How to be creative with chaos?

How does the Brussels cultural sector cope with the institutional complexity and the social diversity?

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4th of December 2018
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   - Who are we?
   - Our missions
   - Our actions

2. Institutional context

3. Civil Society Fellowship

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Who are we?

Created after Bruxelles/Brussel 2000

**BKO**
- "vzw" created in 2002
- Gathers associations/institutions identified as Dutch-speaking
- Funded by VGC + Brussels Region
- 1.75 FTE

**RAB**
- "asbl" created in 2004
- Gathers associations/institutions identified as French-speaking
- Funded by FWB + Cocof + Brussels Region + members
- 2 FTE

BKO + RAB = 170 members
Diversity of scales, profiles & disciplines
Our (common) mission

• Raise awareness of the importance of collaboration that will bridge the language, community and sector divides...

• … to contribute to the development of a coherent vision for culture in Brussels

• … to share the different visions existing in the sector

• … to integrate the transversal dimension of culture within the Brussels civil society
Our (common) actions

• By encouraging and promoting **encounters and exchanges**

• By providing **advice** and **information** (on Brussels & culture)

• By identifying and supporting **joint projects** which respond to the demands and needs of the sector
Institutional context

The communities

Communauté flamande
Communauté française
Communauté germanophone

©IGN, Bruxelles-2001
Institutional context

The regions

©IGN, Bruxelles-2001
Institutional context

Culture in Brussels

Brussels = 1 capital = 1 city-region = 19 municipalities

Budget for culture in Brussels

- French Community + COCOF
- Flemish Community + VGC
- Municipalities (19)
- Federal State
- Region
- Europe
Institutional context

Culture in Brussels

47 people in charge of culture

- 2 French Community (FWB) - Culture + Bruxelles
- 2 Flemish Community (VG) + Brussel
- 1 COCOF
- 1 VGC
- 2 Federal institutions (cultural & scientific)
- 2 Region – Image of Brussels (FR & NL)
- 19 Municipalities – Eldermen in charge of Culture (FR)
- 18 Municipalities – Elderman in charge of Culture (NL)

Result = no coherent and integrated cultural policy!
Civil Society Fellowship

- Open call in September 2015 > RAB/BKO selected
- Start research: May 2016
- Results expected for June 2017 ... and we are December 2018
Civil Society Fellowship & RAB/BKO

Our research project

• Question
Which strategies do the Brussels cultural organizations develop:
> within the institutional complexity?
> within the Brussels diversity?

• Objective
> Analyze of the actual situation
> Description of the strategies (in function of type of organization): strengths & weaknesses
> Recommendations for the future
Civil Society Fellowship & RAB/BKO

Our research project

• Steering committee
  > Bas Van Heur (Cosmopolis – VUB)
  > Jef Vlegels (R&D – VUB / UGent)
  > Maarten Liefooghe (SKAR – VUB / UGent)
  > Jean-Gilles Lowies (ULg)

“Thank you for your support, but mostly for your patience”
Methodology

- **Interviews**: qualitative research

- Starting point = the organization’s **practices** (not the decrees)

- **Sample of 16 organizations** - diversity of:
  - Scale (2 > 450 employees)
  - Discipline (performing arts, visual arts, literature, architecture, interdisciplinary...)
  - Main funding (communities, region, federal state, municipalities, mix...)
  - Level of visibility (local/regional/national/international)
  - Infrastructure (open to the public or not, owner...)

4th of December 2018
Methodology

The organisations

- Alerte urbane
- Atelier Graphoui
- BNA/BBOT
- CC Bruxelles-Nord
- GC De Vaartkapoen
- Flagey
- Fondation CIVA Stichting
- Globe Aroma
- Kunstenfestivaldesarts
- La Monnaie / De Munt
- Musée d’Ixelles
- MRAH / KMKG
- Passa Porta
- Recyclart
- Wiels
- Zinneke

>>> Goal: every organization feels represented
Methodology

• Questionnaire
  > Organizational structure
  > Funding/financing
  > Audience development & communication
  > Artistic project
  > Team
  > Infrastructure
  > + some bouncers

• Transversal themes : language, Brussels, diversity
2016 vs. now

- Organizations changed
- People changed
- Context changed (slightly)

But the overall results and recommendations are still of use.
Today: observations

Organisational structure
Today

Legal & organisational structure

• **Variety of legal structures**: asbl, vzw, asbl/vzw, asbl+vzw, administration service (commune + federal state), “organisme d’intérêt public”...

