

The Urban Culture of Outside Theatre

*Research on the increasing popularity of outside theatre in cities
in the Netherlands and Flanders.*

POLIS, Programme in European Urban Cultures 2003-2004

Free University of Brussels (Belgium)

Tilburg University (the Netherlands)

Manchester Metropolitan University (Great Britain)

University of Art and Design Helsinki (Finland)

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Preface

“The smell of paint and wood penetrates into the nose. Here and there red and white ribbons are tied: do not cross. Unfinished walls, floors and stairs everywhere. But this is what partly constitutes the charm of this ‘Draughty Journey’, in which the theatre is both scenery and subject.”¹

This quotation is from a review of the outside theatre performance *Tocht* (translated both as draught and as journey) in which amateur actors led the audience through the new theatre building in Hoorn, the Netherlands. This journey in January and February 2004 started at the old theatre building and continued in the new building through the cloakroom, foyer, parking garage, corridors and auditoria. Due to its incompleteness, some places in the building were penetrated by a cool draught.

In February 2003 I was involved in the auditions for this performance, but at the same time I applied for Polis, Master Programme in European Urban Cultures, jointly developed by four European universities; Free University of Brussels (Belgium), Tilburg University (the Netherlands), Manchester Metropolitan University (Great Britain) and University of Art and Design Helsinki (Finland).² As I chose to do Polis I missed the journey through the theatre. Instead I travelled through four European cities and experienced an intellectual journey through subject areas related to urban cultural planning and policy. In this thesis I have combined both my interest in outside theatre and in the contents of the course.

Tocht sold out all 75 tickets for 21 performances long in advance and the reviews were generally positive, so it was a big success. Polis was for me an unforgettable experience which learned me a lot, both professionally and personally and therefore I consider it as a great success as well!

¹ Boer, Nico de. “Overal Kniertjes, Romeo’s en Julia’s in Hoorns droomtheater,” in *Noord Hollands Dagblad*, 26-01-2004.

² For more information about Polis, see www.tilburguniversity.nl/faculties/fsw/polis.

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Introduction

Historical background³

During the Middle Ages almost all theatre in Europe was conducted on the streets. The first roaming street artists had no other option than to perform their art in the open, as no buildings were assigned for this purpose. These artists toured through the cities to sing songs about heroes and princesses, tell stories about knights and wars, and recite poems about love and the exotic, leaving most of their performances open to crowds who enjoyed the entertainment for free.⁴ They did not really have a specialism, but called themselves either clown, magician, acrobat or singer. The image of the touring street artists varied. In prosperity they were popular, but in adversity they were not, for example they were seen as the spreaders of pestilence. Also they were seen as entertainers that had never made the effort to learn a decent profession. Despite these critiques the theatre increased. Theatre groups were formed and even theatre competitions were organised.

Around 1610 the theatre moved from outside to inside.⁵ Theatre groups started to use the performances for charity. Suddenly the number of spectators became of high importance. Performances had to be run regardless of weather conditions and only to ticket holding spectators. The logical solution was to perform indoors. When indoor performances proved a success, the idea of having a purpose built building for performances gave birth. In the first half of the 17th century the first of such buildings was completed. For example in the Netherlands it was the Amsterdamse Stadsschouwburg in 1638. This marks the professionalisation of the theatre.⁶ More and more theatre groups performed inside in the growing number of theatre buildings. Meantime, spaces such as churches and stables were made temporarily suitable for performances. At the end of the 17th century street entertainment was prohibited. Governments were afraid that references to the political actuality would cause uproar and moral disorder.⁷ Outside performances almost completely disappeared.

Two centuries later, in the 1960s, there were a lot of groups who started to concentrate on theatre outside the traditional theatre buildings and almost every city or region has its own festival. Many artists and groups make a living out of performing on festivals all over the world. These festivals do not have to fight for an audience, as many people are fascinated by the spectacle.⁸ Never again will theatre solely be equated with traditional theatre buildings.⁹ The question is why outside theatre did become so popular again.

³ The information in this chapter is from the following source, unless stated otherwise:

Groenink, Myra & Wevers, Nathalie (2001). *Op wagens, wad en werf. Theater op onverwachte plaatsen*. Lelystad: Actuele Onderwerpen BV.

⁴ Zalm, Rob van der & Keurentjes, Annemieke & Pegman, Henze (2004). *Tentoonstellingsbrochure Speelruimte. 1000 jaar theater.NL. Verleden en heden van het Nederlands theater in beeld*. Amsterdam: Theater Instituut Nederland.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brommer, Cecile (2003). "The Liberation of Location Theatre," in *Zichtlijnen*, nr. 89, pp 34-39.

⁸ Zalm, Rob van der & Keurentjes, Annemieke & Pegman, Henze (2004). *Tentoonstellingsbrochure Speelruimte. 1000 jaar theater.NL. Verleden en heden van het Nederlands theater in beeld*. Amsterdam: Theater Instituut Nederland.

⁹ Davies, Andrew (1987). *Other Theatres: The Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

Central question

The search for an explanation of this *increasing popularity* involves three points of attention:

1. There is a need for theoretical development of the *outside theatre* genre. All over Europe there are a lot of groups who make outside theatre and festivals where this work is shown. It is also published in photo books and professional journals, but a thorough theoretical foundation is lacking.¹⁰ The aim of this thesis is to make a modest contribution to the development of such a theoretical foundation.
2. The choice is for relating outside theatre with the *city*, because theatre is born out of the city. Theatre is not only an art form; it is also a social institute. It is very deeply connected with the city, with its politics, its problems, its conflicts, its solutions. Theatre is not just a 'representation' of the city. Theatre is rather a 'reflection', in both senses of the word: theatre is thinking about the city, and is a mirror of the city.¹¹ In this thesis the aim is to investigate this relation of outside theatre and the city, with an emphasis on urban cultural policies.
3. The reason for conducting the research in *the Netherlands and Flanders* is the fact that these are both Dutch-speaking countries. Theatre has from way back been an art form of language, in combination with visual and physical disciplines.¹² Within the borders of one language region performances do not need to be translated in order to be understood by the audiences. Because of this the outside theatre scenes in those countries are probably connected to each other. That is why this thesis aims to compare these countries.

The combination of these three points leads to the following central question for this thesis:

*How can the increasing popularity of outside theatre in cities
in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?*

¹⁰ Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

¹¹ Jans, E (1996). 'De keuzes van een schouwburg,' in *Groeten uit Brussel. De Koninklijke Vlaamse schouwburg 1993-1997*. Brussels: KVS.

¹² Reaction of Marc-Jan Trapman in the discussion: *Gezocht: Interdisciplinaire taal*. Bron: www.stuggezaal.nl

Methodology and structure of the thesis

To find possible answers to this central question, the research is mainly based on desk-top investigation of literature, policy plans, websites and other relevant documents. In order to supplement to this information, additional information is gathered by conducting interviews by telephone or email. The results of this research are structured as follows.

The first two chapters function as background information in order to better understand the central question and as preparation for the following chapters. Thus these two chapters do not end with conclusions that give answers to the central question, but contain descriptions and comparisons. To be able to understand what is meant with the word combination 'outside theatre' in the central question, in chapter 1 an overview will be given of its various types, which also tries to show why the genre is so popular. To make it feasible to research the central question, practical examples are chosen that can be studied in detail. Therefore in chapter 2 a selection of practitioners of outside theatre will be introduced.

After this insight in some background information, in the next three chapters it is time to find possible answers to the central question. Before focussing on outside theatre in specific, in chapter 3 the attention will be on culture in a broader sense by answering the question: *How can the increasing political importance of culture, specifically cultural festivals, in cities in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?* The emphasis will be on cultural festivals, because these seem to be an accessible form of offering culture to a broad audience for a certain period of time, which presumes them to be a popular form of culture. Yet there are probably also autonomous developments within the world of outside theatre which these theories do not involve. That is why chapter 4 will be concerned with an intern analysis: *How can the developments of outside theatre and its current position in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?* Chapter 5 will continue in analysing internally. In order to explain the popularity of the genre amongst those who are involved in it, the question is: *How can the reasons of Dutch and Flemish outside theatre institutions for increasingly choosing outside theatre be explained?*

Before drawing the final conclusions, the results of the previous explaining chapters will be checked on their relevance in practice by conducting cases studies. In chapter 6 national and local policies from the Netherlands and Flanders will be studied, considering both the point of view of the policy makers and the point of view of the outside theatre institutions.

In the last part of this thesis, in the conclusions answers to the central question will be given, that are based on the sub-conclusions of the research in the previous chapters. In the discussion the value of these conclusions will be evaluated by discussing the research process.

1 Typology of Outside Theatre

Although in the introduction, the word combination 'outside theatre' is used in general, this concept refers to a whole range of definitions. Outside theatre does not necessarily have to mean 'outside' in terms of theatre which has no roof over it. What is meant is that it is away from the predefined structure of a theatre building.¹³ There is a wide spectrum within this theatre genre and it is not always clearly and unanimously defined. The dividing lines are very thin, sometimes a different name is given for the same thing. And besides, a lot of artists and theatre groups are practicing various types, often even at the same time. They might be averse to classification and just do their thing, whatever others may call it. Despite these difficulties, to be able to fully understand the central question it is necessary to give an overview in of the various types of outside theatre. This chapter tries to help dealing with the definition and to show why the genre is so popular. The first subdivision that can be made is that of theatre at specific locations and theatre in public space.

1.1 Specific Locations

Theatre at specific locations can occur at any location either in the open air or inside, except for the traditional theatre auditorium. Within this, there can be distinguished site-specific performances, location theatre and theatre on location.

Site-Specific Performances¹⁴

Site-specific theatre did not emerge out of an ideological basis. It was pure pragmatic spirit. A group of mime artists was desperate to create their own possibilities, it did not matter where. They were looking for space: *"The theatre doesn't want us? They aren't interested in a new kind of mime, not even if we call it 'movement theatre'? Our answer: The theatre has to escape from the theatre. No money for scenery? Then look for some place – monumental, if possible – and perform a piece in it, or about it."*¹⁵

They analysed the notion of space. They found out that you do not have to consider space only in terms of abstractions, but you can experience something concrete in it with plenty of recognisable aspects. They developed a keen sense of the space around them. Inspired by the many possibilities inherent in working with and proceeding from space, productions emerged that were made for specific places and that could be performed nowhere else: site-specific performances. These reveal the space as an environment and source of inspiration. The architecture and the character of the space always play the leading role.

¹³ Mason, Bim (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London: Routledge.

¹⁴ The information in this paragraph is from the following source, unless stated otherwise:

Smid, Gioia (1993). *Off the boards. Site-specific Performance in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Theater Instituut Nederland.

¹⁵ Vogels, Frits (1993). "From Runaways to cherished species," in Smid, Gioia (1993). *Off the boards. Site-specific Performance in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Theater Instituut Nederland, pp 3.

An important phenomenon peculiar to the sixties, that was extremely important in stimulating the birth of site-specific performances, was that many buildings, including industrial sites and even churches, were vacant. *“It was theatrical spectacle that was crying out for a response. In reaction, space-hungry producers all over the world dived into every conceivable space available.”*¹⁶ The supply of discarded buildings was soon depleted: city renovations and expansions, bureaucratisation and commercialisation took their toll. Producers of site-specific performances were required to tap new sources. It is in fact an ironic situation: after having escaped from the traditional theatre, site-specific theatre has become a genre itself.

Movement theatre group Griftheater has made the following remarks on the characteristics of site-specific performances¹⁷:

- Visual art is an important, even initiating source of inspiration; a way to develop a theatrical style, starting from image and movement. In this perception the visual elements are directly related to the exploration and use of space as a medium.
- Awareness of character and form of space and of the player's own position and movement in it, is regarded as an essential part of site-specific theatre. In this case, space becomes a medium for the theatre.
- Important are the relations between player(s) and space, and between object(s) and space.
- A composition based on architectonic space is justified by the way first the artist/director/choreographer, then the actors/dancers and finally the audience experience the space.
- The architecture of the space does not fix the architecture of the performance. Actors can be part of the space: harmonise it. But they can also oppose it: dissociate themselves from the space, making it more beautiful or uglier, suggesting a use different from what it had been designed for, giving it different colours.
- A properly developed perception of space as such is important to change the way of making theatre for regular theatres. On the one hand, the experience with performances on location influence the regular theatre productions. On the other hand, site-specific performances could not have been made without traditional theatre experience.

Because site-specific work can not, by its very nature, tour, the potential audience will be relatively limited in numbers. So, although the same amount of energy will have gone into creating the performance as for a touring piece, the life of the show will be relatively short. This makes site-specific work fairly expensive. Bookers will have to put a lot of trust in the reputation of the group, because there is no way the finished production can be seen before the contract is agreed. These factors involve that there is certainly not so much site-specific work as there might otherwise have been.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Griftheater (1996). “Some remarks on site specific theatre,” in Lokatievoorstellingen en ruimtelijke projecten. File of copies in library Theaterschool. In its article Griftheater writes about site-specific movement theatre or (corporeal) mime. In this chapter it is converted to site-specific theatre in general.

