

FOLLOW THE ACTOR

Reflections on the arts funding and arts ecosystem in Flanders

Funding for sustainable development of careers, organizations and the arts field.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Flanders is the northern part of Belgium.

Belgium is a federal state, process started in '70ies with culture and education.

Flanders government deals actually with the following domains: culture, education, economy, labour, welfare, mobility, environment, agriculture. Idem Government of the French speaking community.

There is no Belgian ministry of culture.

Cultural policy in the 1970ies and 80ies based on language, culture centres and the inherited cultural institutions of the Belgian state. Traditional.

New generation artists in the 1980ies build international careers, gave impulses for new infrastructure for the production and the presentation of the arts in Flanders, and were asking for change in cultural policy: vision and policy instruments based on new forms of production and presentation.

The Flanders government and its ministers of culture were open for change.

-Change possible within -young- regional autonomy, could 'start from scratch'.

-Win-win situation: art scene can become stronger through policy, and Flanders could become stronger as a region and gain visibility through artists with international careers.

2.MILESTONES in the development of cultural policy

2.1. 1976-2006

Policy instruments

INTENTION

Integrated policy instruments for artists and organizations for different art disciplines.

Performing arts

-Theatre decree 1976-1993

Subventions for theatre companies (theatres are subsidized by cities): annual.

Quantitative criteria: number of productions, number of performances

-Performing arts decree 1993-2006

Decree for theatre, dance, music theatre and (new) institutions for production and presentation.

Both artists/companies and organisations.

4-year subsidies and project subsidies.

Criteria focused on quality, professional peer review system: experts from sector, nominated by Minister

First 4 committees of reviewers, later one committee

Comment: we notice the first steps towards integrated approach of subsectors and organizational forms, within decree of performing arts.

Music

Music decree 1999

subsidy for artists/ensembles, concert organizations, music-clubs, music education and music festivals

4-year subsidies and projects, composition commissions and scholarships

committees for each section in the decree.

Criteria focused on quality, professional peer review system: experts from sector, nominated by Minister

Comment: idem, first steps towards integrated approach of subsectors and organizational forms, within one decree for music.

visual arts

regulation for support of artists and organisations in visual arts since 1997, no decree

-projects and scholarships, residencies abroad, subsidy for promotion of artists during art fairs

-subsidies for organizations: only annual

-one committee for all subsidies, experts from sector, nominated by Minister

Literature

fund set up in 2000: Flanders Literature fund

Audiovisual

fund set up in 2002: Flanders Audio-visual fund

DISCUSSION

- Wish for **equal treatment** of different art disciplines in terms of budget, assessment and subsidy forms
- The funding system does not respond to **multidisciplinary** in art practices and organizations.
- Different decrees have the advantage to be very specific concerning the way a subsector functions, but creates **separations** between art disciplines and competition between art disciplines
- Need to make the **arts** stronger within the government
- The policy instruments per art discipline tend to be reactive to developments in the sector: policy makers try to integrate new tendencies, would it be possible to design policy instruments which are **open for new developments** in the arts?

2.2. 2006 First Art decree

INTENTION

One funding system for the arts (apart from funds for literature and audio-visual who stay autonomous): equal for all artists, organizations and art disciplines.

Advisors of the Minister of Culture came at that time out the arts and culture sector (expertise from sector within cabinet of Minister)/

Structure:

Art disciplines

- Performing arts
- Visual arts
- Music
- Architecture
- Design

Subsidy types: 2 or 4-year subsidy for organizations, subsidy for projects (one year), subsidies for artists for one year (scholarships, projects), international projects (one year)

Organizational forms (multidisciplinary and monodisciplinary)

- multidisciplinary arts centres for production and presentation
- festivals
- art education
- socio-artistic work
- magazines, publications, recording projects
- workspaces

Structural funding : period of 4 years or 2 years,
Project funding (one year)

assessment

- for each art discipline and multidisciplinary art form a fixed committee of assessors
- advisory based on artistic plan and business plan, no quantitative criteria
- minister can add priorities: for instance audience development, cultural diversity
- organizations with +300.000 euro/year: no additional project funding possible, they should include all activities in their plans
- all advises of the different committees are combined in an integrated advise by advisory board of the arts (11 fix members)
- commissions work within budget envelopes based on historical needs, advisory commission gives overall advise based on a budget proposed by the Minister. Advisory board can motivate the need for more money for the arts, final decision by minister.

