shall discuss the labels used in greater detail.

International performances

Compared with Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 we are incorporating new material. The performing arts database contains information about all international performances of the productions in the database. With regard to international tours, we have data for a somewhat shorter period of eight seasons (July 2001 to June 2009). We shall include these in the analysis below.

Growth scenarios.
Other ways of creating and distributing

General figures

For the 16 seasons analyzed, data.vti.be contains data on a total of 9,620 productions. 6,324 of these are creations, 3,296 are reprisals (sometimes of productions that premiered prior to 1993). A total of 16,276 different artists and 1,848 organisations worked on these productions.

Not everyone contributed as substantially to the effort. The performing arts output is the collective work of a highly diverse club, with a number established regulars and quite a few ‘drop-ins’. For example, 15 performing artists worked on at least 50 different productions (if we only count creations and not reprisals). These include the former members of the Dito’Dito company (Willy Thomas, Guy Derruyl and Mieke Verdin) and also Jaak Van de Velde, Sam Bogaerts, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Marianne van Kerkhoven, Bernard van Eeghem, Mieke Versyp, Tanja Van der Sanden, Robby Cleiren, Jan Fabre, Sofie Decler and Jo Roets. William Shakespeare is also included on the list, which immediately makes it clear that you not necessarily have to be living or a Dutch speaking Belgian to be counted as one of the most productive Flemish performing artists in recent years.

After the impressive vanguard of prolific artists, there is a ‘long tail’ of people who contributed to the performance production in a more occasional way. Of all of these performing artists, over the course of 12 seasons, just under half of them were involved in only a single production (7,486 people to be precise).

For those 1,848 organisations that is even more the case. 65% percent of these producers appear barely once in the database, in the course of 16 seasons. Here too, the top is high and narrow. Established names, such as the larger arts centres and producers racked up, over the 16 seasons, credits in the context of hundreds of productions. The most productive organisations – as executive or coproducer - were Kaaithéâtre, Vooruit, De Munt, KVS, KunstenfestivaldesArts and the Paris based Théâtre de la Ville, which supported a total of 233 different productions in which Flemish partners were also involved.

Below, we shall make sense of these somewhat overwhelming figures in other ways as well. To start with, per season, we shall track evolutions in the number of productions, the number of artists and number of producers.
Are there more successful productions than there used to be? Are companies more successful at keeping certain productions in their repertoire? How can we explain the increase in the number of reprisals? Most likely, highly diverse factors play a role.

In search of an answer, it is necessary to consider the way in which the data is collected. In the above 'lexicon' it says that the performing arts database applies a fairly strict seasonal format. A new 'season' begins on 1 July. If performances of a production are given later, then a new production file is created and it is also considered a repraisal. The fact that this happens so much more frequently than in the past may have to do with the fact that this seasonal format is growing obsolete.

Performance venues as well as festivals especially are programming more than in the past during the summer. More summer programming also means more 'reprisals'.

What also plays a role is the fact that producers have begun planning their performance series differently. Increasingly, it is a question of a short premiere series in the spring, with an eye to a wider distribution in the next season and – in the case of international distribution – sometimes even longer in advance. Therefore, quite a few of our 'reprisals' are in fact well-planned tours.

A third factor that might play a role is that work is being presented on a project basis more than in the past. Arts and cultural centres in Belgium and abroad are increasingly organizing festivals with programming on a certain theme. It is not unusual for productions that relate to a social or artistic theme of this type – from economic or ecological crises to activism to video games – to be given a one-off repraisal without it being a case of a new series of performances.

In short: there is a different approach to distribution and presentation than in the past and this is causing the counting methods to become somewhat obsolete. After all, there are no longer any 'seasons'. At the same time, since the turn of the millennium, we have seen a number of successful productions performing reprisals for multiple seasons in a row, such as Missie (KVS), Bezonken Rood (Toneelhuis/ro theater) or Ruhe (Muziektheater Transparant), along with many other examples. For producers, in organisational terms it is not always easy to mount reprisals, certainly when one is working with sought-after freelancers. Strategies are often found to deal with this, such as planning tours on the very long term, or working with rotating casts. A number of organisations – such as Rosas, Ensemble Leporello and NT Gent – still maintain an ensemble, which makes it easier for them to offer productions for longer.

### Number of productions per season

How many productions were there during each of the seasons studied? Graph 1 shows the total number for each season. It does not make a distinction between original creations and reprisals of productions from previous seasons.

**Graph 1: Number of productions per season**

![Graph 1: Number of productions per season](image)

Graph 1 shows, to begin with, that the performing arts output increased during the period studied. In the 1993-1994 season we counted just under 400 productions. 16 seasons later, that number has nearly doubled.

The rate of growth is not constant, however. The output grew primarily in the 1990s. Up until roughly 2005 the level of output remained stable. In the previous edition of this analysis, we described a ‘dented’ growth since the turn of the millennium. But since 2005 there have been more new productions added. Since the 2005-2006 season, the number of productions for each year is above 700.

However, this is not a case of ‘overproduction’. Graph 1 makes a distinction between creations and reprisals. If we only look at creations, then the image of the ‘dented’ growth is confirmed. For about the past 10 years, each season some 450 new stage productions have premiered. The increase in the number of productions since 2005 is completely attributable to growth in the number of reprisals. Before this time, each season, approximately one out of three productions was a repraisal, but since 2005 that number has been over 40%, up to even 45% in the last two seasons studied.
How many artists are active each year?

How many different artists were involved in all of these productions? Graph 2 gives the answer.

**Graph 2: Number of artists (and their credits) per season**

![Graph 2](image)

Graph 2 shows not only how many artists were active each season, but for each season the sum is also shown of all the ‘credits’. After all, many performing artists worked on various productions in the course of a single season. The sum of the credits is the sum of the number of roles.

Graph 2 also indicates that the number of performing artists increased sharply in the course of the period studied. In 1993-1994, 2,332 different artists were involved in 395 productions. In the 2008-2009 season, 3,614 performing artists were involved in 784 different productions.

The number of artists has also increased therefore, but the rate of growth clearly deviates from that of the productions. Whereas output saw strong growth largely in the 1990s, the influx of artists is more recent: it can be situated in the period starting from the 2004-2005 season. We already observed this trend in *Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993*, in which the last season studied showed a strikingly high number. The trend is clearly continuing.

If we compare the growth in the number of productions with the increase in the number of artists, then all things considered, it is a matter of a fairly recent readjustment.

How many producers are active each season?

Yet another growth pattern can be observed if we look at the number of organisations involved each year in the performing arts output. Graph 3 sheds some light on the matter.

**Graph 3: Number of organisations (and their credits) per season**

![Graph 3](image)

Graph 3 shows how many organisations are active in each year and makes a distinction between ‘executive producers’ and ‘partnerships’. By ‘executive producers’ we mean – as indicated in the lexicon above – the number of organisations that, during the season, had final responsibility for at least one production, as a company or producing organisation. Within ‘partnerships’ we have grouped organisations that make a contribution to the production, but only as coproducer or in the context of a different form of collaboration without final responsibility.

The number of producers also increased sharply during the period under consideration, as shown in Graph 3. In the season 1993-1995, 194 organisations worked on 395 different productions.
Sixteen seasons later, 341 different organisations were responsible for 784 productions. Not all of these producers have final responsibility: an increasing number of the producers are only involved in the production as partner. In 1993-1994, 32% of the organisations were only a partner. Since 2004-2005 that has risen to approximately half.

An even sharper increase than the number of producing organisations is seen in the number of production credits. As we have already established, the number of productions doubled over the course of 16 seasons. The number of production credits, however, actually tripled.

There is increasing use of coproduction. In 1993-1994 an average of 1.37 organisations would be involved in a production; in 2008-2009 that was 2.38. Nowadays, it clearly takes more partners to realise a project. The growth in the number of producers is most closely associated with the increase in the practice of coproduction, which we shall discuss in greater detail below.

After this general overview of the number of productions, the number of artists and the number of producers in the Flemish performing arts sector from 1993 to 2009, we can begin to explore the data according to theme. Areas that we shall explore include the hybridisation of productions and genres, the position of the individual performing artists, the mutual dependency within a coproduction network that is becoming denser, and the further internationalisation of the sector.

Hybridisation – on productions and genres

The performing arts database contains information on artistic genres or subdisciplines within or outside of the performing arts, to which productions can be related. VIT staffer assign one or more genre labels to all productions. To do this, they work from the information that is sent in: flyers, brochures, programmes, websites of the producers and performance venues. This information is not always straightforward. What is referred to in one theatre as a ‘dance performance’ might be referred to elsewhere as a ‘performance’. And not all theatres, for example, make a distinction between ‘theatre’ and ‘music theatre’. The communication departments of different performance venues have often developed their own strategies that not infrequently diverge from the way in which the creators and companies regard their work. Apart from this, it is becoming less and less straightforward to sort performances according to these labels. In the previous study it was determined that there are more and more cross-overs and interdisciplinary projects. New genre labels regularly crop up in order to describe the changing practice (‘sensory theatre’, ‘lecture-performance’, …). Sometimes, but not always, they take root as a genuine trend.

It is not easy therefore, and perhaps even impossible, to be 100% consistent in the labelling of productions and if we look at the way that genre labels have been applied over the years, we see that highly diverse motivations have played a role. Not only the characteristics of the productions, also the background of producers can affect how the production is perceived. Productions by dance structures will be a bit more likely to be recognised as ‘dance’, even if they involve relatively little movement and primarily speech.

Over the years, more than 100 different genre labels have been used: from ‘acrobatics’ and ‘entertainment’ to ‘educational theatre’ and ‘workshop’. For the study we have developed a way of organizing this so that we can use this data for our research. We group the entire range of labels used into five ‘tags’:

→ theatre
→ dance
→ music theatre
→ other artistic disciplines
→ children/youth

We have not categorised the productions studied into one of the five groups exclusively. In the majority of cases, it is (still) no problem to label the productions. But sometimes, it is not, and if necessary, productions will then be given different tags.

Here are some examples. Brandhout. Een irritatie is, for the purposes of the database, straight ‘theatre’, just like most of the productions of tg STAN. And a production such as Skènè by Étienne Guilloteau (wpZimmer and ccBE, 2005-2006) can be categorised in data.vti.be without too much difficulty as a dance performance. Just like Al Large by Eleanor Bauer (2007-2008) in fact, although this performance drew heavily on street dance, YouTube-films, documentary techniques and the like. Although this performance pushed the boundaries as a discipline, as a journalist noted, it could still be unequivocally considered to be ‘dance’.

However, that is certainly not always the case and as necessary, we have kept the hybrid nature of productions intact by assigning different tags. We do this to start with when a production has initially been assigned to many different genre labels. Bezoekend rood (Het Toneelhuis and ro theatre) is according to the database, a combination of ‘monologue’ and ‘multimedia’. We enter this production – and the reprisals throughout all subsequent seasons studied – into two clusters: ‘theatre’ and ‘other artistic disciplines’. Pitié (Alain Platel, 2007-2008, with a contribution from Aka Moon) is ‘dance’ and ‘music theatre’.

We also call productions that have been given just one genre label on data.vti.be hybrid, if that genre label is difficult to reduce to one of our tags. Productions which, for example, were given the label ‘performance’ – such as Thriller by Diederik Peeters (2007-2008) or Airplanes & Skyscrapers by Ricky Seabra (2008-2009, produced by nOna and Gashuis) – are included in ‘theatre’, ‘dance’ and ‘other disciplines’. All performances that are referred to as ‘children’s opera’, belong in the cluster ‘music theatre’ as well as ‘children/youth’.

In the list of tags, the category ‘children/youth’ is of course the odd one out. If a production is made for ‘children/youth’, that does not in itself say anything about the discipline but rather about the target group for whom these productions are made. Productions will therefore never belong exclusively to this cluster, they are also given genre-information. In the past this was generally theatre, but recently, the output for children and young people has definitely become more diverse. That is clearly shown in the first series of charts, in which we use the genre clusters to say something about our productions. (The charts in this section are limited to information about 9,459 productions, because for a number of productions, there is no genre-information available).
How large and diverse is the range for children and youth?

In the first place, we shall examine the evolution in the segment ‘children/youth’. Based on the information in the genre clusters we shall divide the output in the first graph into three types:

- **Children’s and youth theatre** – Productions for children/youth which otherwise belong only to the cluster ‘theatre’ (whether or not this includes puppet theatre or object theatre);
- **Children’s and youth performing arts** - Productions for children/youth which may be theatre, but which definitely also belong to other genre clusters (for example, dance, music theatre, or other disciplines);
- **Not for children and youth** – Productions without a specific indication that they are intended for children/youth.

Graph 4 indicates, for four periods of four seasons, how the different types of productions compare to one another.

**Graph 4: Share of performing arts output for children/youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight theatre for children/youth</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s/youth performing arts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not for children/youth</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>1,975</td>
<td>1,997</td>
<td>2,339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 4 again illustrates that the number of productions increased during the period studied. The number of productions for children and youth also increased. The comparisons between the number of productions that are geared towards children/youth and the rest of the productions varies slightly. In 1993-1997 the children’s and youth segment accounted for 20.40% of the total number of productions. That fell in the period 1997-2001 to 17.32 percent. It then rose again: the share in the period 2005-2009 is 21.32%.

What is striking is the hybridisation of performance output for children and youth. In the period 1993-1997 the entire output for children/youth could still be situated within the theatre segment. This has gradually changed: the productions for children and youth are becoming more diverse. The segment ‘children’s and youth performing arts’ – music theatre, dance, or combinations with other artistic disciplines – gradually appears on the map and undergoes fairly explosive growth. In the period 2005-2009 these productions already account for 28.39% of the total output for children and youth.

How have the proportions between the subdisciplines within performing arts evolved?

Graph 5 puts the difference between children/youth and adult in parentheses and shows the proportions between the different subdisciplines within the performing arts and the proportions to other artistic disciplines. Based on our genre clusters, Graph 5 makes a distinction between the following combinations:

- **Monodisciplinary productions**
  - Productions that are straight theatre
  - Productions that are straight dance
- **Diverse interdisciplinary productions**
  - Productions that are theatre and dance
  - Music theatre productions (possibly in combination with dance or other disciplines)
  - All other crossovers (chiefly theatre and/or dance in combination with other disciplines)

The question of whether these productions are intended for children and youth or not is relevant in the graph below.

**Graph 5: Evolution of the number of productions by genre**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight theatre</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>1,403</td>
<td>1,299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight dance</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre meets dance</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music theatre</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other crossovers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. For additional and more refined figures on the production of performing arts for children and youth we refer to Joris Janssens, Osmaose in de kinderkunsten. Tendenzen in de productie van kinder- en jongerenpodiumkunsten (1993-2005), in: Pop-up! De plek van kinderen en jongeren in een dynamisch podiumlandschap. Brussels, VII 2009, pp. 33-64. With regard to the comparability of the data, we should point out that in Pop-up! we work with a slightly different pool of productions: whereas within the scope of this project we have limited ourselves to information based on genre labels, for Pop-up! it was possible to perform a correction based on age related to target group information. The approach in Pop-up! is therefore somewhat more inclusive: the share of ‘children/youth’ is therefore slightly higher (it hovers around 23%) but this different way of counting had no impact on the trends shown over time.
In 1993-1997 the majority of the productions were still theatre (75%). Dance and music theatre account for a small share in the first subsidy period in which dance and music theatre producers are provided with structural support. In this period, the various interdisciplinary productions (dance theatre, music theatre and all other cross-overs) still account for just 15% of the output.

Later, the proportions change radically. If productivity grew for the period of 1997-2001 then it was still in the ‘monodisciplinary’ segments for the time being. The ‘monodisciplinary’ theatre and dance output increased. Especially dance received a huge impetus in the period 1997-2001: production was doubled.

But since the turn of the century, increases are only still seen in interdisciplinary productions. That was already noticeable for 2001-2005, but since then, the hybridisation has become even more widespread. In the period 2005-2009 the ratio between strictly theatre and the interdisciplinary productions was approximately 1 to 1 (respectively 44% and 43% of the productions).

Graph 5 shows the most recent developments and confirmation of the trends that formed the basis, in 2007, for the first study publication: a landscape that was once dominated by theatre is changing into a more diverse performing arts landscape, with more and more interdisciplinary productions. The trend is quite clearly set to continue. If we compare 2005-2009 with 2001-2005, then we see that the number of ‘cross-overs’ nearly doubled (from 654 to 1,276). Here, we are talking about cross pollution within the traditional performing arts (dance theatre, music theatre) as well as about cross-overs with other artistic disciplines (performance, multimedia, video, installations and circuits etc.).

Product differentiation among organisations

The increasing diversity of performing arts output coincides to certain degree with the history of subsidizing the performing arts. 1993 was the first year in which not only the functioning of the theatre companies was structurally supported. With the introduction of the Performing Arts Decree (1993-2005) other types of organisations were given the opportunity to apply for multi-year subsidies: dance organisations, music theatre organisations and arts centres (where various artistic disciplines were being produced and presented, but where the accent was often placed on the performing arts). During the first period of subsidy, 1993-1997, many organisations in the new decree categories received very small starter packages, but they were able to gradually grow. That can be interpreted from the genre-information accompanying the productions: dance and music theatre only surge to the fore at the end of the 1990s.

At the same time, the diversification of the supply cannot be reduced to the structural support of new structures. Existing organisations also changed and began to develop more diverse activities. Thus, the introduction of the Performing Arts Decree – and later the Arts Decree – meant anything but business as usual for the theatre companies. They were given increasing freedom. The Theatre Decree (1975-1993) still describes specific missions in terms of content. You had repertory companies, travelling companies, mid-scale companies (mostly founded in the fifties and sixties) and newer ‘experimental’ theatres. That distinction was abandoned in the Performing Arts Decree, and the terminology also became less strict along the way: where initially quantitative standards existed for numbers of performances and productions, the Arts Decree only uses the more general term ‘activities’.

What impact did this new freedom have on the functioning of theatre structures? Graph 6 zooms in on strictly that part of the output that is made or coproduced by structurally recognised theatre organisations. We count all the productions that were produced by recognised theatres, either as executive producer or in partnership.

Graph 6 shows three categories of productions:

→ Productions that are strictly theatre (whether or not they are intended for children/youth);
→ Productions that are theatre, but also something else, (meaning, combinations with dance, music or other artistic disciplines);
→ Productions that are not recognised as theatre (meaning dance, music theatre or crossovers of these with other artistic disciplines).

Graph 6 shows that the output of the theatre structures grew highly diversified over the years. In 1993-1997 93% of their productions were still strictly theatre. 6% of the productions were theatre, but also something else. In 2005-2009 there is still 66% ‘ordinary’ theatre and already 30% something else: theatre, but also dance, also music or multimedia, installations and so forth.

The share of the productions that is not theatre (but only dance, music theatre and/or other disciplines) remains fairly small, all things considered. It should of course be pointed out here that only productions onstage are shown in this graph, and that the activities of theatres are actually much more diversified. Many structures also engage in other activities: lectures, debates, parties and festivals, concerts and benefit evenings, etc.

And although such phenomena do not show up on the radar, these figures nevertheless indicate that the hybridisation of the theatre structures is a reality. The share of strictly theatre productions is in decline. Yet one could also look at it from a different angle. The core business of the theatres remains theatre, but what we nowadays call ‘theatre’ is given a different interpretation artistically and in terms of content than in the early 1990s. Theatre is changing from the inside, more and more bridges are being built towards other disciplines, within the performing arts and beyond.
Individualisation – or the position of the individual artist

In the entire period of this study, 16,276 different people made an artistic contribution to the performing arts output in Flanders. Above, we have already indicated that this terrain is made up of many established names, at the same time as many ‘drop-ins’ whose contribution tends to be sporadic. At the same time, we assert that the performing arts world has become somewhat more densely populated over the years. Initially, an increase in the output did not lead to more performing artists working. Particularly in recent years – 2005-2009 – more and more performing artists have appeared. In this section, we shall examine this increase in greater detail. Is it attributable to the fact that there is more employment opportunity, or is it a matter of increased competition (more artists for a limited number of roles or credits)?

How big is the artistic team for stage productions?

How many artists worked on a production, on average? How big is the artistic team for the productions in our database? Has there been an evolution? Are the performances with large casts definitively a thing of the past? And if output is growing, does that mean that there is an increase in the number of different people making an artistic contribution? Has there been an evolution? Are the performances with large casts definitively a thing of the past? And if output is growing, does that mean that there is an increase in the number of different people making an artistic contribution? Has there been an evolution? Are the performances with large casts definitively a thing of the past? And if output is growing, does that mean that there is an increase in the number of different people making an artistic contribution?

Graph 7 shows how many performing artists worked on the productions in the performing arts database:

Graph 7: Evolution in size of artistic teams

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 artist</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>1,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>1,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 20</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Graph 7 shows for each of the four-year periods how many performing artists worked on the productions. The size of the artistic teams varies significantly. There are some productions with as many as 80 artistic staff members. On the other hand, there are a (small) number of productions for which the production file in our database mentions just a single artistic worker.

[In a number of cases, that is probably representative of the reality, but at the same time, we must take into account a margin of error because the information about credits for artists is not always communicated in detail.]

Graph 7 shows how the proportions between large and small-scale productions in the four successive four-year periods vary. Particularly in the 1990s, the situation was briefly dramatic. In a previous section, we saw that the output rose very rapidly in 1997-2001. However, this increase was attributable to an increase in the number of smaller productions. The number of productions with a large artistic team shrunk abruptly. Then, in the period 2001-2005 there was a slight correction. In this period, there were once again slightly more productions with a larger artistic team. The number of productions with a small team [5 artists or less] fell slightly.

In Metamorphoses we linked this phenomenon with the financial catch-up manoeuvre that the performing arts were allowed to perform during the first term in which culture minister Bert Anciaux was in office. The total packages increased by a half billion Belgian francs (approximately 12,500,000 euros). Graph 7 shows that this did not lead to an increase in the number of productions, because the bar for 2001-2005 is not much higher than the one for 1997-2001. However, we do see that since then, the number of artists has increased and there are once again somewhat more ‘large-scale’ productions.

The period from 2005-2009 does not deviate from this trend. We see that once again there are more productions – which we can ascribe to the fact that there are more reprisals. Within this total, the large-scale and small-scale productions increased at an equivalent rate. The proportions between the larger and smaller productions have scarcely changed since 2001. That is a bit surprising, because it contradicts what one might expect to be the most logical evolution, from an economic perspective. After all, there has been much discussion about the so-called ‘cost disease’ of the performing arts. The production of theatre, dance or musical theatre is very labour intensive. This means that the productivity in performing arts sectors cannot be increased as sharply as in other sectors, where automation can more easily be applied thanks to new technological developments. In the performing arts, the ‘cost disease’ has certainly led, on the long-term, to shrinking casts and artistic teams. What probably also plays a role in this is the fact that there are fewer ensembles and work is being done increasingly on a project by project basis. But it is striking that the shrinking of the artistic teams has stabilised since the end of the 1990s.

At the same time, the question remains whether ‘automation’ through technological innovation has not in fact affected the performing arts practice. There are indications to the contrary. The figures do show that after a dip in the second half of the 1990s, once again larger productions were mounted, but further examination of the material suggests that the nature of these more large-scale productions had in fact changed. The largest productions from the period 1993-1997 were The Sound of Music and Antwerp-New York, which happen to both be productions by the Royal Ballet of Flanders, which at that time also had a musical department. The ballet as well as opera houses are currently still mounting large productions, but the musical department has been abandoned in the meantime. Furthermore, the top of the list of the largest artistic teams in recent years may point to a number of trends. This list includes Rent a Kid, no bullshit! (Ultima Vez), Baekelandt (Unie der Zorgelozen/Nieuwpoorttheatre), The Woman Who Walked Into Doors (Het muziek Lod, ro
In how many productions is each performing artist involved?

