



Field Drawing of the International Cultural Policy from Flanders – Management Summary

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Management summary

Introduction

The Strategic Framework for International Cultural Policy (ICP), a Flemish cross-policy strategy for 2021-2025, is a relatively new development within the Flemish Cultural Policy. This strategy has three objectives: strengthening the international position of cultural and creative actors, goods and practices, encouraging international cooperation, networking and exchange, and putting Flanders on the world map as 'State of the Art'. The strategy is primarily sector-driven. At the same time, the ICP is used for general image-building and positioning of Flanders abroad. The strategy has a strong focus on activities in other countries, emphasising geographical priorities and synergy between government bodies and intermediary organisations, as well as complementary collaboration between government bodies and intermediary organisations (the sectoral institutes supporting the actors in the different sectors, the funds for the audiovisual and literary sector ...). The various recent societal and sectoral disruptions, which have had an impact on the internationalisation of the cultural sectors, have prompted a review of this prevailing framework. In this context, IDEA Consult was commissioned by the Department of Culture, Youth and Media to draw up a 'Field Drawing of the International Cultural Policy from Flanders'. This Field Drawing is intended to serve as input for recalibrating the ICP. The (sub)sectors within the scope are the following: the visual arts, performing arts, music, circus arts, cultural heritage, socio-cultural work, amateur arts, literature, audiovisual (including film and games), architecture and design. The Field Drawing maps out the developments in these sectors and matches them with the current Strategic Framework. Based on this, several suggestions for improvement were drawn up.

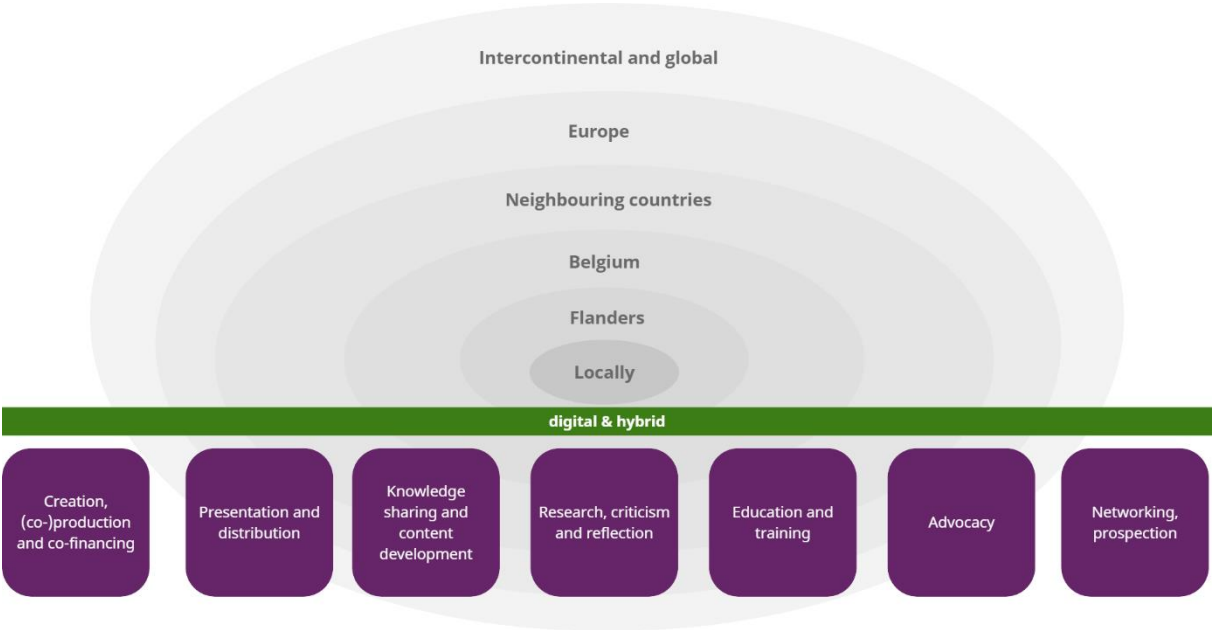
Within the research process, sectoral analyses were first prepared based on desk research, interviews with the intermediary organisations and focus groups with actors from each sector (see annexes, which are only available in Dutch). The insights from these analyses were compiled for a cross-sectoral synthesis in chapters 3 to 5 of the main report. Chapter 2 of this main report provides a compact, forward-looking synthesis of the entire Field Drawing of the International Cultural Policy from Flanders.