Location Theatre

The essence of location theatre is that the piece has to be rooted at the site. Place and performance mutually influence each other. Without a special location the performance would be impossible.¹⁸ But the difference with site-specific theatre is that it is not as abstract and more flexible. It is not only about a composition of movement in space, but there often is a story line. This can either be an existing theatre play that is adapted to the location, or the makers can write their own script, based on for example the history and current function of the location. Usually location theatre is put on a number of times at one special location. Sometimes another spot is also taken into consideration if it sufficiently resembles the original site. The performance then has to be adapted to the new spot.¹⁹ The interaction between the performance and the location is the main aspect. The audience is supposed to make interpretative links between the performance and its surroundings. Even a bird that is accidentally flying over can become a theatrical element of the performance, just like the sunset, wind or rain.²⁰ These unstable elements can be difficult to handle, but to a good performer most interruptions are not a problem. On the contrary they often are seen as a gift, because they can have beautiful dramatic side-effects.²¹

Theatre on Location

Theatre on location has less interaction between the performance and the place. Usually it is an existing play or a piece that is made on beforehand. Therefore the location does not have much influence on the performance itself, although it can have an influence on the actors or the audience, because the atmosphere is different than in a regular theatre. This kind of theatre can actually happen on any location, so it is used a lot during festivals. Theatre groups prepare one piece and travel with that scenario to various festivals where they do more or less the same thing. So it has similarities with the street theatre of the Middle Ages. It is possible that theatre on location happens for want of anything better. Some groups or artists perform on location because they are not booked by the regular theatres. Sometimes they build their own theatre at the location with a traditional theatre setting of a performing area and audience area. It can be argued whether that can be given the definition of theatre on location or not. It is also possible that theatre groups play their existing piece on location, just because they love the location. If the performance and the location do not match though, the risk is that the attractive surroundings causes the audience to become distracted from paying attention to the performance.²²

¹⁸ Freriks, Kester (2002). "Locatietheater: een spannende dwangbuis die bevrijdt," in *Zeeuws tijdschrift*, vol 52, afl 4, pp 3-5.

¹⁹ Smid, Gioia (1993). *Off the boards. Site-specific Performance in the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Theater Instituut Nederland.

²⁰ Freriks, Kester (2002). "Locatietheater: een spannende dwangbuis die bevrijdt," in *Zeeuws tijdschrift*, vol 52, afl 4, pp 3-5.

²¹ Mason, Bim (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London: Routledge.

²² Haan, Gonneke de (2003). *Locatie +/- over de meerwaarde van locatietheater*. Utrecht: Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, afstudeerscriptie Theatervormgeving.

1.2 Public Space

Whereas in the above forms of outside theatre the location is more or less carefully chosen, there are also performances that can happen anywhere in public space. Warner van Wely distinguishes the following characteristics of theatre in public space:

- *Space and time.* In the city space and time are concrete facts. The player really is in front of the spectator at a certain period of time. The strength of theatre in public space is that it happens at one specific spot and nowhere else.
- *Crowd and individual.* In public space the crowd is dynamic. People come and people go. When something is happening, suddenly there is a circle, that can disappear as quickly as it came. A theatre group that performs in public space has to know the techniques to steer the crowd: form and break up circles, guide a group of people to another spot, working visible above the heads or disappear amongst the crowd and reappear somewhere else. Thanks to the crowd people on the street can easily express their experience. Amongst the emotions of others, nobody has to hold back. This does not mean that all of those people experience it in the same way. In their emotions everybody has their own associations, memories and interpretations. Besides, theatre makers have to take into consideration that the spectators have freedom of movement. They can come and leave whenever they want. They can choose a place to sit or stand, closer or further, in front of the scene or at the back. Performances therefore have to have an open structure with space for the own choice of the spectators. The best is no begin-mid-end-structure nor messages that has to become clear step by step, but material for own observations and interpretations instead.
- *Codes and functions.* In a city no places are neutral. Everything, from the sidewalks to an over flying helicopter, has a history and mostly a reason for being there at the very moment. Spaces and objects have a function, even the garbage and stray dogs. The behaviour of people follows the codes that are determined by those functions. Theatre in public space give them another function. The behaviour of the theatre players are outside the ruling codes and that is provocative.
- *Senses and impulses.* Passers-by in public space follow their senses. It is not necessary to only make theatre to look at or only make music to listen to. It is more effective to combine techniques from various disciplines, like visual art, physical theatre and music. The task is to use the aspects of these art forms in such a way that they form an impulse for people to experience them.
- *Coincidence.* Playgrounds are never identical. Spectators are always at different places. During a performance there are always unexpected objects and happenings. A good performance has to show its various qualities in those different circumstances. Then supposedly disturbing factors, that are inevitable in public space, can often be of advantage for the performance. Therefore, in the preparations training and improvisation is more important than direction aimed at exact repetition.

There are numerous forms of theatre in public space. These can be classified into street theatre, moving spectacles, performance installations and infiltrations.

Street Theatre

Street theatre is probably the most common or well-known form of theatre in public space. It is a stationary show with a lot of circus influences, such as juggling, riding a one-wheel bike and clownish jokes. It is often done solo, in duos or small-scale groups and for specific acts they regularly ask volunteers from the audience, who sit and stand in a circle around the playground. The inattentive spectator, to the general hilarity of the audience, can suddenly find him/herself participating in the spectacle. Street theatre can be organised and paid for by festivals, but it can also be done in the form of busking. Buskers are those who do shows and then collect money from the audience rather than being paid by a fee or through box-office receipts.²³

Moving Spectacles

Moving spectacle is a performance without fixed playground, moving through the city like a parade and the audience walks along. The aim is to move the street public as a mass, so that it will collectively experience a feast for the senses, in contrast to the urban environment that often is experienced as being impersonal. The street is a location for explicit staging, because nobody can escape seeing the image. Therefore large objects are used; transforming constructions with elemental materials such as water and fire and intriguing sounds. The acting is extravert and energetic. The audience is a crowd in which individuals feel safe. Spectators search their own route amongst the stream, but the shared attention with its simultaneous silences, laughs and applauses, causes collective energy and excitement. Moving spectacle is a rich form of theatre, because the urban environment is optimally used and the moving audience gets a feeling of anarchism and airiness. It is not an easy form, because the players have to work at a large scale and have to be mobile at the same time.²⁴

Performance Installations

Performance installation as it is called in this thesis, can also be referred to as 'simultaneous location scenes'²⁵ or 'living visual art'²⁶. It is an exhibition of visual scenes that are simultaneously performed in the streets. A theatre group is often divided in a few subgroups that work autonomously. The performance takes a long time. There is no beginning and no end, so the spectators can decide every moment to start or stop watching. The scenes do not force themselves upon the spectators, but are under the energy level of the regular street life. The aim is to confront the street public with moods and actions that conflict with the daily life and that you can not give a place, but that keep on stimulating imagination. Ideal is when a scene seems to be part of the existing environment, then the installation determines the street scene without dominating it.²⁷

²³ Mason, Bim (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London: Routledge.

²⁴ Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Paula Zuidhof (2004). *Brochure Karavaan 15 juli tot 15 augustus 2004 reizend zomerfestival in Noord-Holland*. Haarlem: Kunst en Cultuur Noord-Holland.

²⁷ Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

Infiltrations

In case of the forms described above, people either choose to go to the location in advance or accidentally pass by and stop to watch the theatre. And whether they buy a ticket for it or not, at least they realise that some kind of theatre is going on. Infiltrations - or mingling, or walkabout - are not announced. Instead theatre groups just go out on the streets to infiltrate in the daily life of people. It is theatre in public space that you can not call a show, perhaps not even a performance, but short and out of the blue actions by actors that infiltrate in the public and improvise with moving visual acts without beginning or end.²⁸ Infiltrations play with reality, often to cause some confusion and chaos in the public order. The aim is to break through patterns of expectation and making the fears of people in the street manageable. The work is based on things that are not really allowed in the streets. It is playing with the border of acceptation what is and what is not permitted. For the spectator it either can be hilarious or uncomfortable, because there is no clear distinction between the space for players and for spectators. The players move in the territory of the audience. Often the costume is the only tool for finding out that there is acting going on.²⁹ Some people may not even know whether the happening was real or theatre. This disruptive effect that infiltrations produce is very attractive to those artists with provocateur tendencies. Interaction with the audience, objects and architecture is an absolute essential, either by blending in or contrast with the environment.³⁰

1.3 Comparison

Comparing theatre on locations, *site-specific performances* have the strongest interaction with the location. As they use the space as source of inspiration, productions emerge with a leading role for the spatial characteristics and atmosphere of the specific site, thus these could not be performed anywhere else. Although *location theatre* also has to be rooted at the site, it is not so much the space itself that determines the productions, but the narrative of the location. It is also possible that an existing theatre play is adapted to the location. Of these three forms, *theatre on location* has the least relation with a site. This could be done at any location, except for the traditional theatre building.

In a comparison of theatre in public space, it can be seen that on the one hand *street theatre* shows, with its circus influences, as well as the exciting parades of *moving spectacles* have to do with entertainment of audiences and the creation of collectivity amongst the spectators. On the other hand, the moods of the exhibited visual scenes in *performance installations* as well as the unannounced actions of *infiltrations* are aimed at stimulating the imagination of the individual and a confrontation with reality, causing conflict, confusion and chaos in the public order. Of all forms of outside theatre, infiltrations perhaps have the least connection with regular theatre as people used to know it and the most with public space and urban reality.

²⁸ Warner & Consorten (2004). *CD-Rom Warner & Consorten. Unexpected performances for unusual places 1993-2003*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

²⁹ Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

³⁰ Mason, Bim (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London: Routledge.

To what extent outside theatre is a popular form of theatre of course depends on the contents and realisation of individual performances. Yet it can generally be noticed that, compared to site-specific performances and location theatre, theatre on location is the most popular form. This is due to the possibilities for performing this type of theatre at any location, rather than being stuck to one specific site, so it can easily tour around many festivals, thus being enjoyed by many people. Theatre in public space is by definition public, so performances of that category are free accessible for everybody. Yet street theatre and moving spectacles seem to be more accessible and than the rather abstract performance installations and infiltrations and therefore the former are more popular and better known than the latter. Another popular aspect of all types of outside theatre is that performances are generally multidisciplinary, so almost everyone is able to enjoy their favourite art discipline in an outside theatre performance.

2 Practitioners of Outside Theatre

To make it feasible to research the central question, practical examples are chosen that can be studied in detail. To be able to conduct such a detailed study in the following chapters of this thesis, it is necessary to introduce these examples first. In this chapter eight practitioners of outside theatre are introduced, of which four festivals and four groups, two of each from the Netherlands and also two of each from Flanders. The examples are chosen in the first place because of their relevance to the subject, so the typology in the first chapter is used as the basis for the choice. Furthermore these cases are well-known and well-documented and a geographical spreading is taken into consideration. In the first paragraph the attention is on outside theatre festivals and the second paragraph deals with outside theatre groups.

2.1 Outside Theatre Festivals

The following outside theatre festivals are chosen:

- De Stad als Theater (The City as a Theatre) in Zwolle, the Netherlands³¹
- Oerol Festival in Terschelling, the Netherlands³²
- ISTF (International Street Theatre Festival) in Gent, Flanders³³
- Theater op de Markt (Theatre at the Market) in Hasselt, Flanders³⁴

These festivals are generally introduced, by describing who they are, where they take place, what they programme, when they were initiated and take place, how they are organised and their plans for the future.

Who

Three of the names of the festivals clearly display what they are about. Each of these three names shows that the festival is about theatre, either in the city (De Stad als Theater), in the streets (ISTF) or at the market³⁵ (Theater op de Markt). For Oerol this is less clear, even the full name Terschellings Oerol Festival does not show exactly what the festival programme contains. However, perhaps it is an

³¹ The information for De Stad als Theater in this section is from the following sources: Huis in 't Veld, Henk (2004). *Projectevaluatie 2000 t&m 2003*. Zwolle: De Stad Als Theater. www.destadalstheater.nl

³² The information for Oerol in this section is from the following sources: Goossens, Jesse (2001). *20 jaar Oerol. Terschelling voor Vogels*. Amsterdam: Cultuur in Voorraad. www.oerol.nl

³³ The information for ISTF in this section is from the following sources: Devens, Tuur (2004). *De Vijfde Wand. Reflecties over figurentheater en circustheater*. Gent: Pro-art. www.istf.be

³⁴ The information for Theater op de Markt in this section is from the following sources: PCT Dommelhof (2002). *Theater op de Markt, Theater in de Piste, Theaterstreken*. Hasselt: Provinciebestuur Limburg (België). www.theateropdemarkt.be

³⁵ The name of the Festival Theater op de Markt has a double meaning. On the one hand a market or market square is in fact the most public space in a city. The name therefore represents theatre at public places, not necessarily at the market. On the other hand the name symbolises the question what is available on the market in terms of street, circus and outside theatre.

advantage that the name Oerol is so open as, besides theatre, they want to increase landscape and visual art.