In the following graph, we examine things entirely from the perspective of individual artists. If there are more artists working, are they artists who regularly contribute to a production? Or is it more a question of ‘drop-ins’, who only occasionally collaborate? Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 suggests that the increase in the number of artists was primarily in the latter category. To start with, Graph 8 shows how many different productions each performing artist was involved in during the four multyear periods. In other words, it shows whether the increase in the number of ‘drop-ins’ has continued since 2005.

**Graph 8: Number of premieres per artist in four years’ time**

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,943</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>3,696</td>
<td>4,440</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>990</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>816</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each four-year period, we count the number of active performing artists. We group them into five categories, depending on their level of activity. Because we observed, above, that in the period 2005-2009 there were so many more reprisals, we are limiting this graph to the information on original creations. Thus, reprisals have not been taken into account. We are referring to premieres: how many bouquets of flowers would each artist have been receiving within a period of four seasons?

The lowest block represents artists who would have received a bouquet just once during a four-year period – we refer to them here as ‘drop-ins’. The other performing artists worked more regularly. Some of them were involved in over 10 different creations during a period of four seasons.

Graph 8 shows that the phenomenon of the ‘drop-ins’ is not in itself a new one. Moreover: in each of the periods studied, the drop-ins account for the majority of the active performing artists. (Compared with the figures in Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 the preponderance of drop-ins is now even more pronounced, since we are only working with information about creations here.) But the phenomenon is becoming increasingly prevalent. The increase in the number of artists who worked only one time is particularly striking in the period 2001-2005, but continues slightly through the period 2005-2009.

Nevertheless, the fragmentation should not be exaggerated. The number of artists working multiple times also increased in the period studied. And it is precisely because the ‘drop-ins’ worked just one time, that their share in the total performing arts output is much smaller than it might appear based on Graph 8. After all, those involved in multiple productions have many more premieres than drop-ins; they are much more prominently present in the world of performing arts.

With how many executive producers does a performing artist work?

One of the most striking trends in Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 was the changing relationship between individual artists and organisations. We made a distinction between different types of artists: ‘in-house artists’ who have developed their practice within a single structure, and ‘jobhoppers’ who simultaneously or serially work for different companies. Before turning the spotlight on them in Graph 9, a few announcements are in order:

- Again, we are only showing information about creations and not about reprisals.
- The ‘drop-ins’ from the previous graph have been filtered out of this data, because the question under consideration here is not relevant to them. (Because they worked on only one production, they would show up in the graph primarily as ‘in-house artists’ whilst the might just be the ‘jobhoppers’ par excellence). The graph therefore shows only information on the players and makers who were involved in at least two productions in four years’ time.
- We are only counting their relationship to the executive producers, and not the countless partnerships. In this graph, Grace Ellen Barkey is ‘in-house artist’ at Needcompany. The fact that this company collaborates with a highly diverse range of partners is noted in the proverbial parentheses.
All active performing artists are assigned a place on Graph 9. For each four-year period, we show the number of organisations a performing artist worked with in a four year period. Graph 9 then shows that the increase in the number of artists has continued along the lines of the pattern previously observed.

**Graph 9: Number of executive producers per performing artist (creations, without drop-ins)**

![Graph showing the number of executive producers per performing artist](image)

During the entire period, you have ‘in-house artists’ and ‘jobhoppers’. However, there are always people who remain loyal to a single organisation. That is also the case for a number of artists who have developed their own production structure, such as Hans van den Broeck with Cie Soit. Also the core of Braakland/Zebilding, puppetry theatre de Maan or Ensemble Leporello. Furthermore, there are also companies who maintain a more or less regular relationship with their artists and staff. Some of the dancers of Rosas appear as ‘in-house artist’. The artistic core of Theater Taptoe remained relatively stable throughout the entire period under consideration.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are also the sought-after ‘freelancers’, who rack up lots of credits from many different organisations. Not infrequently, these are authors or designers. People who do not have to be present for the performance each night are free to start a new job more quickly. However, there are also quite a few actors, directors, or ‘actor-makers’ who collaborated with a large number of producers. The trend towards freelancing within different artistic functions is very clearly continuing.

Graph 9 shows that the previously noted trend is sustained. The figure of the loyal ‘in-house artist’ appears less and less frequently during the period studied, and there are more and more ‘jobhoppers’. In 1993-1997, the lefthand bar on the Graph, the lowest block is the largest. The majority of people (1,156) were then working with a single organisation. This way of working was the norm, at the time; it applies to approximately half of the group. A few years later, the standard has shifted. The group of solid in-house artists remains approximately the same size, in absolute numbers. But their share dips under 40%. The group of ‘jobhoppers’ – those working with more than five different theatres – has, however, tripled (302 performing artists in the last period).

In our figures, it is clear how the freelance market for performing artists has continued to grow since 2005. The artistic labour migration within the sector has clearly increased.

**Summary: the position of individual artist**

The research shows that the position of the individual performing artist was subject to change during the period 1993-2009. Initially, performing artists scarcely benefited from the growth in the sector. More productions in 1997-2001 did not mean that there was suddenly more work. There was above all an increase in monologues and productions involving a small artistic team. Since the 2004-2005 season that has been a certain compensation. The artistic teams become bigger, the number of credits for artists increases once again. From the perspective of many individual performing artists, this recovery may not have been noticeable. It remains chiefly limited to the segment of ‘drop-ins’ who were involved in just one creation.

Pending further study, the fragmentation of the artistic credits and the increase in the number of ‘drop-ins’ in the world of performing arts suggests that the external labour migration is also on the increase. Most likely, they are not all the semi-unemployed or amateurs who occasionally wound up in a professional production. One factor might be that performing artists are increasingly working in other sectors (advertising, television, education, …). Inversely, it might also be that the performing arts are attracting increasing numbers of temporary workers from other sectors. Based on what we shall present below, it would appear that the practice is becoming more interdisciplinary.

This can lead to occasional collaboration agreements with experts – visual artists, video artists and such – who are recruited from other sectors. Moreover, it is clear that the steady internationalisation is contributing to the increase in turnover.

All things considered, the increase in the number artists since 2005 is a notable phenomenon. It is also clear that the number of available roles or credits is being distributed among more and more different artists. The figures indicate that performing artists find themselves in a working environment that is more than ever a competitive environment. At the same time, we also observed that the rise of a freelance market is a trend that has also continued after 2005. These are all elements that indicate a greater degree of uncertainty for performing artists.
Mutual dependency – (co-)production in an increasingly dense network

Above, we outlined different growth scenarios for the performing arts output. There are more productions, more active performing artists and more producers, but these numbers increased at different rates. The increase in the number of producers was the most spectacular. The number of organisations involved in the production of performing arts has tripled since the first half of the 1990s. Naturally, this sharp increase in the number of producers should be connected to the phenomenon already noted in Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1992 of increasing (co)production in an increasingly international network. Also, there is more collaboration going on in Belgium. In this section, we shall focus on the increasing interdependence in the world of performing arts and we shall particularly consider the situation since 2005. Is the increase in the practice of coproduction continuing? Which organisations are involved in this increasing (co)production in the performing arts? What is their address and subsidy status? Is fragmentation occurring here as well?

The rise of the practice of coproduction

Graph 10 shows, for each production (creations and reprisals) in our pool how many organisations were involved. A great many productions were and are made by a single company. Others are coproductions with contributions at times from very many partners from Belgium and abroad. How have the proportions between the different types of productions and coproductions evolved?

In how many different productions are organisations involved?

More and more productions are being created in partnership: the number of organisations involved in performing arts and Flanders has therefore increased sharply.

But how lasting is the contribution of all these partners? Are there perhaps more and more organisations that are only providing a one-off contribution? In order to exclude interference but the increasing numbers of reprisals, in Graph 11a once again we are only counting creations and not the reprisals. To begin with, we are not making a distinction between executive producer credits and partnerships.

In how many premieres are organisations involved? Graph 11a categorises each organisation that was active in the four year period, according to the number of premieres that those producers would have been able to celebrate in those four seasons. What is instantly clear is that the bar as a whole is growing rapidly, and is even three times larger than the bar for 1993-1997. We have already seen that the number of producers has increased dramatically.

In each bar, we make a distinction between highly active producers, who collaborated on many different productions, and structures that made only occasional contributions. In the period 1993-1997 there were 153 organisations that were only involved in a single creation; in 2005-2009 that number was 492. At the top, of course we find organisations that produce and facilitate many productions, such as the larger arts centres, the municipal theatres and De Munt. KunstenfestivaldesArts is a notable newcomer in this list. The figures clearly show how the festival has developed from primarily a presentation platform (7 premieres as coproducer in 1993-1997) into a genuine production festival (as coproducer, in the period 2005-2009 KFDA was involved in 15 creations in the period 2005-2009).

HAU remains domiciled in Berlin: so here we are only counting their premieres in which Flemish productions were made through partnerships. In many cases, this meant that there were two organisations involved, but sometimes far more. Sometimes truly a multitude. Top of the bill are a number of productions by Romeo Castellucci & Societas Raffaelo Sanzio (from Italy). Purgatorio and Paradiso – two episodes from the La Divina Commediatology – were supported by respectively 18 and 17 organisations, including KunstenfestivaldesArts. In this top category, there are a number of productions by creators from other countries (also Akhram Kahn and Boris Charmatz), at least when their production was made possible with Flemish coproducers. Here we also find productions by the likes of Needcompany, Meg Stuart, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Alain Platel. This area of ‘super-coproductions’ is clearly made up primarily of work from international circuits. We shall discuss this further below.

Graph 10 reveals an incontrovertible shift in the norm as far as (co-)producing is concerned. In absolute figures, there are just as many productions that are simply made by a single company. But in relative terms, it is primarily the coproductions that are showing up on the map. In the period 1993-1997 one in five productions was a coproduction. In the period 2005-2009 a bit more than half of all productions were created in partnership. As such, that number is not much higher than in the period 2001-2005, but within the category of the co-productions, we still see an increase in the number of productions involving more than five different partners: that number doubles from 106 to 211.

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This time, there is an evolution in the proportions over the years. In 1993-1997 31% of the executive producers were involved in just one production. In the period 2005-2009 that grew to over 50%. The increase in this sort of ‘drop-ins’ over the course of the period studied is striking. More and more productions are being made by smaller structures or ad hoc initiatives.

In other words, in the world of performing arts, there are more and more executive producers active, each of whom is realizing significantly fewer creations. What factors play a role? Could it have to do with the subsidy policy of the Flemish Community? Research about the distribution of structural subsidies within the (Performing) Arts Decree has indicated that since 2001 more and more structures have been recognised, whilst the average purchasing power of those structures has diminished considerably. The structures that were added to the fold since 2001 are relatively small structures, and in the area of subsidies, the prospects for growth are poorer than ever.

Has this encouraged fragmentation within the performing arts landscape in Flanders? Not necessarily: out of the 275 ‘one-offs’ from the period 2005-2009, we count 123 executive producers domiciled abroad. In practice, then, it is primarily the increasing internationalisation that plays a role. Increasingly frequently, Flemish arts centres and festivals are acting as partner for increasing numbers of foreign companies. Whereas in the past, international collaboration tended to be a matter of ‘taking’ – seeking resources from abroad – to an increasing extent, we are seeing reciprocity between Belgium and other countries.

Graph 11a: Number of creations per producer

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just 1 premiere</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>36</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
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</table>

Graph 11b: Number of creations per executive producer within four seasons

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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just 1 premiere</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>275</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>6 to 10</td>
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<td>10 to 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
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Types of producers

Who are all these different organisations, then, who produced and coproduced during the period we studied? For all of the 1,693 organisations that worked, between 1993 and 2009 on at least one production, we assigned to a label that says something about their background. In the first place, we work with four overarching categories based on the address or subsidy status:
‘(Performing) Arts Decree’, ‘foreign organisations’, ‘other subsidies’ and a remainder category for ‘non-subsidised’ Belgian organisations. We then examine several of these in greater detail.

The organisations we characterised as ‘(Performing) Arts Decree (PAD) are those that relied on structural or project-based resources from the Flemish community for a certain subsidy period within the framework of the Performing Arts Decree (1993-2005) or the Arts Decree (2006-2009):

- To begin with, this comprises the structurally recognised organisations. In the period 1993-1997 this only concerned theatre, dance and music theatre organisations and arts centres; since 1999 this has also included festivals. Workspaces have only been recognised since 2006 with the Arts Decree coming into effect. (For the period since 2006 the decree provides for two-year recognition in addition to four-year recognition; we do not make a distinction between these within the category of multiyear structures. For the period 2005-2009 for example, we also include the dance producers Cie Soit and Deepblue in this category, although they have only been structurally recognised since 2008.)

- Project resources were awarded, according to the decree, to productions, not to organisations. Below, we shall nevertheless work with a subcategory ‘project companies’. By this we mean organisations that within a given subsidy period were able to claim project subsidies at least one time, such as for example De Parade, Compagnie Barbarie, Rubber Duck and Stilllab (Kris Verdonck’s organisation) in the period 2005-2009.

- Between 1993 and 2008 various organisations were included and excluded from the Performing Arts Decree. For this reason, we could not assign organisations a single label for the entire period. Their label was reviewed for each of the four subsidy periods. In 1993-1997 Opera Mobile was a structurally recognised music theatre organisation, and in 1997-2001 they realised a music theatre project and then disappeared from the database after 2001.

‘Foreign organisations’ are domiciled in a different country. In these politically uncertain times, we are for the time being still defining ‘foreign countries’ as any part of the world is not in Belgium. Thus, this includes the Netherlands, but not Wallonia. We make a distinction based on geographical criteria, which we shall take a closer look at it in the next section.

The category ‘other subsidies’ encompasses organisations that are subsidised, but not through the Performing Arts or Arts Decree. There are several subcategories:

- Other governments/ministries. These include organisations that are subsidised through sources other than the Arts Decree: Flemish subsidies from outside of the culture budget, from Flemish ministries other than the Ministry of Culture or through governments at other levels (federal, local, European). In a number of cases, these governments themselves act as producer. In the period 2005-2009 the city of Leuven received 5 credits as a partner for various productions (by Braakland/ZheBilding and ABULEUS).

- Nominatim subsidies. In the past, there were a good many organisations that received funding through ad hoc line items in the Flemish cultural budget. For example, up until 2001, BRONKS and Beursschouwburg were paid from a ‘Brussels performance venues’ fund. Later they were included in the Performing Arts Decree. Up until the period 2005-2009 the ‘institutions of the Flemish community’ are also included here (such as deSingel, the Flemish Opera, Koninklijk Ballet van Vlaanderen). From 2006 these were also placed within the scope of the Arts Decree.

- Cultural centres received funding from lower-level governments and Flemish culture subsidies outside of the (Performing) Arts Decree. A number of larger cultural centres such as de Warande (Turnhout) and ccBe (Berchem), are also highly active as producer.

Finally, there is a ‘remainder category’ for Belgian organisations that ultimately encompass highly diverse working methods and processes:

- Non-subsidised producers: some of these organisations develop a professional activity in what is known as the ‘free sector’, such as Fakkeltheater or Paljas Produkties. Others start without subsidies but later join the subsidised system.

- Organisations from other arts sectors, such as music ensembles (for example Blindman) and galleries (for example Etablissement d’en Face in Brussels).

- A true remainder category of organisations for which we were unable to determine the background. Currently, everyone, without exception, sees to it that they are findable via Google, but for the dark ages of the 1990s, there are a few uncertain cases.

In the introduction, we indicated that this research did not presume to graph the ‘commercial sector’. All organisations in our database, therefore, also the non-subsidised ones, have at least one link with the subsidised system: during the period studied, they must have realised at least one production in collaboration with a subsidised producer (from the decree or via the category ‘other subsidies’).

After this somewhat longwinded explanatory note, Graph 12 fairly simply indicates how many credits these four types of organisations gathered during the different four-year periods. Where should we situate this increasingly networked aspect of the performing arts production? Once again, we exclude the effect of reprisals: for each of these types, we show the sum of the number of credits, exclusively for their creations.

**Graph 12: Distribution of credits among types of producers**
Graph 12 counts, for each four-year period, how many premiere credits all producers accumulated during that four-year period and the distribution across the different types. Thus, altogether, the structures recognised via the Performing Arts Decree accumulated 921 credits in the period 1993-1997; in 2005-2009 this rose to 2057. The foreign organisations accumulated 140 credits in 1993-1997, in 2005-2009 that increased by more than a factor of seven to 1005. Various elements played a role in the generally sharp increase in the number of premiere credits:

→ During the 1990s, the number of creations increased sharply;
→ In the course of the entire period studied, an increase in production through partnerships was observed, which results in a multiplication of the number of credits on this graph. This causes the number of credits for creations to continue to rise further, also after 2001.

After the turn of the millennium, the number of credits is suddenly differently distributed among the different types. In the 1990s, there is a visible increase in all categories: subsidised and non-subsidised partners, and also more and more foreign organisations. There are probably many factors at play here. The introduction of the Performing Arts Decree in the mid-1990s gave an enormous boost: there were a huge number of subsidy applications, but the inclusion of structures within the decree ultimately proved quite limited. As we have already seen, in the period 1997-2001 there was nevertheless growth in the number of productions, and now we see that this growth was underpinned by a highly diverse partners. The increase in the number of the credits can be seen in all categories at that time. Within the Performing Arts Decree, there was more mutual collaboration. People went looking for partners abroad. The packages for dance companies and art centres did increase, which allowed them to more actively look for these partners. And joint operating agreements were established with highly diverse organisations: cultural centres, schools, various societal actors.

After 2001 the growth pattern changes. There is no longer any growth detected in the other or non-subsidised organisations. The number of credits for these types declines. The increase in the premiere credits can be completely situated within the (Performing) Arts Decree and the international collaboration. The developing coproduction network is chiefly decree-based and international. We shall explore the background of these decree-based and foreign organisations in greater detail below.

The increasing networking has taken place since 2001 primarily in an international environment and within a decree-based environment. Is particularly the collaboration between decree-supported and foreign organisations that intensifies – and increasingly, this is mutual. Below, we shall zoom in on these two types of organisations. In the following section – and on the poster in the Annex – we shall take a look at the constantly growing internationalisation of the coproduction practice in the performing arts. But first, we shall focus on the increase in the number of ‘credits’ within the (Performing) Arts Decree.

### Zooming in on the organisations within the (Performing) Arts Decree

Before we examine in greater detail the contribution of the different decree categories, we should make a more general point about the increase in the number of credits for decree supported organisations. An important factor is that the policy within the period studied has systematically promoted the decree-based anchoring of the subsidies for the arts. In the past, it was not unusual for arts structures outside of the decree to be supported. Their subsidies were then written into the Flemish budget nominatim. Thus, in the 1990s, for example, there was a budget item for Brussels performance venues’, funding BRONKS and Beurschouwburg among others. Since 2001 these have become a theatre company and an arts centre. Until 2005 the ‘Instellingen van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’ (Institutions of the Flemish Community) were also registered nominatim. Since 2006 they have also been included in the decree.

Graph 13 zooms in on the credits that all of the decree supported companies accumulated within the four multiyear periods. These are credits for creations (not reprises) by organisations acting as a producer or in partnership. In this sense, it is a refinement of the data shown in Graph 12 (only the dark yellow bar).

**Graph 13: Zooming in on premiere credits (Performing) Arts Decree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Text theatre structure</th>
<th>Project organisation</th>
<th>Arts centre/ workspace</th>
<th>Dance structure</th>
<th>Music theatre structure</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Other AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2001</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where can the increase in the number of credits since the turn-of-the-century be situated?

→ Little or no growth is seen among producing organisations. Since 2005, theatre and dance structures even accumulated fewer credits than in the period 2001-2005. In the primarily producing categories, music theatre is an exception.
→ The great increase is chiefly seen in the arts centres and workspaces. Policy has therefore recently focused strongly on intermediary structures: not only with a policy for ‘major houses’ – which oddly enough is not discernible in the theatre structures – and the inclusion of many smaller intermediary structures (workspaces, alternative management bureaus).
The process of decree-based anchoring can also be seen here. ‘Other AD’ (Other organisations in the Arts Decree) encompasses structures which are new since the Arts Decree: social-artistic and arts education organisations and the ‘Instellingen van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’. Together these institutions account for 87 premiere credits in 2005-2009.

There are more and more premiere credits for festivals. As mentioned, the metamorphosis of KunstenfestivaldesArts plays a crucial role here. In the period 2005-2009, KFDA accounts for half of the total number of premiere credits.

We see the effect of the further devaluation of the project subsidies as a tool. Since 2001, systematically fewer project subsidies have been awarded.

Internationalisation

Based on the above figures, it is crystal clear that the internationalisation of the coproduction practice, which gradually began in the 1980s, has continued undiminished in recent years as well. Increasingly, ‘Flemish’ productions are being created through cross-border collaborative relationships. In this section – and on the enclosed poster – we shall take a more detailed look at the international activities within the performing arts.

To begin with, we explore the transnational production network behind the Flemish performing arts output in greater detail. We take a more in-depth look at the origins and the increasing diversity of the foreign partners over the course of the 16 seasons studied. In addition we provide explanation of the poster in Annex to this book: it shows the network of cities that made a contribution to the performing arts production in the period 2005-2009, the last four seasons. We have also published new data. As mentioned, the performing arts database also contains information on international performances of the Flemish productions that we discuss here. With regard to the international tours, we have data for a somewhat shorter period of eight seasons (July 2001 to June 2009). What has been the situation, in these eight seasons, regarding the international presence of Flemish performing arts abroad? How many organisations and productions travelled beyond the national borders? In which cities and countries were the most Flemish performances given?

A globalizing production space

The abovementioned figures for the period 1993-2009 emphatically show that the ‘Flemish’ performing arts output is increasingly rooted in a ‘transnational’ production space: from the start, the projects are collaborations with international partners. This internationalisation of the output has grown organically. In Canaries in the coal mine. Masterplan for dance in Flanders and Brussels (2007) we showed that dance, which is obviously less bound to text than other performing arts genres, has been a leader in the systematic internationalisation of the Flemish performing arts. The figures since the 1990s were the highest for dance, but also in theatre and music theatre, there are more and more companies giving the majority of their productions abroad.

Graph 14 is in fact the first illustration of the way that trends have continued within the period of the Arts Decree. It layers four donuts on top of each other. Each donut shows, for a given period, the share of ‘domestic’ credits compared to international ones, broken down per continent. This includes both credits for executive producers as well as for partnerships and also both new creations and reprisals of older productions and Graph 14 casts more light on the geographic origins of the domestic and international production credits. We make a distinction between:

- Domestic: as of press time, Belgium still exists.
- EU-15 (1995): the credits from the 15 countries which became members of the European Union in 1995. This categorisation has since become an anachronism, but the borders of the EU up until 1995 approximately coincide with Western Europe. Below, the question is posed as to the extent to which these borders still play a significant role in international exchange.
- Rest of Europe: all other European countries.
- Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America, Australia: we cluster the remaining credits per continent.

Graph 14: Origin of the international production credits 1993-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Rest of Europe</th>
<th>South America</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

back to content page
Graph 14 confirms that, at the terminus post quem of our research, the internationalisation of the performing arts output had already begun. In the period 1993-1997 a 10th of the organisation credits can already be attributed to foreign producers. During the rest of the period studied, the international share increases further. In the most recent period there is an increase up to no less than 31%. What is also striking is that at the same time there is increasing diversification.

