kunstenpocket
#3

D.I.T.
(Do It Together)
The position of the artist in today's art world.

Delphine Hesters

THE POSITION OF THE ARTIST

FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE

D.I.T. (DO IT TOGETHER). THE POSITION OF THE ARTIST IN TODAY'S ART WORLD. — *Delphine Hesters*

kunstenpocket#3

FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE — BRUSSELS, 2019

D.I.T.
(Do It Together).
The position of the artist in today's art world.

Delphine Hesters

CONTENT

—

—

A WORD OF THANKS —
This pocket publication bears the name of a single author, but it is the result of teamwork. Several segments of the text have already appeared in recent years, in different versions and by different authors, all working for Flanders Arts Institute. My thanks to them all. I take an extra bow to Joris Janssens and Dirk De Wit, who have made this synthesis possible. My thanks also go out to the readers in the field whose feedback has provided extra food for thought.

—

Although the professionalization of the arts sector continues to rise, and global budgets for art are also growing, alarm bells warning about the precarious socio-economic position of artists are ringing louder than before.

INTRODUCTION – For several years now, a wide range of important political, economic, demographic and ecological changes seem to have shifted into a higher gear. In the year 2019, they continue to cause confusion. They are putting our achievements to the test, as well as what we used to consider self-evident. So too in the arts. At the heart of the arts sector are the artists, in all their vulnerability, like canaries in a coal mine. In recent years, the tensions to which they are subjected have been driven ever higher. This is evident in the following series of paradoxes concerning the position of artists.

The professionalization of the arts sector continues to rise, and global budgets for art are also growing (in the last decades, subsidies have increased, while both the art market and the music industry are currently booming).[1] Despite this, alarm bells warning about the precarious socio-economic position of artists are ringing louder than before. Although there are more and more organizations focused on supporting artists and their projects – just think of studio initiatives, artist residencies, art labs, workspaces and alternative management bureaus – artists report that they are having to invest more and more of their time and energy in production, networking, administration and coordination. *'The people working for the institution feel like they do everything for art and the artists. Meanwhile the artist feels like she's the last one on the ladder.'*[2] This was how artist Sarah Vanhee poignantly characterized the relationship between artists and art workers, as sometimes carrying a bitter aftertaste. 'Flexibility', 'working

to measure with the artist' and 'innovation' are part of the DNA of a large number of arts organizations. Nonetheless, debates within the sector today highlight the need for institutional change, and for art institutions to better connect with the needs of artists.

'What we need is a second Flemish Wave: one of our institutions.'[3] On 25 August 2016, Wouter Hillaert spoke these words to the members of the theatre field in a *State of the Union* speech whose effect would continue to reverberate for some time. His inspired call for a critical rethinking of the way art institutions function, from the perspective of their position in society and the role that they play for diverse generations of artists, had hearts beating faster. His *State of the Union* seemed to accelerate a critical conversation already taking place about 'the institutions', or art organizations, and the need for transition – a conversation that has been buzzing for some years now, not only in Flanders, but in the broader international contemporary arts network. What in fact had a sobering effect on me in the many discussions following the speech was the contrast between the great sense of urgency felt by those who identified with Hillaert's criticism, and an inability to comprehend just what the problem was on the parts of many others. This latter group rightly noted that the larger organizations that came under scrutiny in the address have already repeatedly reinvented themselves through the years, and that during all that time, they have continued to support artists and their artistic plans. As a result, a chasm was running through

the different circles of what seemed to be cosily chatting sector buddies.

In this pocket publication, I attempt to grasp the positions of the artists and the difficulties they experience with the way the art world functions today, with a specific focus on the performing arts, visual arts and music – the working domain of Flanders Arts Institute. It is inevitable that this is not just about artists as individuals, but also about the state of 'the sector', about the system as a whole in a world that is rapidly changing. The story I tell is consequently about the entire sector, but now told from the perspective of the artists. With this text, I want to connect with the disillusionment that I felt in the conversations following Hillaert's *State of the Union* speech, setting myself the ambition of helping unravel the lack of understanding on both sides, in order to look to the future with a more shared perspective. This pocket book gratefully gleans material from the publications, symposia and debates that have taken place in the arts sector in recent years, as well as developed under the umbrella of Flanders Arts Institute, in research and development trajectories concerning the (precarious) position of artists, institutions in transition, and the quest for fair practices.

One important starting principle in all that follows is that those things that go wrong can best be understood as 'systemic issues'. It is a familiar pitfall to try to reduce problems to specific actions or intentions of individual people or organizations, wanting to make lists of 'the good ones' and 'the bad ones' in order to correct 'the

bad'. What this is about is the functioning of the system as a whole, about the larger mechanisms in which we all participate, and which no one on their own can simply redirect on the basis of goodwill and hard work.
At Flanders Arts Institute, we refer to the precarious position of the artist as a 'wicked problem', a term that helps bring the complexity and the enormity of certain social challenges better into view.[4] Where wicked problems are concerned, it can clearly be said that there is in fact a problem, but it is not so easy to indicate exactly what makes up a part of the problem and what does not. Wicked problems consequently have no simple description, and the various parties involved – each looking from their own perspective and sets of values – will disagree about what is at the core of 'the problem'. It is therefore also impossible to immediately define 'the solution', or even be able to say when or how the problem might be resolved. There are different potential answers to different partial questions. Efforts to tackle a single aspect of a tough and highly complex problem can in turn reveal or create new problems.

Understanding this does not have to have a numbing or crippling effect. On the contrary. In *System Change: A Practitioner's Companion* (2014), Anna Birney shows us how to best tackle complex problems that require a fundamental switch in the system.[5] The first step is the diagnosis, in which the system as a whole is untangled as comprehensively as possible in order to successfully chart the relevant questions. Of course, every diagnosis of a wicked problem is

just one possible diagnosis. Still, the ambition can entail no less than going as far as possible in order to understand the whole complex knot. This explains the first objective of this pocket book: offering a diagnosis of the position of the artist in the art system of today. Hence, it should also come as no surprise that Part 1 of this text not only concerns the socio-economic position of artists and the challenges of building more sustainable artistic careers, but also touches on such issues as the well-being of the other people working in the arts sector, subsidies and grants, the increasing pressures on organizations, technological disruptions and gender inequality.

A good diagnosis is of course only the beginning. We want to change the world. The second step is to think of possible answers and draw up a strategy. However, it is important to realize that you can never change a complex system as a whole, not even based on a master plan that follows clear steps and switches from System A to System B in a predicted timeframe. What it amounts to is choosing diverse, well-considered, well-directed interventions for specific partial problems. That means working step by step, by way of experiments, through actual practice. Change does not happen by simply applying the familiar recipes. As Einstein supposedly said, *'We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.'* Therefore, strategizing is about more than finding the right technical solution. System change requires changing the way we look at the world and behave within it: a true cultural shift and innovation.

The good news is that this change is already taking place. In practice, in the field today, there are various artists, art workers and organizations involved in developing new working models that strengthen artists, redesigning organizational processes in order to create and shape fairer working relationships. They are forging new connections between activities, resources, people and organizations.

The assignment that Flanders Arts Institute gives itself is to stimulate the development of the field and consequently help facilitate this system change. To do this, we first scan the landscape, in search of 'weak signals' and 'windows of opportunity' for change, in order to bring these together in a coherent narrative: *'bringing together disparate parts to demonstrate that change is already happening and that the shift is inevitable'.* (Birney, 2014)

On the other hand, we also want to actively stimulate new practices. In the spring of 2017, we established D.I.T. (Do It Together), a development trajectory undertaken together with diverse players in the field to reinforce the position of the artist.[6] Within D.I.T., we not only supported several individual initiatives, but also established connections. Building alliances is of course crucial in a system change. The turnaround can only come about if coalitions are formed between the various experiments and smaller initiatives, in order to 'upscale' the answers and shift value frames on a wider scale. This way, they expand their influence, and more and more people become engaged.

This pocket book not only aims to give insight into the position of artists today (see the diagnosis below), but also to inspire. Part 2 provides an overview of answers that are already being developed today, in attempts to strengthen artists and evolve towards a more durable and fair future. Will these truly make a difference and bring about broader change? Only the future will tell. What we do know is that it is the doers who are showing the way.

PART I

A DIAGNOSIS

This diagnosis of the position of artists takes the form of a diptych. Part 1 focuses on the artist as a professional in today's contemporary art world, Part 2 on the shifts and challenges that present themselves in the relationships between artists and art organizations. For each case, I first provide a context sketch, a snapshot of how the system functions today, in order to then indicate what the problems are that artists are experiencing.

Because we are dealing with a 'wicked problem', this cannot be anything other than a possible diagnosis, in which certain things come to light and others do not. This is the result of intentional choices, but just as often of what is inevitably too limited a view of the situation. In this text, I bring together insights that have evolved through years of research and interaction with players from the performing and visual arts and music, on the parts of Flanders Arts Institute and its predecessors, VTi (Flemish Theatre Institute), BAM (Flemish Institute for Visual, Audiovisual and Media Art) and Muziekcentrum Vlaanderen (Flanders Music Centre). We have already identified more specificities for some (sub)disciplines than for others, something that will be apparent in the remainder of the text. But this should not stand in the way of drawing up a balance. This narrative is never finished, and every time that we tell it, it will reveal yet new insights and generate more discussions and feedback, with which we can understand more deeply than we did before.

It should be noted that this text does not have a separate section in which policies concerning artists are specifically delineated. Where I consider it relevant, I do refer to ways in which policy reinforces or buffers certain evolutions or issues. The focus however, remains on the players in the field of practice. This is also true in Part 2, in our search for answers.

1.
THE ARTIST AS PROFESSIONAL

1.1.
CONTEXT SKETCH

We start out with a wide-open door: so many different artists, so many different ways of working. Some work primarily, and preferably, as individuals, others in collectives. One artist spends a full career within the same structure or collaboration, while another operates as a freelancer in ever changing environments. While one always works in the same city or neighbourhood, the other leads a nomadic life with diverse projects in different countries. Many of these parameters go hand-in-hand with the specific nature of the artistic disciplines. In literature or the visual arts, for instance, the work is more individual, while in the performing arts, music or film, the work is essentially the result of collaboration. Nevertheless, in recent decades it has become apparent that this stereotypical distinction no longer suffices to get a grip on the reality of the artists in the various disciplines. We observe that from a social and organizational point of view, more and more similarities are emerging in how artists navigate through the different contexts in which they are active.

In this sketch, we provide a birds-eye view of which important evolutions have led to the state in which the art world now finds itself. They help us understand the challenges that artists face today and which I then list.

FLEXIBILIZATION IN THE COLLECTIVE SECTORS

The evolutions that have marked the 'collective sectors' of the performing arts and music have something of a

—

In the ‘collective sectors’ of the performing arts and music, the classical company structure with fixed ensembles as the basic model has made way for project-based work.

Copernican twist. As early as their 2007 field analysis, the Flemish Theatre Institute (VTi) saw the 'individualization' of the performing arts as one of the great metamorphoses marking the performing arts landscape of Flanders: since the 1990s the classical company structure with fixed ensembles as the basic model has made way for project-based work. Since then, more and more productions are realized without the artists being structurally engaged with the producers for any significant length of time. Today, the average performing artist works from project to project and is engaged by diverse organizations, based on fixed-term (and often short-term) contracts. In classical music, a similar phenomenon is taking place. These 'flex workers' are the epitome of the new career era in which the hierarchical, stable career of yesteryear makes way for unattached or nomadic careers, in which flexibility, individual initiative and mobility between diverse clients have become core principles. (Forrier, 2007) Although the labour market as a whole is not yet taking such a course, and the majority of employees in Belgium are still working in fairly traditional careers, the arts sector (and by extension the wider creative sector) certainly forms the exception to this rule.

The forces driving this evolution are diverse. One important factor is the 'cost disease' being suffered in the 'live arts' of performance and music. Back in 1965, Baumol & Bowen identified the structural economic problem of sectors in which the growing expense of salaries was not being met by a rise in productivity. Today, the performance of a string quartet by Beethoven still requires just as many musicians and just as much time as it did in the 19th century, but in the year 2019, the fees involved are far higher. Live arts performances require the physical presence of the artist(s) every time the work is performed. Automating or reducing this work would fundamentally change the nature of the work itself. In times in which the pressure for efficiency is

so strong and the range of tasks demanded of arts organizations is constantly expanding, while the means are not growing according to the actual costs, it is claimed that maintaining ensembles is no longer affordable. Contracts have taken on the limited duration of a specific creation, or perhaps a tour. Either that, or people are recompensed for individual performances.

Another shift that has also contributed to this is a switch in the role that subsidies and grants fulfil today. Subsidies are not only used to make and distribute performances, but have increasingly become a lever in the search for extra resources. This logic, sharpened by a number of subsidy cuts, has meant that different organizations use their structural subsidy to pay for the basic operation of the organization, while the artistic resources have to be generated through co-productions or extra project resources. As a result, the artistic budgets, from which often artists are paid, have become systematically flexible.

Making the artistic costs of performing arts organizations more flexible was a more obvious option than making the other associated jobs flexible, for yet another reason. After all, this was in line with the desire on the parts of artists to nourish themselves more broadly, to develop artistically.

An important factor in this is what Marianne Van Kerkhoven (2002) referred to as the emancipation of the 'autonomous actor'. In the performing arts as we know them in Flanders, actors and dancers are not simply performers executing the work of someone else, but co-creators of the works they perform. They often have artistic visions of their own, actively seek new experiences and people with whom they can collaborate, alternating between creating work and performing, depending on the project. For many, in any case, the ensemble model, in which the same group of artists work exclusively with each other for years on end, is no

longer attractive. Similar mechanisms are also no strangers in jazz, for example, or contemporary classical music.

In actual situations, it is of course not always precisely clear what the deciding factor is – the restrictive conditions or the artistic vision – in the decisions that artists make. Does a small collective perform a piece that was written for a large cast, in which every actor plays different roles, out of artistic motives, or because of pragmatic concerns? Does a dancer begin working on a solo of his own because of a strong artistic drive, or because no other projects are on offer, and he needs to remain visible in a rapidly evolving world?

SHIFTING FORCE FIELDS IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Traditionally, visual artists work alone, in a constantly changing constellation of partners, including commissioners, exhibition makers, collectors and galleries. Here and there, personal relations and engagements offered a little more continuity. In recent decades, this field of players has strongly developed, while artists have long remained in the midst of it as individuals. Today, we see that this is changing. Artists are becoming more aware that working alone is no longer a thing of the times, and are seeking relationships that reach beyond the single commission, exhibition, sale or residency.

In Flanders, for decades, the visual arts grew from the bottom up, from the conviction and inspiration of a few strong, individual actors. Until the 1970s, private initiatives set the tone. Only afterwards, a number of purely public initiatives were made possible in Flanders, including the various museums of contemporary art. Nonetheless, it is striking that even these institutions were not established from a coherent vision on the part of government, but primarily out of voluntarism on the parts of private individuals. As a result, the world of visual arts was more than once described as

a fragmented landscape, with more inclination to competition than to working collectively. Although the visual art world today still bears traces of this, according to Valerie Verhack (2019), it cannot be denied that in the last 10 or 15 years, it has developed into an exciting ecosystem of private, public and non-profit actors.

In the last 20 years, the Flemish authorities have taken a more active interest in the visual arts, resulting in important incentives for artists, art organizations and museums, among other reasons because, for the first time, the *Kunstendecreet*, or *Arts Decree*, gave the visual arts an official, legal framework. The initial enthusiasm for that attention has, however, diminished somewhat in the last few years. The 'catch-up operation' that was expected for the further professionalization of the field failed to materialize, and grants and other structural subsidies are again being reduced. In 2006, 174 project subsidies and grants were allocated. By the year 2017, that number was down to only 86. (Janssens, Leenknegt & Hesters 2018)

Today, we have to conclude that there are still gaps in the ecosystem in the visual arts. Those gaps in the ecology are situated primarily between development, production and presentation. In Flanders, research and development expanded exponentially in the last two decades. Artist residencies were established that attracted artists from Belgium and abroad, including AIR Antwerp, WIELS and the private Thalielab initiative. Workspaces were created for a diverse palette of practices and materials. A number of presentation venues equally create space for artists who can work in residence for longer periods of time. In addition, higher art education offers opportunities to professionals in such institutions as HISK, as well as through research and PhD's in the arts.