The internationalisation of cultural practice

The study starts by identifying international developments in cultural practice. What are the main trends, developments, actors and needs in terms of internationalising the cultural and creative sectors in Flanders? Who is doing what and where? Why is working internationally important? What trends – in the cultural sector and in society as a whole - have an impact on working internationally? What is needed to tap into the potential and added value of working internationally?

In the 2020s, working internationally within the cultural sector has taken both recognisable and surprising forms. On the one hand, there are the familiar examples and stories, where cultural Flemish actors have enjoyed success abroad, for example with Oscar nominations, prestigious international tours, top events in Flanders or awards at renowned theatre festivals... On the other hand, the Field Drawing also features examples of practices that prompt a different look at what internationalisation means today: a socio-cultural organisation that runs a community in the metaverse, international artists' collectives that set up experiments in the area of equitable practices, the debate on the origin or restitution of cultural heritage, the international sale of intellectual property, multilingual festivals that appeal to local and international communities, a game studio with branches in every time zone, so that it can develop around the clock...

In short, projects that can focus on creation, (co-)production and co-financing, presentation and distribution, but also on sharing knowledge and developing content, on research, criticism and reflection, on education and training, etc. These activities may take place locally or elsewhere in Flanders, but also abroad: in neighbouring countries, Europe or other continents. And the digitalisation and hybridisation of cultural practice also means that it is no longer obvious where these practices take place. They often take place in different places and dimensions at the same time.



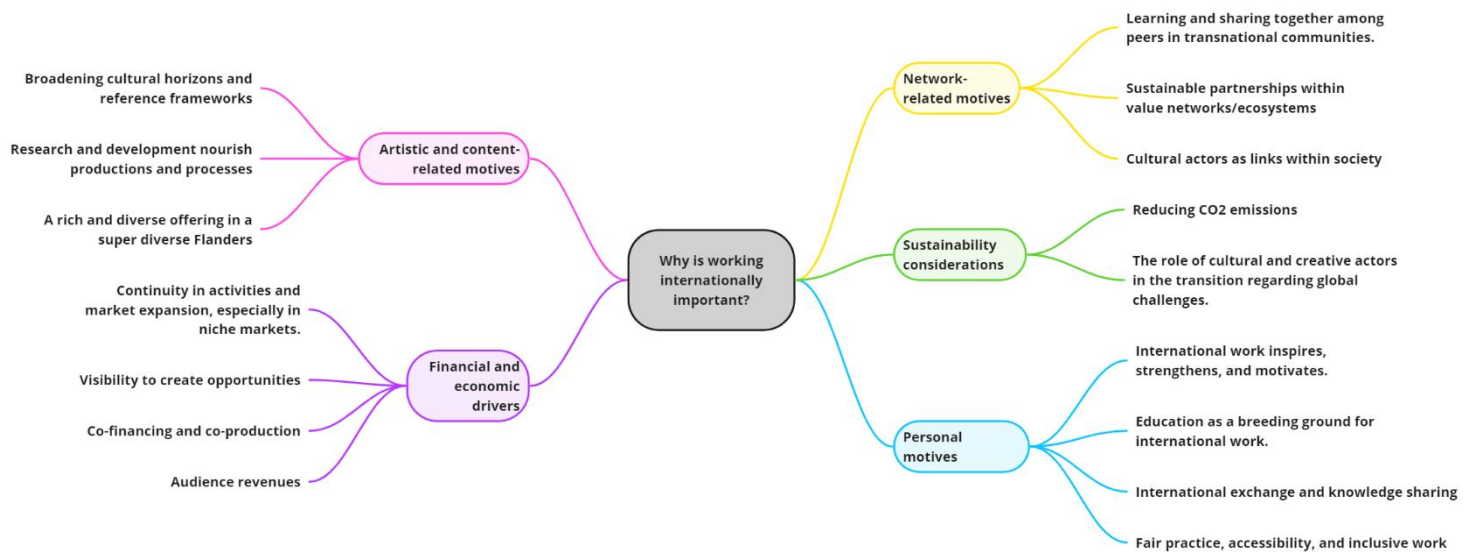
Motivations behind working internationally