In the initial period the foreign input can be situated primarily within the EU-15 – Western Europe, in other words. Throughout the rest of the period examined, the borders of Western Europe remain important. In comparison, the figures for the other continents are somewhat overshadowed by the fact that the coproduction practice has boomed, also within Belgium and Western Europe. Later, the rest of Europe and other continents also show up on the map. But in absolute figures, the trend is undeniable: all things considered, there is a modest, but clearly increasing interaction with the rest of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

‘Metro area’, or the transnational production network behind the Flemish performing arts

A more intuitive approach to looking at the international exchange is via cities, rather than continents and countries. In the period 2005-2009, which cities were involved in the production of Flemish performing arts? How intense were the relationships between organisations from the cities? The poster enclosed provides a completely different view of the database material. The poster not only provides a view of the cities in which the partners of Flemish organisations are based, but also of the relationships between the cities and the intensity of the exchange. Due to the complexity and density of the network, we are limiting the data to four seasons (2005-2009). This poster is once again based on the data in the performing arts database of VTi (http://data.vti.be). In total, in the period 2005-2009 there were 1,055 organisations from 308 different cities active as executive producer or in partnership in the production of Flemish performances. The graph is a visual representation of the contribution of the 50 most important cities. For the remaining cities, the contribution has been clustered according to country (if located within Europe) or by continent (outside of Europe). Later, the rest of Europe and other continents also show up on the map. But in absolute figures, the trend is undeniable: all things considered, there is a modest, but clearly increasing interaction with the rest of Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

4. The relations between data points – the longer coloured lines connect the various data points and indicate relationships. If one or more organisations from a single city collaborated within the framework of a production with one or more organisations from another city, then we consider this as a single relationship. Thus, the Brussels and Antwerp organisations collaborated within the framework of 140 different productions. Each coloured line connecting to data points stands for three such relationships. Here too, numbers are rounded off downwards. If data points collaborated on fewer than three different productions, then this relationship is not displayed on the map.

5. Type of relationships – the colour of the relationships between the data points is also informative: blue lines are intranational relationships between Belgian cities, all other lines indicate collaboration with or between foreign partners.

The picture that thus forms shows the international production network that is connected with the productions in the performing arts database of VTi. We repeat: the criterion on the basis of which we include a production in the study is that there was at least one Flemish producer or coproducer involved. This does not only have to be productions by Flemish companies supported by, for example, Théâtre de la Ville in Paris – the most active foreign partner. It can, as indicated above, also be productions of foreign companies whereby Flemish arts centres or festivals were involved. And it can also be the relationships that such partners establish mutually. Productions by Needcompany sometimes generate relationships between Rotterdam and Paris. Relationships between Rotterdam and Paris whereby no Flemish partners were involved are not included on this graph, of course.

The poster offers a picture of what the network generated by Flemish performing arts looks like:

→ The network is highly international: the top-50 of the city are largely foreign, because there are 29 foreign cities to be exact. Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin and Vienna are even in the top-10.
→ Brussels is the most networked city in Belgium. 141 Brussels-based organisations established relationships with no fewer than 65 different data points, in the framework of 1,056 different productions.
→ Within Belgium, there is also a great deal of collaboration. There is basically a triangle, Brussels-Ghent-Antwerp, that functions as the foundation for the Flemish performing arts output. But also regional-centre cities such as Leuven, Kortrijk and Mechelen make a major contribution and are also internationally networked.
→ For international collaboration, the Brussels-Paris axis is the largest highway. Brussels and Paris-based organisations collaborated on 123 productions. Since there are 1,056 Brussels-based productions, we can conclude that a Paris-based partner was involved in over 10% of them. These include productions by Rosas with Théâtre de la Ville as coproducer, but also the work of Jérôme Bel or Boris Charmatz via KunstenfestivaldesArts and/or Kaaitheater.
→ Sometimes the number of relationships is larger than the number of productions. Sometimes the number of productions is larger than the number of relationships.
→ The international network is global: all continents appear on the map. At the same time, the top is preponderantly European and even particularly Western European. Outside of the EU-15, within Europe, we have only counted Zürich and Geneva. The only non-European cities to appear in the top-50 are New York City and Montréal.
International performances of Flemish productions

Below, we shall also examine data on international tours of productions. As indicated, we only possess data on the last eight seasons: 2001-2002 through 2008-2009. Graph 15 gives a general picture of the performing arts output in the period 2001-2002 through 2008-2009. Once again, it indicates how many productions were made each year and this time, how international these productions were. The blue line indicates, to begin with, for each of the eight seasons, the total number of productions in the performing arts database. The two bars then indicate for each season what share of the productions took on an international life:

- Yellow bars – because the production came about as an international collaboration. In that case there was at least one foreign (co)producer involved.
- Red bars – because the production had a series of international performances. Of these performances at least one was given abroad.

Graph 15: How many productions took on international life (playlist or coproduction)?

To start with, Graph 15 once again shows that the number of productions increased slightly in the period 2005-2009, which, as mentioned above, is chiefly attributable to the increase in the number of reprisals. The international dimension of all of these productions has increased significantly over the years. If we compare 2001-2002 with 2008-2009: the share of productions that have, in that year, at least one international performance increases from 36% to 50%. The share of international coproductions also increases. In 2001-2002 in one fifth of the productions, there was at least one foreign partner involved. That share increases from 20% to 25%.

Graph 16 indicates for each season how many productions were played abroad in that season, and the number performances that were given each year.

Graph 16: How many international performances were given of the Flemish productions?

During the 2001-2002 season there were 1,723 performances of 225 productions (an average of 7.66); eight years later there were 2,769 performances of 391 productions (an average of 7.08). The number of foreign performances is thus increasing. If we compare 2001-2002 with 2008-2009, we see an increased by no less than 60%. The average per production dropped slightly, however.

What is notable, though, is that two of the seasons studied revealed higher values. Is it a coincidence that each time, this has been the last season of a multiyear subsidy period? It is possible that one factor is that organizing international tours requires long-term planning, so that the values at the end of the subsidy period are higher than at the beginning. Another factor is that organisations are more inclined, at the end of the subsidy period, to use the accumulated funds to invest in their international activities and in less lucrative venues.

Some of the productions mentioned above have a longer playlist than others. During the eight seasons studied, 11 productions had over 100 performances abroad: La Cuccina dell’Arte (Circus Ronaldo) is the front runner with 169 international performances over the course of three seasons. Then comes Isabella’s Room (Needcompany, 163), Quando l’uomo principale è una donna (Fabre/Troubleyn, 131), Le Salon (Peeping Tom, 127), üBung (Victoria, 119), Import/Export (Les Ballets C de la B, 115), Blush (Ultima Vez, 110), Sensazione (Laika/Time Circus, 107), Spiegel (again Ultima Vez, 105), The Smile Off Your Face (Ontroerend Goed, 105) and Savent-ils tout? (Ensemble Leporello, 103).
The number of productions that were only played one time abroad is relatively small, according to our tables: just 15% of the total of 1,458 different productions that were sometimes reprised for one or more seasons abroad. The international lifespan of productions can be very long. For the reprisals, \textit{Le Jardin} by Peeping Tom leads the pack, remarkably enough a production realised with a project subsidy. It was played abroad throughout all eight seasons. Once (Rosas), \textit{Endless Medication} (Bue-lens Paulina) and \textit{Peep & Eat} (Laika) played internationally for seven of the eight seasons. Finally one out of three productions has played more than one season abroad. In other words, the increasing internationalisation is an important factor that explains the large number of reprisals: the market for Flemish performing arts productions appears to have grown sharply during the period studied.

### The diversity of venues

The following graphs show where the Flemish companies and artists have in fact been active: the venues where they performed their work. Graph 17 shows in how many countries, cities and theatres they performed each season.

Graph 17: Evolution in number of venues (2001-2008)

Graph 17 shows for eight seasons the number of venues in which Flemish work was performed: the number of countries and the number of different cities and stages in these countries. We see that the travel destinations of Flemish productions have become more numerous since the turn of the century.

During the 2001-2002 season, Flemish productions were performed on 374 different stages in 231 cities in 31 countries. Eight years later, there were Flemish performances given in no fewer than 50 different countries (on 586 stages in 353 different cities). We can certainly see that the economic conditions creaked by a multiyear subsidy period plays a role: at the end of a subsidy phase, a greater diversity of venues are shown.

The countries in which performances are most frequently given are of course the neighbouring countries: the Netherlands (6,342 performances in eight seasons, i.e. 38% of all performances), France (4,577, 27%) and Germany (1,162, 7%). Then follow Austria (639), Great Britain (581), Switzerland (495), Spain (430), Italy (321), Portugal (312) and the USA (273). But beneath this top of the list of very frequent travel destinations, there is a long tail. In total there are 69 different countries on the map, from Argentina to Zimbabwe.

Looking for evolution in the period 2001-2009, within the neighbouring countries we can observe that the distribution in the Netherlands is stagnating and it has increased sharply in France and Germany, particularly since 2005. France is by far the largest growth market. If we compare the period 2001-2005 with 2005-2009, we can see that in France, 483 more performances were held in the last four seasons than in the first, an increase by 24%. In most countries, we are seeing an increase. If we compare 2001-2005 with 2005-2009, then we see that fewer performances have been given in only 5 countries, in 3 exactly the same number and in 61 there have been more. In the 2005-2008 period there have even been 18 new countries appearing on the mental map: including DR Congo (20 performances), Indonesia (12), Slovakia (11), Burkina Faso (8), Lebanon (8), Romania (7) and Peru, Syria and Morocco (each with 5).

Not infrequently, growth scenarios can be linked with highly specific impulse projects. For example in the Congo, the activities of KVS and a number of other companies. We see a significant increase in the number of performances in Hungary, where in 2008 and 2009 a festival on the Low Countries was held. Or in China, where the organisation Theatre in Motion spent some time as interface between the Flemish-Dutch scene and the local scene.

Whether the Flemish presence in these countries will also be structurally anchored beyond these projects is very much the question. VTi is continuing to collect this data, and on the longer term it will be possible to formulate an answer. But beyond the specific aspects of projects of this type, the trend is clear. We are seeing that the market for Flemish performing arts productions has grown over the course of the period studied. And there is absolutely no question that diversification and globalisation have taken place during a period of time which has certainly been very short, all things considered.

We observe that the internationalisation – even cautious globalisation – of performing arts practice has only intensified in recent years. The ratios on all of these graphs haven’t come about overnight. Since the 1970s and 1980s, Flemish performing arts practices have been increasingly incorporated into cross-border networks, leading to a flurry of activity in production, presentation, prospecting, networking, telephoning, mailing, facebooking, dining and visiting.

Ultimately, these numbers form the bottom-line of highly diverse stories, perspectives, working models and motivations that are economic, artistic and societal in nature. Companies are finding the financial support in other countries that they need to realise their creations. In addition, collaboration with international partners is enriching for the artistic content: it is fertile ground for the artistic practice. The work of CREW for example, that is situated at the intersection between art and science needs to make connections abroad because that is where one can find many possibilities related to new technologies.

Whilst other structures such as KVS’s sustained effort to build ties with Congo are more socially inspired, an extension of the artistic activities that establishes relationships with the various communities in Brussels in a new way. In part, the motivation is also economic. For example, the
number of performance venues for dance companies in Flanders is too small to provide continuity for structural operations.

The above figures are naturally too limited to paint an exhaustive picture of all of the aspects of international work in the performing arts. Internationalisation is not limited to simply giving or creating performances. Co-productions or foreign performances are not usually one-off or standalone phenomena, but are the result of relationships, often to mutual benefit, that have been built up over the long-term. Companies and artists want to engage with their foreign partners in a long-term process that transcends the one-off aspect. Flanders and Brussels are centres of attraction for artists from all around the world, who, through their highly diverse backgrounds have vastly expanded the network around Flemish performing arts – through the presence of internationally renowned companies and also the dance school P.A.R.T.S. The above figures indicate what the results have been.

Performing and creating, the aspects about which we have figures available, is just the tip of the iceberg. We have also observed that this tip has truly become a tip, which suggests that the iceberg itself has not shrunk. What the figures do reveal is that the international network in which Flemish performing arts can play a role has significantly expanded in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, even to such an extent that the position of Flemish performing artists, companies and producers is exceptionally strong in comparison to other European countries. Gathering comparable data is difficult, but there are very few other countries who can boast such impressive export figures.

The ins & outs of the Arts Decree

A glance at revenue and expenditure of Arts Decree organisations (2007-2008)

Combined field analysis conducted by BAM, VTi, Flanders Music Centre and VAi in cooperation with and based on data from the Agency for Arts and Heritage

Joris Janssens (VTi) and Dries Moreels (BAM)

Introduction

Under the common denominator of ‘kwarts.be’, the various support agencies for the arts, together with the Agency for Arts and Heritage, have developed a data set that contains key figures concerning the organisations that were subsidised during the first four-year term of the Arts Decree (2006-2009).

There are multiple reasons for this:

→ Flanders lacks a data source that documents the Arts Decree in all its aspects and not per subsector only. Certain analyses can therefore not be conducted and important research questions remain unanswered because, in reality, the field of the arts is becoming more and more characterised by overlaps, exchanges and hybrid forms.

→ Correct figures and well-defined indicators can help substantiate cultural policies objectively.

→ Individual organisations can strengthen their business policies by gaining more insight into the business parameters of comparable institutions or the entire sector.

→ Based on the annual figures, developments within the various sectors will become more noticeable and identifiable in the long run.

In this contribution, the support agencies for the arts present an initial analysis based on today’s data. It maps out the revenue and expenditure of organisations throughout the period of 2007-2008. We take a closer look at various source categories within the total revenue of organisations and present a number of figures concerning employment.
Method and sources

The data collection used in this research is established through a partnership agreement between the support agencies for the arts and the Agency for Arts and Heritage. It relies on the settlement files and inspection reports for its information. In settlement files regarding subsidies allocated to arts organisations for multiple years, the following data are included:

- business registration number and other identification details
- type of subsidy
- global accounting numbers (income / expenditure / result)
- type of income
- employment (employees and freelancers via existing table)
- payments made to artists

From 2009 onwards, activity-related information (numbers and audiences) has also been included.

Finalised inspection reports for the years 2007 and 2008 from organisations that receive structural subsidies in all sectors have been merged into one database by the support agencies, and missing data were completed – where possible – based on data from Steven Marx (Flanders Music Centre, in view of the study titled “Er zit muziek in de subsidies”). They were processed by Steven Vanackere and Dries Moreels (BAM). The inspection reports from 2009 were drawn up in a new Excel format so that they could be easily added to a database by the Agency. Additional verifications of the 2009 database were conducted, this time by Roel Devriendt (IVA Arts and Heritage). Both databases will be stored in the Cognos data management system of the Flemish government and are currently used for field analysis purposes by the support agencies for the arts.

Which organisations are included?

The current data set allows most structurally recognised organisations to be examined systematically. The Arts Decree advocates an integrated approach for various artistic disciplines (apart from literature and film). The decree distinguishes between a number of categories of organisations, of which the following are included in the survey:

- Arts centres (AC): organisations whose principal task it is to monitor the developments in the production of arts nationally and/or internationally through creation, presentation, reflection and/or audience-related activities;
- Festivals (FE): organisations whose principal task it is to monitor the developments in the production of arts nationally and/or internationally within a certain timeframe, through presentation, audience-related activities, reflection and/or creation;
- Organisations for Dutch-speaking dramatic art (DDA): organisations who focus primarily on spoken word theatre and figure theatre;
- Dance organisations (DA): organisations who focus primarily on dance;
- Music theatre organisations (MT): organisations who focus primarily on initiatives in which music – usually performed live – is combined with theatrical forms;
- Musical groups and musical ensembles (ME): vocal, instrumental or mixed groups who focus primarily on musical performances;
- Concert organisations (CO): organisations whose main activity consists of ongoing programming of concerts;
- Musical clubs (MC): organisations whose main activities relate to presentation, audience-related activities and support for musicians;
- Workshops (WS): organisations who focus primarily on supporting creation, development and reflection or business-related services for artists;
- Visual art organisations (VA): organisations whose main activity consists of developing initiatives in the field of contemporary visual art;
- Architecture organisations (AR): organisations whose main activity consists of developing audience-oriented initiatives in the field of architecture, landscape architecture, design and/or spatial planning through presentation and reflection;
- Audiovisual art organisations (AV): organisations whose main activity consists of developing initiatives in the field of presentation, non-commercial dispersion and/or support for (or the creation of) audiovisual art;
- Art education organisations (AE): organisations, with the exception of educational institutions, whose main activity consists of developing educational activities that teach individuals or groups of people how to process art;
- Organisations for social-artistic activities (SA): organisations whose main activity consists of developing process-based activities with a social and artistic dimension;
- Organisations appointed by the Flemish government as support agencies (SUA);
- From publications and recording projects – a separate article of the decree – only magazines are included in the analysis (PU).

Most organisations that are subsidised for multiple years will be examined. However, there are a number of exceptions. The Institutions of the Flemish Community, such as the Flemish Opera or the international arts centre deSingel, which received subsidies ad nominatum prior to 2006, have been entering the Arts Decree since 2006, though not all at the same time or in the same manner. Due to the complex nature of these operations, it is not possible to include these institutions in the current analysis.

With regard to the organisations subsidised under these categories, we will first look at the financial data and employment figures for 2007 and 2008. This report is the first step in a process where, in the long term, more data will be made available and analysed to gain a more detailed overview of several aspects of the Arts Decree in a broader context.

- To begin with, we are working on gaining a fuller perspective of the Arts Decree (integrating figures on projects and grants, integrating data from major institutions). At the moment, some data about non-subsidised initiatives are missing, which is an important caveat when it comes to interpreting the data presented.

3. Oase is a publication by NAI Publishers, a Dutch organisation. The Arts Decree subsidies are paid to the Flemish distributor of the magazine, i.e. printing office/publishing house Die Keure. Including Oase in the analysis would change the figures from 2008 onwards dramatically, as the total revenue of Die Keure, which is on an entirely different scale to that of the Arts Decree organisations, would then be included in the tables.
Both in 2007 and in 2008, there were 256 individual organisations overall. Several subsidies ended and commenced in 2008. In 2008, twenty new organisations were approved for a subsidy over multiple years, while for as many organisations, subsidies ended by the end of 2007. This had a slight effect on the ratios between various categories under the Decree, not only due to the inflow and outflow of organisations but also because of the fact that a number of organisations had moved to a different category under the Decree. Graph 1 represents the distribution of arts organisations among the various subcategories.

For the first time, figures relating to the revenue and employment of these organisations will be outlined in a systematic and integrated manner. The objective is not only to highlight the differences but also within sectors, types of work and artistic disciplines.

A brief glance at the Arts Decree

All the organisations we examined received a subsidy for multiple years from the Flemish Community. However, not one organisation is subsidised 100%. The structural subsidy never covers the entire operating cost of an organisation. The decree also stipulates that each organisation must generate a certain percentage of its revenue through its own means. All organisations have different sources of income. They receive subsidies from other sources in addition to the structural subsidies.

Graph 1: Number of organisations per decree category
For all the organisations we examined, we can verify the ratio of subsidies for multiple years received under the Arts Decree to other income. First, we present the figures for the Arts Decree as a whole. The total amount of structural subsidies for the organisations concerned was 86 million euros in 2007 and 89 million euros in 2008. Total revenue for those years was 220 million euros and 229 million euros respectively.

The various sources of income can be weighed up against one another.

**Graph 2: Various sources of income for Arts Decree organisations**

![Graph showing various sources of income for Arts Decree organisations](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural operating subsidy for multiple years</td>
<td>€86,253,403.85</td>
<td>€88,967,432.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Flemish cultural subsidies</td>
<td>€1,287,854.94</td>
<td>€2,683,173.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial subsidy</td>
<td>€6,709,830.05</td>
<td>€6,625,053.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal subsidy</td>
<td>€19,383,956.92</td>
<td>€20,696,304.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VGC subsidy</td>
<td>€2,960,338.68</td>
<td>€2,723,078.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign government subsidy</td>
<td>€2,174,981.70</td>
<td>€2,559,094.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of subsidies</td>
<td>€15,022,199.94</td>
<td>€12,163,070.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other revenue</td>
<td>€86,619,154.31</td>
<td>€92,919,479.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structural subsidies in the framework of the Arts Decree represent 39% of the total revenue for all arts organisations in both years. Other subsidies account for approximately 20%. What stands out with other departments are the subsidies from municipalities (9%). Other sources of income for 2007 and 2008 represent 39% and 41% of the arts organisations’ total revenue respectively.

With regard to the Arts Decree as a whole, i.e. without including major institutions and project-based resources, it can be said that in those years of an economic boom (2007 and 2008), for each euro invested under the Arts Decree, other sources of income provided one and a half euros: half a euro from different types of subsidies and one euro through the market.

Graph 2 demonstrates that the field covered by the Arts Decree – as opposed to what is sometimes suggested about artistic practices – is certainly not a sector that is relying 100% on public funds to be able to operate. On the contrary: when compared to the subsidies received under the Arts Decree, a considerable amount of income is generated through other sources. The decree stipulates that organisations must generate a certain percentage of own income in addition to the subsidies they receive. The implementation decree imposes a standard between 5% and 12.5%, calculated in proportion to the artistic expenses (with varying rules depending on the type of work and the amount of the subsidy). This standard is greatly exceeded by the Arts Decree overall.

At the same time, it is clear that the Arts Decree supports organisations with many different income structures. For a number of organisations, the Arts Decree is certainly the main source of income and serves to a varying degree as a driving force to generate income from other policy levels and through the market as well.

The following charts show how various subsectors and organisation types rely on different options and assets. However, we first wanted to list a number of general observations about the different types of other income.

With regard to income through the market, one could ask to which extent this relates to public means. Turnover figures of organisations include invoices that are paid by (partly) subsidised organisations – e.g. other organisations that are subsidised through the Arts Decree, or cultural centres. In the accounts, this type of income would be recorded as market income. Income from subsidies is not marked in a certain colour or in a certain way. But even in the case of subsidised payers, such as festivals or concert organisations, the fact is that subsidies represent only a limited part of their income. Cultural venues often generate a large portion of their income through ticket sales, the sale of food and beverages, merchandising or sponsoring and are often supported by several government departments. Therefore, it is basically not possible to determine whether the means with which they pay their buy-out fees/co-production contributions are in fact subsidies or other sources of income.

With regard to the partnerships between (partly) subsidised organisations, it should be noted that these are not always obvious when looking at the accounts (e.g. use of infrastructure, technical support). A number of things must be taken into consideration when it comes to contributions from other policy levels. First of all, the ratios are not indicative to the policies of cities or municipalities; only those means that are linked to the structural subsidies under the Arts Decree are included in the chart. Local authorities are important actors in the field of cultural policies, in particular with regard to many initiatives that are not directly supported through the Arts Decree. Those subsidies are not included in the charts.

Furthermore, contributions from cities, municipalities and provinces are both underestimated and overestimated.

- Contributions from lower-level authorities towards Arts Decree organisations are underestimated in charts 2 and 3 on the one hand because various forms of support are offered by a number of city councils or municipal councils: use of infrastructure, logistical support, etc. In some cases, such forms of support are not recorded in the accounts as they do not involve a financial transaction.
On the other hand, the level of contribution from other authorities is overestimated in the chart, as in a number of cases, the legal person receiving and managing the subsidy for multiple years fulfils more tasks than merely those subsidised by the Arts Decree. This is particularly the case for a number of organisations who essentially receive support at municipal/provincial level. Z33, Dommelhof and Zebracinema are some examples of provincial organisations with an Arts Decree function. In these cases, some verification or reporting instruments from the Flemish government only refer to decree-related functions, while others focus on the operation of the organisation as a whole. In those cases, the accounts also report those tasks that were not supported through the Arts Decree. In other cases – such as with BKSM, visual art organisation in the cultural centre of Strombeek-Bever, or VK concerts in the community centre Vaartkapoen – Arts Decree functions that are embedded in local organisations have been placed under a separate non-profit organisation.