Things are different where support for production is concerned. Larger presentation venues increasingly co-finance new work in regards to exhibitions, but do not necessarily support its production. Smaller venues are financially not in a position to support production. This uneven balance in capability also applies to the for-profit world: due to rising costs in the gallery world (rents, staff, participating in art fairs, etc.), smaller and mid-sized galleries are less able to invest in the production of new work, while the major galleries that profit from rising prices for the work of celebrated artists are indeed able to do so, with increasingly large amounts of money.

Important missing links are bridges to a sufficiently layered field of venues for presentations, which should make it possible to achieve a consciously delineated trajectory for artists. An important factor that has broken a dynamic that had already started taking shape is that, since 2017, several venues in Flanders that focus on the production and presentation of rising talent have lost their subsidies.

The lack of facilities to bridge the hiatuses in the ecosystem has to do with the fact that art organizations and galleries are still thinking on a project-to-project basis. One at a time, they undertake engagements with an artist for a single project, and do not focus enough on long-term partnerships. On the other hand, in this regard, we see some hopeful signals from art organizations that are seeking longer-term engagements with artists in order to create continuity and stability in their mutual relationships, in their own functioning and in building up their audiences. Kunstencentrum Z33 and Netwerk Aalst, for example, are shifting the approach from a rapid succession of themed exhibitions to longer-lasting partnerships and trajectories with artists. Another inspiring example is the collaboration between Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

(MDD), Galerie Tommy Simoens and an investment bank, in order to support a multi-year trajectory with artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. Gallery owner Sofie Van de Velde pleads for a strong dialogue with artists about the direction they want to grow, as a basis for a trajectory that encompasses development, production and presentation. (Vranken, 2017)

In the meantime, these gaps are also being partly filled by dynamic initiatives established by artists and freelance curators. This concerns a multiplicity of individual initiatives that we tend to disrespectfully lump together as 'off-spaces' and 'project spaces' (see below). They respond to real needs, but for the time being, they are operating under conditions that are as precarious as those of the artists themselves.

The rapidly changing social context, with such trends as globalization of the art market and increasing entrepreneurship amongst artists, has seriously shaken up relationships between the private collector, the artist and the public institution. *'Globalization did create possibilities: in principle you can develop, produce and show work anywhere in the world, in a growing number of museums, presentation organizations, residencies and biennials. But that growth also has its downside. A small number of galleries and museums developed themselves into mega-institutions with worldwide outreach, in the form of branch establishments on other continents. That enlargement in scale results in the enormous growth that only benefits the limited number of artists whom they represent. In short, beneath that growth, there is tension and inequality: Did the gap between the haves and the have-nots in the visual arts grow larger? The fact that the market is growing does not mean that more artists are better off for it.'* (Janssens, 2018; De Wit, 2018a) Because of drastically rising prices, public museums are now rarely able to purchase art for their

collections. Major museums that are sponsored by wealthy collectors work closely together with the big galleries, producing intense concentrations of power. Today, the 'public-private collaboration' that used to support diverse artists has disintegrated, thanks to the supremacy of capital over artistic and civil values.

Many artists today work without a gallery, sometimes as a conscious choice, and sometimes because their work is not sufficiently or not at all market orientated. According to the data that Flanders Arts Institute (previously BAM) has collected on the careers of professional artists in Flanders, this concerns about half of the visual artists (in 2015, 309 out of 633). (Leenknegt, 2016) Those who have no gallery not only have less access to the art market, but not having a gallery can also have an impact on the costs of presentations, overall income and the way in which artists are able to organize themselves. (Sacco, 2018)

An ever-growing number of visual artists, just like musicians and filmmakers, for example, are setting up their own channels and directly seeking contact with the public and buyers. Visual artists are using Instagram and Pinterest, for example, and galleries as well are increasingly seeking online possibilities for making sales. While setting up your own locations and channels can offer opportunities, it reinforces the image of the artist who has to manage everything on his or her own.

DIGITAL DISRUPTIONS IN MUSIC

In (non-classical) music, the situation is completely different … and yet not so different. Here, there has been no question of any explosive growth of the market. Following a major shrinking of global sales of recorded music since the turn of the century, there was a slight growth in 2015 and 2016. That growth has to do with the rise of the

digital market, which is now responsible for more than half of global income. Sixty percent of that digital income has meanwhile come from streaming platforms.

What does this mean for the musicians? Digitalization has generated huge shifts in the way people listen to music, and consequently also in the distribution channels and means of earning money on the parts of musicians. What is striking is that these technological disruptions have widened the gap between the haves the have-nots even further. For some, streaming platforms have generated breakthroughs, but for most, it has become all the more difficult to earn anything through music. (Janssens 2018b) Moreover, digitalization reaches to the very heart of the metier: software for writing and producing music has had a huge impact. Composers and musicians no longer need to pick up pen and paper or even musical instruments. Today, they can just sit at a computer. This expansion of possibilities can be confrontational for those who have invested long years in education and training in mastering their professional skills.

On the other hand, these technical possibilities have created broad democratization (even if that means a parallel rise in competition). The distribution of music can now be separated from the moment of release of the physical recording, so that songs can in principle still be picked up months or years after their release. Online platforms also play an important role in artists' search for different models of distribution and for building a community that they, rather than the big companies, can direct themselves (see below).

Here too, the gap in the 'winner-takes-all' music market goes hand in hand with increasing monopolization on the parts of large enterprises that assume the role of gatekeeper. They are de facto deciders of who gets an audience and who does not, as well as what formats have to be followed in

the work. They operate to the logic of making money. This commercialization makes it ever more difficult for smaller players to keep their heads above water and threatens the diversity of the kinds of music being created.

BETWEEN ART AND CREATIVITY

In recent decades, artists have taken up a position in society with a broader perspective and practice. In part, that has gone hand in hand with the aforementioned rising impact of the market and with digitalization, but it is also thanks to a wider interest in the arts from other cultural sectors and societal domains.

Today, art is everywhere, and it has never before been so broadly embraced: art tourism, art studios used to boost urban development, art projects in 'difficult' neighbourhoods, cross-pollination between art and science, art commissions from government agencies and so on. Willingness to engage with artists offers excellent opportunities for engendering dialogue with diverse audiences, with different 'publics'. But it also brings threats. This expansion of the artist's working territory does not necessarily lead to an improvement of their socio-economic position. While the spillover from their work is considerable for society at large, very little of that added value seeps into solid income for those who create it. Artists are often used as catalysts for other purposes (read: 'instrumentalization'). Art then risks to become a convenient resource, decoration or a simple functional object.

It seems a strange paradox: while the added value of art for society is strongly questioned today, artists are more than ever before being 'discovered' and made use of by others. Perhaps we can best understand this in line with the ubiquitous pressure for 'creativity' in our wider society. Not only artists, but also business managers, teachers, insurance agents, policy makers etc. are being expected to

embrace creativity in their everyday professional practices. With this, the image of the artist as society perceives him or her also undergoes a shift. In the social discourse, artists are seen either as part of a broad and anonymous army of multi-use 'creatives', or – at the other end of the spectrum – as hyper-wealthy jetsetters.

In this context, art organizations play a crucial role in realizing the positive potential promised by this expansion of the playing field of artists, by helping mediate amongst all these different partners and by building protective buffers for singular artistic practices.

—

It seems
a strange paradox:
while the added value
of art for society
is strongly questioned
today, artists are
more than ever before
being ‘discovered’
and made use of
by others.

—

Artists are showing a considerable amount of 'entrepreneurship': the capacity to mobilize the necessary resources in order to realize an artistic project.

1.2
CHALLENGES FOR ARTISTS

Where we have thus far taken a birds-eye view, we now look at things from a ground-level perspective. We step into the shoes of the artist who is at the centre of the system, banging against the boundaries. What follows is a summary of the difficulties, tensions and challenges that artists today experience, as professionals. Being an artist certainly does not have to involve only trouble and affliction, but focusing on the problems does make it possible to ascertain where the system needs to be changed. Not every artist experiences every one of the issues mentioned below, or experiences them in the same way. The challenges appear in diverse combinations and each deserve the requisite attention.

MULTIPLE JOB JUGGLING

One phenomenon that inevitably makes up part of the reality of the flex worker, or of the individually operating artist, is 'multiple job holding': the simultaneous execution of different jobs, in and out of the arts, either motivated by (artistic) interest, or by (financial) necessity. In Flanders, several investigations have been conducted that chart this multiple job phenomenon.

In the 2016 survey, *Loont Passie* (Does Passion Pay?, Siongers & Van Steen), 2706 artists in the visual arts, music, performing arts, literature and film from Flanders were questioned about their social demographic profiles, activities, how they spend their time, incomes, professional expenses, statutes and job satisfaction.[7] The research looked into four types of activities that the respondents engaged in during the year 2014: artistic activities in their own primary artistic disciplines, activities associated with or related to those disciplines (such as teaching or coaching, production, administrative work, communications and so on),

artistic activities in other disciplines, and jobs that have nothing to do with the arts.

A very high percentage of the artists responding to the questionnaire crossed diverse categories. Hence, they clearly combine several different activities. The art sector is indeed populated with many such people as Joshua Dellaert, who can introduce himself as 'bassist / label boss / booking agent / teacher', or 'choreographer / performer / curator / editor' Michiel Vandevelde, or 'musician / business collaborator' Sebastien Paz Ceroni.[8]

The following reveals some of the results:

- Of the 899 musicians and composers who took part in the research, 90% performed in 2014, 70% had studio recordings, and 60% composed or arranged. More than 60% also taught, nearly 30% produced, and 15% did management. About one out of three of the musicians and composers also held jobs entirely outside the arts.
- In the visual arts, we saw that 90% of the 716 respondents created their own artistic work and almost 80% exhibited in 2014. More than 40% gave lectures or guided visits to exhibitions, and more than 50% did business-related work, while fully half of them also taught, and 40% also held jobs unrelated to the arts.
- In the performing arts, about 75% of the 391 respondents indicated that in 2014, they worked on their own creations. An equal percentage performed. Sixty percent conducted research, and 60% took part in creations by other artists. More than half of the respondents were involved in more than four different stage productions in 2014. Sixty-five percent taught, and over 40% did production or management. One out of four performing artists had paid jobs outside the arts sector. In 2014, research that looked separately into the socio-economic position of actors revealed that in the reference month of November 2013, 40% of actors in Flanders were actively

involved with more than one theatre company. (Siongers & Van Steen 2014)

Another interesting source is the doctoral research by Annelies Van Assche into precariousness in contemporary dance. Eight out of ten Brussels respondents to her study indicated that they had more than one job at the moment the inquiry took place. (Van Assche & Laermans, 2015; Van Assche, 2018) That mixed professional practices are more the rule than the exception, is something also Camiel Van Winkel, Pascal Gielen and Koos Zwaan discovered, in the context of their study of the 'hybrid artist' in the visual arts. One of the biggest challenges in all of this remains having enough time and mental space for one's own autonomous practice, the artists indicated. (Van Winkel, Gielen & Zwaan, 2012)

Combining diverse activities is also seen in estimations of how artists distribute their time. How the average artist divides his or her time appears to be about the same right across the various disciplines. On average, purely artistic activities take up slightly more than half of artists' total working time.[9] Musicians and composers spend a quarter of their time on related activities (such as teaching, management and production) and 15% on jobs unrelated to the arts. For performing and visual artists, the percentage is reversed: they spend 10 to 15% of their time on related activities and 20 to 25% on activities outside the arts sector.

Combining diverse activities can be the results of interest, but for most artists, it is simply a financial necessity: they take on other activities in order to earn an income that makes it possible for them to make their artistic work whenever that work is not enough to generate sufficient income and/or requires extra investment. Artists are inevitably the first to 'subsidize' their own practices. What these conclu-

sions amount to is that artists are showing a considerable amount of 'entrepreneurship'. Indeed, the definition that Cultuurloket, the Flemish organisation for business and legal advice for artists and creatives, gives to 'entrepreneurship' in the arts is: the capacity to mobilize the necessary resources (financial and material, as well as personnel) in order to realize an artistic project. (www.cultuurloket.be, see also Van de Velde & Van Looy, 2013) Entrepreneurship on the parts of artists reveals itself moreover at yet other levels than simply finding the necessary resources. It concerns everything that they do in order to shape a meaningful place in both the artistic and the overall social context, for themselves and for their singular practices.

The reality of needing to hold down multiple jobs also means that for today's artists, making strong artistic work is not enough. Whoever wants to successfully wend his or her way through the contemporary flexible working context to build a career as an artist can best have an extensive range of competencies, which we can summarize as *'knowing how, knowing whom and knowing why'*. It demands a willingness to constantly keep learning in widely diverse areas and the elasticity to be able to move with a sector that is rapidly evolving. You not only have to vigorously pursue networking in order to maintain good contacts with people or organizations that can be of importance for your work (i.e. 'knowing who'), but combining diverse activities in different legal arrangements, for example, requires considerable study in order to have an overview of your rights and obligations, what taxes and social contributions need to be paid). When, in addition, broader evolutions interfere, such as technological changes that intervene at the very heart of your metier, so that the nature of your artistic creation and your encounter with your audience are drastically changed, it is clear that for artists, lifelong learning is an absolute must. Alas, constantly having to hone up on non-artistic

competencies is not everyone's cup of tea. And inevitably, we lose special artists and projects along the way for non-artistic reasons.

ECONOMIC PRECARITY: DOES PASSION PAY?

In the overall system in which we find ourselves today, flexible working practices turn out to go hand in hand with low income. Those who work from project to project inevitably face periods of inactivity. When these are not sufficiently or not at all compensated by periods when one is working, and being paid to work, global income will hover at low levels. This is what we see in the performance and (classical) music sectors, in which the starting point is payment for work rendered, but where the periods of work are short (and getting shorter), and remuneration generally hovers at the lowest minima of collective labour agreement regulations. In the visual arts, the situation is even more precarious, with creation as such rarely having any financier – unless one includes the artists themselves. Moreover, it remains a daily reality that visual artists have to fight the case that artistic work made on commission, or exhibited, deserves any recompense at all.

The research project, *Loont Passie?* (Siongers & Van Steen, 2016), and the study into actors also mentioned above, took stock of the total net annual incomes of artists in Flanders, in the form of income from *all* sources (salaries, sales, KVR, copyrights, social benefits, grants and so on) minus professional costs. The following tables give an overview of the annual incomes for those organized entirely under the status of employee (Table 1) and for those who are fully self-employed (Table 2).[10]

In 2014, median annual income for the artists who have the employee status was highest in literature and music (20,600 and 20,000 Euros, respectively), followed by actors and

filmmakers (19,000 and 18,000 Euros, respectively), then by (other) performing artists (at 17,000 Euros), with visual artists bringing up the rear (with 12,600 Euros for the year). What this median amounts to is that of every 100 artists in each discipline, 50% earn more per year and 50% less. If we compare the income of the self-employed artists with the income of the employee-artists, we see that median incomes are consistently higher in film, music and the performing arts, and consistently lower in visual art and literature. This is consistent with the fact that the relationship employer-employee is the basic principle within the first group of disciplines, and the decision to become self-employed is one that the artists can make themselves if and when it is financially advantageous for them to do so. That choice does not exist in literature or the visual arts, where salaried employment does not generally present itself and self-employment is the default option.[11]

These amounts, and the differences between the disciplines, come into perspective when we compare them to the median incomes of Belgium's entire population. The Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten (Performing Arts Social Fund) calculated that in 2013, the median net annual income of all Belgian taxpayers was 24,664 Euros. Apart from self-employed directors and screenwriters, there is not a single discipline in the arts that approaches this amount. Given the fact that 85% of the responding artists had higher education degrees, versus about 40% of the overall population, we cannot but conclude that globally speaking, artists' incomes are low.