If we examine the motivations behind these activities – and where they take place – they are legion in all sectors. On the one hand, artistic and cultural motivations come into play, within ecosystems that tend to have an international frame of reference. On the other hand, financial and economic drivers also play a role in most (sub)sectors. Working internationally is sometimes necessary just to survive. By developing international activities and tapping into value-added content, economic opportunities can be seized to ensure continued viability in Flanders. Considerations at the individual level (the importance of fair practice, mental well-being, etc.) and environmental sustainability considerations are also gaining in importance. For this reason, the Field Drawing puts forward a multidimensional motivational framework that considers content-related, economic, social,



individual and ecological motivations, which play a role in all sectors and niches – profit-driven or otherwise – to varying degrees.

Figure 1: Motivations behind working internationally



Trends: the development and local anchoring of transnational ecosystems

Various social trends in recent years have had a huge impact on how actors and sectors can seize this international potential. These include economic developments on the one hand (e.g. the higher cost of living), but also the interplay of social and technological developments that have had a strong impact on a variety of sectors or value chains – and organisational and business models – in recent years. The Covid pandemic clearly accelerated this trend. On the other hand, there are also broader geopolitical, demographic socio-cultural and ecological developments, which have put themes such as environmental and social sustainability, diversity and inclusion higher on the agenda in international forums in Flanders and especially beyond.