There are some very specific cases, such as SMAK, the museum of contemporary art in Ghent which is a municipal organisation supported at Flemish level through the Heritage agency and through the Arts Decree. Below, we will look more closely at the various income structures of arts organisations, with special focus on the specific nature of such cases.

**Details about the decree categories**

Graph 3 illustrates the relation between the various sources of income for each decree category.

Graph 3 weights up cross-relations between the various sources of income for the decree categories. For each category, average amounts have been calculated for operational years 2007 and 2008. We refer to the same income types as in Graph 2.

What applies to the total revenue under the Arts Decree as a whole also applies to the various subsectors: for each input from the Arts Decree there is a return – in most cases higher – from other income.

At the same time, the graph highlights a number of sector-specific elements. At the bottom, those categories are listed where the structural subsidy represents, on average, the smallest percentage of total revenue. Above, going towards the top of the chart, those categories are listed where the percentage of structural subsidies is considerably higher. At the top, the four support agencies for the arts are listed that usually offer pro bono services to a primarily professional target group. It is no coincidence that in the lower half of the chart, you will find categories that mainly include organisations that have developed a presenting role: musical clubs, architectural organisations and festivals.

Certain activities generate income more easily than others. A musical club, for instance, will generate income at the till and through the sale of food and beverages. Generally, organisations with a presentation role – such as concert organisations and festivals – have the added benefit of being able to generate income from sponsoring activities or through the sale of food and beverages, etc. On the other hand, there are many organisations with a mere producing role that generate considerable income from other sources, such as buy-out fees and co-production contributions. Dance organisations and musical ensembles rely on a high amount of income from sources other than subsidies, as shown in Graph 3. All organisations in this category are very active internationally as they are less hindered by language barriers than others. This conclusion serves as a reminder that subsidies received under the Arts Decree should be considered a driving force and a solid starting point in the attempt to find other sources of income, often abroad.
sides. Organisations in the ‘Dutch-speaking dramatic art’ category vary greatly in this respect. There are theatre companies that solely create productions and tour with each production; they do not act as a venue and do not make use of an infrastructure. However, there are many others (not only the city theatres in Antwerp, Ghent or Brussels, but many middle-scale companies as well, such as Antigone, ‘t Arsenaal or Theater Zuidpool) with their own infrastructure, in which they present their own work and that of other companies to an audience.

However, functional diversity is not the sole reason why theatre producers rely on a broad variety of income sources. Some historical reasons must be considered as well. Cities and some provinces have developed a long-standing tradition in supporting theatre productions, and this tradition continues until this day.

We must remember that historical reasons often play an important role in the decision of several governments whether or not to support certain organisations, as described in the green paper for the internal state reform. At the same time, this questions the perspectives offered by charts 3 and 4. Cases such as SMAK, Z33, BSKM or city theatres are not the exception but are instead part of the pattern. In more than one case, certain trends in certain categories can be traced back very specifically to such cases. For instance, it appears that provincial funds play a big role in the workshop category, yet in reality, this mostly refers to provincial funds allocated to Z33. The Flemish Community Commission spends a relatively large amount of money on festivals and arts centres, but the financial support provided to KunstenfestivaldesArts and Kaaitheater turn out to be the two main players.

**Typology of categories and functions**

These examples indicate how careful we ought to be with generalisations about the Arts Decree categories when discussing income sources. There are relatively large differences in income structures not only between the various subsectors but also within each subsector. Graph 4 demonstrates this very clearly and prompts us to look at the Arts Decree organisations differently. It makes us look from the perspective of the individual organisations as opposed to that of the categories. All organisations have their own position on the chart, depending on their income structure (based on data for the year 2007).

Each individual organisation on Graph 4 is represented by a circle of which the size represents the total revenue (and not the subsidy envelope). The colour of the circle refers to the decree category the organisation belongs to.

Each organisation has a unique position on the graph depending on whether it relies to a high degree or to a lesser degree on subsidies (horizontal axis) within the total revenue amount, and based on what the share is — within those subsidies — of the subsidy envelope for multiple years in the framework of the Arts Decree (vertical axis).

- The horizontal axis weighs up subsidies against income through the market. The more weight the subsidies have in the overall revenue amount, the more to the right they will be located on the chart. The more weight is carried by funding through the market, the more to the left they will be located on the chart.
- The vertical axis only refers to the subsidies and to the share of each government level in those subsidies. For those organisations higher on the chart, the share from structural subsidies at Flemish level is considerable. In those organisations lower on the chart, more weight is added by subsidies from other sources.

Each organisation is categorised in either of the four quadrants:

- At the top right, you will find organisations that largely depend on subsidies from Flanders;
- At the bottom right, you will find organisations whose income largely consists of subsidies from different sources. For instance, the circle in the bottom right represents Z33. In this quadrant, you will also find KunstenfestivaldesArts, which is supported by various Belgian communities. City theatres can be found in this quadrant as well: the four large yellow circles represent KVS, NTGent, Toneelhuis and HETPALEIS.
- At the top left, you will find organisations that generate less than half of their income through subsidies, primarily subsidies from Flanders. Examples are architecture organisation Antwerp Averechts, dance companies such as Les Ballets C de la B, and the music venue Ancienne Belgique, who still received support as a musical club in that time.
- At the bottom left, you will find the least prototypical Arts Decree organisations. They generate income primarily through the market. The majority of subsidies they receive are other subsidies than structural Arts Decree subsidies. Not many organisations are listed in this quadrant: most circles represent festivals.

Graph 4, which represents organisations in addition to decree categories, opens up an entirely different perspective: it reveals a diversity of organisations within the decree and within the various decree categories. Most of what we learned from Graph 3 is confirmed.

**Graph 4: Typology of organisations based on income structure**

![Graph 4: Typology of organisations based on income structure](image-url)
The top right of the graph includes many producers (performing arts societies, musical ensembles, but also magazines). This means that they primarily receive support at Flemish level. However, there are some important distinctions to be made.

At the top left, you will find many dance organisations, which means they generate a large proportion of their income themselves. Most theatre companies are dispersed across the entire right-hand section of the chart. This means that for the most part, their revenue consists of subsidies.

Again, this is a rather diverse group: a number of organisations are primarily Flemish organisations while others maintain a more hybrid subsidy structure.

In the case of presenting organisations, a certain diversity emerges which was hidden in Graph 3. Even though the organisations located at the bottom left are primarily festivals, the image presented about this entire category is different this time: the festivals are quite equally dispersed among all four quadrants.

Overall, the distribution of decree categories produces a rather vague image. In Graph 4, the elements that determine where an organisation is situated on the graph are very diverse. The differences between type of work and disciplines are one important factor. They partly related to functions of organisations. The international dimension (foreign funds) and the fact whether or not an organisation uses its own infrastructure are important factors as well.

Finally, there are various types of relations with other government levels that are partly linked to these functions but that are often also determined historically. In other words, the above charts do not only tell us that we need to complement our survey of the Arts Decree with an examination of the proprietorial nature of the decree categories, but that we also need a number of different perspectives and points of view, more geared towards the diverse nature of these organisations.

Graph 5 provides the start for a possible proposal: typology based on function. In addition to existing decree categories or artistic subdisciplines, the Arts Decree organisations are now categorised based on their main function. We can differentiate between the following groups:

→ organisations with a primarily producing role (all musical ensembles, dance organisations, many theatre organisations);
→ organisations with a primarily presenting role (most festivals, apart from producing festivals such as KunstenfestivaldesArts, Antwerpen Open or Theater aan Zee);
→ organisations that combine a producing role with a presenting role (arts centres, numerous theatre companies);
→ organisations with a reflective or supportive role towards artists and their practice (this group includes a number of workshops, alternative management agencies, support agencies, residences and publications);
→ organisations with a primarily educational role (all art education organisations as well as some audiovisual organisations);
→ organisations with a primarily socio-artistic role (in correspondence with the decree category).

Graph 5 presents a much clearer view than Graph 4:

→ Producers are listed at the top of the table. With the odd exception, these producers receive support from funding at Flemish level. The diversity among these producers is considerable – they cover an entire spectrum when it comes to income generated through the market. As mentioned above, international activities of organisations play a deciding role in this as well.

→ Organisations with a mere presenting role tend to have a more hybrid income structure: they are located at the bottom of the chart.

→ Organisations that combine a producing role with a presenting role present a different spectrum. They are dispersed throughout both quadrants on the right. These organisations mainly operate through subsidies but will often have various sources of government funding.

→ A number of organisations with additional roles, such as education, support and reflection, generate little income through the market and receive their main support from funding at Flemish level. Most of these organisations are listed in the top right section of the chart.
Expenditure of Arts Decree organisations

In this section, instead of income, we will discuss the expenditure of those organisations subsidised under the Arts Decree. First and foremost, we are interested in the portion of expenditure going towards employment. Then, we will focus on several types of personnel: artistic staff, audience-related activities, administration, technical staff, maintenance and logistics.

Share of wages within the overall expenditure

Graph 6 gives a general overview of total expenditure for all the Arts Decree organisations combined. It shows how employment expenditure relates to other expenses made by these organisations. In addition, we also take into account that not all workers are hired through an employment agreement. Some staff are independent contractors, some charge fees, some receive a volunteer allowance and some work under the minor remuneration scheme for artists. Salaries and wages are paid through temping agencies or social agencies for artists (SBKs), traineeships, third parties, early retirement schemes, etc. All other types of remuneration for services provided can be categorised under the common denominator of 'other remunerations'. All other expenses that are not related to wages or such services are categorised under 'all other expenses'.

The values listed in Graph 6 represent all the organisations in the survey combined. Figures for 2007 and 2008 are listed separately.

Graph 6: Share of wages and other remunerations within overall expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wage expenses</td>
<td>86,168,572.49 €</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other remunerations</td>
<td>22,092,205.90 €</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other expenses</td>
<td>118,267,256.64 €</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both in 2007 and 2008, an average of almost 40% of the total expenditure of Arts Decree organisations is spent on salaries and wages, i.e. 86 and 89 million euros respectively. These amounts are comparable — both in relative and in absolute terms — to the revenue generated by the organisations through their structural subsidies. For each euro received through an Arts Decree subsidy, one euro is spent on employed staff. In addition, there are other remunerations that go towards administrative, artistic and other staff. The amount of other remunerations increases the average expenditure on employment to almost 50% of the total expenditure.

The amount of other remunerations combined represents approximately 10% of expenditure in 2007 and 12% of expenditure in 2008. In absolute figures, this increase is spectacular. Over a brief period of time, we have witnessed a relatively large increase in remunerations for workers that are not employed through an employment agreement, which can be traced back to the increase in employment through temping agencies and social agencies for artists. This may be an indication of a rise in freelance work in the field of artistic practice, which in the case of performing arts was already identified in the publication titled Metamorphoses. Performing Arts in Flanders since 1993 (VT, 2007). Graph 6 suggests that this is not detrimental to the number of employment agreements in the sector, as a small increase can be witnessed there as well — while concluding at the same time that wage expenses are rising more quickly than indexation over the same period of time. Those are interesting figures, although it must be noted that these figures only represent a time interval of two years, which means that we must remain cautious when drawing conclusions regarding any shift in trends.

In Graph 7, a new attempt is made to highlight the differences between and within the various decree categories. For each decree category, this graph displays the share of wage costs in proportion to the overall expense structure. For each category, the dot in the centre of the line represents the average percentage. The graphs represent the differences between the categories. The dot is centred on a line of which each end represents the standard deviation (the average deviation of the mean). The longer the line, the less representative the average will be for the category concerned and the more cases deviate from the average.

What stands out the most are the significant differences between the decree categories. The average share of wage costs within the overall expenditure varies greatly from category to category. For theatre organisations and support agencies, this share is almost 60%, whereas for festivals, the share of wage costs is slightly over 20%. The share of wage costs is relatively low in organisations with a solid public function. They are more likely to remunerate artists indirectly, via buy-out fees for instance, which are not listed under wage expenses or under other remunerations. With regard to producers in the performing arts – Dutch-speaking dramatic art (DDA), dance and music theatres – but also social-artistic and art education organisations, more than half of the resources go towards wages. As production gains importance within the range of activities of an organisation, the organisation will be positioned more towards the right on the chart. Exceptions are music theatres and musical ensembles, which have an average wage cost of less than 50%. However, there is a caveat: this graph only displays wages and no other remunerations.

In the case of musical ensembles and music theatre organisations, the way in which artists are remunerated can vary greatly, i.e. on a freelance basis or as an employee, which explains why the average wage cost is relatively low in those cases and why the deviation from the mean value is rather substantial.

Once again, we must be cautious when mentioning averages for each category. In several cases, the red line stretches rather far, which indicates that there is some variety within that category. The
line is very short in the case of support agencies for the arts, and relatively short in the case of arts centres and theatres. In other words, the proportion of wage costs against other expenses is more or less the same for these organisations. However, there are some major differences in the case of musical ensembles, dance companies, architecture organisations and audiovisual organisations. This is not only because these organisations perform a variety of roles, but also because of the various ways in which they pay their people. One more reason to focus on the specific position of each organisation. First, let us take a closer look at the share held by the various personnel types employed by Arts Decree organisations.

**Graph 7: Share of wage costs in Arts Decree categories**

![Graph 7](image)

**Artist wages and remunerations**

With regard to wages and other remunerations, the available data make it possible to differentiate between the various types of remunerations for different types of staff members. The settlement files contain rather detailed information about this. Based on the collective agreement on performing arts, the Agency for Arts and Heritage implemented a function-based classification system for all organisations under the Arts Decree up until 2008 inclusive. This classification system comprised 26 categories clustered in 6 groups:

- **Artistic:** not only (performing or creative) artists, but also artistic leaders, playwrights, designers, programmers, directors/choroegraphers and their assistants;
- **Maintenance and logistics:** drivers, janitors, keepers, cleaning staff, etc.;
- **Audience-related activities:** drama teachers, audience assistants, press and promotion, reception staff, doorkeepers and security guards;
- **Technical-artistic:** make-up artists, hairdressers, workshop assistants, theatre technicians, props managers, etc.;
- **Administrative:** business leaders, ancillary services;
- **Other:** non-specified or non-detailed ‘other remunerations’.

Graph 8 indicates the amounts spent by the organisations on staff within these groups of personnel types in 2008. For each personnel type, a distinction is made between wages (employees with a short-term or long-term employment agreement) and other remunerations. With regard to artistic functions, we differentiate between the following: creative and performing artists on the one hand, and other artistic functions listed in the classification system on the other hand. In this case, we are only looking at the figures for 2008 as the available data from that year are more comprehensive for most organisations concerned.

**Graph 8: Distribution of wages and other remunerations according to personnel type**

![Graph 8](image)

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the same distinction between artists and other artistic staff. Using the current reporting method, it is not yet possible to obtain a clear, detailed view on the expenses that are spent on artists directly.

Graph 8 gives an overview of the ratios between the various types of personnel, but it does not allow us to determine which ratio would be required and/or would be desirable, let alone deduct what the standard would be. Of course, the ‘ideal ratio’ between artist wages and other remunerations can not be laid out in general terms and must be related to proper knowledge of the functions and core tasks of the artistic organisations concerned, which – as amply demonstrated above – assume many different roles and functions and have many different relations with (local) public bodies and with the market.

### Cost of (artist) wages and remunerations

Below, we link the relations between the various personnel types to the decree categories and the functions of the organisations in question. Graph 9 is based on the same principle as charts 4 and 5. Each organisation is represented by a circle that indicates the magnitude of the expenditure. The colours are based on the decree category to which each organisation belongs.

**Graph 9: Classification of organisations based on (artist) wages and remunerations**

Again, each organisation is given a unique location on the graph based on two parameters:

- For each organisation, the horizontal axis indicates the share of wages and remunerations in their total expenditure. Organisations located on the left-hand side of the graph have a smaller share of staff-related expenses and a larger share of other expenses in total expenditure. Organisations located on the right-hand side of the graph have a higher share of wage costs in their overall budget.

- The vertical axis indicates the share of artist wages and remunerations in the total cost of wages and remunerations. Organisations located at the top of the graph have more artistic staff among their team. Organisations at the bottom rely primarily on non-artistic personnel.

Please note: we have added together wage expenses and other methods for paying staff. The sum does not differentiate between remunerations for freelance work and employee wages.

This graph only includes 192 organisations as detailed employment figures are not available for all organisations. At the top right, you will find those organisations with higher personnel costs consisting predominantly of artist wages. At the bottom left, you will find organisations with low wage costs and other remunerations and with low numbers of artistic staff. Organisations located at the top left have a smaller ratio of wage expenses and rely mainly on artistic staff. At the bottom right, you will find organisations with a higher wage cost ratio to the overall expenditure and with a smaller number of artistic staff.

The diversity within a number of decree categories, such as workshops and audiovisual organisations, is once again striking. Those organisations are distributed across all quadrants. On the other hand, there are a number of categories – such as dance organisations and musical ensembles, once again – that display relative homogeneity. The image we get from the decree categories appears to be less vague than that about the organisations’ revenue. Once again, there is a clear link with the functional approach. In general, we can say that organisations which primarily have a presenting role (musical clubs, arts centres, festivals) are mostly situated in the left-hand side of the graph (relatively small share of wages and other remunerations), but also that a distinction can be made between whether or not the organisation is run by artists (or by staff members registered as such). Organisations with a more producing role are situated on the right-hand side of the chart.

Theatre companies are usually situated on the right-hand side, which indicates that they have a higher wage cost ratio to their overall expenditure. However, on the vertical axis, these companies belong to a certain spectrum: the share of artist wages within the overall cost of wages and other expenses varies greatly from theatre to theatre. For this reason, organisations such as KVS, BRONKS or HETPALEIS are situated at the bottom of the chart. It is no coincidence that those organisations have an infrastructure that includes programming and audience-related activities. All the more reason to take into account these functions when discussing overhead costs and artistic expenses. For those types of organisations, not only the artistic aspect but also the use of infrastructures, developing participation in culture and communication with several communities are an integral part of the core tasks for which they receive subsidies – quite often from several different government departments.
Recommendations

What is new about the above analysis is the fact that an exhaustive series of key figures about finance and employment for the various sectors in the field of the Arts Decree are systematically examined and disclosed for the first time.

1. An economic glance at the Arts Decree

Overall, the figures indicate that the Arts Decree acts as a catalyst and stimulus for economic activity.

- The direct economic impact of all the subsidies granted under the Arts Decree is considerable. For the two years we examined, i.e. 2007 and 2008, the structural subsidies ranged from 86 to 89 million euros while the total revenue was 220 to 229 million euros. The structural subsidy clearly acts as a driving force; for both seasons included in the survey, the fact is that for each euro subsidised under the Arts Decree, the organisations receive half a euro from different types of subsidies and one euro from other revenue. The Flemish subsidy convinces other governments in the decision to co-subsidise organisations (20% of income). It is also thanks to the Flemish subsidy that these organisations are able to generate a substantial amount of extra income through economic operations (40% of income).

- Subsidies also create employment. The total amount of structural subsidies is a lot less than what is spent by all organisations combined on wages and other remunerations for artists and other workers.

These data are both valuable and useful as they encourage discussion about the arts within a broader context of Flemish policies. They stimulate and support reflection about entrepreneurship and innovation in the arts and they lift the debate about solidifying the creative industry in Flanders and the objectives of ‘Flanders in Action’ to a higher level.

2. Attention to the specific nature of organisations

Overall, these figures are striking. The analysis demonstrates, both in terms of revenue and expenditure, that one must pay attention to the specific nature of the activities performed by the various Arts Decree organisations. There are some major differences among these organisations when it comes to generating own income (from other subsidy sources or through the market).

Employment figures can differ greatly as well, depending on the labour intensive nature of the work or the function performed by the organisations, and depending on their mission. In the present debate regarding alternative financing sources, this diversity is not always recognised. This analysis shows that it is useful and necessary to keep this in mind. Decisions concerning the percentage of own income or the percentage of expenditure that ought to go toward (the performances of) artists must be based on proper knowledge about how these organisations operate and with due respect for their functions and core tasks. During the previous major round of subsidies in particular, this was not always the case. For instance, in the last stretch toward subsidy decisions, new criteria for city theatres were introduced based on a genuine concern about the position of individual artists, but without sufficient knowledge about the business and about how these organisations operate.

Discussions about alternative financing sources or overhead costs hardly gain from a generalising approach. Instead, they require a slightly distinct approach that takes into account not only the various functions and tasks of organisations but one that also links these functions to the various policy objectives: developing the arts, guaranteed diversity in the landscape, professionalism in the operation of organisations, participation, education and well-being.


More so than the usual decree categories, the functions and core tasks of organisations form a suitable basis for standards to be developed and linked to policy objectives. Of course, typical differences among the various sectors must be kept in mind. In the field of visual arts, raw materials are crucial, while various forms of performing arts are characterised by high wage costs. With regard to performing arts, it is clear that dance and theatre companies often have a different income structure (more non-subsidised revenue for dance organisations, more income from several different government levels for theatre organisations). However, some cross-sectoral parallels stand out as well.

For the first time, this field analysis makes it possible to systematically compare several subdisciplines in the field subsidised under the Arts Decree. For instance, there are parallels between the income structures of dance companies and musical ensembles. Both types hardly rely on other subsidising authorities in addition to the Flemish government, yet at the same time they generate a lot of other income through buy-out fees and co-production contributions. There are some parallels between festivals and arts centres. As with other organisations that mainly have a presenting role, they are often the instrument of several public partners. At the same time, it is clear that those decree categories are characterised by a considerable degree of internal diversity. The revenue and expenditure of festivals, arts centres and workshops generally differs to the same extent from the revenue and expenditure of organisations with a producing role, yet considerable differences emerge when compared against one another internally.

Those attempting to profile the organisations in terms of financial and employment data will notice that the decree categories pose some major limitations. A functional approach offers more starting points. Does the organisation have a producing or a presenting role (or a combination of both)? Does the organisation run a cultural infrastructure? Is the organisation structurally active at international level? These questions should lead to a custom approach toward the organisations, as they sometimes combine various different functions — these combinations can be very specific — yet they make it possible to draft new policy guidelines at the same time. Which functions are needed in the dynamic landscape of the arts? What are the specific needs of the various subdisciplines?

4. An integral approach with an eye for a broader context

The fact that these organisations perform different types of roles only explains part of the diversity in income structures among Arts Decree organisations. Another striking conclusion is that the Arts Decree is not like an island at all. First, we must conclude once again that the field covered by the Arts Decree does not coincide with the landscape of the arts as a whole. The material presented in this document demonstrates that the Arts Decree players maintain very different relationships with the Umwelt of the decree: the market and several other government levels. Some organisations receive their main support through the Arts Decree. Other organisations receive subsidies from several government levels at varying ratios. In some cases, these ratios are quite evenly distributed.
Other organisations are first and foremost the instrument of a local or provincial policy and perform a few functions that are supported under the Arts Decree. These cases – too numerous to be cast aside as an ‘exception’ – demonstrate that the decree stipulation that organisations are supported for their ‘entire envelope of operations’ clearly needs to be recalibrated. This is most definitely one element that must be introduced in the discussion about aligning the Arts Decree with the Local Cultural Policy Decree, and in the debate about the internal state reform.