Together with low incomes, it is primarily the great uncertainty in these professions that is a worry for the artists, and this means that many of them regularly feel forced to consider stopping altogether. (Siongers & Van Steen, 2016)

TABLE 1. NET ANNUAL INCOME FOR ARTISTS WITH EMPLOYEE STATUS (IN EUROS), 2014

	Directors & screenwriters	Visual artists	Authors & illustrators	Musicians & composers	Performing artists	Actors*
Average	24,965	14,715	21,752	22,877	17,504	19,952
1 quartile	12,600	7,000	12,000	12,000	11,360	14,017
Median	18,000	13,786	20,670	20,000	17,142	19,000
3 quartile	26,000	20,000	29,850	29,700	24,000	24,000
Number of respondents	*139*	*211*	*97*	*305*	*166*	*173*

TABLE 2. NET ANNUAL INCOME FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED ARTISTS (IN EUROS), 2014

	Directors & screenwriters	Visual artists	Authors & illustrators	Musicians & composers	Performing artists	Actors*
Average	37,831	15,502	19,884	34,395	39,400	26,847
1 quartile	14,500	4,000	10,000	14,750	12,000	x
Median	26,677	12,000	17,000	24,000	20,000	x
3 quartile	50,000	21,050	27,149	32,750	35,000	x
Number of respondents	*91*	*89*	*80*	*86*	*41*	*48*

* For actors, the reference year is 2012.

TABLE 3.
LIVING EXCLUSIVELY ON ARTISTIC WORK (2014)

20%	Directors & scriptwriters
11%	Visual artists
12%	Writers & illustrators
12%	Musicians & composers
10%	Performance artists
8%	Actors*

TABLE 4.
LIVING EXCLUSIVELY ON WORK WITHIN THE ARTS SECTOR (2014)

50%	Directors & scriptwriters
50%	Musicians & composers
31%	Visual artists
27%	Performance artists
26%	Writers & illustrators

* For actors, the reference year is 2012.

Tables 3 and 4 look at the issue of income in another way: who amongst the artists can live from their artistic work? And who can earn a living from the diverse kinds of work available within the artistic sector?

Twenty percent of directors and scriptwriters can live from making films. In all the other disciplines, only about one out of ten professional artists can live from art alone. If we broaden the scope and look at the groups that can survive within the wider art world (from teaching, production, business-related work and so on), then this amounts to half of the artists in film and music, one out of three visual artists and one out of four performing or literary artists (table 4).

A major portion of artists have to bridge the gaps with some other kind of work. But unemployment compensation of one kind or another also plays an important role during those periods between paid employment, and in weaving all the activities together into a relevant, feasible whole. Performance artists, more than other artist groups, can fall back on such compensation in accordance with the 'Artists Statute' (Kunstenaarsstatuut) (47% of performance respondents).[12] In the other disciplines, fewer than 25% can make use of that option. The fact that the Kunstenaarsstatuut arrangement is far better adapted to the realities of the stage arts can be seen in the fact that visual and literary artists rely more on other forms of unemployment benefits than those defined by the Kunstenaarsstatuut. (Siongers & Van Steen, 2016)

In addition to incomes from jobs and social security compensation, personal savings, income from partners or support from parents are also relevant for artists. For us, as a sector and as a society, this means that we need to ask ourselves just who, with what social background, is able to be an artist, and can or has the courage to take on the financial risks. (Hesters 2017a)

Given the economic reality in which so many artists find themselves, a programmer, curator, artistic director today can best presume that the artist sitting across the table has a hard time making ends meet, rather than imagining that everything is okay. It is also important here to explicitly establish that this also concerns artists who are genuinely embraced by the sector, those who are supported and represented by even the most prestigious institutions, who receive project grants or who work with structurally subsidized groups, companies or ensembles. Within our current system, the relationship between artistic success and income is asymmetrical: those who support themselves entirely through their art probably have artistic qualities to offer – or in any case qualities for which there is a market. Those who cannot survive entirely from their art can still be fantastic artists.

There is something fundamentally wrong when professional sectors, in which work is conducted in diverse kinds of vocations and in diverse kinds of institutions, function in such a way that precisely their most central players cannot succeed in living from their professional practice. When at the end of each month, successful and recognized artists still find themselves below the poverty level, it is an important signal that the entire internal system of working, collaborating, remuneration and social protection is due for a revision.[13] (Hesters 2017b)

Agnes Quackels of the BUDA Arts Centre in Kortrijk summarized it as follows in her invitation to BUDA's *The Fantastic Institution* conference in February of 2017: *'Within the current political realm, and surely since 2008, the reality is that what was at the very core of our beautifully professionalized field is being slowly siphoned off: project funding is disappearing, co-productions are becoming rare, artists are creating in long-term uncertainty, being structurally underpaid, overworked and over-dependent in the development of their practices. And the supporting*

—

When at the end
of each month,
successful artists
still find themselves
below the poverty level,
it is an important signal
that the entire internal
system of working,
collaborating, remuneration
and social protection
is due for a revision.

—

The myth of
the growing art career
not only obscures reality,
but can also be harmful
for those preferring to
pursue a different course.
All too often,
the reasoning is reversed:
those who fail to grow
‘cannot possible be
top artists’.

organizations (workspaces, production and presentation houses, etc.) have neither the means nor the function to compensate for this escalating scarcity.' [14]

CAREERS BEYOND THE GROWTH MODEL

It is a hard-to-break myth that a successful art career follows a straight line, step-by-step to the top: forward and upward, from a budding talent that is first discovered and then acknowledged, then reaching mid-career, to there find recognition, and finally able to pluck the fruits of being an established and celebrated artist. In reality, careers can grow too quickly and crash (which is what we are seeing today in the visual art market boom, as well as in the music industry). Careers can stagnate and then pick up again. Oeuvres can be recognized only late in someone's career, sometimes even decades after the artist has died.

That myth of the presumed art career not only obscures reality, which is far less predictable and rose-coloured, but can also be harmful for those preferring to pursue a different course. All too often, the reasoning is reversed: those who fail to grow – in income, co-producers, prestigious partners, audience numbers, sales, international reputation and so on – 'cannot possible be top artists'. An involuntary scent of failure hovers around those who do not show that kind of growth. The assumption that a career has to develop in a specific way also feeds the great focus in the arts on the discovery of 'the new'. Curators, programmers and managers engage themselves in discovering young, promising artists, to the glory of their own artistic profile, but also to give them opportunities and to 'launch' them. The idea that the artists will then be 'picked up' and able to move up the ladder in a kind of inherent logic of the artist's career, is in fact untenable. We have models for the entry or start-up of careers, but we are still looking for models for their continuation. Mid-career artists, who are no longer

new, but who cannot guarantee a support structure of their own or sufficient sales, have a hard time. This is a shame. Too often, interesting artists disappear from view because of a lack of professional stepping stones, at the very time that their artistic work is becoming more and more mature and deepened. (Sussman, 2019)

Today, that model of growth of the artistic career is accessible only to a very few. This is in part because of the economic climate and circumstances in the field and the art market, but also because, for a number of artists, 'growth' of this kind is not the objective. Today, several artists testify of a shift in focus, from 'product' to 'practice', from 'individual oeuvre' to 'co-creation', and from attaining a position in a given discipline to changing contexts and forms. These artists have a different perspective on art and how it functions in the world. This is how I understood the following provocative statements in Wouter Hillaert's *State of the Union* speech: *'"Who is ready to throw us off the throne and succeed us?", I once heard one of our Great Talents call out on the radio. "I don't see it!" The problem, dear Jan, is not the succession, but the throne itself. Most artists in their 20s and 30s are interested in something other than the throne room.'* Whether 'most' artists in their 20s or 30s are interested in something else, I dare not venture to confirm, but I can confirm that that one dominant model is certainly flanked by other models of artistic practices, development and careers. Therefore, the conditions or institutional contexts in which they thrive best are also different, as are the parameters within which 'success' itself can be measured.

In 2012, I conducted 20 interviews with artists from different disciplines who called Brussels their base about working and living as artists. One question I asked all of them was how they defined 'success'. The answer was almost in total unison: succeeding in carrying on further their artistic practice.

That the the 'growth' model as a description and the ideal image of the successful artistic career is a fraud, is something that many could ascribe to. The question is in fact what other images or metaphors we can come up with, which better concur with the diversity of the reality and which put the sector in a position to delineate more effective support models. Investing in new images is important. It might be a cliché, but an image is indeed worth more than 1000 words. *'Unless words, concepts and ideas can be hooked together with an image, they will go in one ear, flit through our brains, and go right back out the other ear. (...) When text and image send contradictory messages, it is the visual message that usually wins.'* (Raworth, 2017) As long as we keep associating the word 'career' with a straight ascending line, we will keep getting stuck.

ON INTERNATIONALIZATION AND GUEST WORKERS

In *Freedom and Frenzy*, his keynote speech at the Flanders Arts Institute conference on working transnationally within the arts in 2017, curator and producer Ash Bulayev drew a sketch of two artists he works with, Maria Hassabi and Trajal Harral, with the following words: *'[They] are both artists who up until recently were based in New York City, both working within contemporary dance practice. In the past few years, both have chosen to leave New York and relocate to Europe. It was a decision that was not taken lightly, for in Maria's case, New York had been her home and community for over 20 years. Right now, both Maria and Trajal are essentially art nomads, calling Belgium, France, Greece and the US their temporary bases. Both artists are objectively successful in their field, with major commissions and presentations all over the world. Neither has any structural funding from any of the above countries, nor any institutional association. They are not attached or supported by any theatre or production house for any extended period of time, and their pro-*

duction model is spread across multiple continents, with a patchwork (a very successful one indeed) of co-productions, commissions, residencies, and private and public funding. If described to an outsider, their professional lives and tempo seem truly manic, illustrating a freelance artist's lifestyle.' In 2006, Nasr Hafez went a step farther and referred to the transnational community of mobile dancers as the 'cosmo-proletariat': navigating between the worlds great cities with the lifestyle of the cosmopolitan, but the socio-economic reality of the proletariat.

Bulayev uses the word 'nomad', but perhaps the term 'guest worker' would be more appropriate to understanding their situation. (Hesters, 2006) Hyper-mobile artists inevitably move to the rhythm, and in the direction where opportunities for work are available. That condition, and the expectation it infers that their stay will be temporary, means that they only selectively invest in whatever place they find themselves. Their geographic world is large, but their social world is not. I have seen diverse choreographers and dancers draw the disconcerting conclusion that they might well have been established in Brussels for more than a decade, and still speak no Dutch or have any idea whatsoever what news is making the headlines in the Belgian newspapers.

The language barrier makes guest workers vulnerable. A great deal of crucial information about rights and obligations, residency and work permits, social security and taxes, for example, is not directly accessible to them. The income, legal and fiscal situations of artists with flexible working conditions is already a complicated matter. Add to this the extra complexity that comes with living and working in a foreign country, and you know that many international artists regularly find themselves feeling around in the dark in precarious, sometimes illegal situations. Even with the guidance of experienced management bureaus

or institutions, it is often still trial and error. Kafka never seems very far away.

They also miss out on money. Those paying social security contributions in Belgium do not necessarily receive benefits should they happen to live in Germany in three years time. And there is no guarantee that the pension one has been building up will materialize when one grows older, back in the United States. Migrants also miss the strength of the social network that people have when they live close to family and friends. That basic social network carries a treasure trove of information that helps people navigate in a society, and consists of people whom you can fall back on in times of setbacks.

In the context of international mobility, there is yet another form of precariousness that plays a role. The hyper-mobile artist that is described above is usually Western. Many artists from other parts of the world are restricted in their mobility. (Janssens, 2018) Here is an example close to home: in February 2018, during *Moussem Cities*, the annual festival of the nomadic Moussem Arts Centre, performances had to be cancelled because the Moroccan dancers were unable to get their visas for Belgium on time. Maria Daïf, who was to moderate a debate, did in fact manage to get a visa at the last minute, but decided to cancel, explaining why in an open letter: *'Europe today treats every Arab or African like a potential immigrant, or worse, like a terrorist. It is simply the purest racism.'* Moussem director Mohamed Ikoubaân supported her decision. *'For young artists, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get into Europe, something that is both a serious infringement on the freedom and movement of artists and their ideas and on the artistic freedom of every European organizer, programme maker or artistic director who works with artists from these regions.'* (Anrys, 2018) During the three-day *The Return of the Fantastic Institution* at BUDA in the same period, Mai Abu

ElDahab shared comparable stories of injustice and frustration that have unfortunately become everyday fare for her organization, Mophradat. Access to the 'transnational art space' for production and presentation is seriously unequal, and that unequal access has little to do with artistic quality, and everything with passports.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The combinations of diverse projects and jobs, further exacerbated by the great uncertainty and competitiveness that are inherent to living as an artist, lay claims on the lives of artists, in all their aspects. Recently, actor Filip Peeters provided another good example, when in a television interview in November 2018, he said that for the first time, he was daring to plan a summer holiday with his wife and children. This man is one of Flanders' most famous television and film actors. He is in his 50s, and only now does he permit himself a period of unavailability for new roles, letting loose the idea of potentially missing crucial chances for work.

The real, or perhaps self-imposed, pressure to be always reachable, available and flexible means that for some, being an artist has been difficult to combine with social and/or family life. The *Loont Passie?* study mentioned above attempted to look at the ability to combine work and family. In each of the artistic disciplines, there was a group of 50% to 60% who claim that that combination was in fact doable, while 20% to 30% took a middle road. In 10% to 20% of the cases, artists indicated that they had difficulties combining work and family. Writers and illustrators, more than filmmakers, musicians and performing artists, found that their careers could be successfully combined with their personal and family lives. Once again, the individual versus the collective organization of those different art practices seem to play a role here.

The challenges of developing a family and social life apply a fortiori to internationally mobile artists. I quote an anonymous artist from an exchange of ideas about the ecological pressure of international touring that recently took place on Facebook: *'There are good reasons to also think of social sustainability when discussing (forced) migratory artists' work: the loneliness of the residency, the dependency on saying yes to invitations, the discontinuity of having a "home", the fragmentations of friendships, the impossibility of residency-based life as a parent and so on…'* During Flanders Arts Institute's symposium on international residencies in early 2017, Taru Elfving, the Finnish curator and writer, was not amiss in posing a number of sharp questions, such as, *'Who and what does travel and networking, for example, actually serve?', and 'What is the cost of being on the move – ecologically, socially, personally, intellectually?'*

FOR WOMAN AS FOR MAN?

'You can better not have children,' is something women in the arts are sometimes told. *'A job in the arts requires flexibility, impossible hours and working in the evenings and weekends, and that is almost impossible for (single or young) mothers,'* claimed another woman on the 2016 online platform that Rekto:Verso installed in the lead-up to their theme issue on gender inequality in the arts. Interest in this theme has not settled down since.

The *Loont Passie?* study not only showed that female artists find it more difficult to combine work and family than men do. Female artists also earn less. The gender gap in income – and here, as above, we are looking at total net annual income – appears to be generally smallest among the youngest age group, and increases with older groups. Performing artists are the exception: amongst the youngest group, women earn significantly less than men, but that

difference does not change according to age. The fact that film and music are the most male-dominated sectors is not to say that the income chasm is greatest there.[15] We find the greatest differences amongst authors and illustrators. There, women between 35 and 45, and between 55 and 64, earn almost 50% less than men of the same age. A female visual artist between 45 and 54 years of age sees on average 10,000 Euros less coming in than her male colleague.