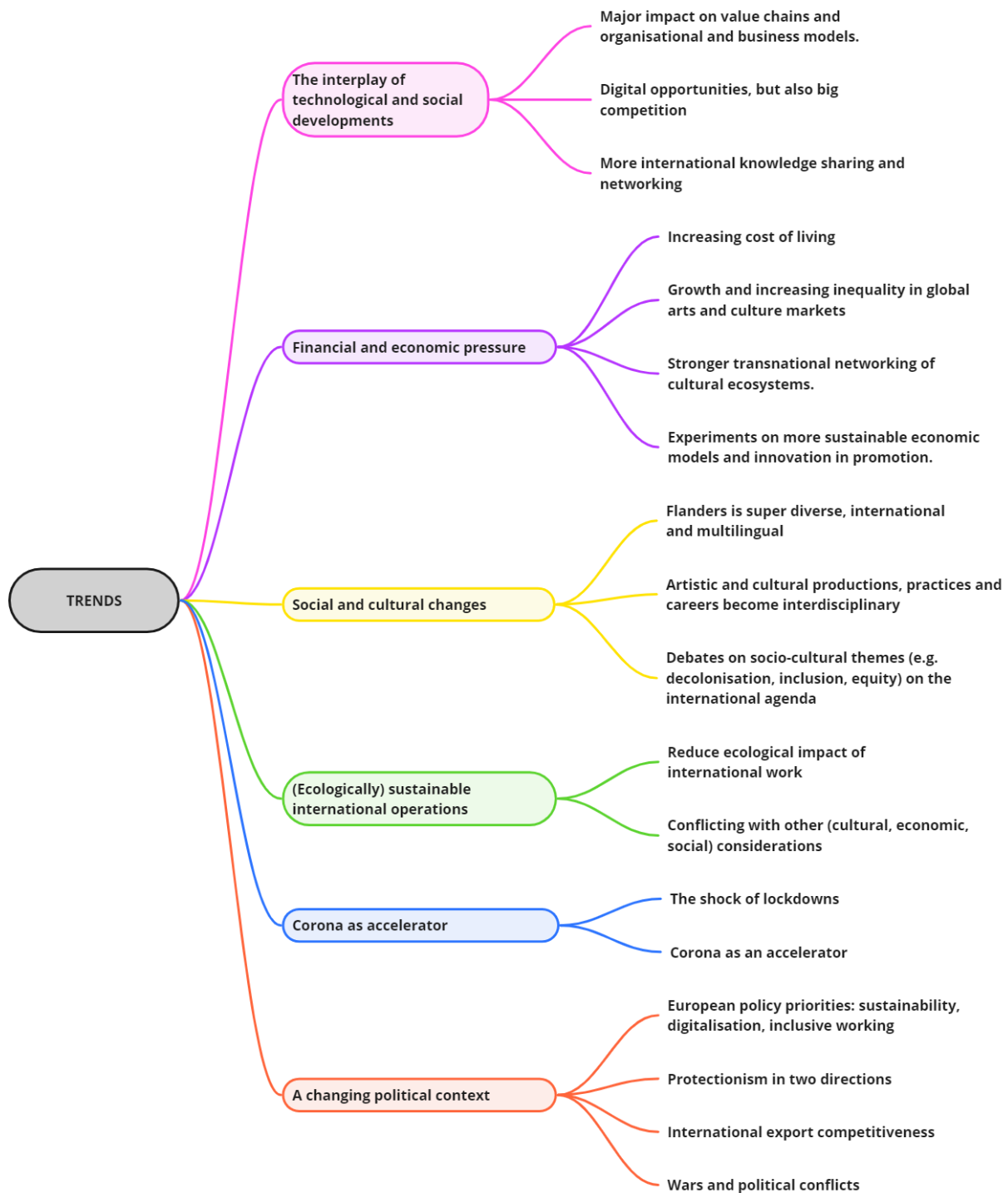


Figure 2: Trends in the field of internationalisation

The impact of these developments on the (internationalisation of) cultural and creative ecosystems has been significant. The study identifies two major movements. On the one hand, these trends are leading to more pressure, competition and acceleration in many sectors. In the process, new opportunities are arising, both in terms of cultural and content-related innovation (e.g. through new technologies, or the possibility of working closely with individuals or organisations on a remote basis) and in terms of economic opportunities in the form of new markets and distribution channels, especially for niche markets.

On the other hand, there has clearly also been a negative impact. The accelerated pace of international exchange is not always sustainable. In many sectors, existing business models are under significant pressure. The fragmentation of resources in international networks is leading to hyper-mobility and increasing pressure on individuals (socio-economic precariousness, mental well-being, etc.) while also bringing the ecological question into focus.

These trends demand an innovative, strategic approach on all possible fronts. What is more, not only do they impact *how* actors work internationally, and what strategies and organisational models and skills are necessary in this regard, the nature of working internationally itself is also fundamentally changing. The flows of cultural development, creation, financing, co-production, distribution and presentation play out on a larger scale (Benelux, European, global). Actors play at these levels simultaneously. Especially in a digital environment, it is difficult to identify 'where' these processes currently play out. The study identifies this trend as 'the development of transnational ecosystems'.

When we refer to 'transnational' networks, it is important to bear in mind that these networks manifest themselves strongly at the local level. In accelerating ecosystems, the connection between the international network and the local context and local communities, is the subject of ever more attention. In many sectors, there is a growing awareness of the fact that production is relocating. Abroad – and also in Flanders – we are seeing that actors working on presentation, participation and education are developing strategies to incorporate an international offering into a local context. The practice within socio-cultural work and the amateur arts has always been strongly anchored at the local level, but actors within these sectors are also active on a much larger geographical scale. Socio-cultural work is part of international movements. Local amateur artists can share their work with communities around the world through social media. In short, local contexts have become international and multilingual spaces, both physically and mentally. Creators and audiences in Flanders are superdiverse and multilingual. Local communities are highly networked at the international level. Cultural players are increasingly becoming the links within both local and international networks and flows.

Needs in the field of internationalisation

In this changing context, the various sectors have a wide range of needs. On the one hand, there are content-related and cultural needs, such as the necessary time and space for developing their artistic skills and craft, and methodological expertise. On the other hand, consideration for financial needs is crucial: working internationally requires investment and access to resources. In this battle for resources, visibility in international networks is essential. Finding your way in international networks demands the necessary competencies and capacities.

In all subsectors, there are questions relating to financial resources, knowledge and capacity, and networks. But these conceal two types of needs and requirements. On the one hand, there is demand for stronger, more competitive positioning and a demand for 'export support'. This can be seen in a demand for resources, visibility, innovation, capacity and competencies, as well as knowledge about developments in the field. On the other hand, we also see initiatives in many sectors focusing on systemic change towards more sustainable international practice, at the cultural, economic, social and environmental levels. There is a strong need for new approaches not based on competition, but on the principles of collaboration and solidarity. In an accelerating international context, how do we create the space to go at a slower pace, the time for local anchoring and meaningful engagements with communities, environmental sustainability, and inclusiveness?

As similar questions arise also more broadly and in other domains of society, can the cultural and creative players also be pioneers in a broader social transition towards a more sustainable society? A range of experiments in



various subsectors are exploring this, both in Flanders and in a transnational context, especially in design, architecture, cultural heritage...