5. Need for more data and further research

The data presented in this document have fed several current policy-related discussions, including the discussion on the internal state reform (cultural authorities of provinces), on the distribution of tasks among the various government levels, and on the alignment of the Arts Decree with the Local Cultural Policy Decree. Which government levels should include or support which functions in the dynamic landscape of the arts? There is also an ongoing discussion about alternative financing sources and the employment of artists and other workers.

Reliable figures are crucial in this matter. Therefore, we want to point out once again that this initial analysis conducted by kwarts.be is not final, but that it must be seen as a first step in a broader process.

- As more detailed data will be processed by the Agency for Arts and Heritage, additional aspects of the operation of Arts Decree organisations will be examined. The support agencies for the arts are definitely willing to work on this together with the Agency. The new template also allows all activities of the organisations to be counted, as from 2009, which will further refine any reflection about a functional approach toward the landscape of the arts. Research in other areas can be further refined as well.

- We reiterate that the support agencies are already analysing sector-specific elements.

- In the long term, it will be necessary to look at links with other data sources, such as activities listed in the Uit! database (CultuurNet Vlaanderen) or employment data from the NSSO. This way, we will be able to complete our overview of the landscape of the arts – to its full extent, far beyond the Arts Decree.
Performing artist Diederik Peeters pronounced this statement on 4 April 2011, at the presentation of VTI’s field analysis De ins & outs van podiumland. Een veldanalyse.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I was asked to come and make a statement here today. But why in heaven’s name would they ask me? This can only be a trap, I thought. Because I’m not that big-mouthed. But when I set eyes on the publication being presented today, unfortunately the reason became clear very quickly. I am, as it happens, the typical example of the post-Fordist immaterial cultural labourer slash job-hopper, who is portrayed and analysed so thoroughly in this publication. And apparently in this industry there are more and more of these individual ‘performers-makers’, of which I stand here in front of you as a blueprint.

I can assure you it’s quite a fright to suddenly see ‘a typical example’ standing in the mirror in front of you. Especially since I thought I was mostly my own personal and unique self (again in accordance with the profile of this neo-liberal creative mind). Still, I am being staged here (involuntarily and without properly realising it) as the unelected spokesperson for the union of immaterial and individual artistic labourers.

‘But what does it look like then, this typical example standing in that union-mirror in front of you?’

Well, I will tell you. I am mobile, flexible and above all ‘available’ at all times. My first answer to whichever question is that I am ‘available’. (For VTI I was available, et me voilà.) – In short, I perform and I create, now and then I try to make myself useful for colleagues in other positions, and I occasionally add in a quickie as a passer-by for TV or film, a guest lecturer, a workshop teacher or in this case an amateur of statements even. In other words I hop from one collaboration to the next, in various positions, and in the meantime – and not in the least – I have set up my own small-scale hybrid projects as well. I merrily waggle through my European backyard, and – as is proper – I leave a solid carbon footprint in doing so.

Just look at me standing here now, in this ridiculous capacity of ‘individual typical example’ and ‘hybrid grasshopper’. If you really want to know how I am doing I can tell you, but you will have to keep your ears wide open. Don’t worry, as you will see, I am well-behaved and extremely polite by nature. And besides I don’t have anything new to tell you. Everything has already been unveiled in the outline of the landscape that is presented here today.

Anyway. First of all I can tell you that the undersigned typical example has enjoyed himself tremendously over the last few years: I have performed a lot, created a lot, travelled a lot and learned a lot – and it was damn fun.

But in the meantime this freelance ‘shredder’ is getting on in years and after a good fifteen years of young and promising flexibility he has gradually become tired of his own ‘availability’. Perhaps
in the end, that’s something more suitable for fresh young spring chickens. (And anyhow, this job-hopping is nothing more than a way of making a living in a system that demands this kind of flexibility.) But in fact it substantially hinders my view on a perspective for the future. Just try and build up something while skipping back and forth from project to project. Instead of reinventing and proving myself for every project time and again, today I have the desire to sink my teeth into my work. I desire, in other words, a better balance between this damned flexibility which is demanded of me all the time, and a minimum of continuity and stability. That, Ladies and Gentlemen, today is my typical individual artist’s desire. And because opportunism, as you will read in the field analysis, is also one of my typical features, of course my next question is: How to get what I typically want?

1. We’ve known for a long time that one of the generic complaints from those generic individual artists has something to do with the fact that he is surrounded by so many people who support or present him, for which they can fall back on the security blanket of a salary. The artist himself has to keep grass-hopping merrily from one freelance job to the next project and from one ‘small’ daily allowance to the next interim contract. The fact that these daily allowances and interim contracts only pay for half his labour is often considered obvious. And in the meanwhile he can enjoy the disguised patronage played with fervour by the Unemployment Office.

Regardless of the circumstances, the savings or the budget cuts, the artist is always expected to remain ‘available’ and ‘efficient’. It goes without saying that he is expected to come up with creative solutions; to make a solo instead of a duet, to shorten rehearsal periods and to rig the lights or design the set himself if needed. It doesn’t matter, as long as the quality of the result is guaranteed. At the same time, for organisations, those same budget cuts are an equally acceptable and understandable argument to justify a lesser commitment in co-production, presentation or support.

It is necessary, and it is good, that there is money for organisations which support individual artists. However, if ever less money is available for the artists themselves, this means the bill doesn’t add up completely.

2. The fact that everyone around him is receiving better pay may be just a first, perhaps superficial consequence of the fact that everything surrounding the artist has been organised in a sustainable and professional way, while he is left standing in the precarious corner. Given all the workspaces and alternative management offices currently eager to give support, the sustainability of this support appears guaranteed. But what about the artistic practice itself?

Right, let it be clear that these fervent supporters and supporting intermediaries have meanwhile proven their utility with flying colours. Witness therefore precisely this generic generation of thirty-somethings that is waiting in my mirror today with its typical, specific need to stabilise, to professionalise, to optimise and to ‘decentise’ their work. But the implementation of these typical individual artists in all those supporting and intermediary initiatives is still mainly project-based. And just try to stabilise or ‘decentise’ in those circumstances.

Many of these intermediary organisations were invented ten years ago, with the idea of giving a decent boost to the beginning artist, until he or she is able to stand on his or her own legs, gather in a collective, funds his or her own company or (best of all) constructs a structure around his or her own individuality. But that kind of development-model seems of little relevance today. For the government, to start with, because weaning-off big companies from the structural budget is not yet under discussion for the moment. And among the individual artists in my mirror I see few fellow-companions who still cherish the ambition of knocking up their own company surrounding their own person. In our typical artist’s eyes those models look somewhat aged and yellowed, like a slightly dated inheritance. The hybridisation of our practice and work processes, which are more and more based on collaborations, require new and more flexible ways of developing, producing and presenting. Furthermore, in this typical individual artistic labourer, or his colleague entrepreneur, an economic awareness rises which sets the idea of a full structure surrounding one individual in quite an absurd light.

And so the artist goes looking for other ways to gain a long-term vision, huddles together with his colleagues and tries to share overhead expenses with them. Everywhere around me, in Belgium and the whole of Europe, I see individual artists looking for a new model: no collectives, no companies, but communities of artists. Groups of individual artists whose individual works preferably show affinities. Clusters of artists which might collaborate now and then, but mostly comment on each other’s work, mutually discuss their practices and throw concerns and insights about the field into each other’s faces.

At the present the support of individual artists is being offered (and subsidised) on a project-to-project basis, without a long-term perspective that is tuned to current practices. Policy makers, and the (intermediary) field as well, are lagging behind.

3. Yet another consequence of this distorted balance between support and practice gets on my typical artist’s nerves even more. And I’m not even talking about the much-discussed 99 percent of the cultural budget which goes to art institutions, and the one percent which remains for individual artists.

No, much worse than those percentages is the fact that as an individual artist I am so damned dependent. Or at least, that I take up this dependant position all the time. My role in the performing arts industry is limited to that of supplier of services and products, and suppliers need customers. My own ideas on that industry and on the context in which these products are being conceived and consumed fall outside the authority of my supplier’s role, and are therefore of little significance. Because after all, who has the money wears the pants, and initiates and determines what happens. And who doesn’t have money in his pockets nowadays, is forced to act or to behave as merchandise.

And I confess: me too, as a motivated and self-made travelling salesman, I try to sell my handbags to the first programmer who comes along. Time and again I find myself back in that needy, begging and dependant position, even towards the people and structures who support me. Because that support is, as I’ve already said, project-based and without long-term guarantees. Nota bene pressurised by the great need of moving up (ah, those young spring chickens!), naturally it is up to the organisations to choose which artists they will work with, and not the other way round. True ‘mutual and joint consultation’ between artist and organisation is of course out of the question within this balance of power.

So you’d better watch your step, not tread on anyone’s toes and be damn careful! But how to be innovative in this position? I mean, just try and play the pain in the neck, let alone the fool, in that position. You might be kicked out on the street. In this manure, politeness and carefulness grow into blown-up caricatures of themselves. And again I confess: I am gradually becoming tame and completely lax by my own polite carefulness. And even worse, it starts to scare and frighten me!

And so I try out my most ferocious mug, and again face the frightened fool standing in front of me. With my finger raised I fling the following towards him: ‘Stop playing the damned travelling door-to-door salesman so arduously! Stop that endless fishing for the grace and approval of all those artistic directors and curators! Rectify that distorted balance between artists and their support yourself! Don’t grumpily wallow in that dependant beggar’s role, and take back the helm and
the initiative! Lazy bones! Miserable slacker! Wring organisations into an affiliation with yourself, that is different from the one in which you’re just a product-provider! Lay claim to your own old-fashioned autonomy, damnit! And how? Get organised! Stop dutifully conforming to the support that’s been invented and provided for you, and knock up your own ‘intermediary’ organisation, instead of submissively staying dependant on the existing ones!

4. A remark which thoroughly gets on my typical nerves is that individual artists are deemed too individualistic or too chaotic to organise themselves. Coming from a programmer or a producer, of course this remark sounds to my typical immaterial labourer’s ears as condescending paternalism. Because the real cause of this difficulty of organizing is exactly that same distorted balance between artist and structure. Firstly I can tell you it requires some organisational talent to organise all that fragmented job-hopping. And secondly it is quite obvious that organisations are better at organizing than individual artists – that is the reason of existence after all, of those organisations, and that’s what their employees are paid for. Organisations get organised, they consult in consulting organs and they network in networks. And of course they only do it for the well-being of the artist, all this organizing. But he wants to be involved in it personally – at least as a co-initiator for instance.

Which fool is fool enough to organise individual and individualistic artists? That could only be the artist himself. So again I put on my ferocious mug and call out to myself: ‘Get organised, Peeters! Join forces with like- or unlike-minded colleagues, share the costs of administrative or production collaborators and free yourself from that wretched beggar’s role! And if no organisational format can be found in the Flemish Arts Decree that responds to your needs or desires, then just invent the sort of structure you need yourself, damnit. Create clubs, huddle together and reclaim the role of initiating engine of the field!’

5. Right. By now my time is up. The fact that I’m standing here – am allowed to stand here – might be a sign of a change of mentality in the surroundings of that artist, who is as disorganised as he is individual; he is being involved in the debate and that means he is starting to be dragged out of that tight straitjacket of mere product-provider.

Before I forget: if I understand correctly, the fact that the one percent needs to become ten again, is clear to everyone and has actually been taken care of already. Please guarantee as well that this won’t be skimped on during the upcoming round of economy measures, if not we’ll be left and the initiative! Lazy bones! Miserable slacker! Wring organisations into an affiliation with yourself, that is different from the one in which you’re just a product-provider! Lay claim to your own old-fashioned autonomy, damnit! And how? Get organised! Stop dutifully conforming to the support that’s been invented and provided for you, and knock up your own ‘intermediary’ organisation, instead of submissively staying dependant on the existing ones!

Increased dynamism for the cultural sector
Some ideas on networking and international coproduction

Guy Gypens

The numbers in this study illustrate an increasing number of co-productions and growing (international) dependence on the part of organisations. This transnational networking provides broad support for the Flemish performing arts within Europe and has significantly benefited the sector both quantitatively and qualitatively. But questions are also being raised. Networking leads to vulnerability; it appears that it is becoming ever more difficult to initiate projects without an increasing number of partners, final responsibility is more difficult to pin down, and there is a risk of fragmentation.

Guy Gypens, artistic director at the Kaaitheater, offered critical comments concerning the concept ‘networking’ at the panel discussion of 4 April. He developed these further in an article for VTI’s magazine Courant.

Network society

‘Network society’ is a buzzword, but the concept is not new: society has always consisted of networks. Traditional, religiously and politically compartmentalised society was already networked, albeit in a different way. The connections tended to be vertical and ideologically coloured. There was talk of an incremental, ascending movement, from the base of society, via civil society, to the political policy level. In a deregulated society devoid of traditional religious and socio-political barriers, these hierarchical relationships gave way to a horizontal side by side set up. Since then, the emphasis lies more on horizontal networks. Compartmentalised networks have not completely disappeared, but due to their relatively narrow focus, they are finding it increasingly difficult to grasp the complexity of society. In a globalised, increasingly mobile world, horizontal networks – with the actors sometimes located far from one another – are very attractive. There is, however, another side to the coin: the gap between civil society and policy – or between the citizen and politics – has widened. The “compartment” or the “pillar” as locus of democratic decision-making has not [yet] been replaced by an efficient horizontal alternative.

In the cultural sector, this depolarisation has resulted in considerable depoliticisation: think of the composition of assessment committees and boards of directors. This was certainly a positive evolution, but it also weakened the bond between ‘the sector’ and ‘politics’. When serious issues emerge, such as those today in the Netherlands for example, the weakness of the link with politics becomes crystal clear.

Translation: Bart Capelle, thanks to Sarma vzw
The cultural sector stands with one foot in the remnants of traditional pillarised society and the other in a system of horizontal networks. And while society’s vitality today comes from these horizontal networks, it remains a precarious situation. In Brussels, for example, at the civil level, there is a strong horizontal network dynamic present, which among other things is attempting to transcend the communal divide. Frustrations increase with the day, however, since an alliance with policymaking has failed until now. One continually bumps up against the remnants of the traditional ‘regime’.

Horizontally networked society is gradually succeeding in playing an activating role in essential matters, but its institutional translation continues to remain limited. Energising the public, by means for example of symbolic statements such as Van Reybrouck’s G1000, is doable and important. Institutionallising such initiatives, however, is much more difficult.

The difficulty in obtaining a hearing among the traditional upper political echelons not only has to do with a lack of institutional clout on the part of the horizontal networks, but also with ‘politics’ itself. Politicians and political parties appear increasingly to be ridding themselves of ‘the political’, and limiting themselves to ‘good governance’. What exactly it is that must be governed, appears to be less important. Political in essence concerns ‘disputability’. Good governance as principle cannot be disputed.

Hence, you could say that you find yourself on the underside of a decompartmentalised, fragmented civil society that is attempting via horizontal networks to reorganise itself, but that as yet has demonstrated little clout. At the top, you see a political decision-making structure in which the dialogical increasingly disappears and in which one is satisfied with managing that which other – often global-economic – forces have initiated. Some already speak in this regard of a post-democratic situation.

This absence of a political-democratic arena is one of the greatest problems facing the cultural sector today. Much is said about the tense relationship between art and politics, with the political usually being viewed as a threat to artistic freedom. It is more interesting to view this the other way around. In a society in which the conditions of possibility for the political, that which can be disputed – the dialogical – is present, the conditions of possibility for art are also present. Artistic practice is de facto part of ‘the political domain’: it is by nature dialogical and necessitates public debate. Thus it should come as no surprise that a number of art organisations today are taking the initiative themselves to place more emphasis on becoming a place for public-political dialogue. As part of an ‘unsafe’ civil society looking for answers, the cultural sector must resolutely play this role.

An art market full of specialisations

The art market as it has developed in the last decades is full of networks: local and especially international. Despite the relative success of these networks, however, it is important to also point out a number of their problems. How resistant and sustainable are these networks, and how is the place of the artist within them evolving? If we focus on the performing arts, then the growing level of functional specialisation and outsourcing is striking: producing companies, receptive venues, workplaces for research, alternative management bureaus, booking agencies, etcetera. Moreover, specialisation and outsourcing together depend on a second dynamism: functions tend not only to become independent, but also to become distinct categories. One no longer thinks according to a functional, connectional logic: functions are increasingly approached as autonomous entities.

This for example also extends to the Art Decree. While the desire is to remove the partitions between the disciplines, the number of categories, all of which result from a functional split, is on the rise. The individualisation and freelancing of the performing arts is the ultimate outcome of this. In order to create, artists themselves must link the different functions. Theatre or dance makers must increasingly profile themselves as networkers and entrepreneurs in a market of specialised services. The potency of the network constructions that artists form around their work or that are formed around it, is not always equally great. Other networks in the continuously expanding performing arts market also do not always excel with respect to continuity and depth. Bringing together small, vulnerable actors does not automatically make for a stronger network.

How can we strengthen the performing arts networks?

1. **Associate:** bring functions and specialisations back together structurally

Bringing functions back together in an ad hoc way in a succession of separate projects is not enough. There is a need for more structural links. The immense challenge consists in creating more ‘backbone’, without sacrificing flexibility. Of course, the intent is not to throw everything together again into cumbersome institutes. Networks, however, need to be aware that they must be able to absorb the blows when something goes artistically wrong, and that they, as fitting a genuine institute, are able to protect the artist. Networks must become ‘more sustainable’ by combining functions intelligently and with continuity.

2. **Diversify:** the more diverse a network, the stronger it is

The art market, functioning ever more abstractly, results in a certain level of commodification of the work of art: art as merchandise without soul in a tangle of market networks. The ‘soullessness’ of some networks often makes for an unproductive environment for artists. One of the ways to combat this commodification is the addition of different types of partners to the networks: partners that provide for a broader and substantial connectedness to the societal context.

In this sense, we need to conclude more partnerships with other social sectors: science, education, development cooperation, environment, etcetera. Networks that open themselves up to partners from other sectors in the long-term are often the most enriching. An example is Imagine2020, a network examining the role of art within the ongoing socio-ecological crisis, to which the Kaaitheater is affiliated. Each organisation within it is linked to an academic partner and to multiple partners from the environmental sector. This certainly contains a risk with respect artistic content, but it especially provides for an innovative dynamism.

Also within our own cultural sector, we as ‘art department’ must be more open to collaboration with subsectors such as the educational sector, the heritage sector, the socio-cultural sector… Associations too often take place based on a “birds of a feather stick together” logic. It appears that partnerships across sector boundaries are avoided out of fear for a loss of autonomy. This perhaps is a remnant of traditional compartmentalised thinking. Within the compartmentalised groupings, the intersectoral link was often a straitjacket from which the arts especially wanted to free themselves. This anxiety, however, needs to be overcome. One of the laws of networks is that quality goes hand in hand with diversity and openness.

Searching for links with other sectors could be a strategy in the discussion on ‘support’ for the arts. The arts sector rightly freed itself from the compartmentalised network system, but it is high time
for the creation of an opposite movement. However, how can one bring verticality back to society, without relying on the traditional compartmentalised model? How does one create community that is compatible with an ascending dynamism? There are no ready-made answers to these questions. The first step to the answer, however, is reconnecting sectors and seeing what happens.

3. Localises: avoid the artificial international level

Our networks are becoming ever more international. Actors with similar experiences in different continents can easily find one another. The power of this global horizonality is enormous, but this type of network also often has the tendency to separate itself from societal reality. The financial crisis has shown us what can happen in such situations. The financial web spun across the globe had lost all transparent connectedness with economic reality, and no one knew how to repair the system when things went really wrong. Each network, however global, needs local anchoring, to local references. Each network actor has a responsibility here.

4. Concretise: provide true content to networks

Many network connections in the performing arts principally concern financial transactions, coordinating material services or boosting sales. The primary aim of these networks is to combine forces for a stronger market presence. Hence, the shelf life of the network directly depends on success in the market. If it does not deliver a result, it is quickly disbanded. To make networks more sustainable, they need to be charged with meaning and content. With the traditional, compartmentalised networks, this took place ideologically. Today it could take place around specific themes. The above-mentioned Imagine2020 network is a continuation of the earlier Thin Ice network. While there was very little money for Thin Ice, the partners chose to pursue it anyway based on their substantive concern. But also the substance of mere co-production networks can be enhanced when the artistic product itself assumes a more central place.

How can policy contribute to this?

The government must first and foremost understand that networking is not only for alternative funding and positioning in the marketplace. It must recognise networking as a structuring power that requires guidance. This guidance will largely be done by the arts sector itself, but the government can, if it wishes, assume a place in the cockpit. They can support networks with funding and positioning in the marketplace. It must recognise networking as a structuring power that requires guidance. This guidance will largely be done by the arts sector itself, but the government can, if it wishes, assume a place in the cockpit. They can support networks with funding and positioning in the marketplace.

Imagination, experience and meaning as quality of life

The performing arts and sustainable development in Flanders

Jeroen Peeters

For a number of years now, ecology and sustainable development have been regularly appearing as issues in the Flemish performing arts. Several initiatives around eco-efficiency and transition management in production and policy have seen the light of day at houses and companies as well as at the Flemish Institute for the Performing Arts (VTi) and in the government. The substantive elements of the social-ecological crisis also are regularly the subject of attention. These initiatives are often fragmented and the ideological differences great, making it difficult to bring things together, to move them via political analysis to a systemic level, and to develop a crossdepartmental policy framework. One thing, however, stands out: the relative absence from the debate of artists and artistic leaders. With slogans such as ‘artistic autonomy’ as talisman, makers appear to be ignoring the social-ecological crisis, and managers treat it simply as a case of efficient building management. Ecology is not considered a theme and field of research worthy of attention on its own, but rather is reduced to a necessary evil or altruistic engagement. The flood of publications, research and thinking about the transition to a sustainable society appears to be lost on the arts sector. How can artists be fruitfully involved in the process of transitioning to a sustainable society?

This text will treat a number of recent initiatives around sustainable development in the Flemish performing arts, with a focus on production, policy and imagination as point of departure. Starting from that which is already taking place, I sketch a broader theoretical framework and attempt to point out a number of paradoxes, questions and alternative lines of thinking, in particular concerning the challenges for artists. In addition to external pressure (climate change) and internal contradictions, system transition is also positively driven from below by concrete alternatives developed in niches. A number of practical examples illustrate the exploration of alternatives within the performing arts.

1. This text was written at the request of VTi as part of its four-yearly field analysis presented on 4 April 2011. See Joris Janssens (ed.), De ins & outs van podiumland. Een veldanalyse, Brussels, 2011 (http://www.vti.be/sites/default/files/veldanalyse_web.pdf). With a view toward the English translation, many supplementary references to Dutch-speaking literature were removed. Translated into English by Dan Frett, with the financial support of Kaaitheater and Imagine 2020.
Sustainable development as cultural problem

‘We will try to do something. We will give it a try.’ With these words, choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker ended her State of the Union address at Het Theaterfestival in the summer of 2003. In addition to merits, she also spoke of things in the performing arts and in the world that she doubted, or was uneasy or angry about. One of these was a concern about climate change and the corresponding social-ecological crisis, since ‘if you destroy the environment, you also destroy yourself.’ An idea she placed alongside the relative vulnerability of culture and more specifically the performing arts in our neo-liberal society: ‘It has to do with survival as person. Physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, spiritually. And if these things disappear, I truly believe then we will lose something essential from our humanity.’ Sustainability concerns quality of life and coexistence, with both ecology and culture playing a crucial role.