Budget

Budget increases in 2006 to allow equal funding for all art disciplines

EVALUATION

- distribution of subsidies between 2006 and 2016 is **not equal**: unequal between art disciplines (visual arts stays underfunded), less attention for education and socio-artistic work. Projects and scholarships underfunded.
Inequalities, historically grown, are difficult to correct. Big becomes bigger.
- fixed commissions and their presidents per art discipline and per art form tend to **advocate** for their sector (competition between committees)
- mix between art disciplines and organizational forms is a solution for multidisciplinary initiatives, but creates **separations** on the other hand: different players in the eco-system are advised by different committees (a visual art magazine or visual arts workspace is discussed in a different committee than all the other players in the visual arts)
- the list of organization forms is are the forms as they exist now (**closed boxes**) and not open for new developments and forms. (suppose that a theatre starts a magazine and focuses a lot on young audiences and art education)
- No solution for organizations working with different art disciplines.
- impossible task of the **advisory commission** to create an equal and balanced advise for the Minister
- 2 and 4 years does not work**, with the idea to use 2-year subvention as a guidance towards the 4-year subsidy or a scenario for phasing out the subsidy
Some organizations don't want to grow into 4-year subsidy
It is strange to let organizations test for two years: they are good or not good.

It is strange to inform an organization that they will lose their subsidy and still can work for two years to prepare themselves into a life without subsidy

2.3. 2016. New art decree (second version)

INTENTION

- Equal and future oriented funding system which facilitates artistic plans as artists, art workers and organizations think they should be in our times.
- Less for more: less organizations with correct funding which matches their plans (no underfunding)
- Less pressure on 5-year structural funding by proposing multi-annual project funding
- better balance between budgets for 5-year structural funding and budget for projects and fellowships

Structure:

Art disciplines

- Intention to define art disciplines as specific as possible to ensure as specific expertise in the assessment, and leave space for new art forms by 'other' (applicants can fill in themselves)
- applicants can combine as much art disciplines as they want

<p>Architecture and design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • architecture • design 	<p>Performing arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance • theatre • music-theatre • performance art • other
<p>Visual arts and audiovisual art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audiovisual art • visual kunst • sound art • experimental media art • other 	<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • music-theatre • classical • pop/rock • jazz • folk • world music • other
<p>Transdisciplinary</p>	

Functions

- Development

(all activities with the aim to support research and development, in careers and organisations)

-Production

(all activities with the aim to create, produce, finance, distribute and sales)

-Presentation

(all activities with the aim to make art public: presentation, audience development, mediation, contextualization, art education)

-Reflection

(all activities with the aim to create a context of critical and/or theoretical reflection on art in general, and make these reflections public)

-Participation (co-creation)

(all activities with the aim to actively involve citizens in the creation process of art)

types of subsidy

basic types of subsidy

-structural funding

(5 years)

-project subsidy (artists, curators and organisations)

(1, 2 or 3 years)

-scholarship (or fellowship)

(1, 2 or 3 years)

Mixing of art disciplines and functions are possible.

Example:

An organization can deal with development and presentation in visual arts, performance art and experimental music.

No organizational forms in the subsidy structure, only disciplines and functions.

This new art decree offers possibility to applicants **to express their DNA**, rather than fitting careers, projects and organizations into predefined funding forms. This is the best guaranty to be close to what applicants are, and open for future innovation in forms and disciplines.