The match with current and future international cultural policy

How do the needs of the cultural and creative sectors relate to current Flemish and international cultural policy – more specifically, the Strategic Framework for International Cultural Policy which is currently in place - and how can the international impact of current Flemish international cultural policy be improved? What are the current gaps? What points for improvement are possible for the future International Cultural Policy?

In the study a number of gaps have been identified while matching the Strategic Framework and the needs and trends in the practice described above.

- ▶ To start with, there is a need to update the basic starting points. It is important to take position with regard to the main issues at stake in the different cultural ecosystems, where increasingly complex interactions are taking place on the transnational level - and the fact that the international dimension is not only a matter of 'activities abroad', but also very present at the local level, in Flanders.
- ▶ There is a gap between the current strategic framework for International Cultural Policy and the way it is implemented. For instance, there is too little collaboration and coordination, even though these are priorities in the Strategic Framework.
- ▶ There is a need for a long-term perspective and more transparency, given that current choices are often ad hoc and criteria often not made explicit. The framework does not provide enough direction.
- ▶ There is a need for more effective knowledge building and monitoring that can inform the strategy. The study identifies several potential suggestions for improvement.

Besides reassessing the basic premises and objectives, there are a number of points for improvement relating to processes.





Figure 3: Overview of recommendations



Reassessing the principles

The positioning of Flemish cultural policy in transnational cultural ecosystems	Managing complex, transnational system dynamics is challenging for any national or regional government. There is a significant need for targeted, specific injections into sectoral ecosystems, while specific constraints also need to be eliminated.
The need for a flexible, adaptive and context-based strategy with a long-term perspective	The substantial volatility in transnational ecosystems calls for an agile approach, focusing on experimentation, incentives, learning, etc., with a view to a changing environment, the context, and the demand side.
Consideration for the local anchoring of these transnational ecosystems	Taking the international, superdiverse and multilingual reality of Flanders into account is crucial. It is possible to capitalise on this in conjunction with cities, municipalities and the supra-local cultural level as partners.
Consideration for the value and preconditions for meaningful international exchange	Achieving the international potential in a fair and meaningful way, depends upon preconditions such as fair practice and inclusive, environmentally sustainable work. The ICP can make this explicit, identify preconditions and propose incentives.
Collaboration as the guiding principle	To generate impact in complex systems, collaboration and coordination between and within sectors, the intermediary organisations, policy areas, levels of government, and priority partners (French-speaking Belgium and the Netherlands) is an absolute prerequisite.

Reassessing the objectives

Sector-specific objective: strengthen the position of Flemish actors in their international context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Funding for international projects and processes (both easily accessible and flexible, and large-scale projects/'breakthroughs') ▶ A toolkit for collective promotion, network development and support for practice. ▶ Sufficient 'carrying capacity', capacity and competencies for the cultural actors themselves.
Cross-sectoral objective: incentivising the switch to more sustainable international practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work on common themes/challenges from a cross-sectoral perspective. ▶ Incentives for innovation and experimentation, pilots and "living" labs. ▶ Space for connecting and evaluating these experiments in shared learning pathways.
Cross-policy area objective: valorise the strengths of the Flemish cultural field within the broader Flemish policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Valorise the cultural strengths/assets within broader government policy. ▶ Put Flanders on the map both in terms of its artistic and cultural excellence and as a pioneer in sustainable innovation and development. ▶ Reassess bilateral cultural relations (interregional and international) and geographical focus areas.



Points for improvement relating to processes

From strategy to action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Strategic vision development: Stakeholder analysis, determining policy options, objectives and priorities, in accordance with the mission and desired vision.▶ Translate into lines of action, including evaluation, adapting the toolkit and envisioning adequate resources and staff capacity.▶ Both the international dimension in sectoral policy (Field Drawings, Strategic Vision Notes) and via an overarching Strategic Framework for ICP.
Investing in knowledge building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Long-term perspective on monitoring, as part of a learning process.▶ Quantitative and qualitative, with consideration for context and horizon scan.
Collaboration in the practice of ICP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Need for better coordination and collaboration in the practice.▶ Develop joint strategy, identify added value, make choices, activate networks.▶ Sufficient capacity, in any event stronger management and possibly a stronger actor in international cultural policy.