Where

Also in terms of the place of the festivals Oerol is different. Oerol takes place at quite rural locations all over the island Terschelling, both outside, like the beach, dunes, forest and streets of the villages, and in inside locations, such as a shed, boathouse or bunker. The other three festivals take place only at urban locations in the inner city. De Stad als Theater makes use of Zwolle's outside locations such as gardens, courtyards, bastions or even in and on the water of the canals, as well as inside locations like balconies, living rooms or sheds. The performances of ISTF logically occur on the streets but also at for example squares, parks, parking spaces and historical buildings spread out over the city of Gent. Comparable locations are used by Theater op de Markt in the inner city of Hasselt.

What

De Stad als Theater focuses on both location theatre, in which a mix of various art forms are developed for a certain location, and theatre on location, in which more or less existing theatre, music, dance and visual art projects are realised at special locations. Besides, they programme various kind of music and visual art projects. The programme of Oerol contains outside theatre in the broadest sense of the word, ranging from site-specific performances where the audience has to pay for to free street theatre. Also landscape and visual art are part of the programme. Whereas the name of ISTF suggests that the festival programme solely contains street theatre, they actually programme qualitative full-scale outside theatre productions and even art installations form a permanent part of the concept of the festival. Theater op de Markt programmes a wide range of fully-fledged theatre performances with a beginning and an end at which both actors and audience have to behave in accordance with the known theatre regulations. All four festival programmes are thus multidisciplinary.

When

De Stad als Theater had its try out in 2000 and three festivals took place in the years that followed. Despite of the intentions for the future to strengthen the organisation as well as its position in the region and to find partners for collaboration, due to financial problems De Stad als Theater was cancelled in 2004. Oerol was first organised in 1982, so already 23 editions took place, this year it was from 11 till 20 June. ISTF exists since 1990 in their first version, only the name changed from European to International in 1998. In 2004 the festival was organised from the 21st until the 25th of July. Theater op de Markt developed from an art market in 1972 to the outside theatre festival it is nowadays. In 2004 Theater op de Markt took place from 12 until 15 August.

How

Generally the core organisation of the festivals consists of a number of employees who organise the artistic and business aspects of the programme during the whole year. In the months before the start this core is extended with temporary employees who prepare the practical matters of the festival and

during the festival often numerous volunteers assist. The situation of a cultural festival in the inner city has a certain pressure on the surroundings as a consequence. That deserves attention and the organisation should handle it carefully. According to De Stad als Theater a central point in the method of working with the surroundings is cooperation with inhabitants and businesses in order to take care of for example traffic and parking, security and supervision and permissions.

Most festivals do not solely programme existing productions, but also initiate and (co) produce performances especially for their festival. De Stad als Theater yearly produces its grand scale music theatre productions, visual art projects and location theatre productions. For the other performances existing groups or occasional formations are invited and challenged to develop new productions or actualise their existing ones.

Oerol has created more and more the profile of a producing festival and the amount of site-specific performances increases every year. The support for small, starting groups has expanded over the years, what gives these groups the opportunity to really develop. For this long term collaboration it is needed that talented and interested artists learn about the island, for example by talking to inhabitants. The groups themselves have to come up with their plans, which are then checked by the Oerol organisation to make them realistic and feasible. The groups are supported in learning the possibilities and impossibilities of site-specific theatre. They also can get help in drawing up the budget and formulating the subsidy application. When needed the workshop group is reinforced with site-specific theatre professionals who give artistic advise in the fields of content, dramaturgy and directing.

In Flanders there are investments in young theatre makers as well. The organisations of ISTF and Theater op de Markt and have the opinion that the Flemish contribution at outside theatre festivals should increase, but noticed that there were not enough facilities and means for theatre makers to develop professionally. That is why Theater op de Markt initiated the Vlaamse Federatie voor Kunsten op Straat (Flemish Federation for Arts on the Street). This federation would like to function as an interlocutor within the national and international professional street theatre field. They want to devote themselves to acquire a professional and artistic recognition for people and organisations with an innovative mode of operation. Besides this administrative federation, they have initiated the Huis voor Kunsten op Straat (House for Arts on the Sreet). This is a workshop for street and circus theatre that co produces artistic creations. Besides logistic and financial support, the workshop offers rehearsal space as well. International collaboration is stimulated to increase the cross-fertilization of various theatre forms.

Future

In the future De Stad als Theater wants to professionalise its organisation, find partners for collaboration and strengthen its position in the region. In 2005 they will programme a large scale location project. Oerol wants to keep on developing the location theatre, professionalise the landscape art and focus on internationalisation. Therefore the artistic priorities are the following: co producing and

programming of large scale (inter)national location productions, strengthening the workshop function, stimulating the landscape art and acquire a structural place for visual art. ISTF wants to realise full-scale outdoor productions with text and Flemish and Dutch actors next to the purely visual performances in cooperation with several festivals in Flanders and the Netherlands. At this point in time, Theater op de Markt is formulating its new plans. They want to continue organising the festival at a biannual basis. Authorities demand to include music in the programme. Apart from street music Theater op de Markt does not want to include other music to prevent an unclear mixture of genres within the festival. The focus remains on theatre, nevertheless as a new challenge they would like to increase the visual aspect.

2.2 Outside Theatre Groups

The choice is made for the following outside theatre groups:

- Warner & Consorten (Warner and his pals), the Netherlands³⁶
- ZT Hollandia (Southern Theatre Hollandia), the Netherlands³⁷
- Teater Exces (Theatre Excess), Flanders³⁸
- De Queeste (The Quest), Flanders³⁹

These groups are introduced with a comparing description of who they are, where they are settled and performing, what they produce, when they were founded, how they are organised and creating their productions and how they are aiming to develop in the future.

Who

The names of the groups are quite different. Warner & Consorten is named after its founder *Warner van Wely*, whereas the combined names of ZT Hollandia are called after the place where the groups were founded, namely *Het Zuidelijk Toneel* in Eindhoven in the south (= zuidelijk) of the Netherlands and *Hollandia* in Noord-Holland. The names of the Flemish groups reflect more or less the contents of their work. Teater Exces makes *excessive* theatre productions, in the sense of extreme and greater than what seems to be reasonable. De Queeste continuously *quests* for probing and vigorous theatre in their self-willed style.

³⁶ The information for Warner & Consorten in this section is from the following sources:

Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

Haan, Gonneke de (2003). *Locatie +/- over de meerwaarde van locatietheater*. Utrecht: Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, afstudeerscriptie Theatervormgeving.

www.straattheater.net/groepen

³⁷ The information for ZT Hollandia in this section is from the following sources:

Oosterling, Henk (2000). *On the Border. Hollandia's hypocritical theatre*. Amsterdam: Erasmus University of Rotterdam Centre for Philosophy & Arts (CFK).

www.zthollandia.nl

³⁸ The information for Teater Exces in this section is from the following source:

Vandewalle, Patrick & others (2002). *Theater Exces op straat geboren en getogen*. Gent: Excessief Productions.

www.exces.be

³⁹ The information for De Queeste in this section is from the following sources:

www.dequeeste.be

Where

Warner & Consorten, ZT Hollandia and Theater Exces use their home-city, respectively Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Gent, as a base from which they are travelling through their own country and abroad. For performances outside the Dutch speaking countries, sometimes productions need to be translated, but often outside theatre performances use a visual language, which means that they have no linguistic limitations for international tours. It seems that none of the groups has a special bond with the city they are settled in. De Queeste, which has its office, storage space and rehearsal space in Genk does not believe in creating a profile as theatre group belonging to one specific city. That is why De Queeste resolutely chooses the whole province of Limburg as their operating base and considers its unexplored fields as a space full of possibilities for traversing them creatively.

What

Warner & Consorten makes unexpected performances for unusual places. Their work is raw, poetic, direct and communicates without text in an original unusual visual language. In wintertime they produce site-specific and location performances. These performances are not the reproduction of a story, but are about the experience of the object and the space. In summertime they perform all kinds of theatre in public space, for which they consider a few principles fundamental: No performances, but actions; no fixed playgrounds, but movements; no rehearsed piece, but thought-out actions in contrast with the image of the city landscape. The real spectacle is the total of everything that can be seen; the prepared action with everything around it. This gives a different view on reality, because reality itself tells the story. It is not about the message of the maker, but about what the maker can provoke with its action. Besides performances, Warner & Consorten gives workshops to young artists in interdisciplinary projects. The short improvisations that evoke out of this working method forms a big challenge for the players. The result is an abundance of ideas with endless possibilities.

ZT Hollandia and De Queeste both produce location theatre in addition to their plays in regular theatres. ZT Hollandia plays in the theatre season in traditional theatres and on locations and in summertime they perform at various summer festivals. At locations, all kinds of sensory sensations play a part that are systematically filtered out in a traditional theatre, such as smells, sounds, images or sensations that constantly make the visitor aware of its own physical presence and that of others. The nature, history, and appearance of locations literally form the scenery of the performance. Reality becomes part of the fiction. Also sounds out of reality are incorporated into the play, sometimes electronically manipulated. ZT Hollandia sees its location as an area of togetherness for the actors and the audience. The performances are often based on ordinary not-dramatic and not-literary texts, such as speeches, articles and interviews. De Queeste makes probing and vigorous theatre in their self-willed style. The text material is newly produced by contemporary playwrights about the current human backgrounds. Every year they make one big and one small stage project and a location project in summer. Besides these performances they freely explore new material and collaborations in their laboratory.

Teater Exces makes street theatre and moving spectacles with no linguistic limitations. Their performances are a wide range of visual, abstract acts and playful creations, both for children and adults. The group has a specific playing style in which long poses evolve into repetitive moments, and mime and movement theatre blend into each other.

When

After he had gained experience as artistic director for outside theatre group Dogtroep, Warner van Wely founded Warner & Consorten in 1993. The artistic director of ZT Hollandia, Johan Simons, was among the co-founders in 1979 of the Wespentheater, which in 1982 was replaced by the Regiotheater. In 1985 the Regiotheater merged with a theatre group of the same kind, Acht Oktober, into Hollandia. In 2001 theatre group Hollandia merged with Het Zuidelijk Toneel into ZT Hollandia. Patrick Vandewalle founded Teater Exces in 1972 as a reaction to the situation in the late sixties. In more than thirty years they made at least hundred five productions. De Queeste originated in 1997 at the Theatre Academy in Maastricht (the Netherlands), where a few Flemish students started a special and intense collaboration.

How

Due to the multidisciplinary approach of outside theatre groups, their artistic teams do not only consist of actors, but also of artists skilled in other disciplines. Warner & Consorten is a group of sculptors, musicians, dancers and actors, sometimes in collaboration with other artists and groups. ZT Hollandia has a core of actors, one musician-composer and one designer. In their ranks there is also the experimental music laboratory Veenstudio and the collective of recent graduates from the Theatre Academy in Maastricht JONGHOLLANDIA. Teater Exces consists of mime artists who are working with freelance and guest actors. The core actors of De Queeste searches for enriching and inspiring cross-overs with other makers. That is why they regularly work together with guest actors, directors, musicians, designers and technicians who bring in new artistic challenges.

Although, in case of Warner & Consorten, ZT Hollandia and Teater Exces, the founding individuals seem to have had and still have the main influence on the developments of their group, the method of working is generally a collective process of all the artists involved. For example the theatre makers of Warner & Consorten never make strict plans before they start working on a production. Most traditional theatre groups say before the rehearsals start: *"This is what we are going to do, this is what the performance is going to look like."* Warner & Consorten says: *"This is how we work, nobody knows exactly what it is going to look like. We are ourselves curious for the result as well."* After preparations in the workshop, the performance only gets its definitive form at the location itself. During the performances they make use of and react on what materials are existing and what situations are happening on the site. In that way, every time a unique performance comes into being. Another example is the working method of De Queeste, that also is a process of collective research, experiments and improvisations in which the makers question and challenge each other and react on the materials and situation of the space. It is trial and error, searching, finding and letting go, with an unqualified trust in each other, with the result of unique and inspiring performances.

Future

For the following years, Warner & Consorten wants to continue the outside, inside and co productions. They planned two new pieces for public space, one production for inside, one co production and a few specials. In 2005 Johan Simons will be replaced by Matthijs Rümke and the group will continue to solely use the name Het Zuidelijk Toneel. In their plans for 2005-2008 Het Zuidelijk Toneel does not focus as much on location theatre as they used to do in their merger with Hollandia. At this point in time Theater Exces is in transition. For the next policy period they would like to recreate the function of the group, but the direction of these developments are still unclear. De Queeste wants to continue in their endless collective quest.

2.3 Comparison

In comparing the outside theatre festivals and groups in their undergone developments and in their plans for the future in order to show the direction in which they aim their development, it can be seen that Theater op de Markt has the longest history of the four festivals. The festival developed from an art market in 1972 to the outside theatre festival it is nowadays. Oerol was first organised in 1982 and ISTF exists since 1998. De Stad als Theater is the youngest festival. Its try out was in 2000 and three festivals took place in the years that followed. Despite of the intentions for the future to strengthen the organisation as well as its position in the region and to find partners for collaboration, due to financial problems De Stad als Theater was cancelled in 2004. That is why they want to professionalise the organisation, find partners for collaboration and strengthen its position in the region. In 2005 they are planning to programme a large scale location project. Whereas one of the artistic priorities of Oerol is to increase visual art and the new challenge for Theater op de Markt is to increase the visual aspect of the festival as well, the future plans of ISTF are to realise text productions next to the purely visual performances.