Today, eight years down the road, the urgency of the climate-change and social-ecological crisis plays a more prominent role in societal debate, and the Flemish performing arts are also reluctantly following. At Het Theaterfestival 2010, it was up to theatre maker Benjamin Verdonck to review the current state of affairs, and he did not hide his concern, nor his confusion about what to do as artist and as person. The biophysical carrying capacity of the earth’s ecosystem is limited; it is impossible to extend our Western welfare model based on economic growth to all of the world’s population, and thus it is fundamentally unjust. Verdonck invited the performing arts sector to participate actively in the transition to a just and sustainable society. A number of months later, this invitation was made concrete in a ‘charter’. If the entire performing arts sector for a half season long would use public transport, not fly, no longer eat meat and fish, reduce printed advertising, recycle decor, etc. – what would the impact be? This reading of the charter is a bit superficial, since Verdonck pokes fun at the approach of transition management, which believes that all of this can be solved purely via technical innovation and individual changes in behaviour. He also suggests what is being overlooked in this approach: (ecological) citizenship, public debate and a political struggle concerning concepts and practices, problems and solutions. And also room for imagination, because the collective action after all concerns a work of art: ‘what an epiphany of possibilities / support and symbolic capital / what a cathedral of public debate and a political struggle concerning concepts and practices, problems and solutions. And also room for imagination, because the collective action after all concerns a work of art: ‘what an epiphany of possibilities / support and symbolic capital / what a cathedral of tangoes, dissonances and dialectic / this would generate / for our future art.’

The ‘urgency’ of the social-ecological crisis can sometimes lead to the expectation here and now that steps must be taken that can efficiently lead to low-carbon methods of production and reducing the ecological footprint. This approach is problematic for a number of reasons. It embraces an economic and technologically efficient way of thinking to arrive at solutions, without thoroughly analysing or calling into question the current system. Moreover, sustainable development (with its ecological and social components) is a political concept, an idea around which a continuous ideological struggle is fought, just as the form and direction of the transition to a sustainable society are not fixed and not always transparent. Transition demands long-term thinking and a systemic perspective, with a necessary cultural component: initiating a breakthrough and giving new interpretations to the ‘good life’ is a cultural problem. Fundamentally rethinking the present social system demands not only instrumental solutions and a basis for support, but also historic consciousness, imagination and a sense of experiment, so that new meanings can arise.

Art can have and thus indeed has a role to play in this transition to sustainability: by formulating a critical and contrary analysis of the present system, by offering perspectives for learning to deal with the confusion and uncertainty, by imagining alternative views of humanity and the world. Nevertheless, discussions concerning the performing arts and ecology continually face huge and difficult questions. How to create art politically, rather than trying to reduce art to the spreading of clear political messages? How can art interrupt the current logic of production via an alternative approach to time and space? How can artistic autonomy be linked to new, more eco-efficient ways of producing? How is artist expression related to citizenship? How can art, in ways of its own, play a role in the transition to a sustainable society?

Production beyond eco-efficiency

In the wake of a first climate conference in November 2008, VTi initiated the EcoPodia project, in which a diverse group of people (artists, presenters, technicians, communication and production professionals) from the performing arts participated during the course of 2009 in order to exchange experiences and knowledge concerning ecological management and to conduct a broader discussion around this theme. In the area of behavioural change and reducing consumption, of producing differently and more consciously, in the end, the performing arts do not differ so much from other sectors. A number of organisations had an environmental behaviour scan performed, organised eco teams within their activities, or focused on care for the environment in another way. The EcoPodia project resulted concretely in a checklist that served as guideline for organisations wishing to actively work on reducing the footprint of production and programme. In this, the entire creative process was examined, from preproduction to premiere, tour and postproduction. Topics treated included: building management, energy consumption in rehearsal areas and theatre, transport, printed material and promotional material, catering and waste

2. Benjamin Verdonck, ‘Handvest voor een actieve medewerking van de podiumkunsten aan een transitie naar een duurzame toekomst’, http://www.benjamin-verdonck.be. Verdonck presented the charter at the Royal Flemish Theatre in Brussels on 13 Dec. 2010. The work of art begins on 1 September 2012 at the start of the new theatre season and ends on 7 February 2013, 160 days later, half way through the same season.
3. The concept of sustainable development (SD) made its major breakthrough with the Brundtland UN report of 1987, in which the following definition is given: ‘Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.’ Concerning the history and diverse interpretations of the idea of SD, see Peter Tom Jones and Roger Jacobs, Terra Incognita. Globalisering, ecologie en rechvaardige duurzaamheid, Ghent, 2006, pp. 143-173. Note that Jones and Jacobs systematically speak of ‘just sustainability’ (in the meantime also taken over in the Flemish cultural sector), and thus impart a specifically ethical understanding of the idea of SD. Jef Peeters, on the other hand, argues for retaining the term SD precisely in order to preserve the emphasis on openness and the political struggle of ideas, thereby also retaining the space for the cultural aspects of SD. See Jef Peeters, ‘Tussen droog en dood’: at Idem, Een veelzijdige samenleving. Sociaal werk en duurzame ontwikkeling, Antwerp, 2010, pp. 33-43.
4. Examples include Kunstencentrum Vooruit, Bijl de Vrieze Gasten, CC De Muze, Muziekclub 4AD, STUK Kunstencentrum, Ancienne Belgique, Franfabriek Kunstenwerkplaats, Rosas, Ensemble Iaporelio, KVS, Tg Stan, Comp. Marius, Ultima Vez, Antwerpen Oopen, Roma, Rutaplan, Wulpurgis, HETPALEIS, Trix Muziekcentrum, Kaaitheater, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Toneelhuis, deSingel, JABULEUS, BUDA kunstencentrum, NTGent.

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treatment, raising audience awareness. Also important are the search for and debate around more sustainable options: ‘The goal is a continuous conversation concerning what is possible and attainable, with respect for the artistic choices and the financial possibilities.’ Nevertheless, the EcoPodia project and the checklist reveal a tendency to approach sustainable development as a technical, accountancy and bureaucratic issue – and artists and artistic directors quickly withdrew their commitment to the workgroup.

In the meantime, VTi and Ecolife were awarded a subsidy from the Flemish government’s Department of Nature and Environmental Education for the project ‘Jonge Sla’, that runs from September 2010 until September 2012 with several partners, including the centre for visual arts and audiovisual media BAM, Flanders Music Centre, the Social Fund for the Performing Arts and STEPP, the professional association of scenographers and theatre technicians. In addition to documenting best practices, and developing and distributing instruments and information tailored to the arts sector, the project in the first place envisions their active implementation within artistic production processes, in order to make these more environmentally friendly. Thus, a major challenge consists of raising awareness among all involved in a creative process: artistic, technical as well as logistical.

Nevertheless, the EcoPodia project also showed that matters that are allocated to the field of eco-management are interwoven with the artistic creative process, with its practices and content. Rather than seeing in this a restriction of and threat to artistic autonomy, it comes down to acknowledging this interrelation and accepting it as a challenge. I provide two examples that point out diverse lines of thinking.

### Lighting design

Set construction, stage technique and theatre lighting form a bridge between eco-management and creation, precisely because their practice brings together technical and artistic matters. London’s Arcola Theatre intends to become the first CO₂-neutral theatre in the world, and thus highlight the ambition of the city’s Green Theatre Plan to reduce CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2025. A hydrogen fuel cell generates the electricity for the LED lighting in the bar and foyer, as well as in their Studio One theatre. Executive director Ben Todd, who has visited Belgium several times to explain his house’s eco-policy, points out that it intends to make no artistic compromises by presenting ‘eco plays’, but rather is focusing on the production context and energy management. The use of the hydrogen fuel cell and LED lighting by artists who visit Studio One is optional, and in this sense provides room for experimentation. The lighting industry delivers new lamp models to try out, while performing artists, lighting designers and theatre technicians can experience how such a context affects their familiar way of working. And also hopefully discover new artistic possibilities inherent in the new energy-efficient technologies and media.

The latter provides a perspective that goes beyond technical solutions that simply intend to preserve the present way of working, which demands a thoroughgoing revision of the systemic

8. On the relationship between travel, residencies and a new type of artist that feels at home in the neo-liberal age, see the publication ‘Portrait of the Artist as a Resident’, compiled by philosopher Dieter Lesage in December 2006 in the context of the Sarma Project B-Chronicles, on the impact of increasing mobility and transnationalism in the life and work of the dance community [http://www.b-chronicles.be/index.php?type=publication_dieter&lng=restrictive].

9. Peter Sloterdijk, Euatroïsme. Over de kritiek van de politieke kinetiek, Amsterdam, 1991, p. 31

10. See ibid. pp. 21-70.

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5. There are a number of interesting initiatives in Flanders around set construction. Since 2005, Rotor has been focusing on the reuse of industrial materials, also in an artistic context [http://rotorb.org]. The non-profit association Brugge Plus is presently working on a platform for reusing exhibition material, in collaboration with the Bruges museums.


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unbridled kinetic subjectivity. According to Lepecki, this image loses its innocence when dancers deliberately stand still or stumble, cause the modern system to wobble, and thus draw attention to the conditions of possibility and side effects of a privileged, uninhibited room to move. By asking with which energy sources contemporary dance – as a specific place of imagination linked with mobility – literally and figuratively nourishes itself, this argumentative rant also points to ecological concerns, social justice issues and a North-South perspective. How can global and ecological citizenship be reconciled?

Travelling less, and more sustainably, as well as conducting an ongoing discussion of the issue and a weighing of the pros and cons, must of course become a part of the practice of the performing arts – led by substantive questions. Symbolic affairs do indeed matter, since it is precisely in this area that the arts can contribute to systemic change, from below. A return to the local thus does not mean ceasing to travel, but rather demands a different approach to space and time; it entails a reflection on embeddedness, participation and lived experience. Efficiency thinking and an excess of information and events have made us insensitive to the place, that is to spaces loaded with narrativity and relationships, for a world inhabited by people and things. While artists sometimes create work on site, our relation to the theatre as a black box, generic production facilities, our travel behaviour and all the international meetings where the concern is ‘networking for networking’s sake’ have become goals in themselves, and today are prototypical examples of non-places. Are these productions that go on tour, or do they also provide artists, thus people, with sufficient possibilities to expose themselves to new contexts and interact with them? Do these artists simply move in an abstract space from A to B in an aircraft, or do they travel by train or freight bicycle from one place to another, borne by the landscape? The demand for the local can also serve as a guide to reflecting on international residence facilities. Why would one travel far, to then retreat to a white plastered studio and an apartment with Ikea furniture, generic conditions that are also available close to home? When can travel and accommodation provide a concrete context with which artists can enter into a meaningful relationship – for themselves, their work and others?

Theatre maker Dimitri Leue is not only involved thematically with ecology, he also wishes to reflect on the form of energy use in the theatre – with Don Kyoto [Against the lamp / Running into trouble] [2009] toured using self-grown rapeseed oil – as basis for a dialogue with theatre houses and audience. Jan Goossens, director of the Royal Flemish Theatre in Brussels, connects his plea for a revaluation of the local with the omnipresent international activity of theatre and dance today, which requires longer stays on location in order to arrive at a more in-depth and more sustainable dialogue with local artists and audiences, as well as to achieve long-term collaboration with privileged partners. ‘Let us do more with less for more diverse audiences. Less new productions, less travel, to fewer different locations, but with the ambition to make a true and sustainable difference with every production in every specific context.’

The traditional model of ensemble theatre – today chiefly known in the German municipal theatres and in traditional ballet companies – might offer a point of reference to link relocalisation with a regularly recurring request to keep productions in the repertoire longer. Local ensembles work with new ideas or a contemporary repertoire via guest directors. In order to update this model artistically and in terms of sustainability, we must again see traditional ensembles as places for experimentation. And conversely, independent artists must be prepared to also deploy the new collaboration models and artistic strategies that they develop in such a traditional context, an awareness raising exercise that also needs to take root in art education programmes. An example of this way of working is the choreographer Jérôme Bel to no longer travel the world with a cost of twenty for his successful production The show must go on (2001), but to stage the piece each time using local ensembles or in training contexts. The travel burden is much smaller, the interchange with local artistic communities and audiences greater.

Cultural policy in the transition to sustainability

Based on the convergence of the domains of environment, nature and culture in her portfolio, Flemish Minister Joke Schauvliege formulated a strategic objective around ‘initiating eco-culture’ in her policy document Cultuur 2009-2014. With a view toward the June 2010 Culture Forum in which the cultural sector and government exchanged ideas on policy issues, a group of people from the wider cultural sector developed a vision text in the Eco-Culture Atelier. Here the idea of ‘eco-culture’ is broadened based on current research on sustainable development and linked to the needs and possibilities of the broader cultural sector, and it is linked to a series of concrete policy proposals (‘breakthroughs’). At the Culture Forum, this vision text was somewhat awkwardly received, not at least by the minister herself, who reduced its complexity to the goal to effectively reduce the sector’s ecological footprint by 2020. While the interpretation given to ‘eco-culture’ may be far removed from the vague appeal for more landscape art in her policy document, in focusing only on technical solutions with an effect in the short term, Schauvliege paid little regard to the vision text of the Atelier. In the meantime, however, the text has been discussed in the Flemish Parliament and extensively taken on board in the Flemish government’s updated Flemish Strategy for Sustainable Development [2010].

It is worthwhile taking a thorough look at the vision text. Unlike the EcoPodia project, the working group consisted of people from the broader cultural sector (arts, patrimony, local cultural policy, 11. See André Lepecki, Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement, London/New York, 2006, pp. 1-16, 87-105. Note that Lepecki treats the question of the kinetic modern subject only at the level of representation and imagination, not at the level of production conditions, nor does he directly address the ecology issue. Asked how choreographers who travel the world in order to stand still on a stage can deal with the paradox that their critical gestures on stage are not really in keeping with their own ecological footprint, Lepecki told me in a public discussion that artists must continue to travel, and that self-reproach is not a productive strategy. ‘Compared to the war industry, the footprint of the art world is negligible.’ [In TransBibliothèque, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 15 June 2008].

12. At the end of his book on globalisation Het Kristalpalais (Amsterdam, 2006, pp. 277-279), Peter Sloterdijk makes a brief plea for relocalisation and dwelling: ‘The extensiveness of embedding situations, of course, is the natural ally of the sustainable.’


15. See http://www.cijm.vlaanderen.be/cultuur/culturforum/downloads/eco-culture.pdf. The text is a collective project of the following people from the broader cultural sector: Patrick Auwerx, Marc Soenens, Fria De Greef, Vicky Demeyer, Joke Fluer, Guy Gypsens, Jos Pauwels, Eva Peeters, Jeroen Peeters, Johan Penson, Tineke Van Engeland, Jef Van Eyck, Piet Van Loocke, Tony Van Nuffelen, Dirk Verheist, Kristien Vermeersch, Steven Warmanbol, Nikkel Wellens and Jan Wyckaert. They participated in their own name in the Atelier, although the organisations for which they work are known for their ecological initiatives.
amateur arts and sociocultural work for adults), often from organisations concerned with ecologi-
cal matters. This allowed the discussion to be opened up and more widely embedded, but also
made it clear how few transverse projects, exchange and policy frameworks there are at present
that link the sub-sectors to each other and to other sectors (education, tourism, industry, economy …) – condition of possibility for giving concrete form to a systemic vision.

An important point of departure is the idea of ‘eco-culture’ into a plea for a ‘transi-
tion to just sustainability’, which links the recognition of ecological limits with social justice in a
worldwide perspective. In our living environment, the natural environment and the social-societal
fabric are inextricably linked to each other – it is historically contingent and thus also includes a
pronounced cultural component. What’s more, our actions here and now have consequences
for the future and elsewhere in the world, nearby as well remote. The transition to a sustainable
society demands the development of ‘ecological citizenship’, which means ‘active citizenship
for the future and elsewhere in the world, nearby as well remote. The transition to a sustainable
development: in-house, in dialogue with partners and the public. And over
an ongoing public debate concerning where we are today and where we wish to be tomorrow.
are needed. The broader cultural sector can use its mobilising potential to involve many people in
democratic forms of discussion and decision procedures.

This vision of sustainable development may appear very broad; it offers a necessary counterweight
to the current trend of reducing the social-ecological crisis to a natural issue (without taking into
classification social, political and cultural aspects), something that can be solved purely through
 technological innovation (without having to call into question the existing system) and individual
changes in behaviour (without a societal debate on the systemic preconditions). And the text is
ambitious to be sure, but at the same time also modest: while the cultural sector often prides itself in
playing a pioneering role in society, it tends to lag behind in the area of sustainable development.

Public realm, learning processes and imagination

The role that culture and the broader cultural sector can play in the transition to sustainability
is described using three linked spaces. Kaaitheater director Guy Gypens reiterates the plea for
plural citizenship and the three spaces in a discussion on cultural policy: ‘Art has extracted for
itself an interesting island, but in my view, that is just one of its three spaces. In addition to this
function, there is also a political-public space and a ‘learning space’. Each space fulfills a function: art is investigative, antagonistic (it generates public debate) and emancipatory.
Our cultural policy tends to emphasise one or two of these functions, but never all three. And
when speaking of the value of culture in society, it is essential to have a foot in each of these three
spaces. Certainly in a metropolitan context, where the crisis of a civil society devoid of traditional
religious and socio-political barriers is felt the strongest."

To arrive at a dialogical democracy focused on transition, in the first place new ‘public spaces’
are needed. The broader cultural sector can use its mobilising potential to involve many people in
an ongoing public debate concerning where we are today and where we wish to be tomorrow.
This begins with continuous discussion, deliberation and reflection on one’s own practice with
respect to sustainable development: in-house, in dialogue with partners and the public. And over
time, hopefully also within a consultative body that stimulates collaboration between the various
sub-sectors, as well as via structural links with other sectors.

Second, there is the ‘learning and experience space’, in which knowledge of the social-ecological
is shared, a space that is not limited to biophysical knowledge, but also includes ‘underly-
ing knowledge of the basic causes (where our system fails), of possible strategies for change, and
of possible alternatives (able/daring to think of a different world).’ The cultural sector can contrib-
ute to the creation of shared learning and experience spaces, and the development of concrete
perspectives for action via its experience with processes of social and collective learning. Note
that such techniques are fully utilised in sociocultural educational work, community development
and social-artistic work. Conversely, the attention in this for investigation and experiment, doubt
and vulnerability, confrontation with others and the world, also connects closely with themes and
practices that are highly valued in the performing arts. The investigation of similarities and differ-
ences here could result in an interesting practical interchange.

‘Room for imagination’ is the third component, one in which the arts sector can identify with most
strongly in its restricted sense. Without imagination, inspiration and creativity, we are unable to
create future visions for a new society. ‘From which view of the world, humanity and life do we
wish to develop a resilient society?’ Imagination, via a shared horizon, gives meaning to human
activities, and allows trying out new ideas, lifestyles and perspectives. To fully fulfill this laboratory
function and ‘to experiment with the meanings, images and stories from which a society lives,
relatively independent from the prevailing values and norms’, autonomous art also has a role to
play, in its themes as well as in its working methods. As opposed to diverse forms of efficiency
thinking (economic, technological) and the ‘urgency’ of the crisis, art from its autonomous zone
can realise a break in our instrumental approach to time and space. Is it not the disruption, the
delay and the detour that create a context in which time and space can arise for unexpected
meanings, experiences and new qualities that lead us away from the familiar production mecha-
nisms and the resulting compulsion to perform and consume?

Imagination, art and paradigm shift

Via projects such as Kaaitheater’s Burning Ice festivals, some debate is gradually emerging
on how artists can meaningfully relate in their themes and practices to climate change and the
social-ecological crisis. The spectrum of positions and visions is broad, with always the same two
extremes being cited with a view toward scepticism, rejection or postponement. Must we then
not create unambiguous, message-based art? And: if we are to produce differently and less, can
we not then just stop altogether? However, does not an entire field lie open between these two
extremes? And yes, what is the current status of this much vaunted ‘artistic freedom’ and what is
its relationship to production processes?

For that matter, does something like specific ecological themes exist in the arts today? As eminent
example of the interrelation between nature and culture, the landscape allows itself to be associated
with ecology, but also with a long tradition in the arts that documents and gives form to its histori-
cal density. Due to its familiarity within both an ecological and an artistic discourse, the landscape
theme invites a manifold gaze that results in complexity. With a bit of imagination, this strategy can
be extended to cover numerous themes, again highlighting the common ground between art and
sustainable development. A quick look at programmes immediately yields a handful of themes: the
landscape and biodiversity, food and city gardens, future scenarios, an ecological economy, glo-
balisation and citizenship, mobility and localisation, waste, recycling and art as a form of symbolic
waste, sustainable building and the reuse of industrial materials, noise abatement and sound art, etc.

16 Interview with Guy Gypens and Sven Gatz (VLD), ‘Cultuur en politiek één strijd?’, Rekto:verso:, 45, Jan.-Feb.
A too narrow focus on themes and contents, however, can overshadow the quest for a paradigm shift in our view of man and world, and the role that art and imagination can play in this. Hence, it is important to further expand the frame at the outset. The transition to sustainability demands a critical analysis of the present system, the creation of visions and horizons that inspire a breakthrough, an alternative idea of man and world view, small-scale production mechanisms that make possible narrativity and embeddedness – these are also themes and practices alive in the performing arts.

Autonomy in connectedness

In Een veerkrachtige samenleving [A resilient society], environmental philosopher Jef Peeters describes some aspects of an ecological worldview and a relational idea of man. The understanding that the biophysical carrying capacity of the earth is finite, puts pressure on the modern, detached approach to time and space: human life after all is embedded in ecosystems, thus also in concrete places and histories – as indicated above in the considerations on relocalisation. Consequently, an ecological worldview is in principle plural: one earth, many worlds. This narrativity is related to a complex, diverse and layered system in which life appears as intrinsically relational, which de facto implies a ‘shared destiny’: ‘life is (mutually) dependent on other life, and finally on the earth and the sun.’ 17 The idea of man associated with this is also relational, and sees people as intrinsically social beings: ‘People are not the origin of themselves, but rather they become who they are via their relationships with others and the world.’ 18

This approach of ‘autonomy in connectedness’ is in direct contradiction to an individualistic modern idea of man, as well as to the neo-liberal concept that links autonomy to negative freedom. I find this point important, because the same tension surfaces in the debate on artistic freedom: the latter after all concerns the claim of artists to be free to develop an autonomous language, in relative independence of the expectations and regimes concerning experience, interpretation, production and ‘relevance’ imposed by a society. This does not mean that artists work in a void, rather it precisely provides a specific margin for sustainable development. In particular, it allows artists to explicitly develop and embed their ideas via their self-designed practices of research, production and presentation. Thus, an alternative organisation of time and space can become concrete, and the experiences and meanings that exist therein become specific.

Small-scale and relational

The interrelation of representation and production need not jeopardise artistic freedom, but rather it precisely provides a specific margin for sustainable development. In particular, it allows artists to explicitly develop and embed their ideas via their self-designed practices of research, production and presentation. An alternative organisation of time and space can become concrete, and the experiences and meanings that exist therein become specific.