Despite the fact that today, more girls than boys are attending art schools (Hillaert & Hesters, 2016), as their careers progress, women drop out at a higher rate. Not only parenthood – and then primarily the still asymmetric distribution of the burden of raising children – restricts opportunities for women. Women artists also confront strongly imbedded stereotypes and prejudices that have to do with the fact of being an artist in its own right, such as the myth of the male genius and images of women that primarily serve as muse. These different expectations are something that we have all internalized. Where women artists question themselves more, their male colleagues have a greater sense of entitlement and ambition. Well-worn stereotypes, combined with what are often informally arranged commissions and collaborations, mean that women systematically end up in the outside lane. (Sussman, 2019 and Willekens & Co., 2018)

CRACKING CODES IN WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Another question that has been an issue for some time, but which has been debated more intensely in recent years, is that of the 'whiteness' of our art institutions. It is not only the audiences in theatres, concert halls and exhibition spaces that remain too white. Amongst the artists who populate or give substance to these institutions through their work, there are very few with different colours or backgrounds who could potentially bring in different per-

spectives and narratives. It is still too rare that the code of exclusivity in our institutions is cracked, exposing how the path of being an artist is more difficult for them, and how the white perspective of the institutions themselves exclude these artists.

In 2013, together with Demos and RAB / BKO (the Brussels network of art organisations), VTi set up the research project, *In Nesten*, looking into initiatives for talent development and interculturalism in the performing arts, from which the following insights stem. It consisted of case studies, in search of the specifics and extra barriers that makers of non-Belgian descent (but born in Belgium) can encounter in their paths into the arts.

In discussions about inter-culturalism – in society at large as well as in our sector – people generally do not speak of 'non-Belgian' makers in general, but about makers of 'non-Western' origin and about the opportunities available to young people who grow up in families with migrant backgrounds in being able to move in and through the arts. We can observe that a significant number of artists with 'non-Western roots' who are active today in the arts in Flanders did not follow the traditional path towards a professional arts practice, by pursuing higher art education after high school. They have built their trajectories as autodidacts, as self-trained artists. This brings extra challenges (as it also does for autodidacts of Belgian origin). Finding your way in the sector requires finding inroads into the 'right' networks. Those who have missed an arts training are also likely to have missed such a starting point, as fellow students and teachers are often the first collaborators in a professional trajectory. A higher arts education moreover not only means artistic formation and networks, but socializes people in the implicit social rules and codes that are inherent to how people work in the field: how you ad-

dress potential partners, work together in the studio, talk to professionals about your own work and so on.

What is potentially the most complex 'intercultural' issue, along with various forms of prejudice and discrimination, has to do with the canon in which artistic work takes on meaning. Despite common situations of paucity of social opportunity, many of these young people did grow up in rich cultural environments. It is just that the frames of reference, aesthetics or artistic codes for creating and understanding artistic work are not the same as those that dominate our arts sector. They point out the blind spots. All too often, the discussion around performances that have grown out of a different framework are dominated by whether the work has enough 'quality', while what they really do, at the very least, is challenge the implicit parameters within which that 'quality' is measured.

As Orlando Verde put it in August 2013, on the Kif Kif website: *'To my mind, a lot of people are hanging around waiting for the brown Jan Decleir, the allochtone Dimitri Verhulst, the black Michaël Roskam or the Moroccan Tom Barman. And that is exactly where almost everybody misses the boat: it will not happen. (...) Are you going to go see something new if it does not look like what you expect?'* The issue of the canon also concerns the recognition of different forms of expression, such as urban dance or slam poetry, within our cultural and arts institutions. Many young people in society today do not recognize themselves in the forms, nor in the content of what is put on stage. Do we want to involve them, or keep them out, just presuming they are not interesting?

The arts sector has been debating and discussing these questions and themes for a long time. It is often just 'about', and not 'with' the people who are the subject of the debate. Not that there are no attempts being taken

to involve 'them'. But it turns out to be difficult to reach them. In the *Fair Arts Almanac,* Joachim Ben Yakoub (2019) explains how that happens: For a long time, the narratives and the perspectives were – and often still are – those of a 'white' sector that indicates it wants to change and that describes itself in terms of 'multiculturalism', 'interculturality' or 'super-diversity', and recently also 'decolonization'. In the last few years, we do see a greater self-awareness, which questions and deconstructs the dominant discourse on diversity. *'Now, there are different artists moving out of the mainstream spaces of the arts scene, developing 'decolonial' aesthetic practices and decolonizing discourses. It is the first time in Belgium that you see a form of radical self-definition emerging from below. The collectivities who are directly implicated are setting their own agenda by connecting their local diasporic and displaced condition to historical and geopolitical dynamics.'* Joachim Ben Yakoub observes that institutions sometimes genuinely want to commit themselves to feeding the debate about decolonization, and to offer a platform, but that it is precisely their actual position of power and impact that remains a blind spot in this debate. For this reason, there is the risk of instrumentalizing and appropriation of that discourse on decolonization. *Can* white institutes actually ever decolonize? Maybe the answer lies in more radical initiatives to redistribute power, with the bottom-up initiatives that are outside the institutionalized field?[16]

2.
SHIFTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ARTISTS AND ART ORGANIZATIONS

In Part 1, the diagnosis, we see artists as individuals who have to position themselves as professionals in a world that is undergoing changes, some of which are inherent to the art world, while others go hand in hand with broader tendencies in society. In this second segment, the perspective shifts, and we zoom in on the relations between the artists and the art organizations, which are also undergoing considerable shifts.

2.1.
CONTEXT SKETCH

DIVERSITY OF PRACTICES: CHALLENGES FOR THE SECTOR

The 'flexibilizing' of artist's trajectories in the performing arts and music corresponds with a growing diversity of working models. That diversity reveals itself both in the way in which artists organize themselves and at the level of the artistic work itself. This in turn brings significant challenges for the art organizations that want to support the artists, their artistic practices and their careers.

It would be wrong to think that with this tendency towards flexible working patterns, everyone has abandoned the one model (long-term employment) for the other (the flexwork model). What is actually happening is that more and more different working models are coexisting, and evolving alongside one another. Alongside the flex workers, we still also see theatre companies, collectives and music en-

sembles that receive structural support and in which artists do have long-term contracts (whether or not full-time). A portion of those artists contracted to a given structure also combine that work with other engagements. Of course, also within the group of flex workers, the diversity is great. There are makers who have no structure of their own, but who can build on long-term engagements with a management bureau or an arts centre, and in this way expand on an artistic trajectory with real perspective. There are also 'performing' dancers, actors or musicians who have no long-term contracts, but who find relatively stable work with makers or companies. And then of course, there are all those artists – makers or performers – for whom indeed the next project is the horizon of their perspective. It should be noted that the reality of project-based work can take very different shapes, based on how dependent one is on the initiative of others.

This diversity of labour positions and working models has provided the conditions for the artistic practices they embrace to become equally more diverse. Just as all 'visual artists' cannot simply be reduced to painters or sculptors who exhibit their work in museums and sell in galleries, 'performing artists' cannot be lumped together as directors or actors who create 1-hour-15-minute black box performances that tour in cultural centres and theatres. In the words of Charlotte De Somviele and Dries Douibi (2016), *'Performing artists make more than performances; they also create living libraries, stadiums in public space, poster campaigns about refugee politics, a museum about Europe, discussion marathons, guerrilla actions, social documentaries, neighbourhood projects, a maquette that fits into a backpack…'* One even has to question whether such artists as Anna Rispoli, Sarah Vanhee, Gosie Vervloesem, Benjamin Verdonck, Peter Aers, Mette Edvardsen, Thomas Bellinck or Jozef Wouters – to whose work this quote refers – would

even primarily present themselves as a 'theatre maker' or a 'stage artist', and that holds true for many others.

This phenomenon is close to what has been taking place in the visual arts for some time. *'Contemporary art is no longer determined by the use of specific media or techniques. Since the late 1960s, artists have not primarily called themselves painters or sculptors, but 'visual artists'.'* (Van Winkel, Gielen, Zwaan, 2012) Artistic practices cannot always be directly translated into 'a work of art' or what would be generally recognized as such. They are practices, perspectives, strategies with which people – artists – look at the world and intervene in that world. They are able to do this from the autonomous domain in society that is called 'art', precisely because that domain offers opportunities to determine the rules of the game.

Alongside these artistic practices that challenge the boundaries of the artistic disciplines, and that also turn standard ways of producing and presenting on their heads, painting, sculpting, choreography, composing music, making text theatre all continue to move forward. Flanders indeed still boasts a great many artists who create highly topical and exciting work that can be read in terms of centuries of development in their respective artistic disciplines. They find the right conditions to work and meet their audiences in the art institutions that have specialized in supporting this kind of work - theatres, museums, concert halls etc.

The fact that, together with the growing number of artists, these diverse working models and artistic practices all stand side by side forms the core of the complexity with which art organizations – and equally art policies – are confronted with today in their search for appropriate arrangements to support artists.

—

Rather than evolving towards large production houses with various functions, the dominant development over the last 20 years has been directed toward functional specialization in small structures, making things possible by working together in dense networks.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS: A SECTOR AS A MODULAR BUILDING KIT

Since the late 1970s, the performing arts have witnessed a perpetual search to reinvent the structures so that they can respond to artists' new requirements and ways of working. In the 1980s a generation of artists arose (among them: Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Jan Lauwers) who experimented early in their careers with new forms of collective organization, but soon developed individual companies for the development of their own work. This meant a paradigm shift in the way in which the performing arts organized themselves in Flanders. According to Marianne Van Kerkhoven (2007) – the influential dramaturge who provided critical guidance for this generation – a situation had been reached at the time *'in which professionalism not only entailed a social but ultimately also an artistic substance'*. The core of this is an awareness that the working structure also determines the work. Anyone wanting to claim full artistic autonomy consequently has to be in a position to not only be able to make his or her art work to their own terms, but equally define the way it is organized. The artists referred to here found partners in inspired organizers, which, with the forerunners of today's Kaaitheater, STUK, Beursschouwburg, Monty, deSingel and BUDA, among others, (the 'art centres'), established an entirely new circuit of centres for the production and presentation of their work. In the 1990s, we witnessed the appearance of the phenomenon of the theatre collectives. They searched, also in response to the malaise being suffered by city theatres, for a new way of approaching classical repertoire and theatre texts. (Meuleman 2018)

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it became clear that this ideal of a proper structure for each individual stage artist could not survive. Not only had the population of artists grown in such a way that it had become practically

– financially – impossible, but because the artistic practices, requirements and ambitions of an increasingly broad and diverse group of artists were so diverse. In that period, new forms of support evolved, including workspaces (e.g. today's wp Zimmer in Antwerp, or Nadine, De Pianofabriek Kunstenwerkplaats, WorkspaceBrussels in Brussels) and alternative management bureaus (e.g. today's Caravan Production, HIROS and Kosmonaut Production).

In 2012, no fewer than 25 of Brussels' workspaces and alternative management bureaus from different artistic disciplines organized *Open House,* an event with which they all opened their doors to the public. In their opening statement, they claimed that as young structures with a strong focus on research and development, they wanted to function as a magnet and a working base for an international community of artists in search of new practices, tools and alliances. These new kinds of organizations evolved not just as a response to the needs of a growing and increasingly diversified group of artists, but in turn also contributed to the veritable boom of the performing arts community in the early 2000s.

While these new support structures emerged, the city theatres and established dance or theatre companies have not remained at the sidelines. They continued to search what roles they could play in this changing landscape. Under the leadership of Guy Cassiers, for instance, Toneelhuis became a home base for several in-house artists and collectives of different generations. Since 2017, young theatre makers are given space and support to create for the large stage, under the umbrella of P.U.L.S.. Companies such as Wim Vandekeybus's Ultima Vez set up their own production and management facilities for young makers (recently Seppe Baeyens and Yassin Mrabtifi) and makes its infrastructure available to other artists as much as possible. Les ballets C

de la B, in which Alain Platel had consistently taken on the leading artistic role, was a collective right from the start. NTGent took another remarkable step and, under Johan Simons and Wim Opbrouck, chose to again install a fixed ensemble of players, just at the point when that model seemed to have been written off in Flanders. Troubleyn, Monty and deSingel in Antwerp together founded the mobile workspace, deheatermaker, which uses their own facilities to support younger artists. WorkspaceBrussels came about through a similar initiative by Kaaitheater and Rosas. KVS is today working with an 'open ensemble' of makers, players, directors, choreographers and authors, and consequently forms the production structure or structural partner for no fewer than 23 'faces of KVS'. These are just a few examples from a longer list that indicates how 'the institutions' are rethinking themselves in order to take on their roles and their responsibilities. This kind of dynamic within larger institutions and among more established players might seem self-evident, but seen from the vantage point of many other countries, such alertness and willingness to change, on their own initiative, would rather seem unimaginable.

As a result, since the start of the 2000s, for the majority of artists, the performance sector has begun to function as a modular system that tries to anticipate and respond to perpetually new needs on the parts of individual artists and projects. Together, all the organizations and initiatives comprise a building kit for support possibilities (research, financing, dramaturgy, technical facilities, management, production, sales, administration and employment), whereby the appropriate constellation or combinations are sought for each artist and each potential project. The code word here is that it is all 'custom-made'. Rather than evolving towards large, all-encompassing production houses in which the various functions are brought under one roof,

the dominant development over the last 20 years has been directed toward functional specialization in what are generally small structures, making things possible by working together in extremely dense networks.

2.2.
CHALLENGES FOR ARTISTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The answers that artists and art organizations have continually developed in recent years have overcome many of the needs of artists that have arisen. Nonetheless, the artists, as well as the organizations, are (still) confronted with a series of problems that present themselves in the current state of affairs in the arts sector.

CUSTOM-MADE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

Organizations and initiatives in the performing arts are collectively functioning as a modular building kit: the most appropriate means of support is sought for each artist or project, as are the constellations or collaborations that can best be mobilized. But in practice, that principle of 'custom-made' working patterns seems to operate primarily as a horizon, or an ambition, and is in fact rarely efficiently achieved. And for understandable reasons.

To begin with, the list of possible partners who can be approached for projects is not limitless, and there are also limits to what each separate organization has to offer. Some organizations have infrastructures of their own, and some do not. Some have artistic budgets and others do not. Alternative management bureaus and workspaces that are devoted to supporting a number of artists and consequently are best able to strive for the principle of working to measure, are generally precisely those smaller structures that try to do as much as possible with limited

budgets. However, what two or four people in an office can mean for the work of ten artists is obviously not the same as what the same number of people can do for a single artist. For the artist, having a structure of your own is undoubtedly still the best guarantee of being able to work under custom-made conditions.

Moreover, in recent years, the burden of coordination and planning around the work of individual artists has soared. *'The pre-production processes are becoming more complex and on average, it takes considerably longer to get the necessary financing around the project. The inflation of co-production sapped and eroded the engagement of partners, so that more and more partners are needed to meet a budget. In addition to partners in other countries, grants from other countries are also used to finance projects. As an unwanted side effect, these projects have become administrative masterpieces.'* (Baert 2019) Also the aforementioned diversification of the artistic practices themselves, which requires ever more new partnerships, working environments and tools, are a serious challenge to the art workers.

In the current conjuncture, these smaller artists-supporting structures fail to succeed in making the essential financial leap. The organizations which had previously taken on a good share of the production and support for artists, mainly the arts centres, are increasingly pulling back in this regard, and presume that that role is now being taken over by workspaces and alternative management bureaus. However, this 'outsourcing' of responsibilities has not been accompanied with sufficient financing. In the most recent round of structural subsidies, diverse workspaces and management bureaus urged for larger budgets to cover the increased workload, but that plea was not honoured. As a result, several experienced pioneers have chosen to leave their organizations. (Baert, 2019)

Moreover, and importantly, most of these supporting organizations have little or no artistic budgets at all for the artists with whom they work. That money has to be found from project grants or co-productions. And it is precisely these resources that are under such tremendous pressure today. (Janssens, Leenknegt & Hesters 2018)

At first sight, larger organizations might seem to have more possibilities, but they also have more missions to fulfill that require attention and resources. Moreover, more subsidies and larger budgets also bring greater responsibilities and stricter rules. They also are inevitably more likely to run into a lack of flexibility in their structures and working processes. In her master thesis on cultural management (2013), Danuta Peeters investigated the process of programming amongst a number of art centres. She also tested their organisational models against the values they adhere to. She found that the common organisational models – with functional cells for communications, the artistic program, production, technique and business management – were rarely put into question. 'Flexibility' was primarily translated into the attitudes and availability of individual personnel, not into more flexible processes or structures.

