Overview

1. Legislative context
   - general
   - tangible heritage
   - intangible heritage
4. [case] Towards a Living Human Treasures policy in Flanders?

1. Legislative context
   Flemish government – distinct funding departments:
   - ARTS
     - artists
     - companies
     - projects
   - HERITAGE
     - museums
     - archives
     - libraries
   - EDUCATION & SCIENCE
     - teaching & research
   - NEW 2008
     - supporting organisations or ‘centres of expertise’

2008

New Cultural Heritage Decree in Flanders

- Not only care for cultural heritage in (‘expert’) institutions
- also focus on the support of heritage processes in (‘expert’) communities, organisations and individuals outside the professional heritage field

shift
from collection managers
to development of services and coordination of processes
from top-down care
to answering bottom-up needs of a ‘heritage community’
from ‘curation’
to ‘participation’
influence of 

2003 UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

2006-2010 Initiatives by Flemish government to implement

2. Het Firmament: mission & self-positioning today

‘neutral’
‘NETWORKER’
‘BRIDGE’
‘FACILITATOR’
‘BROKER’

€180,000/year - 3.6 FTE

How?

We develop expertise & services on aspects of tangible heritage

• Tracing and mapping collections & archives (c&a) on www.hetfirmament.be
• Sustainable care for performing arts c&a
• Appraisal, selection, deaccession of c&a
• Finding depots for important c&a
• ‘Re-activating’ performing arts heritage in publicly oriented initiatives
• Communication of good practices

Supporting sustainable care for performing arts c&a?

Instead of doing it ourselves, ..

[1] we developed..
How?

**We develop expertise & services on aspects of intangible heritage**

- Tracing & mapping intangible techniques, approaches and processes
- Help with documenting of performing arts
- Transmission of intangible cultural heritage
- ‘Re-activating’ performing arts heritage in publicly oriented initiatives

*Initiative, approach, responsibility, viability → starts & ends with communities themselves!*

UNESCO: Intangible heritage

“practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. [...] transmitted from generation to generation [...] constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment [...] and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

UNESCO: Safeguarding

“measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”
Challenges re intangible heritage elements in living performing arts:
• clustered or specific?
• community traditions or individual inventions?
• 'high' – 'folk' – 'popular' culture
• Western – non-Western
• canonical repertory vs. Taylor’s repertoire

("embodied memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing - all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge")

We offer support in a variety of forms, for free
• Training courses
• Customized guidance, on-site visits, brainstorms
• Conferences and public events
• Sharing experience, information and ‘inspiring practices’ through communication, etc.

2. Het Firmament’s (pre)history: shifts in self-positioning between 1968-2012

1968-2009: School & Centre for puppetry arts

2009-2011: Centre of expertise for the cultural heritage of puppetry

2012+: Centre of expertise for the cultural heritage of the performing arts

Why the heritage paradigm?

NEEDS FOR SUPPORT AND FUNDING:
- lack of resources for school & centre
- no place for puppetry in Flemish Theatre Institute or official arts education

Why the heritage paradigm?

OPPORTUNITIES:
• 2003: UNESCO Convention for s. of intangible heritage → puppetry as a testing ground for policy on intangible cultural heritage
• 2004: 1st Flemish Cultural Heritage Decree → funding for research project towards a strategy to transmit heritage of puppetry in the long term

A study into the need, the feasibility and the desirability of a Home for puppet theatre in Flanders
IMPLICATIONS: ...

‘heritagization’

different ways to instrumentalize concept of ‘heritage’ <-> art & art field (conservative, promotional, ‘ecological’: repertory vs. repertoire)

cf. other concepts: ‘contemporary’, ...

→ for puppetry: fruitful

Research project (2005-2009)

- Mapping of the field and its heritage

- **Need for institution**: a house for puppetry is desirable and feasible, if only it can be a hybrid organization

- **Need for performative and playful engagement**

  with heritage: working with both tangible and intangible heritage

  (new creations / ‘aura’ or not / computer game)

Research project (2005-2009)

- Methodological:

  - official recognition helps to convince community
  
  - external employees
  
  - common goals & collaborative methods
  
  interviews and annual conference; thesaurus group; focus groups; sensibilise external stakeholders

Research project (2005-2009)

Yet...

Home for Puppetry received no funding...

Problems:

- Niches = difficult issue
  
- New institutions = difficult issue
  
- Bottom-up need or top down search for legitimacy ?
  
- Empowering a community or strengthening an organisation?

- Centralizing vs. decentralization of heritage responsibility

  → other ways of making communities & individuals responsible for safeguarding?
2. Towards a Living Human Treasures programme for performing arts in Flanders

- International examples
- “What’s the problem?”: diversity of needs in performing arts & education
- Interviews & focus groups
- Importance of transmission (takes time, need for master-student model)
- Importance of sensibilisation (promotion, gaining support with external parties)

2. Research project: towards a Living Human Treasures programme for performing arts in Flanders?

- Importance of recognition and protection of a ‘craft’
- Need for support in business aspects and administration
- ‘Heritagization’: benefits and risks?
- Responsabilisation of individuals in relation to communities, less depending on institutions
- Support of institutions & academia remains possible: research, documenting, outside eye.

QUESTIONS

What are your experiences with the '(intangible) heritage paradigm' with regard to living art?

How can we use UNESCO’s intangible heritage approach at their benefit while avoiding the risks?

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