Modern, industrialised society has brought about a thoroughgoing division of labour and specialisation, resulting in individuals no longer having a view and control of processes of production. Moreover, numerous household and cultural practices (raising vegetables, repairing bicycles…) have been lost that a few generations ago were still self-evident and that structured and gave meaning to people’s lives. ‘Transition towns’ – intended to offer an answer to peak oil based on local, community-forming processes – represent a return to such practices, because they are rich in imagination and meaning, and thanks to their small-scale nature, they make production processes visible and accessible. 19 When theatre maker Alexander Nieuwenhuis in the project Altijd willen weten [Always wanting to know] (2009) entered into dialogue with a colleague theatre maker, but also with a furniture maker, a cook, a biologist, a bee-keeper and a philosopher, on the relationship between craft and sustainability, he hoped to discover in these diverse practices a ‘sustainable polyculture’: ‘Craft appeared to me to be an option in which experience emerges in the place of routine.’ 20

A choreographer such as Xavier Le Roy has created a large part of his oeuvre around the question how he could appropriate conditions of production and allow his artistic research and creation processes to find their way to the stage. In the project 6 Months 1 Location (2008), he took relocalisation literally by withdrawing to Montpellier for six months with some twenty artists: a model in which individual projects and new forms of collaboration were developed in an alternative time-space framework in opposition to the present regime of mobility and project hopping. 21 For a decade, choreographer Jonathan Burrows has been creating only productions that fit in a single suitcase, a scale that guarantees him a certain level of independence from the market and the present economic climate. And he also knows that ‘meaning arises in the most unexpected of places’, but that for this, artists must first claim a production context tailored to their aspirations. For some, working approximately one hour per day in their own kitchen is the ideal environment. 22

Artistic curatiorship and the creation of specific environments for research, creation and presentation were recently also explicitly connected to an ecological discourse, namely a relational idea of man and world view, by Elke Van Campenhout: “It is a curatorship focused on the ecology of actants within a given space: not only the people but also the temporary community that emerges at these precise moments: between the people, the performances, the discussions, the objects, 
Manifesto for the active participation of the performing arts in the transition towards a fair sustainability

Benjamin Verdonck

dear associate,

in the period september 2012 to 7 february 2013 i am hoping to make a new work

i am an artist

the work is called ‘manifesto for the active participation of the performing arts in the transition towards a fair sustainability’.

i need help with this
(and so i am addressing all those who work for a performing arts organisation that receives support under the arts decree)

my question is whether you are prepared to comply carefully and to the best of your ability with the articles described in the manifesto during the above-mentioned period

by endorsing this manifesto you will become a co-artist of my work and you will then be free to promote criticise expand change or sell it as you would your own work

you can read and endorse the manifesto on www.handvest.be and direct any questions suggestions or reactions to jajaja@handvest.be

may i ask you to kindly forward this letter to all the employees in your organisation

i realise that the cooperation i am asking for is perhaps not the norm
i dare to ask it as an artist because i want to make a new work this work
because i believe in the power of a work
in a power which everyone has to a greater or lesser degree rather this than that not much or a lot perhaps

i look forward impatiently to your reply

yours warmly and respectfully

benjamin verdonck

the experiences that take place there. In such an environment, affective involvement is asked of each participant, a willingness to be transformed that is generated in the situation itself. One of the projects she treats is Changing Room – rehearsals for a changing world by radical_hope, an episode of which was part of Burning Ice. Thus in this case, ecology is more than a vogue word: by describing and analysing one’s own artistic practice with such terminology, the potential commitment to a transition to sustainability can also be better seen.

Meaningful time

In Stil de tijd [Slow down time], essayist Joke Hermsen explores other approaches to time via art and philosophy, in order to point out their fundamental importance to a transition to sustainability: ‘Alienation, cynicism, indifference, acceleration, loss of self and life beyond all hope for or any faith in change, that is what marching to the time of the economic clock has brought about. Pleading for slowing down or consuming less, without a fundamental revision of our approach to time and without a thoroughgoing exploration of a possibly different experience of time, makes little sense to me. It concerns awakening and kindling our intuition for this different time, so that a new and necessary balance with clock time can take place.

In addition to relational models of production and attention for narrativity and embeddedness as a form of localisation, the performing arts also deal with time in a specific way. Their strength consists in the fact that they disrupt the omnipresent regime of ‘clock time’ or ‘efficiency time’, thus allowing ‘meaningful time’ to emerge, time in which we can dwell on our actions – both in productions as well as in creative processes. Now that our free time is increasingly absorbed by all kinds of activities and consumption – yes we even manage our lives and that of our children as a well-thought out ‘project’ – art is probably one of the few places left that escapes the paradox of wishing to produce meaningful time via efficiency time.

Valuable ideas and experiences cannot be easily quantified, are not readily susceptible to planning or a coercive production rhythm; they demand alternative frameworks in order to exist at all. Artistic research without a precise goal, loafing as method, claiming non-productive time, extended work processes and slow productions – all are forms of an alternative approach to time that allow room for meaning. The social-ecological crisis leaves us little time – for this reason let us interrupt our ordinary course of events and take the time to dwell on things.

Translated into English by Dan Frett, with the financial support of Kaaitheater and Imagine 2020.

manifesto for the active participation of the performing arts sector
in the transition towards a fair sustainability
to all employees of a performing arts organisation
receiving support under the arts decree
and by extension to all who wish to respond to this appeal
I’m asking you to help me create a work of art
the work of art consists of
adhering within a certain period
and to the best of one’s ability
to the following rules
the rules concern the actions of participants
in their capacity as employees of a performing arts organisation
and are in no way compulsory
as to the actions of participants outside of this capacity
the creation of the work of art begins on september 1st, 2012
at the start of the new theatre season
and ends on february 7th, 2013
160 and a half days later
in the middle of the same theatre season
after completion of the work of art
all commitments entered into during its creation become void
at the start of the work of art all eco teams of the participating performing arts organisations
are dissolved
then people are invited
to meditate on the causes of the ecological crisis
by means of a letter
sent by the united nations to the artists gilbert and george
on the opening of their exhibition the naked shit pictures
to inform them that excrement from the west
still contains sufficient salts and minerals
to keep alive for four days
a third world child
at the start of the work of art
thursday as veggie day
is rescinded
that day is served a choice of
steak and chips or lemon sole with pommes dauphine
the participating organisations are then asked not to serve
any meat or fish dishes
in their staff canteen on the other days of the week
any employee having a meal out of the office while on the job
will also abstain from consuming any meat or fish, except on thursdays
Is investing tax money in cultural productions economically worthwhile?

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The debate on the sense and nonsense of subsidising cultural activities has flared up (yet again). The latest round of budget savings in the Netherlands managed to get discussions going; also in Flanders, people are questioning the investments of tax money in cultural productions (see recent media contributions by Patrick Dewael, Prof. Paul De Grauwe, Bart Caron, Ivan Van de Cloot, and others. In times of budgetary discipline and cutbacks, subsidies for cultural bodies are always in the firing line.

Rightly so? Not entirely, as we will try and demonstrate. Our reasoning is based upon two insights ‘acquired’ in recent decades in the field of innovation (and innovation policies): 1) ‘market failure’ is a regular occurrence within the field of innovation, and 2) a society that helps mitigate these failures through collective investments will reap the rewards in the long term, even from an economic point of view.

What do we mean by ‘market failure’ in the field of innovation? Innovation – introducing new products, services or processes onto the market – goes hand in hand with uncertainty; ex ante, it is not clear whether or not and to what extent investments made in innovative efforts will pay off within a reasonable timeframe. The more radical these innovations are and/or the more time these innovations require to generate a positive outcome are not made by businesses en masse but instead rely on research budgets provided by the government, funded by tax payers. To illustrate: the building blocks that made the Internet architecture possible, developed in the 1950s-1960s and a market success since the 1990s,

nor to receive
any company using air travel
no exceptions to this rule are possible
unless the participating organisation contends
that an international tour is essential
to financially ensure
its continued existence
or
participant is in possession of a ring
they twist around their finger
making them invisible
while flying
and doing this
twice on a european flight
and
once on a transatlantic flight
whereupon the advantaged participant
undertakes to
howl like a dog
every night
for a month
up to three times a night
imagine what would happen
if the entire performing arts sector
participated conscientiously and assiduously
for 160 and a half days
in this work of art
what a cathedral of skeins of dissonance and dialectics
what an epiphany of possibilities
fundamentals games joy and symbolic capital
this would generate
for our future artistic practice
remembering cocteau
who
when asked
what he would take with him if his house was on fire
answered
the fire

Translation: Martine Bom
were primarily funded through government budgets. In other words: certain forms of innovation – characterised by a large degree of uncertainty, also in terms of appropriation – do not thrive in a market environment despite the fact that in the long term, they do result in economic gain. In this case, collective investments offer an alternative.

Can a parallel be drawn with culture? As Caves (2002) argues convincingly, numerous cultural productions are characterised by uncertainty. Considerable investments are made in theatre, music and opera productions, for instance, while it remains uncertain to what extent these costs will be recovered through the market. In that case, relying exclusively on the free market when it comes to allocating investments will again lead to the phenomenon of ‘underinvestment’: only those productions with a ‘calculated’ risk profile will see the light of day.

Is such underinvestment problematic? While there is sufficient empirical evidence to substantiate the positive impact of science and technology on the economy, this impact has been less obvious when it comes to culture, until recently.

In recent years, Richard Florida’s work has brought about a change. His research demonstrates that more creativity in a region will contribute to greater economic well-being. This (empirical) conclusion is not that surprising, really; in a society that is increasingly involved in services and information, meaning is gaining importance, in addition to knowledge. A striking example to illustrate this is the recent work by Roberto Verganti (2009), an authority in the field of design-driven innovation. His analysis of the success of Italian design businesses (such as Alessi) shows that breakthrough innovations are driven by the creation of new meaning. And this is where artistic productions are the equivalent to academic researchers; active, respectively, in the laboratories where meaning and knowledge are manufactured.

Based on these considerations, the question whether ‘collective’ investments in cultural productions are worthwhile can be answered positively. At the same time, this does not answer all questions surrounding subsidies for cultural activities. Which forms of art are we talking about? To what extent are they subsidised? And also: what should be the allocation criteria for the granting of public funds to yield the best possible return in the long term?

This contribution does not aim to provide an in-depth answer to each of these questions. However, it does urge policy-makers to take into consideration the proper nature of artistic productions while focusing at the same time on mapping and analysing current practices to develop sustainable and ‘productive’ policy options. Some examples to illustrate this logic: in a recent contribution, A. Van Wijckelaert (University of Antwerp, 2010) argues in favour of limiting subsidies to 30 or 35 percent of turnover. This approach would stimulate entrepreneurship and encourage cultural actors to be more market-driven. A recent analysis of turnover figures – including government support – of cultural actors in Flanders (theatre, dance, classical music, concert infrastructure, jazz, etc.) has demonstrated that both the nature of the productions and their role in the performing arts value chain are key factors in terms of the share of turnover obtained directly from the market (P. Jouque, 2010).

In other words: organisations such as the Ancienne Belgique achieve a direct market income share that in many cases exceeds the designated 65 or 70%. At the same time, it is found that theatre companies or (classical) music ensembles barely reach this ‘standard’. The fact that innovation is often about producing new knowledge – which can be easily reproduced at low cost (by ‘spectators’ who are not making an investment) – is preventing investors who are looking for profit from getting involved in such activities. In a number of art forms, such ex ante investments are considerably smaller (e.g. when writing a poem or composing a song) and fall within the investment capacity of the producers (artists) concerned.

Hence, a generic guideline fails to take into account the (economic) character of different cultural productions and appears to be based on ‘ideology’ alone. We believe that implementing such logic in a uniform manner will most likely result in the elimination of certain types of cultural productions, as opposed to stimulating productivity, quality and entrepreneurship.

Comparing the situation in Flanders with that in other regions is a rather eye-opening experience. We recently conducted an analysis in which the financial situation of North American classical orchestras was compared with orchestras in Flanders (which receive support from the Flemish government under the Arts Decree). On average, North American orchestras manage to achieve 43% of their turnover through ticket sales and buy-out fees. For Flemish orchestras, this figure is … 42%. In other words, the main difference between both countries – when it comes to financing cultural actors – is not the extent to which one is able to attract money from spectators, but the way in which additional means are collected in order to execute productions.

In the case of Flemish orchestras, funds provided by the (Flemish) government make up the majority of their income, while direct government support is more limited in the United States, often seen as the prime example of free market policies. In the case of North American orchestras, the orchestras finance their activities through additional funds collected via a system of donations. However, such a system also implies a tax deduction for donating parties. In other words, these funds are of a considerable public nature. In that regard, one can conclude that the essential difference between North American and Flemish orchestras relates to the decision-making process concerning the allocation of public funds. Whereas the US tends to such decisions concerning ‘support’ to the discretion of the individual (wealthy) citizen, Flanders has chosen a more collective model that could therefore be labelled as more ‘democratic’.

Furthermore, these figures are eye-opening in the context of the suggestions made by colleague Paul de Grauwe, who advocates that the public should have a say in the allocation of funds. Direct involvement, as observed in the United States, seems to be viable – and capable of resulting in a liveable situation for cultural producers – only if the flow of funds are of a substantial nature. However, generating such a flow of funds requires that donating parties have more buying power at their disposition and seems therefore only possible to move into this direction if we first evolve towards a substantial decollectivisation of our society (including education and healthcare).

The above demonstrates that it is worthwhile for a society to invest collective means into cultural productions. In addition, we argue that the nature of artistic productions must be taken into account when subsidies are granted. Among other things, this implies that it is of little use to introduce a set of ‘uniform’ rules. In addition, the public character of the allocation of resources may be the perfect opportunity to achieve – in a democratic manner – a cultural landscape characterised by quality, international appeal and diversity, and capable of providing added value for the community.
‘We’re not in Kansas anymore’, says Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz. Ever since September 15, 2008, the day the American investment bank Lehman Brothers – a monument of banking solidity – filed for bankruptcy, we have been living in a new era. That is at least how economics journalist Paul Mason1 sees it. In 1971, when president Richard Nixon abandoned the gold standard – and thus the fixed standard for converting the amount of money circulating in the world into real commodities – the relationship between the financial sector and the so-called ‘real’ economy was radically altered. The new exchange value of money was no longer something tangible, something material: gold had been replaced by the fairly abstract notion of worldwide productivity. That is why combating inflation soon became the primary focus of economic policy. It was a question of preventing the (relative) value of money from being eroded, despite economic growth. In this context, the monetary authorities – official central banks on one hand and financial institutions in the private sector on the other – grew into exceptionally powerful players, able to manipulate all of the previous industrial arrangements to the advantage of capital interests. This put the social landscape under intense pressure, not only for ideological reasons (‘Reaganomics’ and ‘Thatcherism’), but also because economic policy was now technically required to shift from an emphasis on encouraging expansion to a focus on monetary policy – in other words: combating inflation. The speeding train seemed unstoppable and the economic policy appeared perfectly justified in invoking the ultimate argument: ‘There is no alternative.’ Until September 15, 2008 that is, the day on which the inexorable financial laws, the ‘constitution’ on which the economic policy had been built, proved to have been fully realised and immediately discredited. Despite their ‘relative autonomy’2 that is to say, the limited leeway political leaders had, certainly at the time, not to simply unquestioningly carry out the agenda of the financial economic complex, they failed to take advantage of that momentum, and that’s putting it mildly. The Belgian government, for example, managed to manoeuvre itself into a double bind: first by nationalizing Fortis, and then selling this public asset at a dumping price to BNP Paribas in exchange for a minority stake in the French bank. The result is that each round of rationalisations, which in practice always come at the cost of the financial independence of the Belgian economy, generates tens

References

2. ‘Relative autonomy’ is a concept used by Marx in his early work to describe the relationship between state and society. In neomarxist political theory, it stands for the distance that exists in a capitalist society between the political institutions and the real (financial/economic) power centres (see Nicos Poulantzas, Pouvoir politique et classes sociales, Paris : Maspero, 1972). In this text I am largely taking the concept out of that ideological context, but it remains a question of the government’s room for manoeuvre.
of millions in revenue for the Belgian national treasury. In other words: the relative autonomy of the political actors is lost and the real economy slides more firmly into the grasp of the financial world. Thanks to the super-food that the government has injected into them, the banks are once again profitable, and one may well wonder if they have learned anything at all from the errors that brought the most reckless among them to the brink of bankruptcy. Bonuses are still just as extravagant, and risky subprime loans remain too attractive. Those who talked of the end of the age of greed were surely a bit too optimistic.

What does this all too brief analysis of the banking crisis have to do with the problematic legitimation of the arts policy – and theatre policy especially – in Flanders? Since 1975, the date of the first Theatre Decree, a number of fundamental shifts have occurred in the Flemish arts policy. In those 30 years, the arts policy, which culminated for now in the Arts Decree of 2004, has undergone several paradigm shifts. The ‘old’ arts policy was characterised by a curious combination of Bildung – repertory theatre performed at municipal theatres, cultural diffusion at cultural centres – and politiek pellican – equitable distribution based on party politics and parochial criteria. This compartmentalisation persisted and was even objectified through advisory boards – the notorious Raad van Advies voor de Toneelspeelkunst (RAT or Advisory Board for Theatrical Arts) – but also, social and economic criteria were added, as well as quality assessment. The Podiumkunstendecreet (Performing Arts Decree) of 1993 reinforced this quality assessment and restricted the social guarantees to the CLA obligations as defined by both sides of industry. But the subtext was more important. Although his successor Hugo Weckx received all the credit, this decree came about under the impulse of the Liberal party Minister of Culture Patrick Dewael. His leadership was informed by a dual discourse: on one hand, a neoliberal vision was advanced about the all-powerful force of public taste, in opposition to quality assessment by peers, and in favour of the systematisation of art, and on the other hand, this decoupling led to a somewhat conservatively, the relationships between various actors in the arts – theatre, dance and music theatre companies, arts centres, projects that had originated in practice, and which had certainly not been driven by economic concerns, but rather arose from the desire for artistic freedom – the freedom of independent artists as well as of a free-thinking audience. The same logic was applied in the Arts Decree, and further reinforced: broadening the performing arts system to cover the entire arts field (except for audiovisual production and literature, which are largely supported by ‘foundations’), greater objectification of the assessment criteria, strengthening of the assessment system itself and support for the expertise present in the sector via support agencies. The cultural policy that was given shape under the ministers Bert Anciaux and Paul Van Grembergen (1999-2009), was unabashedly voluntarist, constantly emphasised the ‘primacy of objectives, that is how Rudi Laermans characterised this ‘cultural regime’. The current Flemish government of minister-president Kris Peeters has, probably intentionally, made a low priority of the cultural policy and the arts in particular. Yet that is not a neutral stance, because it is a way of taking distance from the ‘relative autonomy’ that was effectively claimed by Dewael/Anciaux: this government would implement the agenda of VOKA and Unizo, which just so happen to be the respective former employers of budget minister Philip Muyters and minister-president Kris Peeters.

Just like the Western governments, in their solutions for the banking crisis, were prepared to largely abandon their relative autonomy – when in fact it suggested the opposite response – the Flemish authorities are abandoning their leeway to create policy based on an obviously narrow economic definition of a scarcity of government resources – and, consequently, on an equally unimaginative repertoire of solutions for said scarcity. Or to take a somewhat broader historical – and slightly provocative – view: after the dismantlement of the welfare state, a model which had ostensibly been attained ever since the ‘Rhineland’-consensus in the wake of the Second World War, follows the scrapping of cultural emancipation as a responsibility of government [théâtre service public, to use the term of Jean Vilar4]. So for the crisis in the financial system has not led to the insight that a reversal – away from the chaotic market, in favour of a regulating government – might be called for. Indeed, no more has the crisis in the production of meaning – the cultural effects of globalisation – resulted in a ‘Copernican revolution’ in cultural policy, in other words, a policy that intentionally combats the ‘spontaneous conservatism’ of the art and culture markets. Incidentally, this is not a problem in Flanders alone: in several of our neighbouring countries – Great Britain, the Netherlands – the temptation has been far greater to fall back on neoliberal recipes to deal with the crisis, and to extend this approach, when it comes to budget cuts, to an elusive, ‘elitist’ arts sector – or: how a neoliberal revel has also become a kind of Kulturkampf.

In January 2011, I conducted a series of interviews with opinion makers from the theatre world on the question of the legitimacy of art – insofar as this can be answered or even should be answered – and above all, of the legitimacy of an arts policy, and more specifically subsidies for the arts, and especially for theatre. The people I selected to talk with were my personal choice, based on the subjective hunch that they might have strong opinions about this issue of legitimacy, which – at least according to my hypothesis – is undergoing a crisis. The discussions were carried out informally and my hunch was borne out: strong opinions about legitimacy and legitimation, about the crisis which may or may not be currently at hand, about the responsibility of artists and theatres themselves, and about the responsibility of the government. At the same time, it became clear that the existing (non)policy was a source of frustration: no culture in the long-term strategic plan Vlaanderen In Acte, a one-size-fits-all ‘cheese slicer’ approach (in other words, shaving an equally thick slice off the top of all budgets) accommodating little differentiation, with the rare measures that there are being only arbitrary – such as the fairly disastrous slash and burn in the non-politically compartmentalised adult education sector. In this text, these discussions form the explicit backdrop for an analysis of the cultural policy impasse described above. This essay can be divided into two major themes:


6. The people I spoke to were: Jan Lauwers, theatre maker and artistic director Needcompany (Brussels); Dominique Willaert, coordinator of the social/artistic workspace Victoria de Luxe (Ghent); An-Marie Lambrechts and Erwin Jans, resp. artistic coordinator and dramaturge at Het Toneelhuis (Antwerp); Staf Felckmans, director of cultural centre De Warrande (Turnhout); An de Bisschop, director of the cultural participation think tank Demos; Karol Vanhovebroek, drama coordinator at the RITI/Erasmuscollege Brussels and lecturer at the Universiteit Maastricht; Wouter Hillaert, theatre critic for De Standard and editor of the art criticism magazine Rekto Verso; Frank Peeters, Professor of the history of theatre at the Universiteit Antwerpen and a member of the Recordingscommissie Theater (Theater Assessment Commission) and finally Bart Caron, member of the Flemish Parliament for Groen! and former head of the office of culture minister Bert Anciaux.


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1. The presumed crisis of legitimacy in the performing arts: of the art itself, of the government policy in general, and of the subsidisation in particular. The responsibility of the artist to regain and/or reinforce the legitimacy of his work and, thereby, of the government support.

2. The external pressure on the arts policy and on the job of the (subsidised) artist, including: the implicit demand from the media to quantitatively expand the audience and to increase the aspect of art as an event, the so-called economic laws and the associated drive to economise, the political reflex to interfere, which, in extreme cases devolves into ‘hatred of art’ and on another fronts, aims to encourage the trend towards identity-politics in Flanders.

In the conclusion, we shall examine more closely the inability to take the strong demands, such as are being heard in the arts and in the theatre – as a particularly visible ‘factory’ where artworks are made, which are moreover products with a short shelf-life – and to translate and apply them politically. An inability and/or unwillingness that is found within the arts sector as well as on the part of the politicians, however, in highly different forms.

The legitimacy of art or the legitimacy of the subsidies?