However, even those who consciously aim to make different choices in building up the structures of individual organizations cannot escape the collective habits or mechanisms in the ways that they work, which are shared on a wider scale across the whole sector: there is a collective timing that determines what the length of time is between the first conversation with a programmer and the actual presentation, a shared idea about how long a residency should last, how high a co-production is, how much time the process of making an evening-length piece should require, when the programme texts for annual brochures have to be written, and so on. Hence, the relationships between (the staff of)

institutions and artists are not just fueled with good or bad intentions, but are determined by structural factors and customs whose logic is understandable and defendable. But an artist with his or her own idiosyncratic plan can, as a consequence, feel like running into a brick wall.

This all said, however, perhaps the question should also be asked to what degree all the established art institutions have to be ready to respond to the needs of the widely divergent artistic practices. Is it useful for them to break open their ways of working to such an extent that they undermine the quality and potential of their own infrastructure, expertise and networks? Do the 'biggest institutions' have to make themselves available in the service of the 'smallest artists'? And if not, are there possible transfers that can re-establish a financial balance in the sector, now that there is clearly no substantial growth of art subsidies in sight?

PRESSURE ON THE SPACE FOR DEVELOPMENT

During three sector meetings, for music, visual arts and performing arts respectively, organized by Flanders Arts Institute in the autumn of 2018, we assessed the primary urgencies art professionals experience today. Time and time again, the pressure on the time and space for development was mentioned as a serious issue.

That pressure on possibilities for development partly reveals itself in how a career in the arts takes shape today and what kind of work is validated. Flex workers who live from project to project are forced to work with a short-term perspective. That often means that they are de facto forced to think in terms of (quick) results and to act on behalf of specific concrete aims. A work situation with no attachments promises freedom, but constantly demands tangible results and visibility that might in turn lead to opportunities for future support or collaborations. Under these

—

Financial support of organizations is largely geared to production: to the realization of work that can be sold or presented. Very rarely is any income made available for time spent on research or development.

circumstances, it is extremely difficult to find time to slow down, concentrate and develop depth.

One thing that strongly contributes to this is that the financial support that organizations make available is largely geared to production: to the realization of work that can be sold or presented. Very rarely is any income made available for time spent on research or development (Siongers & Van Steen, 2016), just as there is none for investments that artists make in their broader development (networking, study, etc.). At a seminar on artistic research held at RITCS in 2012, artist Myriam Van Imschoot used the metaphor of a basting thread. A trajectory in the arts is marked by periods that are visible and periods that are not, periods of investigation, experimentation and deeper development, and then coming to the surface again. In today's system, support for artists is primarily legitimized by those threads that are visible.

The places and the financial resources specifically reserved for development and research within the ecology of the arts sector are today under threat. Based on her years of experience in guiding artist trajectories and on diverse discussions with fellow art workers at workspaces and management bureaus, Helga Baert shared the following conclusion (2019): *'In recent years, different larger institutions (...) have been forced to pull back in processes of self-examination, to concern themselves with complex financial and social issues. As a result, the margin for artistic experimentation and risk has shrunk. It is striking that in the relationships with the individual artists, it happens more and more often that the risks for the institution itself are brought to the fore. The evaluation of the own financial risk, the waning support for art in society, audience numbers and the image or symbolic capital of the institutions themselves are increasingly taking over the artistic logics. Institutions have become more cautious of experimenta-*

tion, research and potential failure, beyond the standard logic of production.'

Artists are increasingly finding their way to art schools and universities where such budgets (and salaries!) are provided by way of academic research projects or PhD's in the arts. These offer welcome breathing space to artists, but also bring along a number of risks of their own. Academic institutions have their own frameworks, which determine what research is and what research is not accepted. The kind of thinking that determines who has access to these resources and who does not do not automatically connect with the logic of the field of practice. Seen from the other side, it also leads to convenient instrumentalization of research resources for the continuation of regular art practices, which in turn has the effect of impoverishing their research potential.

The chipping away of the artistic autonomous zone reveals itself in the visual arts in yet a different way. Studio space has become more and more difficult to find because fewer spaces are available and rents are rising. Moreover, ateliers and studio initiatives are more frequently instrumentalized by others. The rise of the hipness factor of such initiatives for the temporary occupation of empty spaces on the parts of local authorities and businesses would seem to offer attractive opportunities, but such projects often serve objectives other than the art (such as driving up the market value of real estate), or they impose specific demands (including participatory projects with the neighbourhood) that cancel out the autonomous space for artists to be able to work.

THE INFLATION OF CO-PRODUCTIONS AND COORDINATION BURDENS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

At the start of the 1990s, more than 80% of the production that Flanders Arts Institute registered in its performing arts databank had been organized by a single or-

ganization. Today, 70% are co-productions with different partners. In the 2012-2013 season, about one out of three productions was a collaboration with four or more organizations, with a few even going up to 20 different organizations. This is an indicator of a serious system switch. Collaboration, in all its forms, has become self-evident in the performing arts. That enormous growth in partnerships is largely realized in an expanding international network. In 2000-2001, Flemish makers and companies worked together with 131 foreign organizations. In 2014-2015, that had increased to 545. (Janssens, 2018b) For a long time, we were telling this story with a sense of pride: 'Isn't it great, all this collaboration and ability to mobilize?' But the underlying reality is alas less rose-coloured. What these figures actually show is that, in order to achieve the same outcome as in the past, more and more partners are required. Since the early 2000s, the number of new productions in Flanders has stopped growing, the available resources for making art are becoming increasingly fragmented, and the budgets for co-productions are dropping systematically. (Janssens, 2018b) We call this latter phenomenon 'the inflation of co-productions'.

For many artists, the inflation of co-productions, together with the evolution towards a system that consciously functions as a modular system, has weighty consequences. *'Today, that is an important paradox: there are more organizations that specifically provide frameworks for artists, but through that fragmentation of the resources and the 'inflation' of co-productions, artists themselves, for the same amount or for no money at all, have to invest ever more time and energy on networking, business management, negotiations with potential partners, and so on.'* (De Wit, Joye, Wellens, Janssens) With diverse co-producers, artists have a lot of partners, but these are not necessarily partners with one another. It is certainly

not standard practice for co-producers to gather together around the table in order to help realize a project. It is up to the artist and his or her own entourage to manage the individual appointments, agreements and relationships with the different partners. In the autumn of 2018, during our sector meetings on the performing arts, one artist pointed out that this is not always a sinecure: *'You have to know the whole network. You have to know that A does not want to work with B, etc. This consumes a lot of time and energy and gives a lot of pressure.'*

Having more partners not only leads to a greater burden of coordination, but also heightens the risk of diluting the engagement of each individual partner. Who takes responsibility if a project subsidy is not granted, or if it turns out that more time is needed in the studio? In a larger network, it is less clear who can or should feel responsible in a collaboration with just a few players.

Artistic freedom can also be compromised when artists are dependent on different intermediary organizations. Artists operating on an individual basis often have no ownership of the instruments with which they work and only limited say about the formats or processes in which they work. For many an artist, bringing what is offered by the diverse partnerships in line with their artistic vision and ambitions poses a considerable challenge.

PRECARITY IN ORGANIZATIONS: BURNING OUT ON FIXED CONTRACTS

There has been a bitterness creeping into the perspectives of artists who experience it as unjust that they are being forced to freelance while the employees of professional arts organizations have long-term contracts. Is it, after all, not the artists themselves who supply the foundations on which the work of those others is built? The lack of security that they experience, however, also permeates

both smaller and larger organizations in the field. It is not just the artists who have to pay the price for the increased pressures on budgets: the ever higher demands being made on the institutions that receive funding (for example, to increase their efforts in participation, archiving and diversity) and the heightened competition in the expanding international market mean that it requires ever more effort to continue achieving the same level of 'output'. (Janssens 2018b) Time and again, the organizations with which artists work have to scrape away layer after layer, and they are more and more often essential layers.

In 2017, the Sociaal Fonds voor Podiumkunsten (Social Fund for the Performing Arts) presented a study about the work experiences within the sector. It revealed that staff working for art organizations felt great satisfaction from their work and were strongly engaged. The other side of that same coin is that 47% of the respondents also experiences what is called 'recovery need'. Just over half indicated that that need was perpetual, implying that there are no periods for the actual recovery. The risk that they will be unable to work within the next six months because of illness is considerable. Hence, it comes to no surprise that 'burnout' has become a repeated theme in conversations about the health of the sector. Most art professionals in organizations can indeed count on long-term contracts, but many twist themselves into knots, often plagued by a sense of guilt that they are not doing enough for the artists. According to Sarah Vanhee (2017), *'There is some violence in the relations the art institution produces and we have grown used to it. Staff working for the institution seem to be constantly fighting: fighting for money, fighting to be original, fighting to get things done in time, fighting to defend art's place in society, fighting for audience, fighting for legitimacy, which often means fighting for the pretension of being unique, which means fighting with other institutions.'*

In 2014, Barbara Raes put her finger on the wound in a text that reflected on her own burnout and how she was able to understand it: *'A burnout occurs when the gap between your own deep convictions and the survival patterns of everyday practice become too wide. In fact, where motivational force and powerlessness meet. Every age has pitfalls of its own, and being exhausted is of all ages. What truly counts is how we deal with it. In that sense, the illness says a great deal about the comings and goings of a society in overdrive and the practices and the systems within a sector. It is a sector in overdrive.'*

What has still not been sufficiently highlighted is the freelancing that continues to creep into other positions within the arts. Art criticism, dramaturgy, curatorship and technique are, for example, functions that have likewise become largely flexible. What is equally less visible is the parallel rise of part-time contracts, which often conceal what is in fact full-time work, and work-study apprenticeships or volunteer work that are replacing paid jobs. In sketching the flexibilizing of the sector in the previous part of this pocket book, I stated that it is claimed that ensembles are no longer affordable, and that it has been more self-evident that artistic 'jobs' be made freelance than the other jobs. It would perhaps be more correct to add that this tendency is taking place more widely, and that at many levels across the sector, a great deal of the time spent working is unpaid. With this tendency, and the fact that learning on the job has become increasingly impossible as a result of the financial pressure on organizations, we can now even speak of a tendency towards de-professionalization in the arts sector.

The precarious situation in which artists find themselves sometimes leads to an understandable but despairing attitude of 'artists versus institutes'. No one wins in the trap of a divide-and-conquer mechanism. How does one rebuild

equal relationships without trying to find it by getting others to share your own precarious situation, or by compensating that with an irresolvable sense of guilt?

PRESSURES ON THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION: AT YOUR SERVICE?

Another point of tension between artists and institutions has to do with the culture of 'service' that seems to have taken over the spirit of collaboration in the relationships between artists and organizations. The attitude of 'providing service' is noble and professional, but it instills an asymmetrical relationship in which someone is in the position of the supply and someone else in the position of the demand. During the 2017 *Fantastic Institutions* symposium at BUDA, Sarah Vanhee asked, '*What if we were to pause for a moment and rethink this function: "to support artists?" How does the institution do that? If I say there is a violence in the relations the institution produces, I (also) mean there is a fundamental political question about how this support takes place, mostly in the form of 'offering' and 'giving'. Because maybe the artist does not want to 'receive' certain things, but could suggest herself how she would like to be supported by the institution.*'

The shift to 'providing services' marks a shift in the corporate culture of the sector. It makes up part of a mercantile relationship of supply and demand, in which the price is not based only on the needs of the negotiating parties, but is also determined by scarcity. Those who ask and those who provide each act according to their own interests and not according to a philosophy of cooperation and care. Moreover, greater competition leads to lower prices. When the level of buy-out fees, co-productions and fees are (in part) determined by 'how far the other party is willing to go', people are no longer sitting alongside each other, but on opposite sides of the table. The culture of exclusivity ('I

will only show your work if it hasn't been shown somewhere else') has everything to do with this kind of competition and self-interest, and nothing to do with the care for artists and the desire for a performance or exhibition that people believe in, for which they hope to reach as large an audience as possible. In this way, we are drifting far away from the philosophy of collaboration, in which all parties, with dialogue and trust, work side-by-side towards a shared goal, and in which an individual artist must be able to be on equal terms with a large institution.

An important point to mark is that this culture is given shape every single day and is maintained from all the positions in the field, and consequently just as much by the artists themselves. I often hear from programmers and organizers that artists are so written into the fabric of the field that is also difficult for them to engage beyond that framework. More open questions about what is needed, beyond the 'offer' of the institution, are greeted with silence. It is because of this that it should be considered as a cultural phenomenon, because it concerns value frameworks that are shared in the wider system, and into which newcomers are quickly socialized.

THE ARTIST AT THE CENTRE?

Thus far, I have used the words 'institution' and 'organization' interchangeably. An institution is in fact more than simply an organization. It is also not a business. An institution, in sociological terms, has a social and cultural role. It is an organizational translation of values that we share beyond the here and now, a bridge between the past and the future. In the institutional context, resources are redistributed and the interests of diverse stakeholders are reconciled. Seen this way, an institution – and therefore an art institution as well – is a zone of compromise, not as a sign of weakness, but in the most exceptional and

—

An institution
is a zone of compromise,
not as a sign of weakness,
but in the most exceptional
and social sense
of the word.
Through the process of
organizing, staff, artists,
audiences, the surrounding
neighbourhood and
other stakeholders
are connected with
one another.

social sense of the word. Through the process of organizing, staff, artists, audiences, the surrounding neighbourhood and other stakeholders are connected with one another. I wrote above that the zone for development for artists has been put under pressure in recent years, among other things because institutions have been forced to withdraw in processes of self-examination and are having to reposition themselves in relation to more complex societal issues. It is indeed their task to do this. Besides, it should be noted that these processes of self-examination and repositioning often take place in close collaborations with artists and through artistic projects.

Artists are therefore not the only party whose needs and desires find a place in art institutions. It is obvious that they have a special role to play, and they deserve – certainly given their precarious position – proper care and guidance. But they do not necessarily stand at the centre. We repeatedly hear from many organizations that 'the artist is central in our work'. This undoubtedly derives from a sincere concern, but maybe the phrase should be less frequently invoked. In workspaces, labs, alternative management bureaus, collectives, companies, ensembles and artist-run organizations, artists are generally central. But today, is that also the case for arts centres? For museums and major exhibition halls? In concerts and clubs? In organizations for art education? And should they be? Not necessarily. Those organizations who take on roles such as presentation, participation or reflection, and who physically nestle themselves in a concrete location are the ones who have to build bridges, give shape and cultivate connections between the different stakeholders. In art institutions of this kind, it is the *art* that is central, around or through which diverse parties find one another. In caring for their own personnel, their visitors, the artists, the management and the neighbours, there should in fact be no hierarchy of priorities at all.

Making the art and not the artist the central focus also even seems a good way of bringing oxygen into the close relationships between artists and the art workers who support their development and production. The *Fair Arts Almanac* (2019) puts it as follows: *'New demand: the artwork, NOT the artist, should be in the centre and all the people involved engaged in caring for the work of art. This implies that neither the artist, nor the art worker, nor the institution stands in the centre, but the thing(s) they want to accomplish together. It makes a huge difference if there is a "third space", outside the relation between artists and art workers. If a common goal is defined and the work is truly understood as a collaboration, we can look beyond the personalized hierarchy!'*

PART II

ANSWERS FROM THE FIELD

'Never doubt
that a small group
of thoughtful, committed
citizens can change
the world; indeed,
it's the only thing
that ever has.'

(Margaret Mead)

By pointing out the problems that artists experience, we can detect the shortcomings in how the system functions today. Focusing on all the difficulties can lead to discouragement and bitterness, but a diagnosis does not have to be an end point. It can be the beginning of a trajectory of change.

Changing a system takes place by way of experiment, through practice and based on a shifting framework of priorities and values, as I wrote in the introduction. This segment of this pocket book provides an overview of answers that are already being developed today, in an effort to strengthen artists and evolve towards a more durable and fair future. In this way, we hope to inspire readers to bring about shifts of their own.