Teater Exces is the group that exists for the longest period of time. It was founded in 1972. At this point in time the group is in a transition phase. They would like to recreate its function, but the direction of these developments is still unclear. Another group with a long history and uncertain current developments is ZT Hollandia. Its origins lay in 1979, but the current group merged in 2001. In 2005 the artistic director will be replaced and the group will continue to solely use the name Het Zuidelijk Toneel. In their plans for 2005-2008 Het Zuidelijk Toneel does not focus as much on location theatre as they used to do in their merger with Hollandia. It seems to be still unclear what will happen to the outside theatrical inheritance of Hollandia. Warner & Consorten and De Queeste are younger groups, both originated in the 1990s. Warner & Consorten was founded in 1993. After its ten years of existence, they plan to continue developing their outside, inside and co productions. The relatively young De Queeste originated in 1997 at the Theatre Academy in Maastricht (the Netherlands), where a few Flemish students started a special and intense collaboration. They want to continue their collective quest in the future.

3 Political Interest in Culture

In this chapter the attention is on culture in a broad sense, rather than on outside theatre in specific. The question is how the increasing political importance of culture in cities in the Netherlands and Flanders can be explained. This chapter tries to offer insights in the developments that have led to this increased political interest in culture as marketing instrument. The emphasis is on cultural festivals, because these seems to be accessible in offering culture to a broad audience, which makes them a popular form of culture.

3.1 Changes in Cultural Policies

According to the European Commission⁴⁰, culture is a driving force in today's European society and economy. It gives identity, confidence and social cohesion to individuals and regions. More and more often, the economic development and competition of regions includes the development of their cultural resources and cultural initiatives. Cultural assets and activities can also give regions a dynamic image, attracting people and investment and thus bringing further development. The importance of a region's cultural image is confirmed by the results of studies, which show that 30% of company directors in industry and 50% in services regard the availability of cultural resources as a major factor in decisions on place of business.

Taking a look at the recent history, according to Bianchini⁴¹, urban cultural policies in western Europe during the 1950s and 1960s were relatively unimportant, non-controversial areas of local policy-making. They made few connections between a city's cultural resources and their possible exploitation for urban renewal, tourism, image or economic development purposes. In the early 1970s cultural policies became politically more important and controversial. This was related to the rise of the post-1968 urban social movements whose activities had a clear cultural dimension. From the social and political concerns prevailing during the 1970s, the strategic objectives of cultural policy shifted to the economic development and urban regeneration priorities of the 1980s. The direct impact of 1980s cultural policies on the generation of employment and wealth was relatively modest, in comparison with the role of culture in constructing positive urban images, developing the tourism industry, attracting inward investment, and strengthening the competitive position of cities.

So, the cultural sector has grown remarkably since the beginning of the 1980s in terms of the economic importance of this sector for the cities. Zukin draws attention to the new symbolic economy of culture for cities: *"As a set of architectural themes, it plays a leading role in urban redevelopment*

⁴⁰ European Commission, DGX (1998). *Culture, the Cultural Industries and Employment*. Brussels: Commission Staff Working Paper.

⁴¹ Bianchini, Franco (1993). "Remaking European cities: the role of cultural policies," in Bianchini, Franco & Parkinson, Michael (eds) (1993). *Cultural policy and urban regeneration. The West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp 1-20.

*strategies based on historic preservation or local 'heritage'. With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities – the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge.*⁴²

Also Charles Landry notes this replacement of the traditional industries by culture. He has more or less invented the notion of the Creative City:⁴³ *“Historically, creativity and innovation have been the lifeblood of cities. Yet there are special reasons for thinking about the problems of cities today in terms of creativity and innovation – or the lack of it. Today many of the world’s cities are facing agonising periods of transition. Old industries are disappearing – value added in cities is created less through what we manufacture and more through the application of new knowledge to products, processes and services. The factors that once shaped city development – transport, rivers, proximity of raw materials – have become less relevant. As we approach the 21st century there is a widespread understanding that it will be the creativity and innovativeness of our cities that will determine the future success of Europe and elsewhere. (...) Culture is crucially important. It is the often forgotten glue that may hold things together in cities. It is in the cultural arena that battles of the future will be fought – won and lost. Thus a cultural perspective needs to move centre stage in the planning of our cities.”*⁴⁴

O'Connor⁴⁵ states that the encouragement of the 'creative city' is beginning to bring together cultural and economic policy at an ever more strategic level. Zukin⁴⁶ explains that cultural institutions establish a competitive advantage over other cities for attracting new businesses and corporate elites. Culture suggests the coherence and consistency of a brand name product. Like any commodity, "cultural" landscape has the possibility of generating other commodities. Historically, the causality is that only economic surplus generates culture. But in European cities during the 1970s, culture became more of an instrument in the entrepreneurial strategies of local governments and business alliances.

A certain kind of culture, art, is regarded as a structural characteristic of the cityscape, as an important factor in urban development, and as a crucial element in increasing the quality of urban life, writes Cochez.⁴⁷ Arts and culture should not be used as instruments for reaching political aims indeed, yet the positive side effects should not be underestimated. In the advice for the Dutch cultural policy⁴⁸ it is stated that culture is a binding factor, it can increase integration and has tourist value. A cultural climate improves the value of a city or region as place for businesses. Creativity is essential for innovation, the quality of public space and the public domain in general.

⁴² Zukin, Sharon (1995). *The Cultures of Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp 1-2.

⁴³ Verwijnen, Jan (1999). "Preface," in Verwijnen, Jan & Lehtovuori, Panu (eds) (1999). *Creative Cities. Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design, pp 6-7

⁴⁴ Landry Charles. "Conference presentation," in Verwijnen, Jan & Lehtovuori, Panu (eds) (1999). *Creative Cities. Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design, pp 6

⁴⁵ O'Connor, Justin (1999). "Popular Culture, Reflexivity and Urban Change," in Verwijnen, Jan & Lehtovuori, Panu (eds) (1999). *Creative Cities. Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design, pp 76-101.

⁴⁶ Zukin, Sharon (1995). *The Cultures of Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp 12.

⁴⁷ Cochez, Geert (2002). *Urban Space, Art and Religion: Reflections on Intercultural Conflicts between Muslim Immigrants and Western Performing Arts in European Cities*. Brussels: Thesis Polis.

⁴⁸ Raad voor Cultuur (2004). *Spiegel van de Cultuur. Cultuurnota-advies '05-'08*. Den Haag: Raad voor Cultuur.

As seen above, the use of cultural policies has shifted from social-political reasons to economic reasons such as upgrading and promoting a city's image for business investment. More recently, however, urban cultural policies have increasingly come to emphasise the employment potential of the cultural industries, says O'Connor.⁴⁹ In 1998 the European Commission published a Working Paper on Culture, the Cultural Industries and Employment⁵⁰, which concludes that culture and the activities which surround it - directly or indirectly - are a resource for the future and an important asset for the development of employment in Europe. Some jobs are part-time, and as yet there are no reliable sources to establish the equivalent in terms of full-time jobs. Concerning the performing arts, employment is usually only for a given production or maybe only for one performance, making conversion into permanent jobs very difficult. But there is no doubt that it has an impact on employment as well as a potential for stimulating the economy. In times of their increasing unemployment, more and more traditional industrial towns have been incorporating culture in their restructuring policies.

3.2 Cultural Festivals

According to Terho⁵¹, in many cities festivals are being used in those kinds of policies. Cultural festivals which put on performances for a fixed period of time are very popular. They offer a wealth of opportunities for cultural exchange, promotion and dissemination. Both for local and regional cultural organisations and for the local and regional shopkeepers and trades people festivals can be a strategic partner. After all, write Ranshuysen & Jansen⁵², festivals bring dynamics to the city or region, therefore have a positive effect on the (internal and external) image of the area and they cause economical spin-off. The local/regional actors can profit from that. Terho⁵³ states that, amongst other cultural institutions, festivals grab a larger share of local economies than before. They create jobs and make money but they also have indirect economic effects through the service sector which serves the audiences that consume culture. Festivals are also considered to be suitable situations for exceeding the limits of everyday use of spaces. In many cases, the festival's use of a space has had a long-lasting impact on the use of the space in normal everyday life. Due to the fact that little is known about the scale of all these effects, the importance of festivals can not always be convincingly demonstrated. Moreover, the artistic aims that national governments seem to consider important are hard to combine with the often more functional aims of city or region promotion, being economical spin-off and

⁴⁹ O'Connor, referenced in Verwijnen, Jan & Lehtovuori, Panu (eds) (1999). *Creative Cities. Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design, pp 15.

⁵⁰ European Commission, DGX (1998). *Culture, the Cultural Industries and Employment*. Brussels: Commission Staff Working Paper.

⁵¹ Terho, Henri (2000). "City Festivals and Urban Space: Music and cultural policies in England and Finland", in Mitchell, Tony & Doyle, Peter & Johnson, Bruce (eds). *Exceeding the Limits? Space, Performance and Music in Festivals*. IASPM - International Association for the Study of Popular Music 10th International Conference 9 to 13-July-1999 UTS, Sydney/Australia. Sydney: University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences.

⁵² Ranshuysen, Letty & Jansen, Marije (2004). *De Zomerfestivals van het Vierde Kwartaal. De huidige praktijk en marketingmogelijkheden*. Rotterdam: Letty Ranshuysen.

⁵³ Terho, Henri (2000). "City Festivals and Urban Space: Music and cultural policies in England and Finland", in Mitchell, Tony & Doyle, Peter & Johnson, Bruce (eds). *Exceeding the Limits? Space, Performance and Music in Festivals*. IASPM - International Association for the Study of Popular Music 10th International Conference 9 to 13-July-1999 UTS, Sydney/Australia. Sydney: University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences.

stimulating cultural participation. Therefore the positive effects of festivals are not used enough in negotiations with local and regional subsidizers and sponsors, think Ranshuysen & Jansen.⁵⁴

This last point might also have to do with the amount and content of research on the subject. Considering the enormous popularity and the ever-increasing number of various festivals, academic research on the subject has been surprisingly limited. The research literature that does exist tends to emphasise the economical impact the festivals have in their home area, according to Ranshuysen & Jansen.⁵⁵ Terho⁵⁶ says that festival organisers are nowadays eager to announce estimates about how much money the cities and their entrepreneurs are gaining due to festivals and that information is also given press coverage. The media does not appear to be interested whether the performers were good or whether the audience was satisfied. What appears to be important is whether all the tickets were sold and how much money was involved. When studying the importance of festivals as a whole though, economics play only a small part of the forming and the reception of festivals. The mental or cultural impacts of festivals form another way of describing the importance of the festivals and a far more important one for many people attending, performing and organising the festivals. Study that focuses on the attitudes towards the festivals requires a multidisciplinary approach and often it is hard to find a firm theoretical basis. That might have affected the limited number of such studies.

One of the existing studies on festivals in Europe, conducted by CEFAC in 1996,⁵⁷ states that festivals are only a part of the city's cultural entirety, though a very important part. A robust festival sector can only exist in the context of a healthy year-round cultural provision. It is not realistic to expect the festivals alone to deliver all the council's cultural, social and economic objectives. CEFAC therefore recommends that:

- The social and economic feedback of a festival city should be organised around an artistic coherence which exceeds the time limits of the festival. The more this coherence is planned and structured, the greater are the chances of economic development downstream, whether linked to culture or not.
- The most beneficial economic impact and employment for the community should reside in the durable establishment of the festival.

⁵⁴ Ranshuysen, Letty & Jansen, Marije (2004). *De Zomerfestivals van het Vierde Kwartaal. De huidige praktijk en marketingmogelijkheden*. Rotterdam: Letty Ranshuysen.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Terho, Henri (2000). "City Festivals and Urban Space: Music and cultural policies in England and Finland", in Mitchell, Tony & Doyle, Peter & Johnson, Bruce (eds). *Exceeding the Limits? Space, Performance and Music in Festivals*. IASPM - International Association for the Study of Popular Music 10th International Conference 9 to 13-July-1999 UTS, Sydney/Australia. Sydney: University of Technology, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences.

⁵⁷ CEFAC (1996). *The Economic Impact on Employment of Ten Festivals in Europe*. Paris: Study for the European Commission.

Thus, the festivals' economic and cultural success will be significantly enhanced by a strategic approach. In order for festival cities to enjoy considerable presentational advantages and media benefit, festivals must be closely linked to the rest of the city's annual cultural provision and given a degree of continuity and security, according to the festivals strategy of Edinburgh.⁵⁸

Slijkhuis⁵⁹ mentions another research from 1997. This research proves that in the past years large cities have invested in improving the cultural infrastructure and now they have too little means for increasing the cultural activities. That is why local authorities have demanded the government for extra money in order to stimulate arts in the large cities. This would indirectly be profitable for the cultural festivals. According to this research, the importance of culture for the total development of a city is increasingly acknowledged. Culture therefore is – besides its intrinsic value – also important for tourist and economical development of a city. Experiences of various cities prove that it is possible to successfully use means from these other sectors for the sake of culture.