Art exists, so art does not therefore have to legitimise itself. It would seem to be as simple as that. But it is precisely because a multitude of cross connections and dependencies have arisen – certainly given the public arts policy over the past 60 years – that any question as to the importance of art for society is associated with the question of the government’s responsibility for art. Nevertheless, this question itself is a slightly uncomfortable one. In fact, it inevitably gives the impression that those asking the question tend to have a simplistic understanding of culture and certainly of art. And as an artist, then, how do you respond to a question that contains an implicit accusation? You can react assertively and explicitly reiterate the self-evidence of art and, as Jan Lauwers does, refer to the added value in symbolic meaning that art produces, to the existential meanings, contributes something substantial to human existence, influences individual and collective identities, and gives the culture space to breathe.’ (Jan Lauwers)

But the debate about the importance of this added value, of this countervailing meaning – about preserving it (heritage) and developing it for the future (arts) – only truly takes place when the role of the government comes into play, and usually only when it is distributing these subsidies. The legitimacy of art – and its cultural function – thus only becomes a public topic when the government actively broaches the subject, particularly through financial support. Nevertheless, an artist such as Jan Lauwers also returns to the question that precedes the legitimacy of the (subsidy) policy. Barely a decade ago, he made a personal analysis of his work and came to the conclusion that his ‘dark side’, his tendency towards the hermetic, was reaching a dead-end. So, with Isabella’s Room (2004) he re-embraced the narrative. His performances in the Sad Face/Happy Facetriology – after Isabella’s Room came The Lobster Shop (2006) and The Deer House (2008) – are not linear narratives, but they do make use of ‘old-fashioned’ identification mechanisms: the characters are, in many senses, ‘worthy of our sympathy’. Lauwers decided to fully restore the sensory dimension to the artwork, an aspect which in his view, ever since Marcel Duchamp exhibited his urinal, had been lost in art – and certainly in all that declared itself the avant-garde and sometimes continues to wear this badge – in favour of a reflective stance. Lauwers’ (self) analysis is admirable in that it brings into focus a number of premises – sometimes they are/ were merely prejudices – concerning the complexity of the theatrical codes: postmodern formal principles such as montage and juxtaposition are not per se in contradiction with narrative transparency; irony or shock effects are not the only weapons against theatrical sentimentality. It is no coincidence that such questions are being posed by a theatre maker who happens also to be a visual artist. The valuable contribution of an art historian such as Hal Foster® consists, among other things, in the fact that he made an assessment of the historical avant-garde and

‘If theatre did not rely on government subsidies, the discussion concerning legitimacy would be totally different. If something is economically viable, the legitimacy question doesn’t get raised. There is then no controversy concerning intellectual value. Only when something costs the taxpayer money, does it become value laden. Ethical problems around the arms industry had a simple solution: authority in this domain was split, and everyone wished FN in Wallonia a bright future.’ (Bart Caron)

‘When Marcel Duchamp exhibited his urinal, la Fontaine, it was a cluster bomb. But if you don’t understand the impact, then you’re not understanding the work. We still haven’t properly recovered from that explosion, but we have neglected the sensory dimension. If a space alien were to see the pyramids of Gizeh, it is something he can understand, even if he knows nothing of the cult of the dead that underlies them. The purity of the form, the sand that surrounds them, is enough.’ (Jan Lauwers)

7. See Paul Kuypers, In de schaduw van de kunst. Een kritische beschouwing van de Nederlandse cultuurpolitiek, Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1999, p.10. He refers to a critical piece by Koen Brasa and Dirk Pultau, ‘Beeldende kunst en beleid in Vlaanderen, 1992’ (De Witte Raaf, 79, May-June 1999, p.16) about the regime under culture minister Luc Martens (1995-1999): ‘a contemporary cultural policy should in the first place be based on a production of meaning that is brought about within a field with a relative autonomy, which could not survive without support. In the second place, it must conceive of the necessity for support based on the nature of this meaning production itself.’ (my italics)

As a result of the marketisation of the arts in the United States, it is only possible now to continuously reprise the same performance formats: a handful of people on stage, a little bit of music, a little bit of (veiled) nudity, a digestible text. Capitalism tolerates extremely little diversity. Things that are difficult, a different stylistic language, long periods of silence: it’s not played, not reviewed and finally, no longer gets made. Our subsidy system does allow for difficult things, it allows this type of production to gain legitimacy.’ (Dominique Willaert)

Apparently, no one wants to be quoted as saying that subsidies for (innovative) art are not justified, but the relationship with the economy is precarious to say the least. Not only is the government placing increasing emphasis on generating revenues — although admittedly as more of a guideline than as a numerical requirement, but moreover, the artistic organisations themselves are showing a tendency to make a point of justifying their policy within the market context. In this way, they are already offering an answer to the question of how the arts nowadays wish to strengthen their legitimacy as recipients of government subsidies. However, this is not an innocuous strategy. Those who in this way unreservedly go along with a narrative in which market economy and government support are treated as equivalent partners, the arts in the United States, it is only possible now to continuously reprise the same performance formats: a handful of people on stage, a little bit of music, a little bit of (veiled) nudity, a digestible text. Capitalism tolerates extremely little diversity. Things that are difficult, a different stylistic language, long periods of silence: it’s not played, not reviewed and finally, no longer gets made. Our subsidy system does allow for difficult things, it allows this type of production to gain legitimacy.’ (Dominique Willaert)

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risk losing a piece of their legitimacy. Their legitimacy within the artistic system, because the demand for return inevitably threatens the artistic independence, and their legitimacy outside of the system, because the criteria whereby artistic productivity can be measured are scarcely (allowed to be) discussed in the prevailing economic discourse.

Cultural participation forms a part of real society: the society in which economic activity takes place, the society in which art also forms part of the leisure sector. This interlacing makes it difficult to talk about the autonomous legitimacy of the arts policy without a certain level of confusion as to the terms. It is precisely for this reason that the concept of participation must be expanded, and not remain limited to reducing the financial thresholds and increasing attendance numbers. For An de Bisschop, participation means that a broad involvement in society is reflected in the way in which a cultural house organises itself. An ongoing reflection about the way in which a diversified population experiences culture is an essential part of this effort. But generally, this reflection is limited, as far as the future is concerned, to the question of whether and how the theatre – the supply – addresses social issues. It is a dramaturgical question, a search for diversity in the repertoire. No one is nostalgic for theatre that formulates clear answers to contemporary conflicts in society, be they ideologically inspired or otherwise. But what does this responsibility then mean? Is a performance such as De Man zonder Eigenschappen by Guy Cassiers, which is in fact about politics, in broad historical perspective detached from the concrete societal environment? If this is taken to mean that it provides a trenchant and moreover visually appealing sketch of the bourgeois culture that is held up to the audience like a mirror, then the answer is no. If ‘engagement’ means that the margins of today’s society need to be explored, then it is yes. Perhaps Toneelhuis is compensating for this in the work of Benjamin Verdonck, thereby bringing balance to the range.

Many are vigorously calling for reflection on how to engage the commercial sector and how to create networks jointly with it. This discourse has come about gradually and subtly, but it is a highly risky one. Artworks become products, merchandise. The products are bought and sold; they need to be recycled, they need to circulate – make the rounds. By contrast, I am calling for a “sanitary barrier” around commercial partners. I am calling for a maximum in revenues that you should be allowed to derive from the market, if you receive government subsidy. Because otherwise, you give up your autonomy. After all, those who put up the money are counting on a return.

(Dominique Willaert)

10. Geert Sels, ‘Raven Ruëll weg bij KVS’, De Standaard, 2 December 2010
11. The term was introduced by performance theorician Richard Schechner. (Klaas Tindemans & Karel Vanhasselbrouck, ‘We zitten in een kooi, maar het is een hele grote kooi. Richard Schechner en Carol Martin over niche-gardes, activisme en documentair theater’, Etcetera 123, December 2010, p. 28-34)

Some artists seem at times to have lost the ability to relate to daily life. Nevertheless, they are connected to society, and this line must be kept open, you always have a public function whether you want it or not. At a certain moment you have to – your organisation has to – justify yourself for the public resources that you are using. And the increased complexity of the artistic language, of the artistic codes does not make this any easier. That is simply a sociological observation. And I for one am just as much at a loss as to how to resolve this.’ (Bart Caron)

The method of peer review that the Arts Decree established is at once the strength and weakness of the system. The strength, because it is a way to more effectively realise policy goals such as innovation and circulation, and the weakness because as a government, you are constantly entering a battlezone. You even allow your advisors to provoke conflicts.’ (Bart Caron)
business terms, not least and especially from an international perspective and this professionalisation has meant that self-regulation – although this is still something that cannot/may not be said out loud: that would compromise the ‘primacy of the political’ – has essentially become the norm: the Assessment Commissions are staffed by engaged professionals (artists and intermediaries) and the major institutions are even evaluated by international experts. If a Culture Minister gets the wild idea of assigning more posts within the advisory system to representatives of ‘popular’ forms, or to advisers who want to blur the boundary between professional and amateur arts, then there are international quality criteria in place that one cannot get away with circumventing. Besides, where would those ‘popular’ experts have to come from? The campaign with which former culture minister Bert Anxiaux went looking for ‘ordinary’ audiences to help staff the Assessment Commissions – ‘everyone can have a seat on the board’ – was not successful. Unless these experts would have to come from the political parties themselves, which would instantly turn the clock back by at least twenty years. As long as the internal legitimising discourse generated, with every round of subsidies, through the dialogue and interaction between peers in the Assessment Commissions and politicians in the Flemish government, remains consistent, there does not have to be any problem. However, we can raise the question of the extent to which an artistic discourse – which, as mentioned, does not necessarily coincide with the apologetic discourse conducted by intermediaries about the art – which does genuinely articulate doubt, uncertainty and resistance, would jeopardise this (bourgeois?) consensus. There are enough forces at work that will feed off of this structural weakness in art and will be able to manipulate the material for conflict that is inherent to the cultural policy in a political and/or economic direction.

Disruptors in the debate: media, the desire for cuts in spending, political pressure

It is not an overgeneralisation to claim that the discussion about the legitimacy of culture policy, and of the subsidy system in particular, is disrupted by three major ‘disruptors’: the commercial behaviour of the (general) media, the simplistic drive to cut spending as a knee-jerk response to the crisis, and the sneaking suspicion that direct political pressure is alive and well.

Problem one: the media. The fact that ‘Bekende Vlamingen’ (Flemish celebrities) stimulate sales for theatrical productions has long been common knowledge among companies and theatres. But recently, this reasoning seems to have been reversed, not so much in subsidised theatre but in the commercial productions, with their large publicity budgets, derive the most benefit from this. But it goes without saying that reviews, quality assessment, but on the contrary they cater slavishly to the PR machines, expanding to include newspapers. These (commercial) choices are further reinforced by the existing media value of the makers, by the fact that they are already well known: once again a highly self-referential logic of predictable publicity – and barely any criticism – is set in motion that no longer has anything to do with insight into artistic, let alone societal developments. The question is whether an artistic discourse – a different type of art criticism, which no longer takes as point of departure the modernist certainty that an autonomous practice of the arts directly and decisively influences the culture and society – can break into this economic dynamic.

In fact there are good reasons, some more altruistic than others, justifying greater attention for theatre in the press. The free-thinking development in Flemish theatre – different approaches to acting, alternative narrative techniques, hybridisation – has in fact played a role in the high quality of television fiction. Newspapers generally limit themselves to the anecdotal approach of the ‘insider tip’13: no one had heard of Stefaan Degand until he showed up in De Ronde by Woestijnis/Jan Eelen, but the theatre had long been convinced of his skills. Did anyone see him, for example, as Oedipus in Kreon by theatre Zuidpool? This type of hype completely ignores the fact that a generation of actors and theatre makers – roughly: the ‘children’ of Dora van der Groen, jnvis/Jan Eelen, but the theatre had long been convinced of his skills. Did anyone see him, for example, as Oedipus in Kreon by theatre Zuidpool? This type of hype completely ignores the fact that a generation of actors and theatre makers – roughly: the ‘children’ of Dora van der Groen, besides, where would those ‘popular’ experts have to come from? The campaign with which former culture minister Bert Anxiaux went looking for ‘ordinary’ audiences to help staff the Assessment Commissions – ‘everyone can have a seat on the board’ – was not successful. Unless these experts would have to come from the political parties themselves, which would instantly turn the clock back by at least twenty years. As long as the internal legitimising discourse generated, with every round of subsidies, through the dialogue and interaction between peers in the Assessment Commissions and politicians in the Flemish government, remains consistent, there does not have to be any problem. However, we can raise the question of the extent to which an artistic discourse – which, as mentioned, does not necessarily coincide with the apologetic discourse conducted by intermediaries about the art – which does genuinely articulate doubt, uncertainty and resistance, would jeopardise this (bourgeois?) consensus. There are enough forces at work that will feed off of this structural weakness in art and will be able to manipulate the material for conflict that is inherent to the cultural policy in a political and/or economic direction.

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14. A good example of sloppy work is the contribution of economist Ivan Van de Cloot to the discussion about the then in reverse. Nevertheless, the arts sector needs to cut back just as rigorously as everyone else? To start with, everyone has forgotten – and apparently, the economists above all – that sectors and organisations with (relatively) small budgets are harder hit by the so-called ‘cheese slicer’ than others. If you take away the same amount of money from everyone, then that is only ostensibly fair. Currently, this linearity within the arts sector is corrected by taking away more, percentage-wise, from larger organisations than smaller structures, but the generalised standard for cutbacks impacts the arts sector as a whole. And therein lies the rub, for the following reason. If you remove the same percentage from a small budget as from a large budget, you are in fact economizing more heavily on that small budget. After all, the ‘marginal use’ of the amount saved is greater for a small sector than for a larger policy domain, even if, in absolute numbers, the latter is sacrificing more. Put another way, the smaller the budget you have, the heavier the impact of linear cuts. That is the logic behind progressive taxation, but then in reverse. Nevertheless, the arts sector cannot hide behind a general rejection of the ‘cheese slicer’ method. Although the Arts Decree was meant to be ‘bloodless’, experience of the practice of advising demonstrates that Assessment Commissions vigorously defend their own terrain, either by sustaining privileges, or by fervently courting ‘transplantation’ in other disciplines. Moreover, and this was suggested by virtually all those I spoke with, there is cause to question the number of subsidised art productions.

Problem three: political intimidation. Poorly conceived enthusiasm to make cutbacks can be met with rational economic and political answers: the law (or the syndrome) of Baumol16, demonstrably efficiency and professionalism in the sector, public service, and so on. But recently, a purely ideological threat to the legitimacy of arts policy in and of itself has reared its head: the phenomenon of ‘hated of art’. In the Netherlands, the PVV party of Geert Wilders openly calls handing out art subsidies a ‘leftist’s hobby’17. In Flanders, this tone is rarely heard, for now. However, these days there is commotion about spending government money on anti-‘flamingante’ (roughly: anti-Flemish nationalist) manifestations by the Brussels KVS, by deBuren. Does this suggest that from Flemish nationalist quarters, there is mounting pressure to push for an ‘identity based’ discourse on art, that subscribing to—or at least accepting—a Flemish collective identity should be a prerequisite for government support?18 Since its origins, the Flemish movement has drawn a clear link between culture and emancipation, including its translation into party politics. This relationship has however constantly shifted in meaning apace with the Flemish nationalist parties’ own gravitation towards the right: the VNV as successor to organisations such as the Front-partij (1933), the N-VA as successor to the Volkspartij (1901). The result has been that ‘cultural emancipation’ has acquired a different meaning than in the labour movement or in the Christian democratic movement: in the N-VA, the identity connotations of this concept appear to have been upheld. The unexpectedly dramatic electoral success of the N-VA put the party into a central position in Flemish public opinion. Its vision of Flanders became representative, and as a result the culture too—including art—that exists in Flanders, was subjected to this representative standard. That is at least the first political reflex of politicians who are suddenly thrust into such positions of power. Artists, certainly today, are positioned outside of the centre: they consciously seek out challenges, they claim an autonomous position within the democratic discourse. This is where the conflict arises, whereby the presumed belgicism of the ‘ascetic elite’ is merely a clumsy excuse. The nationalism of the N-VA is ideologically less neutral than the emphasis on political emancipation that dominates its discourse might seem to suggest. But in general, the complaints of the politicians are classic ones and they do not demonstrate pathological hatred of art: snide remarks about artists who refuse to tolerate an audience (as if such a thing actually exists), a narrow interpretation of the language laws (against multilingual advertising by theatres in Brussels), a nostalgic reflection on the vanished bourgeois repertoire. What this type of gratuitous remark does reveal is a disconcerting lack of knowledge among politicians concerning what is on offer in the arts. This type of intellectual vacuity may prove to be the weakness of the cultural policy at a time when art truly comes under fire.

Conclusions or coexisting opinions?

Recently, a small political scuffle took place between columnists in the De Standaard on the subject of art subsidies19. Kristl Strubbe, a local politician from the Open VLD party in Mechelen, reiterates the familiar refrain about the government as cash cow, about a meandering flow of subsidies and about the admirable engagement of wealthy patrons of the arts. She calls for a clear infrastructure model: personnel and building should be paid for by the government, the art itself must be funded by the audience and patrons. Just like the mobility policy, in other words: the state pays for the railways, water and roads, the logistics sector is self-supporting. Marc Reynebeau, professional opinion maker, is—justifiably—irritated by all of these clichés which display a contempt for (subsidised) artists and which promote a (thinly) veiled privatisation agenda. Strubbe has not bothered to inform herself about the actual policy applied in our cultural houses, about the level of reflection and (self) criticism, about methods of production and relationships in art. Jan Lauwers notes that (theatre) artists have been, ever since the ancient Greeks, ‘state officials’. What’s more, the proverbial patrons from the Renaissance had considerable political power: they had often in fact acquired their fortunes through this political influence: only on this basis were they able to support their favourites. In that case, a transparent subsidy policy is quite a bit more democratic, if only because it calls for the artist to take up his social responsibility. What Strubbe, in her idealisation of the wealthy and generous patron of the arts is forgetting above all, is that a contemporary arts policy is first and foremost a development policy: the relationship between government and artists—or their organisations—is not contractual, not ‘tit for tat’, despite management agreements. Our arts policy assumes that the artist himself will determine his goals, will create the necessary conditions for production professionally, including appealing to the audience that he himself has in mind. It is on the basis of the self-determined objectives that the government weighs artists, and rightly so. But contemporary government does not want to go about erecting flags, does not want engraved plaques on pedestals, no


18. On the risky proposition that democracy is based on collective identity, see i.a. Marnix Beyen, ‘Identiteit regenta de Europese politiek’, De Morgen, 5 October 2010


‘The narrowminded government programme of Kris Peeters is accompanied by the revenge of the rural districts upon the cities, revenge of the parochial mentality. Flanders has been urbanised in terms of land use, but not in terms of mentality.’

(Dominique Willaert)
enlargement of scale for the sake of prestige, no targeted contribution to identity forming. Wise politicians know that a presence at Rock Werchter, or at the performance of the local amateur theatre, ultimately garners them no more votes than a season-ticket to deSingel. Good governance – meaning: from a distance, subsidiary, serving the public – can generate votes, whether it is a question of economic or cultural policy. The slight dismay revealed when I asked some of my interviewees about the critical legitimacy, is fundamentally justified. Everybody agrees that the budget minister has to come up with a balanced budget, that the economics minister needs to encourage sustainable investment, that the environment minister needs to work towards sanitation of the waterways. But the notion that something similar also applies for the culture minister, that he/she must stimulate the production of meaning and therefore must allow for, and even encourage, all conceivable experiments – after all that’s what art is about – this is something that some people seem to doubt. The retort is in fact clear enough: a thorough rethinking of the social welfare state as it stands in 2011 in fact demands more investment in the arts. Not in the first place in structures, but above all, in artists and in their studios. And yet, despite the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers, there has hardly been a mental revolution among politicians. Sometimes the meaning of art is still being weighed against a gold standard, that is, the simplistic idea of ‘good public taste’ which can be measured in sponsorships and audience numbers. Sometimes the bookkeeping, often enlivened with an impressive chapter on international revenues, is used as the ultimate criterion in balancing the books, including that of the symbolic capital that has been generated. But assessing art on the basis of art and nothing else, that is something that the current policy is not yet ready for, despite meaningful practices in the arts sector itself: the successful artistic management within large and small arts organisations, the peer review (in the form of self-regulation) that the Arts Decree organises de facto. And what is truly disturbing is the fact that the media – the intermediaries par excellence – are the least willing of all to embrace such a radical thought exercise.

Just before Dorothy leaves Oz, the Wizard wonders how he might bring her home. He concludes that he will have to do it himself. ‘Oh, will you? Could you? Oh, but are you a clever enough Wizard … to manage it?’ To which the Wizard replies: ‘Child, you cut me to the quick! I’m an old Kansas man myself, born and...’ The (conservative) conclusion of this fairy tale is therefore that we do not have to escape the world in which we live, that even where it is not ‘Kansas’, it is still always ‘Kansas’. Despite all the imagination in the world, even among policymakers, it is difficult to discuss the obvious legitimacy of the art itself, and only later to talk about the political feasibility. In that order.
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About VTi

Institute for the Performing Arts

Since it was founded in 1987, VTi (Vlaams Theater Instituut) has developed into an open organisation with strong links to both the sector itself and the policy-makers. The reason for its existence is the need for sound information among the public, theatre professionals, politicians, students, press and academics. On performing artists and their work. On cultural policy and stage matters. On international work. On developments and trends. On infrastructure, distribution and art education.

VTi wants to provide all this information in a broad range of easy-to-use resources. To this end it currently fulfils three main functions: documentation, research and interaction. Its intention is in this way to contribute to the ongoing growth of the sector and help build a social environment for artistic creation.

Documentation centre for theatre, dance and music-theatre

VTi assumes responsibility for the intensive documentation of performing arts practices. The sector and its context are observed, artistic and policy-making developments are recorded, sorted and made accessible by means of the extensive database, library and website.

Sectorial think-tank in a diverse and international Flanders

Applied research is a major component of VTi’s work because it converts the information in the database and collections into a useful form. The research is applied to actual practices by means of descriptive and analytical fieldwork. In this regard, the performing arts are not simply the object of research, but also play an active part in shaping opinion.

Critical interface between theatre-makers, the public and the policy-makers

VTi is a place for knowledge, study and also vision. It is for this reason that it sets debates going, and wants to actively inform people and increase their awareness. Research and new insights are presented as feedback to the sector on the website, in publications and the magazine Courant, through the library and at study sessions. The chief concerns here are reflexive dialogue, practical usefulness and an overview of the broader picture.

In all these activities VTi links current events in the performing arts to long-term projects, such as a thorough analysis of artistic practices and oeuvres, public participation / distribution and international and intercultural cooperation.

Day-to-day business

VTi’s three core tasks are organically combined in its day-to-day business.

Open house

VTi is an open house in the centre of Brussels. We have an extensive library collection that is spread out over the two floors. We also provide spaces to meet and computer workstations. Visitors are welcome to work, meet, browse through the library collection or have a cup of coffee. We are open from Tuesday to Friday, from 10 am to 6 pm.
Collections
Our collections contain a mine of information and can be consulted free of charge. They include:

- documentation on organisations in Flanders
- books on the performing arts, cultural management, policy, art education, etc.
- at least 10,000 plays, in both published and manuscript form
- 120 professional journals
- cuttings archives of relevant information from newspapers and periodicals
- a video library with over 5,000 hours of tapes

On data.vti.be, you can search through our library catalogue. The VTi staff is there to help you find the information you need.

Helpdesk
VTi staff also answers specific questions about the performing arts from Belgium or abroad by phone, e-mail or post. Moreover, we organise specific sessions every second Tuesday afternoon, meant to help and inform individual performing artists.

www.vti.be
The www.vti.be website is intended to be flexible and keep pace with current news. It enables you to keep track of VTi’s work, with a survey of all its activities and useful documents. In addition, the site contains a mass of useful information on the performing arts sector: the ins and outs of subsidies, a list of first nights, the latest job vacancies, etc. On data.vti.be, you can find all information about persons, productions and organisations. An ingenious search engine enables you to search through our library catalogue.

Publications
On a regular basis, we translate the results of our research and other relevant articles into English to keep international performing arts professionals informed.

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