It is also important to weave these initiatives together in a coherent narrative, in order to show that they, however partially, are part of a larger whole, and that the shift is already taking place today. Although arts policies that follow this change will be crucial for a different future, we here focus on what lies within the power of players in the field of practice; what can picked up elsewhere tomorrow.

In the course of Flanders Arts Institute's D.I.T. (Do It Together) project, we wanted to actively stimulate new practices.[17] To this end, in the spring of 2017, a call was launched for initiatives – either existing or new – that strengthen the position of the artist. Forty-one ideas emerged from diverse players in the field, which, from equally diverse perspectives, formulated their own unique proposals: about fair practices and fair payment, sharing and exchanging resources (working space, networks or knowledge) either through digital platforms or physical locations, reinforcing the voice of the artist and initiatives of self-organization. In an interactive trajectory, we created space for further development of the plans, in smaller groups of like-minded

people. We thus equally gambled on the creation of alliances and reinforcement networks. Ultimately, we supported and guided the realization of four concepts, selected on the basis of their innovative character and their potential to be relevant for a wider circle of professionals (both in their concrete execution and as possible blueprints): Engagement, the Fair Arts Almanac, 51% and the Coalition (more about them below). We spent a year working with these four initiatives. In addition to following up their individual autonomous trajectories, we tried to provide a framework for exchange and collective learning, to culminate in a final public meeting in March of 2019.[18]

In scanning the landscape for 'weak signals' or innovative strategies, we searched for Flemish initiatives, but were also able to activate our international network, culminating in the overview of strategies described below.[19] They have been organized as follows: we first show three strategies for different ways of organizing and working together, followed by three forms of awareness-raising. These are being applied to creating greater collective consciousness of the problems involved, and consequently to wedging their way towards a broader shift in the priorities and value frameworks.

1. FROM D.I.Y. TO D.I.T.: COLLECTIVE SELF-ORGANIZATIONS OF ARTISTS

Artists in different disciplines are increasingly working together in order to share knowledge, expertise, contacts and other resources with each other. This collaboration exists in different forms and serves different objectives – creation, development, presentation, management support, reflection, defending interests, etc. – but it is useful here to refer to them under the unifying concept of 'self-organizations'. The core questions that they are trying to answer

are inevitably the same: how can artists in a fragmented domain build and extend a sustainable career, and how can they themselves give shape to the organizational mentality and the logic with which they are working, in line with their artistic vision and core values? By bundling their strengths, they try to find more solid ground, from where they as individuals can be less dependent on larger intermediate structures, such as galleries, art centres or management bureaus. In this way they can hold up a mirror to partner organisations and attempt to pry open their institutionalized routines. Where formats of this kind clearly diverge from artistic collectives is that here, the respective partners each seek their own path in artistic endeavour. They have what we call a W.A.T. relationship: Working Apart Together.

Self-organizations can also be seen as a way of giving shape to the 'peer space'. According to sociologist Pascal Gielen (2013), a healthy artistic biotope consists of four spheres, each with its own value framework, which have to be kept in balance: domestic space, peer space, market space and civil space. Peer space makes artistic development possible within a collective, professional context. In interaction with fellow artists, work can be 'tried out' in an early stage, and an artistic oeuvre can mature without yet being dominated by the value frames of the marketplace or public discourse. Today, given the insidious tendencies of marketization and instrumentalization, preserving this peer space is vitally important.

The most commonly cited examples of self-organizations in the performing arts are SPIN (the structure around Hans Bryssinck, Diederik Peeters and Kate McIntosh) and Manyone (Sarah Vanhee, Mette Edvardsen, Alma Söderberg and Juan Dominguez). What both of these organizations share is that they are a platform with which the individual projects and activities of the artists can be

melded into an integrated trajectory, and in this, they try to connect durability with flexibility and remaining alert to changing circumstances.

In the context of the visual arts, initiatives such as Jubilee (artists Justin Bennett, Eleni Kamma, Vincent Meessen, Jasper Rigole and Vermeir & Heiremans) and Auguste Orts (an initiative of Herman Asselbergs, Sven Augustijnen, Manon De Boer and Anouk De Clercq) bear similarities with the examples in the performing arts mentioned above. A very interesting three-year project by Jubilee is CAVEAT!!!, in which the contracts between organizations and artists are being rethought, removed from the formatting of today's model contracts towards a tool for formalizing the relationship between the parties involved in an equal and open dialogue. (caveat.be)
Today, diverse visual artist initiatives are sprouting like mushrooms. They include Greylight Projects, Pinkie Bowtie, Deborah Bowmann, In De Ruimte, Sorry, Artist Club/Coffre-Fort, Enough Room for Space, Convent Space for Contemporary Art and Hole of The Fox. In De Ruimte, for example, is an initiative in which upcoming talent is supported with exhibitions and guidance. Enough Room for Space was started by Marjolijn Dijkman and Maarten Vanden Eynde in order to develop research-driven art projects in synergy with art organizations, universities, foundations and social groups. With Pinkie Bowtie, Vaast Colson and Dennis Tyfus experiment as artists in order to work out models for studio, presentation and gallery structures.

'Independent or alternative art spaces', 'project spaces', 'pop-ups', 'off-spaces' and so on: a whole range of names is used to refer to initiatives that make up part of a delicate, locally and/or internationally expanding network. They are looking for freespace, breeding grounds or experimental territories for new ideas. What this is about is creating and giving shape to that space, so that they are

not completely engulfed by the prevailing mentalities of the marketplace or established public institutions. They form a 'contemporary underground', which does not place itself entirely 'outside' or 'in the margins' of the system, but, as Pieter Vermeulen (2018) phrased it in his investigation of off-spaces in Flanders and Brussels, *'use the power of the structures the way a judoka uses the power of his opponent'*.

In music as well, in various niches, we see D.I.Y. initiatives that are looking for alternatives for producing and distributing music, bypassing the big industrial players. *'This kind of bottom-up organizations have at least two things in common: the love of music and the drive to take things into their own hands,'* as Nico Kennes (2017) said in a conversation with the people behind All Eyes on Hip Hop, dunk!festival and dunk!records, the electro label Tangram and the jazz label Solidude Records.[20] That shared 'love of music' is not as self-evident as it might sound. In the musical niches in which these initiatives are active, music is all too often a product that is commercialized, and in which it is 'the market' that decides what does or does not have a chance of being produced. They make use of online possibilities – Spotify, Deezer, Apple Music, iTunes, Tidal, BandCamp, SoundCloud, YouTube, Vimeo, Songkick, ReverbNation, BandsInTown and so on – to establish bridges to potential audiences. Workspace Walter, an initiative of musician Teun Verbruggen in Anderlecht, can also be seen in that D.I.Y. or D.I.T. context. Musicians and visual artists who are driven by experimentation and improvization can here find rehearsal spaces, residencies and/or concert spaces.

The phenomenon of self-organization in the arts is nothing new. For example, vzw Schaamte, founded in 1978, did exactly that: bundling their strengths to give wings to the separate careers of Josse De Pauw, Jan Lauwers and Anne

Teresa De Keersmaeker, among others, alongside what were then the established theatres in Flanders. They shared a space that they acquired together, technical and administrative staff, an international network and the management of Hugo De Greef. Financial risks were spread across the different artists (Janssens, 2018a). By now, artist-run spaces and collective spaces have generated lavishly filled chronicles that date back to the 1960s. (see Vermeulen, 2018) We therefore consider today's buzz around self-organizations – which is also taking place at the international level – as a symptom or a signal of the larger and more fundamental system change that many are hoping to achieve.

The tendency towards 'self-organization' is not only a technical choice for a business model. Here too, the words of Marianne Van Kerkhoven are relevant: *'How you organize yourself is a way of being in the world. It is in this sense also a political question. It is no coincidence that almost all of these initiatives not only focus on their own artistic work, but also engage in the wider discourse and actively stimulate reflection on the position of the artist and how art stands or could stand (differently) in the world. They are searching for new organization models that call the accepted production models in the arts and in society into question.'* (Janssens 2016; De Wit, Janssens, Joye, & Wellens, 2015)

2. FROM DEARTH TO WEALTH: RECALIBRATING AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Problems artists and organizations face today often sprout from scarcity. The inspired strategies listed here however, reconsider the wealth that is already available. They do this by finding different ways of validating available resources, or by redistributing them.

TIME. An interesting example of time being applied as a currency is Timebank (timebank.cc), operating in the Netherlands. It is an online platform available to anyone, offering skills and knowledge. People are able to hire the skills and knowledge of others in exchange for time that they themselves invest in others. In this way, exchanging money is by-passed. Those registered have a time budget, whereby an exchange does not immediately have to be on a one-to-one basis, but is found in the wider Timebank community. Timebank works online, but comparable initiatives can just as well be set up through physical meeting points, for instance, in co-working spaces.

SPACE. Physical space is crucial in arts practices. An artist's studio, rehearsal studio or bureau creates an environment for autonomous artistic work and professional exchange. Because space is so important, but also scarce and consequently expensive, many art organizations, as soon as they acquire their own infrastructure, commit to sharing it with (other) artists or setting up studios (for example, the expanded use of the infrastructures of LOD, Needcompany's MILL, where Kuiperskaai has found a home; Ultima Vez, which shares bureaus with Peeping Tom, Khadouj Films and others; and Summer Studios, of Rosas and P.A.R.T.S.). In the visual arts, artists get together to look for space in unoccupied buildings, and organizations have emerged that search for and manage spaces for artists, as well as set up activities for talent development. These include examples such as Studio Start in Antwerp and Nucleo in Ghent. In smaller municipalities as well, such as Leuven, Mechelen and Hasselt, similar organizations are being established by the artists or the cities themselves.

Sharing space can also happen in a broader network. Looking beyond the realm of the arts, for example in schools, we find technical studios or gymnasiums that are free in weekends

and school holidays. In a different way, it can also be valuable to share spaces the other way around. Infrastructure in the arts could not just be redistributed to as many artists as possible, but also to other people in the neighbourhood – an amateur group, a youth organization or a seniors club. This principle can extend so far that a portion of the operation of the art house can in fact be paused, for example during the summer, for a 'fallow' period. *'A fallow period consists of a peculiar mix of passiveness and activity, a focus on the outside world that is at once undirected, purposeless and stoical. It is characterized by openness, availability, alertness and attention that abandon the desire to want to control and change things.'* (Kuzmanovic & Gaffney, 2016) [21] It can be a way of slowing things down and rebalancing the energy and the rhythm of both the organization and its staff. Meanwhile, the partners who in the meantime are able to make use of the infrastructure undoubtedly generate a flow of other valuable assets. In this way, artistic organizations are more firmly interwoven into a wider social fabric.

We also found an online platform that allows for space to be shared in a broader network and consequently makes sharing on a broader scale possible: AboutSpace (aboutspace.nl). This database includes all kinds of private and public infrastructure for creative activities that are made available on a temporary basis.

SOCIAL NETWORK. The strategy mentioned above already refers to the power of having a diverse social network. In those networks reaching outside the arts, which every organization and every individual has in one way or another, one can find potential resources that can feed the arts practice. GLUON, for example, was established to bring artists into contact with the innovative laboratories of businesses, start-ups and universities: they detect and match the potential players. In the last few years, in Brussels, different

artist collectives have experimented with, for example, social organizations or neighbourhood shops, in order to have an impact on the neighbourhood and be able to find alternative resources for themselves. Hence, it aligns with the expanded social interests that I have already mentioned. This is, for example, what the K.A.K. (Koekelbergse Alliantie van Knutselaars) has done, or what Einat Tuchman does with Espacetous, at a neighbourhood community house in Molenbeek. In his search through 'territories for new urban creation', commissioned by Flanders Arts Institute, Chris Keulemans visited Allee du Kaai, Cinemaximilaan and Cultureghem, among others, places nestled within the city, operated according to different principles (social, cultural, artistic, urban, etc.) and where artists are able to find fruitful alliances and tangible resources (Keulemans, 2018). Established art institutions are also making the same connections possible between artists' practices and other societal domains, in specific lines of programming, such as the 'urban residencies' at Vooruit.

Other countries also boast inspiring organizations, such as Pogon – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth. Pogon's primary function is to provide free space for cultural and youth organizations in Zagreb. Its operation and management is partly in the hands of the city and partly in the hands of cultural and youth players. It is an open, non-curated platform, where more than 200 different events are organized each year (exhibitions, theatrical and dance performances, circuses, concerts, lectures, concerts, workshops and seminars). Pogon is used for production, rehearsals and artist residencies. In the past, the alliance between all these cultural and youth activities revealed itself as crucial to the existence of Pogon as a place for art. At a politically tense moment, thousands of people in Zagreb went into the streets to defend the future existence of Pogon. This is something that is hard to imagine for a place that is solely a working space for art.

KNOWLEDGE. An exceptionally important resource in reinforcing and strengthening the position of the artist is knowledge. The Timebank example shows how time can be applied as a medium of exchange, but also how knowledge and skills can be better distributed. Closer to home, the *Fair Arts Almanac 2019* was produced by the SOTA (State of the Arts) artists collective, offering a collection of practical information, statements, ideas, testimonies, tools and announcements of relevant deadlines. It is a guide, a calendar and a notebook with contributions from about 50 people. A good-old-fashioned, pocket-sized book may not seem innovative in these times. But in times of excess inundation of information, scattered across so many websites of so many different organizations, we need guides that collect information in an appropriate manner. Here, this means: customized to artists' needs, and in English.

MONEY. The search for ways of redistributing the available money or funding in the arts is perhaps the most challenging. Sometimes this even seems like a taboo, something people are not supposed to be talking about. On the micro level, the initiative, The Common Wallet, by ten artists and art workers, primarily based in Brussels, is an audacious one. They have different lifestyles, levels of income and family situations, but since January 2008, they have been depositing their incomes into a joint bank account. This is their 'shared portfolio', in which everyone can contribute according to their own ability and use according to their own needs – for such everyday expenses as food, clothes, energy and transportation, but also for rent and paying off loans. The ten participants have no fixed rules, but they do have a shared frame of values and a great sense of responsibility. After having evaluated their first year as very positive, in the second year, they are investigating the possibilities of joint savings or realizing communal purchases with the group. (*Fair Arts Almanac,* 2019)

3. FROM BUILDING TO WEAVING: REFORMS IN SEARCH OF FAIR PRACTICE

'I desire art institutions that practice alternative politics instead of presenting art programmes about alternative politics.' In recent years, fair practice has emphatically found itself on the agendas of the arts. It is an umbrella concept that summarizes what we are talking about when we speak of fair payment, practicable working hours, solidarity amongst colleagues, transparency in institutions, giving a voice to the powerless, sharing decisions, trust and safety, anti-racism, anti-misogyny and ecology. (*Fair Arts Almanac*) Fair practice is about practicing what you preach, bringing your own actions in line with the values that you hold dear. This sounds far more simple than it is. Changing direction into fair practice is a slow and tedious process that definitely requires courage. It is a complex tangle of issues that all interconnect to one another. *'Saying no to this rat race of worldwide omnipresence and permanent state of readiness inevitably generates fear of missing the boat, or never even finding the boat.'* (Dirk De Wit 2018b). Where do you begin?