3.3 Conclusions

As is ascertained in this chapter, cultural policies have developed through the decades. In the 1950s and 1960s they were relatively unimportant. In the 1970s the importance increased with an emphasis on social and political concerns and in the 1980s the objectives shifted to economic development and urban regeneration. In the 1990s terms like 'new symbolic economy' and 'creative city' were introduced to indicate the shift from the traditional industries towards cultural industries. Cities became aware that a cultural profile was able to attract businesses, visitors and inhabitants, because it is a binding factor, improves the value of a city and more recently the employment potential of cultural industries is emphasised. So culture increasingly became a marketing tool in the competition of cities. In this light, specifically cultural festivals seem to be popular. However, their advantages depend on a strategic approach and festival policy should be embedded in other urban policy sectors in order to increase its economic and cultural success.

⁵⁸ Graham Devlin Associates (2001). *Festivals and the City. The Edinburgh Festivals Strategy*. Edinburgh.

⁵⁹ Slijkhuis, J.A. (1999). *Voorstel aan Raad A, Culturele profielschets van Zwolle tot ca. 2005*. Zwolle: Welzijn, Onderwijs en Cultuur.

4 Developments and Position of Outside Theatre

To be able to understand the increasing popularity of outside theatre it is necessary to analyse autonomous developments within the genre that have led to its current position. Therefore in this chapter an internal analysis is made of why outside theatre became popular again since the sixties and what its current position is.

4.1 Developments since the Sixties

In the 1960s the younger socially rising generations offered resistance against the establishment, against the existing rigid morality and against authority in general. Various art disciplines aimed at provoking reactions from the audience with (political) happenings and infiltrations. Many experiments took place.⁶⁰ Also young theatre makers became active. In their opinion, in the regular theatres plays of established playwrights were performed only for a high educated, elite audience. According to them, theatre had to go out on the street again, where it took place during the Middle Ages. This time not out of necessity though, but out of belief. Theatre should no longer be hidden behind the theatre walls, but had to become an essential part of society.

Eversmann⁶¹ distinguishes two main reasons for outside theatre in the sixties. The first concerns a choice against the regular theatre buildings, which goes together with a sense of freedom and an aversion against theatre traditions, for example the traditional placing of the audience. The second concerns a more social point of view. The target audience was not coming to the theatre, therefore the theatre makers decided to bring theatre to the audience. There are some other reasons as well. It was possibly more cost effective to perform on the street. A location could offer extra content to the performance. Some theatre makers liked to experiment with the theatrical conventions and the field of tension between performance and reality. Working on location required creativity and inventiveness from the makers, which led to their artistic development. And it was also fun and exciting.

The first groups that made theatre out of a social philosophy wanted to educate the audience. By making social and political committed theatre they tried to teach the spectators to be conscience of their social situation and to think about that critically. In their performances they mainly aimed at an audience that normally would not get into contact with theatre, namely workers and youngsters. They began playing in locations such as community centres, schools and factories, and in summertime surely also on the streets. The subjects that they dealt with were related as much as possible to the audience.

⁶⁰ Haan, Gonneke de (2003). *Locatie +/- over de meerwaarde van locatietheater*. Utrecht: Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, afstudeerscriptie Theatervormgeving.

⁶¹ Eversmann, P. (1994). "Theatre on Location in the Netherlands," in *Western European Stages*, New York: CASTA. Volume 6, nr. 2, pp. 35-49.

The sixties were not only the years of opposition and commitment. When this tendency of commitment decreased, the motivations for outside theatre changed. From then onwards the makers concentrated more on the content of the performance and the aesthetics of the location.⁶² The hippie youth also thought that things could be a bit more playful. This wish for happiness led to the first street theatre festivals. As counterpart for the official and elite festivals the organisations of the new festivals wanted to offer fun for everyone. No difficult cultural tour de force, but amusement with few serious elements. Together with the developments described in chapter three, this stood at the base for the current 'festivalisation' of the Netherlands and Flanders.⁶³

4.2 Current Position

Over the past few decades there has been a major shift in attitudes towards outdoor theatre. Even as late as the end of the 1970s, street performers were being arrested and charged with begging or obstruction. Although local authorities still attempt to keep a tight control on the place, timing and quality of the performers, many cities, particularly tourist centres, have allowed them space to perform. When the Pompidou Centre in Paris was designed to include a space specifically suitable for street entertainment a milestone was reached and other cities gradually followed suit. It became recognised that outside theatre can improve the atmosphere of for example uninspiring modern shopping centres by providing something colourful, lively and out of the ordinary. Prearranged outdoor performances are nowadays regularly encouraged by local authorities. Many festivals, all over Europe, are organised exclusively for street theatre, so there is an ever increasing demand for outdoor theatre.⁶⁴

Due to this increasing demand, the outdoor theatre festivals and groups go through important developments. Nowadays the offer is versatile, festivals and groups are increasingly professionalised and gain international recognition. The audience is large and enthusiastic about the accessibility combined with quality. The problem is though, that money stays behind all these developments. According to the outside theatre sector they do not receive the financing that is in proportion to its size and popularity. Hardly any festival receives financial support to (co) produce, facilitate or initiate productions. Governments and foundations that supply subsidies have the opinion that festivals should solely concentrate on programming, but in fact outside theatre groups could use some help from the festivals to produce a good performance on the festival location. After all, there is mostly a lack of facilities on location, which can make location theatre an expensive discipline. To increase the possibilities festivals have organised themselves in various forms of collaboration, either in the Netherlands and Flanders, or at European level. Nine festivals in the Netherlands and two in Flanders

⁶² Haan, Gonneke de (2003). *Locatie +/- over de meerwaarde van locatietheater*. Utrecht: Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht, afstudeerscriptie Theatervormgeving.

⁶³ Davies, Andrew (1987). *Other Theatres: The Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

⁶⁴ Mason, Bim (1992). *Street theatre and other outdoor performance*. London: Routledge.

who decided to collaborate in Het Vierde Kwartaal⁶⁵ have the aim to produce productions together with the opportunity to perform them at the participating festivals.⁶⁶

One of the results of the collaboration is that there has recently been a research on the position and marketing of the nine Dutch outside theatre festivals of Het Vierde Kwartaal.⁶⁷ The main recommendation that came out of the conclusions of this research is that the festivals should join their forces in terms of a collective marketing. They could do this in naming and carrying out their common characteristics and developing collective promotion, while watching and revitalising their own identity and profile. Festivals should not aim at reaching a larger and amorphous audience, but concentrate at specific target groups that fit in the unique characteristics and context of the festival instead. Therefore marketing should receive an important position within the festival organisation. Festivals have an important breeding function for theatre makers, which they should make more visible for the established theatre world. Instead of the ambition for (co) producing, they might better aim at facilitating and initiating productions. The festivals should collectively stimulate the different authorities to develop a consistent cultural policy.

Tracy Metz⁶⁸ explores the process of expansion, or even massiveness of the festival offer. According to Metz, this *“festivalisation of the festival”* is caused by four characteristics of outside theatre festivals:

1. The mix of culture, catering, parading and relaxed gathering fits well in the leisure culture of the nineties. Festivals serve as a model for the contemporary leisure: deciding at the last moment whether to go or not, choosing from the offer on the spot by yourself and being entertained, often with spectacles.
2. Festivals are easily marketed. They have a certain recognisable theme, a clear period of time and often take place at a special location.
3. City councils see festivals as good means to get a cultural profile to attract more business, inhabitants and visitors.
4. Festivals fill in the cultural emptiness in the summer.

The outside theatre festivals have a difficult position: they have to be cosy, but not too cosy, because then the artistic value will not be taken seriously; they have to be well organised, but not too polished, massive and commercial. In fact, festivals should have success, but not too much. Metz argues that the festivals should wonder whether they want to join the establishment and fit into the subsidy system that offers continuity on the one hand, but little urge for renewal on the other. In this sense the subsidy system has a weakening function, despite all its goodwill. *“Under a warm blanket you can also suffocate”*.

⁶⁵ Het Vierde Kwartaal consists of: Boulevard, Cultura Nova, ETCETERA, Festival a/d Werf, Karavaan, Noorderzon, Oerol, Over het IJ, Parade (the Netherlands), ISTF and Theater op de Markt (Flanders).

A similar project, but with less partners in the Netherlands and Belgium is Pilooot. (Devens, Tuur (2004). *De Vijfde Wand. Reflecties over figurentheater en circustheater*. Gent: Pro-art.)

Networks at European level are In Situ (Ibid.) and Eunetstar (www.eunetstar.org).

⁶⁶ www.oerol.nl

⁶⁷ Ranshuysen, Letty & Jansen, Marije (2004). *De Zomerfestivals van het Vierde Kwartaal. De huidige praktijk en marketingmogelijkheden*. Rotterdam: Letty Ranshuysen.

⁶⁸ Column Tracy Metz during Zomerproloog 28 januari 2004 in Den Bosch Bron: www.straattheater.net

4.3 Conclusions

As can be seen in this chapter, in the sixties outside theatre became an essential part of society because of two main reasons. The first concerns a choice against the regular theatre buildings, with a sense of freedom and an aversion against theatre traditions. The second concerns a more social point of view. Theatre makers wanted to reach an audience that did not come to the theatre of their own accord to make them critically conscience of their social situation. This tendency for opposition and social commitment was gradually replaced by a focus on content and aesthetics on the one hand and a wish for happiness, playfulness and fun on the other, which marks the current ambivalent situation of outside theatre. Outside theatre seems to be in a position between the conventional views on theatre and an increasing demand for festivalisation and spectacularisation. Outside theatre therefore has to find its way in a combination of artistic quality and popular accessibility.

5 Cultural Interest in Outside Theatre

This chapter focuses on the reason why theatre institutions increasingly choose for outside theatre. Therefore the practitioners that are introduced in chapter 2 are further explored on the basis of the question what they are aiming to reach with their choice for outside theatre. First the attention is on outside theatre festivals and after that on outside theatre groups.

5.1 Outside Theatre Festivals

De Stad als Theater chooses for outside theatre because the special, well accessible setting gives them the possibility to use the characteristic inner city of Zwolle as a stage and the inhabitants as a sounding board. The organisation aims to develop this stage function for the artist to use the city as a source of inspiration for theatre and this public function in order to reach new audiences, like youth, youngsters and foreigners. Besides they would like to have a stimulating function for opening up new horizons by confronting and mixing theatre with other art disciplines, a breeding ground function for professional and amateur art practising in order to develop new outside theatre productions and a promotional function in order to create a distinct profile at a national level for the city.⁶⁹

The philosophy of Oerol about outside theatre is that the whole island of Terschelling is a stage and source of inspiration for theatre makers, musicians and visual artists from the Netherlands and abroad. On the one hand the aim of the outside theatre festival is to stimulate and support theatre makers who want to increase their skills in outside theatre. On the other hand the aim is amusement for the audience by creating ten days of cheerfulness 'oerol' (= everywhere in the dialect of Terschelling) on the island. The development of new ideas and working methods is based on the tempting nature, culture, history, customs and habits of Terschelling and its inhabitants.⁷⁰

The choice of ISTF for outside theatre is to develop the genre by opening new horizons. The aim of the organisers of ISTF is to function as a trend-setter for the street and outside theatre in Belgium by selecting the best outside theatre productions of recent years. Therefore they always look for qualitative performances, mounted by international professional companies. The dramaturgy, scenography, and direction have to reach a high artistic level and have to show a professional approach in all aspects.⁷¹

The aim of Theater op de Markt is twofold. On the one hand they aim to fulfil the assignment of the Province of Limburg to organise an accessible summer event for an audience as broad as possible. On the other hand they have the mission of programming performances of a high artistic quality.⁷² The choice for outside theatre to reach these aims is made because the organisation recognised an

⁶⁹ Huis in 't Veld, Henk (2004). *Projectevaluatie 2000 t&m 2003*. Zwolle: De Stad Als Theater.