Specific subsidy instruments (functions and art disciplines are not applicable)

-loans, partnership projects with other domains, co-financing of international projects

-grants for presentation abroad (transport & accommodation), focus on Flanders art abroad, artists residencies abroad proposed by the government

-art acquisition by the state

assessment

-pool of over 200 experts

experts define their expertise also in art disciplines and functions by self-definition

experts are nominated by Ministry based on an open call for assessors

-ad-hoc committees are put together with experts out of the pool: expertise of assessors matches with the functions and art disciplines marked in dossiers,

-role of presidents of committees is limited to moderation and facilitate quality of discussion. To avoid influence on the content of the discussion, presidents cannot preside a committee which deals with art discipline the president is expert in
-ad-hoc commissions are put together by ministry

-criteria for artistic and business plan: only qualitative criteria
-assessment of artistic and business plan in 5 categories (very good, good, sufficient, close insufficient, completely insufficient)
-artistic assessment is more important than business assessment, a project with negative points for business plan will not succeed
-Minister of Culture can add specific criteria: the actual minister was sensible for support of artists (fee, remuneration), cultural diversity (vision, plan) and own income.

-no predefined budget-envelopes per function nor art discipline, one budget for arts
-Ministry presents advises to the Minister to take a final decision based on the available budget, it's up to minister to find more money, or make choices based on evaluation within the available art budget

-political pressure on the 5-year structural funding, more pressure means often that more money goes to structural funding; which means also less money for projects

EVALUATION

-difficult to make corrections towards equal distribution of funding in functions, art disciplines and different generations of organizations.
-lack of overview in the assessment when dossiers are evaluated in different ad-hoc committees. This system of assessment has the advantage that each dossier gets tailor-made advise, but makes it difficult to assess in relation with other applications and to balance assessment of initiatives into the arts eco-system (balance between functions, art disciplines, continuity versus innovation, senior organisations/artists and newcomers/inflow)
-quality of reviewers is a problem: there is no serious screening of the self-declared expertise and only basic training of assessors is foreseen
-difference in ways of assessing between different committees who assess dossiers in the same fields
-presidents cannot evaluate the quality of reviewers because they preside committees outside their expertise-domains
-the ministry makes the integrated advise towards the Minister of Culture, based on advises by committees: has the Ministry enough insight knowledge in arts eco-system?
-most of the money goes to structural funding, less money for projects and for artists
-difficulty to ensure inflow when there is so much pressure and competition and when budget for the arts was reduced in early 2010ies.

2.4. 2019: small changes in the Arts Decree

- committees: mix of fix members (based on expertise in art discipline) and rotating members. A solution to problem differences in assessment between ad-hoc committees and solution to lack of overview.
- less application dates for projects and scholarships (2 dates instead of 3)
- financial criteria: more own revenue

3. CONCLUSIONS

Overall EVALUATION

Design of art funding system:

- different steps in the design of the arts funding system in Flanders are the result of intense **dialogue** between government and sector, dialogue based on the conviction of a mutual win-win, we fund you and you will make us (Flanders region) big/excellent
- government is convinced by 'follow the actor' principle, rather than imposing top-down ways of making and presenting art and imposing quantitative criteria. Follow initiative of sector, making innovation possible, trust of government in sector.
- only quality, based on peer review, trust in the sectors ability to choose for quality
- trust of government based on international recognition of arts sector
- trust empowers sector to take initiative and innovate
- dialogue between policy (political level and ministry) and sector in Flanders was based on 'the right people on the right place': open minded ministers, civil servants in administration with knowledge about art scene (often people from sector), advocacy based on dialogue and mutual understanding.

Difficulty to realize the promise of equal distribution of public funding when all is based on peer review. Dialogue is necessary between politics and sector, but also within sector, about fairness and solidarity.

Innovation means innovation in ways of making art public, but means also enough place for new players, inflow seems to be very difficult in a sector which is excellent in all levels.

NEED FOR

Individual careers: empowerment, fair relations with organisations and peers
 Organization: transition
 Field: equal, in balance