START SMALL. The first advice is: start small. Although the call for fair practice concerns the way entire institutions function, it is possible to take immediate small steps. It all begins with an honest self-investigation. Two three-day *Fantastic Institution* sessions produced the following series of questions to help detect unfair practices and discover where there might be fertile ground ready for change. In everything that you organize, you ask: why are we doing this and who will benefit from it? What is the origin myth of my institute: what narrative forms its DNA, and is that still valid in terms of what we stand for today, or what we want to stand for? In that story, who makes up part of the 'us' in our organization? Who is in and who is out? What is

my vision of 'art' and of 'quality'? What is the image that I have of 'the artist'? Does the way we organize support for artists agree with this image? Am I 'offering services' or am I collaborating with artists? Which implicit agreements and limitations does my organization have? Thought exercises or practice tests can reveal the answers to the latter question. One amusing but effective example: how long would it take for somebody in the organization to intervene if a visitor were to move the copy machine from one floor to another? Who would intervene, and how? What ideas about 'good organization' or professionalism are prevalent in my organization? To what level is that in fact necessary? The PAF artist residency, in Reims, poses a challenging example. PAF has no personnel. So who cleans the toilet or washes the dishes? The answer of initiator Jan Ritsema: *'People tend to do it when they want to do it. That works very well. But it also means it will go dirty for a while.'*

A working session held during the *Return of the Fantastic Institution* produced the following list of recommendations.[22] Some sound poetic or even banal, but they should all be taken very seriously. They show that organizing differently is often less about building or rebuilding an institution, but about carefully reweaving the social space that that institution is.

- Take care of the people inside your institution.
- Taking care means recognizing them as full persons, not only as the slice which is the role they take up in your institution.
- Make the way you organize your institution intersect with the lives of the people.
- Model the way you work based on the most vulnerable person in your organization.
- Take care of people and allow them to emancipate themselves through your institution.

- Have lunch together. Eat healthy food.
- Organize child care for your staff.
- Organize child care for the audiences.
- Organize child care not to get rid of the problem called children, but find a way to incorporate the children into the institution.
- Adjust the hours of work and presentations to the diverse schedules of the diverse people's lives.
- Develop a politics for listening. Make listening a core value. Listen to artists, colleagues, audiences, neighbours. Practice.
- Having a politics of listening means not only scheduling time for listening when the organization sees fit. It is about an attitude and about availability.
- Begin every meeting with 'checking in', allowing all those present to talk about what they have on their minds, potential concerns that might be in the way.
- Use oral communication.
- Don't use difficult words when they are not necessary.
- Don't underestimate the intelligence of the audience.
- Do not think about the audience in terms of 'the audience', as a monolith.
- Organize 'relaxed performances' (Google that).
- If you have power, use it in order to give a voice to other people who usually don't get a voice.
- Be conscious of who is speaking on behalf of your institution. Don't speak in a singular voice.
- Practice the ability to step aside.
- Not all 'problems' have to be solved. Start with listening.
- Practice, don't promote. Show, don't tell.
- Take care of your physical environment together. Clean together.
- Be transparent towards the people you work with (inside and outside) about your budget and its underlying logic.
- Take responsibility for what happens with your money

(are the artists on your stage paid well with the fee you paid for the show?).
- If you invite someone for a meeting, organize to his or her convenience. Propose to go there, rather than invite them to you.
- If you invite a freelancer for a working meeting and you have a salary and decent funding, pay them a fee for the meeting.
- Give credit.
- Make work visible. Acknowledge work done.
- Establish long-term relationships with artists.
- Invite the artists you build long-term relationships with to your board meetings.
- Do not buy products from artists.
- Don't glorify the young and the new.
- Trust.
- Be kind.

Francis McKee, director of the CCA in Glasgow, added, *'Believe in magic spells. If you say something in the right words, you will get it.'* You receive things back in the language in which you formulated them. This applies to every kind of language. It consequently also means that if you fill in a form in bureaucratic language, you will be contributing to the establishment of a bureaucratic space. If you write about customers and discounts on your website, you will be creating a mercantile space. And so on. So a final piece of advice for every day is: care for your language.

THE GREAT TRANSITION. Reshaping a number of organizational principles according to the rules of fair practice can have great consequences. Sometimes it sets off a chain of dominoes in the direction of fundamental change in organizational models and ways of working together. They are pushing towards reweaving the entire organism that an organization is. I will give two examples in which the principal

of fair play was put high on the agendas of the organizations, and as a result, they end up questioning every aspect of how they function.

At the end of 2016, Veem House for Performance in Amsterdam decided to transform itself into the *100 Dagen Huis* (100 Day House). Since 2017, the house has been operating for 100 days each year. The rest of the year, it is closed. In the subsidy granted to them for 2017-2020, the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts expressed great regard for Veem as an innovative production house for dance and performance. Despite the high praise, the funding awarded was not enough to effectively execute their plans according to standards of care and correct remuneration that the organization wants to underscore. Instead of doing what art institutions normally do, which is doing more with less and keeping up the façade while the rest of the house disintegrates, Veem made the radical decision to move in the other direction. After all, ultimately, someone pays the price of constantly lowering standards, and they are often the artists.

The consequences of this decision are considerable, and the *100 Day House* has raised a lot of questions. What about their responsibility towards all the artists who lose their support, or towards the public and the city, during the days that Veem is closed? Does it mean cutting back contracts for staff, who are no longer working full time? And what about the part of the work which inevitably carries on during the other 265 days, but which is now rendered invisible (writing grant applications, discussions with partners, arranging contracts…)? How can the infrastructure be used in a different way, without it all becoming a muddy gray zone, neither inside nor outside the operation? Director Anne Breure emphasizes that she does not want to present the *100 Day House* as a model or an example. What it is about

is an attitude that has consequences. The discussions that this move has already generated show that in any case, it sets something in motion that reaches much farther than the city of Amsterdam.

In Kortrijk, in 2018, BUDA has begun a significant course of reflection and possible reorganizing. BUDA does this as one of the partners of *Coalition*, a group of four organizations (BUDA, detheatermaker, Beursschouwburg and Netwerk Aalst) that have been closely examining their own operations and are enacting concrete changes, reinforced by their supportive peer consultations. We know that periods of research and creation are often not remunerated for artists. BUDA is investigating how it can ensure such income for the dozens of artists and art workers who are resident in Kortrijk, so they can receive decent remuneration for their periods of residency.[23] The start of this trajectory is a yearlong survey of all the residents: how and by whom are they recompensed (or not) for their residencies at BUDA? What follows after analyzing the responses is a search for an organization model in which every resident can receive compensation, while not having to diminish the infrastructure and other support capacities of BUDA.

These organizations are not the only ones that have begun a fundamental quest. In her introduction to *Turn, Turtle! Reenacting the Institute,* Lilia Mestre (2016) notes that the movement is a broader one and that the redrafting of art institutions proves to be a matter of collaboration between institutes and artists: it *'is a move towards an engaged reappropriation of the arts institute in artistic (performance) practices, and a more in-depth collaboration between institutes and artists in rethinking the functioning, position, and decision-taking structure of the organisations.'*

Flex-working artists or artists with individual art practices risk being powerless or being pried apart because their separate voices carry so little weight. They have a need to bundle their strengths so they can promote their own interests, from the perspective of the specificities of their respective practices. The data accumulated by the *Loont Passie?* study are clear on this point: in sectors in which artists have strong professional organizations, such as film, their situation is less precarious. Visual artists are the least (collectively) organized, and this is consequently reflected in their socio-economic position. Organizations of and for artists are the first base for their empowerment.

Many examples can be found of artists' initiatives whose strategy consists of bringing artists together in order to give them a voice. An example of this close to home is the above-mentioned SOTA (State of the Arts), which works as an open platform for those who want to work towards a healthy climate for art and artists in society. SOTA was founded at the end of 2013 and has since already undertaken diverse brainstorming sessions and symposia, an action at the Flemish Parliament, and a working trajectory that explored the possibilities for a fair practice label for art organizations.[24] In 2019, they published the *Fair Arts Almanac*.

SOTA works without any financial support and has no formal structure. It operates as a fluid network of individuals. It fights to find continuity, in part because of the precarious working and living conditions of its members, and their international mobility. On the other hand, it is interesting to see how SOTA holds on to the idea that a classic form of advocacy no longer matches the complex realities of artists, and that falling back on that form consequently does not produce any quick solutions. Even though SOTA wants to defend the position of the artist in society, it

does not wish to speak with a single voice. How does one carry the diversity of voices and needs, without flattening them out or smothering them in compromise? SOTA has already played an important role in putting fair practices in the arts on the agenda in Flanders, and beyond. Although there has been no resulting fair practice label as such, it did form a source of inspiration for what has now become the *Fair Practice Code* in the Netherlands, launched in October of 2017 (see below).

5. CAMPAIGNING FOR RAISING AWARENESS

Engagement (engagementarts.be) is an artist's movement that charts sexual harassment, sexism and power abuse in the Belgian art world, started in the wake of the #MeToo movement and founded by Ilse Ghekiere. *Engagement*'s campaign aims to create clarity about what exactly constitutes sexual harassment, what the effects are and how we can assume responsibility. Using an online statement, which can be signed as an artist, institute, teacher or audience member, or even as someone who has crossed the line, they want to be a stimulus for everyone who is part of the arts sector to reflect about his or her own responsibility in maintaining a climate that facilitates abuse. In an easily accessible way, the website also shares tools for effective action when confronted with unacceptable behaviour.

Ilse Ghekiere initially took inspiration from a movement in Scandinavia, where anonymous witness accounts were collected in a closed Facebook group. *Engagement* also organizes physical meetings, safe places for sharing personal experiences. That sharing is an exercise in raising consciousness, in making careful judgments and in unmasking mechanisms of which we are all a part. *Engagement* quickly expanded from a small group of people to a true movement. (Vranken 2018) The movement organizes actions focused on gender inequality and sexism,

such as Women Counts, which count the numbers of female and male artists mentioned in the programmes of festivals and institutes, in order to chart the underrepresentation of women. *Engagement*'s initiators have been successful in combining an assertive attitude with an open, learning and inclusive practice. In a short space of time, they have established themselves as a credible partner in the collective plans of action on harassment, set up by the sector and the Minister of Culture in 2018.

51% (51procent.be) is a campaign initiated by Thierry Mortier, realized together with Sarah Hendrickx. Their objective is for 51% of all paid functions in the arts sector to be carried out by professional artists with an active arts practice. Artists are people who have to earn their keep and who in any case often hold down other jobs, in addition to their artistic activity. Wouldn't it make sense for those secondary jobs to be, as far as possible, within the arts organizations? Artists have diverse applicable expertise and skill sets, and in this way, a portion of the money spent by the institute – mobilized thanks to the work of the artists – would flow back to the artists. 51% is provocative, making people think. The logic behind 51% is simple, but those who apply it in practice discover its broader consequences. It can mean that institutes have to split and fill their job descriptions differently, hence rethink their organization principles. (Vranken 2018) In addition to a 51% engagement statement that institutions can subscribe to, the website also collects witness statements by artists who have non-artistic jobs within the arts sector.

6. COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS FOR KEEPING EACH OTHER ON TRACK

Using campaigns to stimulate others to think is one strategy. Making effective agreements about good practices

with a group of individuals or organizations is another. In 2017, the *Handvest voor de Podiumkunstenaar* (Charter for the Performing Artist; www.handvest.org) was launched by a number of artists and art workers. It is a declaration of solidarity by artists who agree to no longer accept unpaid or underpaid opportunities for the presentation of their work that take place in or for organizations with one or more employees with a fixed salary. *'The total fragmentation of a scene of essentially powerless freelance artists makes it easy for art institutions to formulate unfair financial proposals. There will always be an artist who agrees. Even worse: a 'no' is perceived as artistic suicide. Every presentation is seen as a possible 'springboard' for a future career. Visibility is crucial for survival. However, by agreeing to un(der)paid work, unfair habits are perpetuated. Not only is the artist who accepts them harmed, but also his or her colleagues. This vicious circle has to be broken at some point'*. Therefore, the Charter for the stage artist aims to create a network of solidarity among freelance artists.' These words are the 'why' underlying the *Handvest*. It denounces unpaid or underpaid work, but most of all wants to create a network of solidarity between the (freelance) artists themselves. At the time of this writing, the *Handvest* has already been signed by 400 artists and 25 organizers.

In 2017, Kunsten 92, an advocacy organization for the arts in the Netherlands, produced a *Fair Practice Code*.[25] It is a charter or collective framework of agreements in order to improve 'the labour market position of cultural professionals'. The code wants to be a *'normative framework for durable, honest and transparent entrepreneurship and way of working in arts, culture, and the creative industry'*, supported by as many cultural and creative professionals as possible. The *Fair Practice Code* functions as an umbrella under which regulations and guidelines for different sectors

can be developed, which can contribute to an improvement in the earning capacities and development perspectives for those working in the cultural and creative sectors. At the end of 2017, version 1.0 of the *Code* was presented in Amsterdam, to a great deal of interest. It is still an open framework that needs to serve as a basis for discussion and conversations in the broader sector, in order to lead to further refinement.

In Flanders, the oKo (Federation of art organizations) is also working on a fair practice charter. Like its neighbour to the north, it here concerns the formulation of fair working principles for which art organizations and art workers can express their commitment. Where this goes a step further, is that the charter has the goal of providing everyone who is negotiating collaborations with the requisite knowledge and information, so that everyone can make well-founded, fair agreements. For the domains of client or patron and the provider of the work, producer or co-producer and production or presentation locations, oKo is working on a toolbox with guidelines, models and checklists. When oKo presents the charter in 2019, it will have been tested in all of the working groups of the organization, so that the tools can equally be applied in the performing arts, music and the visual arts.

We also find inspiration from the Netherlands in the form of the *Kunstenaarshonorarium* (Artists Honorarium; kunstenaarshonorarium.nl:), an initiative of BKNL (the informal consultation platform of the Kunstenbond, Platform Beeldende Kunst, Beroepsvereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars and De Zaak Nu). It offers a guideline and a tool for calculating fair honoraria for artists. I have already alluded to the fact that payment for visual artists for exhibitions is not yet common. In music and in the performing arts, there are collective labour agreements that establish

minimum norms for remuneration in the context of the employer-employee relationship. Enforceable shared standards do not apply in the visual arts, when people by default work with fees for work rendered. The guidelines – including a calculator, checklist and simple contract – offers a framework for determining a fair fee. The calculator computes the minimum honorarium per artist per exhibition, depending on the duration of the exhibition, the number of participating artists, and whether or not new work is being shown. In this way, the initiators want to stimulate artists and institutions to agree to more professional contracts and negotiation practices. In the meantime, more than 100 museums and art institutes are applying these guidelines in their own practices.

The Kunstenaarshonorarium not only offers a guide for artists and venues. Government agencies and cultural funding organizations have also climbed aboard. For them, it sets a standard that they themselves can use in how they award subsidies and grants. This not only means that they have a framework for the evaluation of the subsidized organizations, but also for estimating their real financial needs. The Mondriaan Fund, the Netherlands most important public funding organization for visual arts and cultural heritage, has applied these guidelines and set up a temporary subsidy scheme with extra resources to help stimulate its application. The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has made an extra budget available for this. In this way, a self-regulating initiative from the bottom up has simultaneously provided a lever for more government resources for the arts. In Flanders, the idea of developing a guideline for artists' honoraria, adjusted to the realities of the Flemish field is also starting to take shape.

In addition to developing a sharp diagnosis, conceiving and working out strategies, setting up experiments and making connections, the final important link in bringing about system change is sharing learning processes. By sharing insights and experiences – of failures as well as successes – we together become smarter. That sharing is a form of sticking your neck out, of taking the lead, or of making yourself vulnerable in order to become stronger. It is, in short, the kind of leadership that is needed today in order to indicate the direction for bending the system. (Birney 2014)

This principle of sharing your learning curve is already embedded in many of the initiatives mentioned above. It can take form in different ways: in a safe group of confidants, such as with the *Coalition*, or with *Engagement*, through the organization of collective working trajectories, such as D.I.T., blogs on websites (see also: blog.kunsten.be), or by way of a publication such as this. Every form of sharing produces yet new feedback and input in order to take yet another step forward in the development towards more sustainable and fair practices in the arts.

NOTES

1 See the study, *Putting the Band Back Together: Remastering the World of Music* by Citigroup about the state of affairs in the music industry (published in August 2018) and *The Art Market 2018,* by Clare McAndrews, commissioned for Art Basel and UBS.