⁷⁰ www.oerol.nl

⁷¹ www.istf.be

⁷² Interview by telephone with Marc Celis, manager Theater op de Markt.

increasing impact of outside theatre on the general cultural experience. According to them, the combination of the genre-accessibility on the one hand and the highly-qualitative contents of the festival on the other hand, lie at the basis of an ever-growing interest.⁷³

5.2 Outside Theatre Groups

For Warner & Consorten theatre in public space means playing in reality, at places and with things that have a set function. Their aim is to temporarily change those functions for the sake of excitement, curiosity or fun. They want to undermine the set ways of experiencing daily life for the individual spectator and to change a part of the city for a moment for the people who daily use it. Theatre for urban space restores the contact between the imagination and the surroundings by developing contemporary forms of celebration. In city societies people live amongst strangers with whom they do not share a cultural background in an environment they can not control. During performances in public space people can get the feeling of being amongst those strange people and things, that normally are closed and merciless. With theatre in public space Warner & Consorten playfully wants to make their audiences realise how daily life can be different at some points of time and how that can be enjoyed. Warner & Consorten wants to play with public space related to ownership, territory, physical security, safety and with the hidden rules of public space and of people moving around in the city.⁷⁴

ZT Hollandia emerged out of a few socially committed theatre groups that performed for children and adults in community centres, dealing with actual events and conditions in the community in pieces about the history of the region and the historical setting of a location. They used their own scenarios based on topical matters, and performed at places where there never are any theatre performances to make people aware of their social situation. Nowadays, the aim of ZT Hollandia still is to bring theatre to places where there is not yet theatre for people who never or hardly go to this kind of theatre to tackle the controversial issues in society.⁷⁵ The themes of ZT Hollandia are about the contrasts between nature and culture, between rural and urban life, about uprooted people and communities, meaninglessness, tyranny and roaming around, often with a political message. Outside theatre seems to be a good means for such messages, because political commitment is enlarged by the audience's physical involvement with the location. Jammed together in unheated greenhouses, draughty factories, damp garages and echoing production halls, they become aware of their presence. Acting then also becomes interacting in which both the actor and the audience are immediately involved with each other.⁷⁶

⁷³ PCT Dommelhof (2002). *Theater op de Markt, Theater in de Piste, Theaterstreken*. Hasselt: Provinciebestuur Limburg (België).

⁷⁴ Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia.

⁷⁵ www.zthollandia.nl

⁷⁶ Oosterling, Henk (2000). *On the Border. Hollandia's hypocritical theatre*. Amsterdam: Erasmus University of Rotterdam Centre for Philosophy & Arts (CFK).

The aim of Teater Exces is to develop their own form of movement theatre and social committed pieces. Theater Exces chooses the language of movement as a pure and artistic form of communication, getting inspiration from the world of natural environment. They do not want to philosophise too much, but rather touch the hearts of the audiences and make them think a little further.⁷⁷

De Queeste's mission is to make social committed theatre about themes that keep them awake at night, about people they once could be themselves, and about people in relation to the world around them; a world in which a sense of direction is lost, in which life loses meaning. That is why they want to question norms and values with every production. Every time they try to revise their opinion. They do not avoid current social relevant affairs, but clearly unravel them. They undertake passionate attempts to relate themselves to the complexity of the world they live in. They are mainly fascinated by the personal quest of struggling and fighting people, who revolt with all their possibilities against a situation in which they experience injustice. This has the strongest impact on locations that relate to the subjects.⁷⁸

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter there is given insight in the reasons why theatre festivals and groups increasingly choose for outside theatre. Five diverse aims can be distinguished, that are not always in line. The first is the aim for amusement and forms of celebration in order to create a feeling of collectivity amongst people that are strangers to each other in daily circumstances in today's society. Second, theatre institutions want to increasingly connect to their physical surroundings. They are using their environment as a stage for performances and a source of inspiration for outside theatre makers, or they are temporarily changing the functions of things or spaces in order to play with reality and cause disorder in public space. The third reason is to strengthen the link with their social surroundings. The priorities are to increase the interest for new art forms at a broad audience, by bringing accessible outside theatre to places where there is not yet theatre for people who never or hardly go to theatre performances. This can be done either by either by blending in with the public and making a pleasant combination of the performance and the audience or by conflicting with it and undermining the set ways of how individuals experience daily life or to question norms and values by unravelling current social affairs. The fourth are grounds that focus more intrinsic on the genre of outside theatre, namely by stimulating young theatre makers to develop new horizons in order to develop the outside theatre genre and gain in artistic quality of the performances. The fifth reason is explicitly mentioned only once, namely to fulfil a promotional function in order to create a distinct profile at a national level for the city.

⁷⁷ Vandewalle, Patrick & others (2002). *Theater Exces op straat geboren en getogen*. Gent: Excessief Productions.

⁷⁸ www.dequeeste.be

6 Case Studies

Case studies are used to research the relevance of the theories in practice. In this chapter national and local policies from the Netherlands and Flanders are studied, considering the points of view of both the policy makers and the outside theatre institutions. First is dealt with the case studies of national policies and after that the cases concerning local policies are studied.

6.1 National Policies

In the following the national policies concerning outside theatre are studied, followed by the consequences these imply for the outside theatre festivals and groups, in order to find out what the position of outside theatre is in the national policies, what the criteria are for the evaluation and how the national governments grant subsidy applications. First is dealt with the Netherlands and then with Flanders.

6.1.1 National Policy of the Netherlands

The Dutch cultural policy for the years 2005 until 2008 will be presented at the so-called Prinsjesdag (Prince day) at September 21, 2004. Already published are all kinds of preparations for the actual policy, such as the advice from the Board of Culture.⁷⁹ In the introduction of the sectors in this advice, the Board describes how the theatre sector has developed from a limited, one-sided sector into a differentiated one with a rich and divers offer. According to the Board, the submitted policy plans show that the sector is varied, dynamic and performs at a high qualitative level. Although it is not directly mentioned, outside theatre seems to have partly caused this differentiation. Within the theatre sector, the various theatre genres are subdivided. Outside theatre festivals fit in the category 'summer festivals' and groups either in 'visual location theatre' or in the 'large and middle-large theatre groups'.

The advised amounts of subsidy for the outside theatre genre altogether are relatively lower than those of the other theatre genres. According to the Board that is because the organisation and nature of activities of the genres are different. The Board states that outside theatre institutions have a more flexible method of working, with a different role for continuity in the organisation and more project based work, so they should not compare with other theatre institutions that apply for subsidy.

⁷⁹ Raad voor Cultuur (2004). *Spiegel van de Cultuur. Cultuurnota-advies '05-'08*. Den Haag: Raad voor Cultuur.

Festivals

The criteria of the Board for the advice to support 'summer festivals' are an adventurous and artistic interesting programming, contribution to the development of the performing arts and an above regional importance. According to the Board however, most festivals primary have a regional function and are therefore the responsibility of the other authorities. Moreover, the Board does not give priority to the ambition of the summer festivals to also co produce. According to the Board the festivals should focus on programming and not on producing. They think there are enough existing theatre workshops in the Netherlands, where young makers can do their thing.

Concerning the Dutch festivals, the advice of the Board is financially not satisfying. According to the Board *De Stad als Theater* lacks a clear artistic profile and does not play a role of national importance. That is why it advises not to give structural subsidy. The Board is more positive about the artistic development of *Oerol* and its accessibility for a large and broad audience. Although no priority is given to the workshop function, the Board considers it important that *Oerol* is able to develop the discipline outside theatre. That is why the Board advises to give extra subsidy for *Oerol* to strengthen its position as outside theatre festival. This money is meant for programming and to appoint a coordinator who can focus on the strengthening of the expertise location theatre.

Groups

Whereas in the preliminary advice of the Board of Culture in 2003⁸⁰ outside theatre was probably supposed to fit in either the sector mime or object and puppet theatre, in the definite advice⁸¹ the category 'visual location theatre' is added.⁸² The Board considers outside theatre an important genre, because it reaches a big audience, its productions are strong and renewing and it has a strong international influence. Nevertheless, the Board is critical about the artistic quality of the productions of the outside theatre groups. Besides the artistic quality, the quality of the cultural entrepreneurship is decisive for the success of an outside theatre company. Outside theatre groups could for an important part generate their own earnings. Not only from ticket sales, but also sponsoring and subsidies from (private) foundations and lower governments. Their productions could be financed by contributions from the market sector. Herewith not only the festivals are meant (what the festivals seems to be afraid of), but working for commercial clients such as television or international events. Often the demand of a city that is celebrating its jubilee is an important factor. So the productions of the groups can for a great deal be financed by contributions of the market sector and (private) foundations. That is why the Board considers structural subsidy to be mainly advisable for a relatively small production core to be able to function in continuity rather than to cover the production expenses.

⁸⁰ Raad voor Cultuur (2003). *Cultuur, meer dan ooit! Vooradvies en Sectoranalyses*. Den Haag: Raad voor Cultuur.

⁸¹ Raad voor Cultuur (2004). *Spiegel van de Cultuur. Cultuurnota-advies '05-'08*. Den Haag: Raad voor Cultuur.

⁸² Although the Board of Culture uses the definition visual location theatre, in this thesis we continue to use the term outside theatre.

The advice for the groups in our Dutch cases is to give them no extra subsidies. The Board concludes that *Warner & Consorten* has its own place within the outside theatre sector, but the performances are of varying quality and the artistic development of the group is small. The Board wants to give Warner & Consorten the possibility to work on the artistic development, but the group should be able to generate more money by good cultural entrepreneurship. So the current subsidy is advised to continue at the same level. Concerning *ZTHollandia*, the Board regrets that the artistic managers will leave the group very soon after the merger of Het Zuidelijk Toneel and Hollandia. Under their artistic policy the group manifested strongly with qualitative special outside theatre and international cooperation. The Board considers the merger as ended and advises to bring back the subsidy to the level of Het Zuidelijk Toneel before the merger.

The outside theatre festivals and groups are concerned about their future existence. For example Oerol does not understand that the Board considers this festival important in the development of outside theatre, but does not give priority to the support of workshop for outside theatre. According to Oerol, producing outside theatre requires specific knowledge and that expertise is not present in the existing theatre workshops. The groups state that the limits of cultural entrepreneurship are reached. and artistic quality has always been the starting point for performances. At the very moment they protest against the advice. They have collectively sent a letter directly to the State Secretary with the request to ignore the advice of the Board of Culture.⁸³ From now on, apart from demonstrating, it is a matter of waiting anxiously for the decisions of the State Secretary, which will be presented at September 21.

6.1.2 National Policy of Flanders

Unfortunately the cultural policy of Flanders is only until 2004. All cultural institutions are at the moment whilst this thesis is written very busy with evaluating the past years and making policy for the next. Those plans for the future have to be handed in at the beginning of November, so they are not public yet and therefore cannot be analysed in this chapter. That is why in this paragraph there is taken a look back on previous years.

Festivals

In the Realisations 1999-2003 in the *Beleidsbrief Cultuur 2004*⁸⁴ there is no special attention for outside theatre. Outside theatre festivals likely fit in with the category 'cultural top events'. It is said that these events aim at a broad audience, have a clear international ambition and are often organised in collaboration with the tourist sector. They are mostly multidisciplinary and sometimes connected with infrastructural or urban developments on the long term. The main criteria for subsidy are: artistic quality, urban dynamics, differentiation and social commitment. Also important is the cultural

⁸³ For the contents of these reactions and other actions, see the website of Warner & Consorten, Vis à Vis and The Lunatics www.lokatietheater.net.

⁸⁴ Grembergen, Paul van. *Beleidsbrief Cultuur 2004*. Brussel: Kabinet van de Vlaams Minister van Binnenlandse Aangelegenheden, Cultuur, Jeugd en Ambtenarenzaken.

participation, that has the aim to reach people who normally are deprived of any access to the performing arts. In the next policy period there will possibly be a commission for festivals, which would increase the recognition of this sector.

Since 2001 three festivals are subsidised by the Flemish Community in accordance with the Performing Arts Decree, of which both Flemish festivals *ISTF* and *Theater op de Markt*. Although herewith the first step in recognition of outside theatre festivals is taken, according to the manager of ISTF,⁸⁵ there are more festivals that are doing a great job and deserve subsidy. Moreover, the subsidy is not much, which is shown by the fact that the main financier of Theater op de Markt is the Provincial Government Limburg and the organisation is co-financed by the host town.⁸⁶

Groups

In the Performance Arts Decree in the Beleidsnota 2000-2004⁸⁷ it states that Flanders has a rich theatre offer. To prevent rigidity, the theatre field should continuously receive new impulses. The government creates conditions for a lively flow of the performing arts. Although outside theatre is not directly mentioned, a few of these conditions are related to this genre, namely to strengthen theatre in the large cities by investments in typical urban projects, and to give a maximum of chances to multidisciplinary theatre practices. These plans could contribute to the development of outside theatre. The problem is though that within the performance arts there is no commission for outside theatre. As a result applications for subsidy from outside theatre groups are often considered vague and are thus being refused.

Looking at the first Flemish group, *Teater Exces* is receiving project subsidies from the city of Gent as well as the province of East Flanders, but never from the Flemish Community. Teater Exces submitted countless applications for structural subsidies but to no avail. As far as Patrick Vandewalle, founder of Teater Exces, is concerned, the numerous commissions are in contradiction. *“They do not know where to classify us. We do not fit in dance nor text theatre and the movement and street theatre did not yet acquire a position in Belgium”*⁸⁸ It seems that in Flemish policy outside theatre is still an unknown or even non-existing world; it does not receive the recognition it deserves. *“After 30 years, the Flemish Community still refuses to recognize this kind of theatre. They think we are old hat, but abroad we are praised for being unique and ground-breaking. In Belgium it is the audience in particular that loves us, we just don't get political support. The general public thinks it is a disgrace that Teater Exces does not get subsidised.”*⁸⁹

The other Flemish group, *De Queeste*, is more positive. They act like a pioneer in the province of Limburg, because they operate as the only subsidised professional theatre group. They can count on

⁸⁵ Interview by telephone with Fabien Audooren, manager ISTF.