• **Choice made from the beginning**, rarely evolution but important consequences.

• **Composition of the Boards and General Assemblees**:
  > From a very free composition to an extremely formalised
  > Strategic choices to
    connect with the authorities: ‘language’ related
    connect with the local environment
  be in balance (NL/FR, gender, …)
Today

Funding
Today

Funding / financing

• List of subsidies (non exhaustive!)
  > WB Culture + Promotion de Bruxelles
  > VG Cultuur + Brussel
  > COCOF Culture + Cohésion sociale
  > VGC Cultuur + Stedenfonds
  > Municipalities: Culture + ‘Flemish Affairs’+ Employment (article 60)
  > Federal state: Culture + Scientific policy + National Lottery + Beliris
  > Region: Image (FR/NL) + Employment + Beliris + FEDER/EFRO
  > Europe: Creative Europe, FEDER/EFRO
Today

Funding / financing

• **Philanthropy & sponsorship**
  > Only developed by bigger organizations
  > Funds and calls not directly aimed for the cultural sector (ex. Social funds)
  > Mecenas: more for side projects than for artistic productions

• **Own incomes**
  > Ticketing & Bar
  > Rental of the venue
Today

Artistic project
Artistic project

- Artistic freedom? Highly appreciated
  > Staff decides
    Not the Board or General Assembly
    Nor the supporting instances
  > Brussels’ complexity creates a kind of ‘free zone’

- … but not always that free...
  > Institutional frameworks influence the choice of projects and the way a project is described
  > Brussels’ complexity suffocates ambition.
Today

Audience development
Today

Audience development

• Audience
  > Lack of objective information about the audience (profile, mobility habits, ...)
  
  > Diverse audience ≠ more audience
  
  > Means: partnerships with schools, social associations, youth organizations...
Today

Audience development

• Language

> External communication generally FR/NL + often EN + sometimes other languages (SP, Arabic...) in oral communication

> Difficulties:
  - lack of time & money
  - pressure from the political level
Today

Teams / Human Ressources

- Lack of money > lack of personnel
- Often people living in Brussels >< Brussels diversity not represented

- **Languages: mastering FR or/and NL**
  - Level of volunteers: no importance
  - Level of employees: relative importance
  - Level of direction / board: crucial importance = strategic choice
    - political obligation
    - strategy for subsidies
    - internal balance for the bilingual organizations
Today

Infrastructure
Today

Infrastructure

• Many problems
  > For many organizations (small and big): difficulties to get a good space on a long term basis (offices & public infrastructures)
  > Lack of investment by the authorities

• Positive role of the Brussels Region
Tomorrow: recommendations
Tomorrow

Shared knowledge and interference
Tomorrow

Shared knowledge and interference

How to stimulate knowledge exchange in a diverse and intercultural society, and more specifically in between the two main language communities in our country? How to stimulate a certain porosity?

> Diversify the Boards, General Assemblies and Management
> Support cultural networks and their mission to share knowledge
> Centralize information on culture and politics
> Stimulate common research topics, create learning communities
Tomorrow

Support multilingualism
Support multilingualism

How to support multilingualism in the internal and external communication (and artistic products) of cultural organizations?

> Stimulate organizations to develop a real policy on the use of language as integral part of their mission and vision

> Stimulate authorities to support multilingualism by offering language courses, supporting translations, creating a fund for translations / translators, etc.
Tomorrow

Know your public and diversify
Tomorrow

Know your public and diversify

How to stimulate organizations to develop a policy on public mediation with the Brussels’ society as starting point?

> Diversify Boards, Assemblies, teams and management
> Work on multilingualism, also in ways of artistic production
> Develop a toolkit for organizations to analyze and measure their public
> Stimulate authorities to really support audience development (responsibility of the Region?)
Tomorrow

Brussels statute
Tomorrow

Brussels statute

How can the authorities officially recognize the Brussels’ reality and support cultural initiatives working in/with this?

> Short term results: Valorize the statute of a ‘bicommunautarian’ organization

> Long term results: strengthen and define a regional cultural policy in relation to the Communities.

> Develop a policy on knowledge exchange, audience development, multilingualism, infrastructure
Freedom Future Fragile
Thank you! – Questions?

Photos-credits: Belgian Solutions - David Helbich
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