2 Sarah Vanhee did this during her speech at *The Fantastic Institution* symposium at BUDA Arts Centre in 2017.

3 The Flemish Wave, or Vlaamse Golf, refers to the rise of a group of remarkable innovators in the performing arts in the 1980s, including Jan Lauwers, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Wim Vandekeybus, Jan Fabre, Alain Platel and Josse De Pauw. These makers are still leaving their mark on the performing arts in Flanders and far beyond.

4 For an explanation of the origins and a definition of the 'wicked problem' concept, see www.stonybrook.edu

5 See also www.forumforthefuture.org/school-of-system-change.

6 A detailed explanation of the D.I.T. trajectory and its results can be found at www.kunsten.be.

7 This investigation was conducted by the CUDOS research group at the University of Ghent, commissioned by Flanders Arts Institute, the CJM department of the Flemish Community, Kunstenloket, Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten, ACOD, VFL, VAF and oKo.

8 Read about Joshua Dellaert's adventures as a holder of multiple jobs at www.kunsten.be, and those of Michiel Vandevelde and Sebastien Paz Ceroni at www.51procent.be.

9 This is about 53% for visual artists, 55% in music and 59% for performance artists. A multivariate analysis in which gender, age and degree of 'being established' are considered shows that there are differences between the disciplines. It seems that visual artists and performance artists significantly spend more time on their artistic work than musicians (are able to) spend. When other variables, in addition to the artistic discipline, are also accounted for in the analysis, it turns out that women (are able to) spend less time on their artistic activities than men, and older artists more than younger artists.

10 Data for those who combine the status of employee with self-employment (as secondary occupation) is not examined here, but can be found in the broader research report published at www.kunsten.be.

11 Literary authors and illustrators rarely conduct their artistic activities under the status of employee (only 7%), whereas more than half of the performing artists (57%) do. Also, few visual artists make art as employee (12.5%). Directors and scenarists in film and musicians are in the middle, with respectively 29% and 36% in employee status. Performing artists are moreover also employed by way of an SBK (social bureau for artists) or interim bureau: 51% of performing artists are remunerated in this way for their artistic activities. In the case of directors and scenarists, four out of ten work with an SBK. Proportionately, we find the largest number of self-employed amongst authors and illustrators, both in their principle and their secondary profession.

12 The so-called 'artist status', unlike the name might suggest, is not a separate social security arrangement (with social premiums and social protections). Based on a number of rules of exception in line with the nature of the specificity of the artistic practice, an artist is included as either employee or self-employed. (www.cultuurloket.be)

13 See also the blog post by Delphine Hesters at blog.kunsten.be, entitled *Moeten we dan echt iedereen die zich kunstenaar noemt betalen?*

14 Reports on this three-day meeting on *The Fantastic Institution* can be found at www.kunsten.be.

15 71% of filmmakers and 77% of musicians and composers who took part in the research were men.

16 See also the Demos brochure on *Macht herverdelen,* at www.demos.be/machtherverdelen.

17 A detailed explanation of the D.I.T. trajectory and its results can be found at www.kunsten.be.

18 See, among others, Ingrid Vranken's report, *Do It Together: een gesprek op weg naar Fair Practice,* at www.kunsten.be.

19 During the IETM meeting in Bucharest in April 2017, we launched the Facebook group, *Freedom and Frenzy*, where dozens of inspiring examples can still be discovered.

20 Both the interviews conducted by Nico Kennes and his synthesis text are available at www.kunsten.be.

21 Maja Kuzmanovic and Nik Gaffney quote philosopher Ton Lemaire (2016) in their contribution to the white book by Rekto:Verso and the Netherlands' Transitiebureau. This white book includes eight stimulating examples for the culture of (the day after) tomorrow in Flanders and the Netherlands.

22 See also the blog post by Delphine Hesters at blog.kunsten.be

23 It is striking that Vooruit, STUK, wp Zimmer, WorkspaceBrussels, Campo, Pianofabriek Kunstenwerkplaats, C-Takt, Monty and detheatermaker

have also joined the inquiry, and in 2019, they too will chart how their residents are paid during their residencies.

24 For a brief history of SOTA, see the article by Robrecht Vanderbeeken in the *Fair Arts Almanac*.

25 More on how the *Fair Practice Code* came about can be found at www.kunsten92.nl. The *Code* can also be downloaded from the site.

REFERENCES

Anrys, S. (2019, 9 februari). *Culturele boycot tegen vernederende visa-procedures. Maria Daïf: 'Europa doet de deur dicht voor kunstenaars. Op dubbel slot'* via www.mo.be

Baert, H. (2019). *Ontwikkelingsgericht werken* via www.kunsten.be

Baumol, W., & Bowen, W. (1965). On the Performing Arts: the Anatomy of their Economic Problems. In *American Economic Review, 55*(2), 495-509.

Bazinet, J. et al (2018). Putting the band back together. Remastering the world of music. *Citigroup Citi GPS: Global Perspectives & Solutions* via ir.citi.com

Ben Yakoub, J. (2019). Speaking of Discrimination, Or, Who Is Not Speaking. In *SOTA: Fair Arts Almanac*.

Birney, A., (2014). *Cultivating System Change. A practicioner's companion.* Dō Sustainability.

Bulayev, A. (2016). *Freedom and Frenzy. On the sustainability of transnational artists trajectories* via www.kunsten.be

Coppola, L. (2019). Working (together) #4. The Common Wallet. In *SOTA: Fair Arts Almanac*.

De Somviele, C., & Douibi, D. (2016, 1 september). Als de poppen aan het dansen gaan. In *De Standaard*.

De Wit, D., Janssens, J., Joye, S., & Wellens, N. (2015). W.A.T. (Working Apart Together). In *Courant 111*. Brussels: VTi, BAM and Muziekcentrum Vlaanderen.

De Wit, D. (2018a, 8 juni). *Dagen van gras, dagen van stro. Remedies tegen de precariteit van kunstenaars en de groeiende kloof in de kunstmarkt* via www.kunsten.be

De Wit, D. (2018b). *Naar een kunstenaarsgerichte aanpak in de beeldende kunst. Essay over de zorg voor duurzame kunstenaarscarrières en fair practice* via www.kunsten.be

Elfving, T. (2017). Residencies & Future Cosmopolitics. In *(Re) framing the International #1*. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

Forrier, A. (2007). De ongebonden loopbaan van de podiumkunstenaar: een zegen of een vloek? In *Courant 80*. Brussels: VTi.

Galeazzi, N. (2019). What art-workers say about artists. In *SOTA: Fair Arts Almanac*.

Gielen, P. (2013). Artistic Praxis and the neoliberalization of the educational space. In *The journal of aesthetic education 47(1)*.

Hafez, N. (2006). Welcome to the cosmoproletariat. In *Janus 21* (also see www.b-kronieken.be).

Hesters, D. (2006). *The facts and fixions of B-longing* via www.b-kronieken.be

Hesters, D. (2017a). *Moeten we dan echt iedereen die zich kunstenaar noemt betalen?* via blog.kunsten.be

Hesters, D. (2017b). *Spelen op het scherp van de snee. De sociaal-economische realiteit van de podiumkunstenaars in Vlaanderen* via e-tcetera.be

Hesters, D. (2018). *Day 2: How to build a fantastic feminist institution?* via blog.kunsten.be

Hesters, D., & Janssens, J. (2018). DIT (Do-It-Together). Tracing collective answers to the precarious position of artists in Brussels. In F. Rinschbergh, E. Swyngedouw & J. Vlegels (Reds.), *Cultural & creative industries in Brussels. Creativity in a divided city*. Brussels: VUB Press.

Hillaert, W. (2016). *State of the Union. Er komen andere tijden. Een pleidooi voor radicalisering* via www.theaterfestival.be

Hillaert, W. & Hesters, D. (2016), No woman's land. In *Rekta:Versa (Rekto:Verso)* 73 (also see www.rektoverso.be).

Janssens, J. (2016). *W.A.T. (Working Apart Together). The collective organization of artistic practice within the performing arts* via www.flandersartsinstitute.be

Janssens, J. (2018a). *SCHAAMTe vzw: the Primordial Artist-Run Organisation (1978–1987)?* via blog.kunsten.be

Janssens, J. (2018b). *kunstenpocket#2, (Re)framing the International. Over het nieuwe internationale werken in de kunsten*. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

Janssens, J., Leenknegt, S. & Hesters, D. (2018). De projectenparadox. De evolutie van projectsubsidies en beurzen via het Kunstendecreet (2006-2017). In J. Janssens, S. Leenknegt & T. Ruette (Reds.) *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

Kennis, N. (2017). *Perspective: Underground. Synthese. Over artistieke noodzaak, ambitie en vooral veel doorzettingsvermogen* via www.kunsten.be

Keulemans, C. (2017). *kunstenpocket#1, Brussels. In search of territories of new urban creation.* Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

Kuzmanovic, M., & Gaffney, N. (2016) Doe beter, doe niets: floreren in onzekerheid. Witboek: acht voorstellen voor de cultuur van (over)morgen in Vlaanderen en Nederland. In *Rekto:Verso* 69, Rekto-Verso and Transitiebureau.

Leenknegt, S. (2016). De Vlaamse Kunstmarkt: nationaal, internationaal en mondiaal. Studie over Vlaamse promotiegaleries en Vlaamse kunstenaars met galeries in binnen- en buitenland (2005-2015). In J. Janssens, S. Leenknegt & T. Ruette (Reds.), *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

McAndrews, C. (2018). *The art market 2018*. In opdracht van Art Basel en UBS.

Mestre, L. (2016). Introduction. In E. Van Campenhout & L. Mestre (Reds.), *Turn, Turtle! Reenacting the Institute.* House on Fire.

Meuleman, B. (2018, 11 juni). P.U.L.S. via puls.toneelhuis.be

Peeters, D. (2013). *De dynamiek van het kunstencentramodel. Een studie naar de wisselwerking tussen de programmatie en het management in enkele Vlaamse kunstencentra anno 2013.* Antwerp: Master thesis Cultuurmanagement, Antwerp University.

Raes, B. (2014, 12 september). *Stralend opbranden en stenen stapelen* via www.dewereldmorgen.be

Raworth, K. (2017). *Donuteconomie. In zeven stappen naar een economie voor de 21e eeuw*. Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam.

Sacco, P. L. (2018). Postmillennium tension. Contemporary art at a crossroads. In */re/framing the international #3*. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

Simons, G., Maréchal, M., Hesters, D., & Gadeyne, J. (2013). *In Nesten. Onderzoek naar talentontwikkeling en interculturaliteit in de podiumkunsten.* Brussels: Demos, VTi, BKO-RAB.

Siongers, J., & Van Steen, A. (2014). *Acteurs in de spotlight. Onderzoek naar de inkomens en de sociaaleconomische positie van professionele Vlaamse acteurs.* Ghent: CuDOS, UGent.

Siongers J., & Van Steen, A. (2016). *Loont passie? Een onderzoek naar de sociaal-economische positie van professionele kunstenaars in Vlaanderen.* Ghent: CuDOS, UGent.

Sussman, A. L. (2019, 11 januari), *The Challenges Female Artists Face Mid-Career* via www.artsy.net

Van Assche, A., & Laermans, R. (2015). *Contemporary dance artists in Brussels. A descriptive report on their socio-economic position.* Ghent: S:PAM, UGent.

Van Assche, A. (2018). *Dancing precarity. A transdisciplinary study of the working and living conditions in the contemporary dance scenes of Brussels and Berlin.* Ghent: Vakgroep Kunst-, Muziek- en Theaterwetenschappen, UGent & Centrum voor Sociologisch Onderzoek [CeSO], KULeuven.

Vanderbeeken, R. (2019). Fair Practice? More than words. In *SOTA: Fair Arts Almanac.*

Van de Velde, W., & Van Looy, B. (2013). *Kritische Succesfactoren van de Vlaamse Kunsten. Cases uit de muziek-, dans- en theatersector.* Leuven: Department of Managerial

Economics, Strategy and Innovation, KULeuven.
Vanhee, S. (2017). *The Fantastic Institutions. On the art institution as a hole in the ground* via www.kunsten.be
van Kerkhoven, M. (2002 (1991)). Niet meer spelen, maar gespeeld worden. Bedenkingen omtrent het acteren vandaag. In M. van Kerkhoven, *Van het kijken en van het schrijven. Teksten over theater.* Leuven: Uitgeverij Van Halewyck.
van Kerkhoven, M. (2007). Stenen in de stroom. Een pleidooi voor vertrouwen. In *Metamorfose in podiumland. Een veldanalyse.* Brussels: VTi.
van Winkel, C., Gielen, P., & Zwaan, K. (2012). *De hybride kunstenaar. De organisatie van de artistieke praktijk in het postindustriële tijdperk.* Breda: Avans Hogeschool, AKV St. Joost Expertisecentrum Kunst en Vormgeving.
Verde, O., (2013, 13 augustus). *De bruine Jan Decleir* via www.kifkif.be
Verhack, V. (2019). Het Vlaamse beeldende kunstenveld in kaart via www.kunsten.be
Vermeulen, P. (2018). *Vrijbuiters, lappendekens en paddestoelen. Een blik op off-spaces in Vlaanderen en Brussel* via www.kunsten.be
Vranken, I. (2017). *Van product naar traject: samenwerking met kunstenaar centraal in de beeldende kunsten* via www.kunsten.be
Vranken, I. (2018). *Do it together. Een gesprek op weg naar fair practice. Een tussenstand van de vier geselecteerde DIT projecten* via www.kunsten.be
Willekens, M., Siongers, J., Pissens, L., & Lievens, J. (2018). *Zo man, zo vrouw? Gender en de creatieve sector in Vlaanderen.* Ghent: CuDOS, UGent.

WEBSITES

51procent.be
aboutspace.nl
cultuurloket.be
engagementarts.be
fairpracticecode.nl
flandersartsinstitute.be
handvest.org
kunsten.be
overlegkunsten.org
podiumkunsten.be
stonybrook.edu
timebank.cc

On The position of the artist.

This pocket publication fits in with the research that Flanders Arts Institute has been conducting into the position of the artist and the possibilities of strengthening that position, both artistically and socio-economically. Although the individual artist is at the centre, this publication inevitably also talks about the state of 'the sector' as a whole, the changing position of the art institution and its relationship with the artist.

Flanders Arts Institute wants to actively stimulate the development of new, fair and sustainable practices. This is why, in the spring of 2017, we set up D.I.T. (Do It Together), an interactive trajectory to strengthen the position of the artist, together with various players from the field. Different concepts and ideas that were addressed in the D.I.T. process are featured in this publication, among many other strategies that are already in practice today. We hope to inspire readers to join in and take the necessary steps to bring about a shift towards a more sustainable and fairer future.

This text draws on publications, seminars and debates that have taken place in the field in recent years, developed by Flanders Arts Institute in research and development projects focusing on the (precarious) position of the artist, the quest for fair practices and on institutions in transition.

COLOPHON

—

Author	Delphine Hesters
Translation	Mari Shields
Final Editing & Coordination	Nele De Cocker
Design	Princen + De Roy
Printing	Antilope - De Bie

—

A publication by
Flanders Arts Institute
flandersartsinstitute.be
March 2019

FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE

with support from

Flanders
State of the Art

—

isbn 9789074351539

—

This pocket publication by Flanders Arts Institute attempts to understand the position of the artists and the difficulties that they experience in today's world of the arts. By pointing out the problems that artists experience, we also detect the shortcomings of the functioning of the system as a whole.

At the same time, we notice that in the field today, there is a great deal of movement in the attempt to strengthen artists and evolve towards a more sustainable future. ¶ How are diverse artists, art workers and organizations already engaged in re-examining their working habits, reshaping organizational processes, giving form to fair working relationships and developing working models that strengthen artists?

–

In our *Kunstenpocket publications*, Flanders Arts Institute shares insights from ongoing research trajectories. Previously published are: kunstenpocket#1. Brussels. *In search of territories of new-urban creation*, written by Chris Keulemans and published in January 2018, and kunstenpocket#2. (Re)framing the International. *On new ways of working internationally in the arts*, by Joris Janssens, September 2018.

kunstenpocket#3

THE POSITION OF THE ARTIST