⁸⁶ PCT Dommelhof (2002). *Theater op de Markt, Theater in de Piste, Theaterstreken*. Hasselt: Provinciebestuur Limburg (België).

⁸⁷ Anciaux, Bert. *Beleidsnota 2000-2004 Cultuur*. Brussel: Kabinet van de Vlaams Minister van Cultuur, Jeugd, Stedelijk Beleid, Huisvesting en Brusselse Aangelegenheden.

⁸⁸ Patrick Vandewalle, quoted in Waele, Annelies de. “Theater Exces al 30 jaar bezig op Gentse feesten,” in *De Morgen*, 19-07-2004.

⁸⁹ This quote can be found at the website www.exces.be under the heading WELCOME.

appreciated support from a lot of Flemish and Dutch locations to perform and from cultural partners, the City of Genk and the Province of Limburg. From the Flemish Community they receive project subsidies, but they try to obtain structural subsidy for the next policy period.⁹⁰

Although the concrete amounts of subsidies are not included in this thesis, the subsidy-levels for outside theatre organisations seems to be in proportion in the Netherlands and Flanders. In the Netherlands the advice is that the amount of subsidy should increase for Oerol, should continue at the same level for Warner & Consorten, should decrease for ZT Hollandia and De Stad als Theater does not receive structural subsidy at all. In Flanders, both ISTF and Theater op de Markt are structurally subsidised and De Queeste receives project subsidies, but Teater Exces gets nothing.

6.2 Local policies

This paragraph first analyses the policy plans of the city councils concerning their cultural profile, which includes policy areas such as tourism, events, festivals, (performance) arts and theatre. After each of these analyses the experiences of the festivals in playing a role in these profiles are investigated. Festivals have a much more intense bond with their home city than groups, who often travel and perform elsewhere. That is why in the following only the festivals are taken into consideration. Again, first in the Netherlands and after that in Flanders.

6.2.1 Local Policies in the Netherlands

Zwolle policy

According to their long-term development programme⁹¹ Zwolle developed into an important centre for the north-east Netherlands and has a high qualitative level of cultural facilities. Zwolle wants to make the most of this cultural potential with a broad cultural offer, supplemented with leading festivals concentrated in the setting of the historical city centre. The priority of a yearly festival in the inner city fits into the image of Zwolle as 'city where things happen'.⁹² Zwolle is aware that large-scale festivals of several days have more interests than solely cultural. They also contribute to the fields of economics, tourism and promotion. Therefore the City Council made a new stimulating festival policy⁹³ to create a profile for Zwolle as culture and festival city. According to the Zwolle festival policy it needs time, money and quality of contents and organisation to develop a large and talked-about festival of national importance. De Stad als Theater is given the chance to develop into this kind of festival.

⁹⁰ www.dequeeste.be

⁹¹ Gemeente Zwolle. *De Kracht van Zwolle. Meerjaren Ontwikkelings Programma (MOP) 2005-2009*. Zwolle: gemeente Zwolle.

⁹² Genevace, Frederieke (1999). *Zwolle, op naar cultuurstad van formaat. Culturele toekomstplannen tot 2005*. Zwolle: Gemeente Zwolle.

and Afdeling Communicatie (2002). *Zwolle, stad waar het gebeurt*. Zwolle: Bureau Cultuur, gemeente Zwolle.

⁹³ Borst-Bom, B.P. (2002). *Festivalbeleid gemeente Zwolle*. Zwolle: afdeling Welzijn, Onderwijs en Cultuur.

De Stad als Theater

De Stad als Theater plays a significant role in terms of the amount of subsidy and it is often mentioned in the festival policy mentioned above. De Stad als Theater believes that as the festival develops further and the attention comes from a bigger region around Zwolle, the festival will contribute to a better cultural profile for the city and region. Where arts and commerce can go hand in hand this will positively effect the economic and tourist climate. Herewith it fits in the ideas for the current festival policy with the aim to increase the connection and efficiency of events that contribute to the image of the city. Despite these aims of the festival seem to tune to the plans of the city, the festival of 2004 had to be cancelled, due to financial problems of the organisation.⁹⁴

Terschelling policy

According to Edwin Zijlstra, employee of the Council of Terschelling⁹⁵, Terschelling does not have an up-to date cultural nor tourist policy that concerns its cultural profile, but they are planning to make these policies next winter. The five Dutch Wadden islands together are currently doing a research on how the islands should promote themselves in relation to each other by looking at their differences and similarities. The results of this are also expected next winter. Whereas Oerol came into being due to enthusiasm of its initiator, without any supporting municipal policy, nowadays Edwin Zijlstra immediately mentions Oerol in the context of creating a cultural profile for the promotion of the island. The council gives financial and practical support in form of subsidies, facilities and services. Through the years, Oerol became increasingly important, not only because of the visitors it attracts, but also because of the positive publicity. According to Edwin Zijlstra it is impossible to imagine summer tourism at Terschelling today without the festival.

Oerol

Before the first Oerol took place, a lot of people from Terschelling were very sceptical about the idea of a summer festival, so Oerol did not get much support. Apparently, entrepreneurs, and local and provincial authorities did not realise then, that the fact that Oerol attracted thousands of visitors could be an advantage for the island and the province. The member of the Provincial Executive of Culture said in 1993: *"All those people come with their car over the dike, on the boat to Terschelling and the rest of Friesland does not receive anything."*⁹⁶ However, ten years later a research on the regional economy of culture in the province⁹⁷ proves that the regional-economical effects of Oerol are almost 9 million euros in direct and indirect revenues, in which 221 fulltime jobs are concerned. So Oerol is indeed profitable for the region and Oerol is the festival that put Terschelling on the cultural map of the Netherlands.

⁹⁴ Huis in 't Veld, Henk (2004). *Projectevaluatie 2000 t&m 2003*. Zwolle: De Stad Als Theater.

⁹⁵ Interview by telephone with Edwin Zijlstra, Council of Terschelling.

⁹⁶ Goossens, Jesse (2001). *20 jaar Oerol. Terschelling voor Vogels*. Amsterdam: Cultuur in Voorraad, pp 58.

⁹⁷ Krozer, Joram (2003). *Regionale economie van cultuur in Fryslan*. Amsterdam.

6.2.2 Local Policies in Flanders

Gent policy

The cultural policy of Gent⁹⁸ is written because culture is the engine of a vital society, both economically and socially. According to this policy, culture is without a doubt one of the most important levers in increasing the liveability and attractiveness of the city for everyone who makes use of the urbanity. Gent considers itself to be the leading Flemish theatre city. Gent refers to its city as the laboratory in which the newest and trend setting developments within the performance arts expand. Therefore the positioning is 'Gent city of lively culture'. Cultural events support this image, so in their events policy Gent plan to create the conditions for events in which culture and tourism embrace each other. Festivals are, in Gent's opinion, by definition a meeting place for a very differentiated audience. They are an excellent instrument for attracting a large audience and the enlarging of cultural participation. In the cultural policy it is stated that 'Gent city of festivals' is not a false epithet for the city. Nevertheless, the fact that the genre outside theatre invariably receives negative advice for subsidies is destructive for creating a broader profile within the performance arts sector in Gent.

ISTF

The manager of ISTF⁹⁹ confirms that Gent has a rich cultural infrastructure. Besides for example music and dance, there is a lot of theatre, both classic and contemporary. These lively cultural initiatives and the cultural policy mutually influence each other. The problem though, is that apart from being mentioned in a single sentence, ISTF does not have a place in the cultural policy, but in the policy for festivities instead, since culture, festivities and tourism are subdivided in separate policy domains.

Hasselt policy

The cultural policy of Hasselt¹⁰⁰ notes that the city has a young cultural tradition. Up to the seventies there was not much to offer, but the last decennia Hasselt was characterised by a strong cultural dynamism which resulted in the development of a fairly rich infrastructure. For 2003-2007 Hasselt wants to further develop culture from a strong urban perspective. The city wants to be the cultural capital of Limburg and a prominent cultural city in Flanders and the Euregion. The arts play the most prominent role within this vision of urbanity. They developed Hasselt into a city with strong artistic emphasises. There is an important interaction between culture and tourism. Hasselt states to have been developed into an attractive tourist destination, partly due to the fact that in the last few years Hasselt has become known as a city of events. From May until October there are events going on a continual basis. The city as a stage makes qualitative cultural events at an international level accessible. Therefore one of the concrete aims within the arts policy of Hasselt is the further

⁹⁸ Rouveroij, Sas van (2002). *Cultuur als Dwarsligger, Cultuurbeleidsplan Stad Gent 2002-2007*. Gent: Regiegroep Cultuur en Toerisme.

⁹⁹ Interview by telephone with Fabien Audooren, manager ISTF.

¹⁰⁰ Stad Hasselt (2002). *Cultuurbeleidsplan 2003-2007*. Hasselt: Stad Hasselt.

development of Hasselt as a city for image building events. They want to reach this by (co) organising a yearly summer festival for street theatre with international charisma and vast numbers of visitors.

Theater op de Markt

The manager of Theater op de Markt¹⁰¹ emphasises that Hasselt tries their best to be a cultural capital. For Theater op de Markt this means advantages such as a proper subsidy and logistic support. The city wants to create such a positive image that everything is possible and they never say 'no'. According to Theater op de Markt this is gradually leading to an explosion of the offer of events. Whereas Theater op de Markt is organised in Hasselt every second year, the city would like to have a yearly event, so every other year the Cultural Service of the Council organises a smaller scale festival. Theater op de Markt however points out the risk of creating an overkill.

6.3 Conclusions

National Policies

Comparing the Netherlands and Flanders, it can be noticed that outside theatre has a different position in the national policies of those countries. Whereas in the Dutch policy outside theatre festivals and groups are evaluated in appropriate sector categories, respectively 'summer festivals' and 'visual location theatre', in the Flemish policy there is no special attention for outside theatre in specific commissions. The Dutch and Flemish policies are quite different in their evaluation, though the criteria of artistic quality apparently is important in both of them. Although the concrete amounts of subsidies are not included in this thesis, the subsidy grants for outside theatre organisations seem to be in proportion in the Netherlands and Flanders. In the Netherlands the advice is that the amount of subsidy should increase for Oerol, should continue at the same level for Warner & Consorten, should decrease for ZT Hollandia and De Stad als Theater does not receive structural subsidy at all. In Flanders, both ISTF and Theater op de Markt are structurally subsidised and De Queeste receives project subsidies, but Teater Exces gets nothing.

At this point in time a significant difference between the national policies of the Netherlands and Flanders is the state they are in. In the Netherlands the advice for the policy is given in April 2004. In the meantime outdoor theatre festivals and groups are demonstrating against this advice in order to attempt to influence the definite policy that will be presented in September 2004. In Flanders outside theatre festivals and groups are currently working on their future plans and subsidy application, that they have to submit in November 2004, after which the Flemish Community will draw up their plans for the next policy period.

¹⁰¹ Interview by telephone with Marc Celis, manager Theater op de Markt.

Local Policies

Apart from Terschelling that does not yet has an up-to date cultural nor tourist policy that concerns its cultural profile, the other three city cases write quite positively about their cultural profile. The cities seem to emphasise these cultural profiles, because they think that cultural facilities, festivals and events have more interests than solely cultural, such as contributions to the fields of economics, tourism and promotion. Thus, although the cities are apparently quite content with their cultural profile, they also seem to realise that culture is important in their competition, so the cities are planning to even increase the attention for culture. Cultural festivals generally play an important role in this, but to what extend cities explicitly mention outside theatre festivals in that context varies.

Analysing the combination of the local policies with the point of views of the festivals, it can be remarked that they do not always work out optimally. Although Zwolle wants to give De Stad als Theater the chance to develop into a large and talked-about festival of national importance and although De Stad als Theater itself also believes that as the festival develops further, the festival will contribute to a better cultural profile for the city and region, still the festival organisation got into financial difficulties and had to postpone the festival. Most likely, this is a great disappointment for both the city and the festival. Despite Gent's positioning as city of lively culture, the cultural policy does not include ISTF, because that is the responsibility of the festivities domain. This seems to be a peculiar subdivision of related policy domains, which is not desirable for the creation of a coherent competitive profile. The enormous drive of Hasselt to create a cultural profile is on the one hand an advantage for Theater op de Markt, because of all the attention and support they receive. On the other hand however, the festival thinks the emphasis on events is going too far. It is advisable that the City Council and festival organisation communicate and tune their vision for the development of the festival. This makes clear that structural communication between city councils and festival organisations seems to be necessary in tuning their plans in order to reach the aims of both.

Conclusions and Discussion

*How can the increasing popularity of outside theatre in cities
in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?*

Conclusions

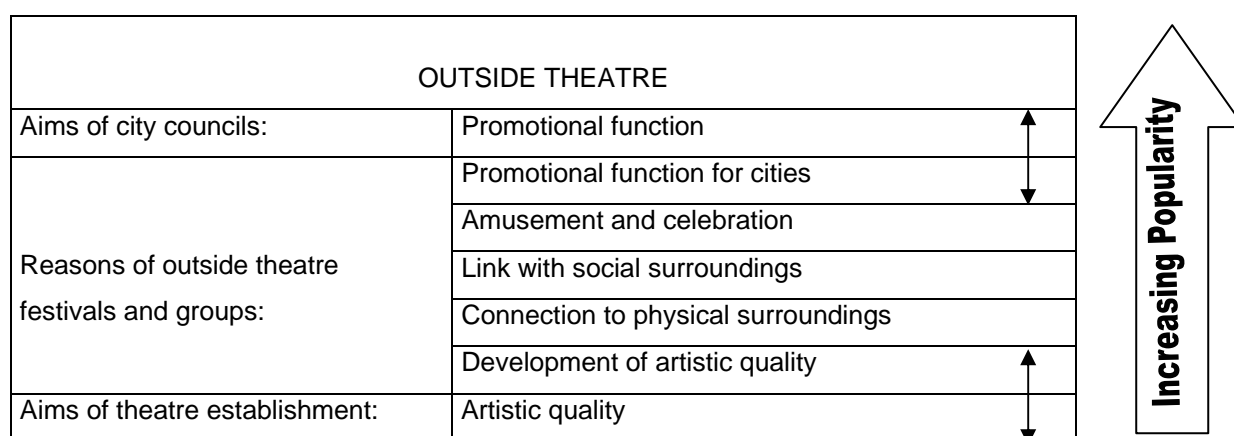
From the foregoing it can be concluded that the answer to this central question is threefold. One part of the answer is that the increasing political interest in culture of cities in the Netherlands and Flanders can be explained, because city councils increasingly seem to deploy culture in their creation of a distinct profile. Whereas in the 1970s cultural policy took an interest in social and political concerns, with the disappearance of traditional industries the objectives shifted to economic development and urban regeneration. Cities became aware that a cultural profile was able to attract businesses, visitors and inhabitants, because it is a binding factor, improves the value of a city and the creative industries have employment potential. So culture increasingly became a marketing tool in the competition of cities. In this light, specifically cultural festivals seem to be popular, because, under the right conditions, they are able to offer a wealth of opportunities for cultural exchange, promotion and dissemination.

A second part of the answer is that developments within the outside theatre world since the sixties seem to have led to an increased popularity of this genre in the Netherlands and Flanders. In the sixties outside theatre became an essential part of society due to opposition against the established theatre traditions and commitment in social affairs. Gradually these reasons were being replaced by a focus on content and aesthetics on the one hand and a wish for happiness, playfulness and fun on the other hand. As a result, nowadays outside theatre apparently is in the ambivalent position in between the aims for artistic quality and development from the point of view of the theatre authorities and the aims for accessibility, promotion and thus popularity from the point of view of urban regenerators who seem to be interested in deploying cultural festivals, such as outside theatre festivals, in their creation of a cultural profile.

A third part of the answer is that theatre institutions in the Netherlands and Flanders increasingly seem to choose for outside theatre. The five different reasons for this choice are to increasingly offer amusement and celebration, connect to their physical surroundings, strengthen the link with their social surroundings, develop the artistic quality of the outside theatre genre and fulfil a promotional function in order to create a distinct cultural profile for the city, region and province.

The three above expounded parts of the answer are analysed on their relevance in practice. Concerning the first conclusion, in three of the cases can be discovered that culture is indeed increasingly popular in the creation of a distinct profile. Although the city councils are apparently quite content with their cultural profile, they think that culture can make contributions to other fields, such as economics, tourism and promotion and is therefore important in their competition. Thus the cities are currently even increasing the attention for culture in their policies. Cultural festivals in general play an important role in these policies, but the level of explicit attention for outside theatre festivals in specific varies from case to case. Therefore it can be recommended that outside theatre festivals should try to gain a prominent role in urban policies by structurally communicate with city councils in order to tune the aims of both. This aim for increasing the promotional function from city council's point of view seems to be opposite to the need for artistic quality that the national policies use as one of the criteria in their evaluation for granting subsidies, according to the case studies. This opposition corresponds with the ambivalent position of outside theatre that it mentioned in the second conclusion. Concerning the third conclusion, the reasons why theatre institutions increasingly choose for outside theatre, seem to be in between these opposite aims of the theatre establishment on the one hand and city councils on the other hand.

These conclusions are visualised in the following figure:



As audiences seem to be enthusiastic about the combination of accessibility with quality, it appears that outside theatre institutions do not need to choose for one of the extremes. A recommendation in this context is that outside theatre festivals and groups should try to profit from this position. If they develop their artistic quality on the one hand and make use of their promotional function on the other hand, they will both gain recognition and even increase their popularity.

In a comparison between the Netherlands and Flanders, similarities can be found in the reasons why theatre groups choose for outside theatre. In both countries the reasons seem to be more or less related to social commitment. The reasons of theatre festivals seem to be less similar, as the aims of Flemish outside theatre festivals are inclined to be more genre intrinsic. Concerning the policies, the

local policies of cities in the Netherlands and Flanders show similarities in their urge to use cultural festivals in creating a competitive profile, whereas outside theatre has a different position in the national policies of those countries. In the Dutch policy outside theatre is considered as an important genre, because it reaches a big audience, its productions are strong and renewing and it has a strong international influence. Thus outside theatre festivals and groups are evaluated in appropriate sector categories. In the Flemish policy there is no such special attention for outside theatre in specific commissions.

Discussion

The answers presented in these conclusions are not the only possible answers to the central question of this thesis. In this thesis the focus is on the point of view of governmental and urban policymakers on the one hand and outside theatre institutions on the other hand. Another possible answer for the increasing popularity of outside theatre in cities could be the point of view of the audiences. This can be seen in three ways. First the increasing need of people for forms of public sociability as response to the individualistic society. This has to do with the feeling of togetherness that outside theatre performances can provoke. Second, the interest of consumers in social and cultural experiences within the scope of the experience economy. That relates to the fact that outside theatre performances can be spectacular experiences. Third, the longing from leisure-consumers for authenticity in the globalised and uniformed world. In this context one can think of the outside theatre productions that focus on the historical characteristics and narrative of a specific place. These viewpoints can be seen as recommendations for further research.

This work of research has a number of limitations. One of these is that it is based on a small amount of interviews. It was difficult to get into contact and make appointments with the right persons during the summer months. For outside theatre festivals and groups, the summer is high season. Festivals were organising the last preparations before the start and groups were very busy with travelling and performing around Europe. There was a risk that these difficulties and delays would negatively influence the value of the contents of interviews, because of the insecurity whether the interview was going to be held with the most knowledgeable persons. This already resulted in one appointment with someone who could not give suitable answers to the interview questions. Furthermore, during the first phase of the research it was discovered that the theatre groups and festivals generally were surprisingly well documented. That is why those documents are investigated and when necessary additional information was gathered with interviews by telephone or email.

Another limitation is the representational value of the cases. Because of the choice for qualitative research the conclusions are valid only for those cases included, but due to the lack of quantitative research these could not automatically be applied in a more general sense. The included cases proved to be quite useful for the research, because the outside theatre festivals and groups could be investigated in their position in national and local policies, except for Oerol at Terschelling. This case study turned out to be not ideal in the first place because Terschelling does not have an up-to date

cultural nor tourist policy, and secondly, because of the locations where the festival takes place are rural, rather than urban. The decision to nevertheless include this case study in this thesis was made, because Oerol is known as the festival with the most occasional theatre locations of the world and therefore the most famous example of outside theatre festivals in the Netherlands. Besides, the festival plays an important role in the advice for the Dutch cultural policy.

A limitation in the study of the policies that they are being developed at the moment whilst this thesis is written. In the Netherlands the advice for the national policy is given in April 2004. In the meantime outdoor theatre festivals and groups are demonstrating against this advice in order to attempt to positively influence the decisions of the State Secretary that will be presented at the 21st of September 2004. Local policies will possibly be influenced by the final decisions on the national policy. In Flanders outside theatre festivals and groups are currently working on their future plans and subsidy application, that they have to submit in November 2004, after which the Flemish Community will formulate its cultural policy for the next period. This lack of up-to-date policies is a pity, but it is tried to get the most out of the advice for the cultural policy in the Netherlands and the former cultural policies in Flanders.

Epilogue

In the introduction I distinguished three points of attention in the search for the central question that I evaluated. Starting with the third point, I assumed that outside theatre in the Netherlands and Flanders are well comparable. After having made the comparison, I found out that this is not necessarily because they are both Dutch-speaking countries. Instead of communicating in words, outside theatre performances often use a more visual or physical language. As a result, outside theatre festivals often programme groups from abroad and outside theatre groups often go on tours to perform elsewhere. Nevertheless, in my opinion the comparison of the Netherlands and Flanders makes sense because there still is a stronger relationship between the outside theatre scenes in these two countries than there is with other countries, for example in co producing.

Whereas the second point I stated that theatre is deeply connected with the city, I discovered that besides its urban side, outside theatre also has a rural side. One of the aims of outside theatre institutions is to reach an audience that can not be reached with traditional theatre. Because certain people do not come to the regular theatre buildings, some outside theatre festivals and groups go to those people. Therefore they play on sites that do not have anything to do with theatre, sometimes in places that do not even have a theatre, which are mostly smaller towns and villages. That gives outside theatre a rather anti-urban element, next to its clear urban culture.

The first point that I mentioned in the introduction was the need for theoretical development of the outside theatre genre. I can only express my hope that this thesis makes a modest contribution to the development of such a theoretical foundation. In that context I would like to end this thesis with a quote from Warner van Wely. He is the founder of Warner & Consorten and considers it very important to conduct research on the genre of outside theatre and to develop theories:

*“Outside theatre is a discipline in development.
In thirty, forty or fifty years it will be a conventional art form.
I think it has to, considering the amount of festivals world wide, the number of artists
who are involved and the quantity of audience that it attracts.
What form that convention will take, nobody knows.”¹⁰²*

¹⁰² Wely, Warner van (2003). *Theater in de openbare ruimte*. Amsterdam: Stichting Prima Materia, pp 70.

Summary

*How can the increasing popularity of outside theatre in cities
in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?*

In order to understand this central question, first background information is described and compared. A typology and the popular characteristics are represented of three forms of theatre at specific locations, namely site-specific performances, location theatre and theatre on location and of four kinds of theatre in public space, namely street theatre, moving spectacles, performance installations and infiltrations. Eight practitioners of outside theatre are introduced. Included are the festivals De Stad als Theater, Oerol, ISTF and Theater op de Markt and the groups Warner & Consorten, ZT Hollandia, Teater Exces and De Queeste. These outside theatre festivals and groups are compared in their undergone developments and in their plans for the future in order to show the direction at which they aim in their development.

In order to find possible answers to the central question, three sub questions are formulated:

1. *How can the increasing political importance of culture, specifically cultural festivals, in cities in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?*
2. *How can the developments of outside theatre and its current position in the Netherlands and Flanders be explained?*
3. *How can the reasons of Dutch and Flemish outside theatre institutions for increasingly choosing outside theatre be explained?*

This research work resulted in the conclusions that city councils in the Netherlands and Flanders increasingly seem to deploy culture, specifically cultural festivals, in their creation of a distinct profile in city competition. The reasons for this shifted from social and political concerns to aims for economic development, urban regeneration and employment potential. Developments within the outside theatre world since the sixties seem to have led to an increased popularity of this genre in the Netherlands and Flanders. As a result outside theatre institutions have to find their way in the ambivalent position between city councils' aims for using outside theatre for city promotion on the one hand and the artistic quality that the theatre establishment aims on the other hand. Theatre institutions in the Netherlands and Flanders increasingly seem to choose for outside theatre for reasons of offering amusement and celebration, connecting to their physical surroundings, strengthening the link with their social surroundings, developing the artistic quality of the outside theatre genre and fulfilling a promotional function in order to create a distinct cultural profile for the city, region and province.

These explanations are checked on their relevance in practice by conducting case studies. The advice for the national policy of the Netherlands and the previous national policy of Flanders are studied in order to find out what the position of outside theatre is in the national policies, what the criteria are for the evaluation and how the national governments grant subsidy applications. The position of outside theatre in these policies is quite different in distinguishing appropriate sector categories. Also the criteria for the evaluation are, except for the concentration on artistic quality, different, whereas the subsidy grants seem to be in proportion in the Netherlands and Flanders. The policies of Zwolle, Terschelling, Gent and Hasselt concerning their cultural profile are analysed, after which is investigated to what extent the festival cases play a role in those policies. Although the city cases are apparently quite content with their cultural profile, they also seem to realise that culture is important in their competition, so they are planning to even increase the attention for culture. Cultural festivals generally play an important role in these policies, but to what extent outside theatre festivals are explicitly mentioned in that context varies.

It can be recommended that outside theatre festivals and groups should try to develop their artistic quality on the one hand and make use of their promotional function on the other hand. Then outside theatre will both gain recognition and even increase their popularity in cities in the Netherlands and Flanders.

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