

Artistic work and structural organization of theater groups in Lisbon area.

Five empirical standpoints to inform public policies.

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Abstract

Organizational structures in the cultural and creative sectors are being challenged by deep changes in the economic, cultural and governance frameworks in which they operate. These changes force them to assume increasingly differentiated strategies to face the challenges that thus emerge. This phenomenon increases the complexity of the analysis of the art worlds and it also brings new challenges to the conception of public policies for these sectors. This is particularly visible in the field of the performing arts; when we observe the evolution of organizational structures, the professional paths and individual careers, as well as when we witness the indecisions and dilemmas in contemporary public policies in those fields. Drawing from a theoretical discussion based on recent contributions of sociology and economics of the arts and culture, and departing from a typology previously suggested elsewhere by the authors, this paper offers an empirical standpoint towards five dimensions of theater groups' work in order to extract conclusions that may inform public policy decisions: organizational structure, artistic work, art world commitment, economic structure and geographical scope.

Keywords: theater, cultural policies, performing arts, organizational structure, territory, Lisbon.

1. INTRODUCTION

The performing arts field, its cultural organizations and artists, occupies a central position in the European artistic labour market and represents an important arena for discussion regarding two issues: how to support artistic/cultural employment? How to choose (the best) artists and cultural organizations to subsidize, when today's crisis implies reducing funding?¹

Like in many other countries, national scale public support for performing arts in Portugal is based on a series of periodic call for tenders. Arts organizations apply to these, and the selection is made after an independent jury's decision, based on public interest. However, several unsolved issues recurrently arise in this process: how to overcome the multiple difficulties in interpreting this "public interest"? Should this process be based on one sole call or diverse distinct calls, with distinctive rules, for different needs? Is there one unique public interest? Or should public authorities be attentive to the accomplishment of several different kinds of public interests when dealing with these activities? All these questions recommend a need to go further on these issues in order to clarify the better criteria to assess and to help public decision.

This paper aims at contributing to this clarification. Departing from the analytic disentangling of the diversity of situations verified on the theatre companies supported by public funding in Lisbon region, we aim at understanding the multiplicity of problems and challenges that are being faced by these groups and at assessing the importance of considering the variety of particularisms in their functioning, in order to improve the reflection about cultural policies and the funding mechanisms for this sector.

In Portugal, performing arts, and theater in particular, often struggle with financial difficulties. Nevertheless, nationally, theatre absorbs 59% of the total central government grant for the arts and 42% of the artistic entities supported develop activities in this artistic area. The high concentration of artistic structures, funding and activities in Lisbon region (LVT)² is also noticeable. Nearly half the structures are gathered in a region that represents little less than one

¹ This text corresponds to the paper presented by the authors at the APS 2012 Conference, "Sociedade, Crise e Reconfigurações", Porto, 19 - 22 de June 2012; at ACEI 2012 Conference, "17th International Conference on Cultural Economics", Kyoto, Japan, 21 - 24 June 2012, and at the RESER 2012 Conference "Services and Economic Development: Local and Global Challenges", 20 - 22 September 2012. Bucharest, Romania We are grateful for the comments provided on those sessions, which allowed us to improve the paper.

² LVT – Lisboa e Vale do Tejo (Lisbon and Tagus Valley) region.

third of the population of the country. The extreme polarization of theater groups' activities and public support in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon is derived from the particular relation between creative dynamics and agglomeration (e.g., Scott, 2000, 2006; Costa et al, 2007), with a more than proportional concentration of artists, art practices, cultural organizations and audiences in urban territories. These crossroads between artistic work, organizations and territories are particularly interesting, as they intersect structural, organizational and public policy considerations with artistic and creative values.

In this context, the focus of our paper is theater groups' work. What economic dynamics and social processes are connected with the artistic work of theater groups? How to account for the fluctuation of theater groups work and its territorial insertion? Our effort is directed towards a comprehensive description of theater groups' trajectories, considering in detail the five analytical dimensions we have elsewhere presented (Borges, Costa and Graça, 2012): (i) organizational structure, (ii) artistic work, (iii) art world commitment, (iv) economic structure and (v) territorial scope.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Our research framework follows the general theoretical and empirical contributions of the sociology and economics of art and culture, namely, Becker's (1982) "art world", networks, organizational behaviors and the reputational dynamics; Menger's (2009, 2012) analyses of creative work and artistic labour markets, especially cultural organizations and the successive temporary works and contracts in arts; Karpik (2010) discussion about singularities markets; Scott's (2000, 2006) analysis on cultural agglomerations; Cooke and Lazzeretti's (2007) and Camagni et al.'s (2004) critical perspectives on creative milieus and local based creative systems; Caves' (2002) analyses of performing arts creative system organization, artistic training and labs; Cowen (2012) and the microeconomics dynamics of public choice in developing economies, Throsby (1994) analyses about artistic labour markets.

This approach stems from, on the one hand, arts and placemaking as described by Markusen (2011, 2013), and the territorial dynamics and resources of the theater groups analyzed by Urrutiaguer et al. (2011, 2012); which are specific frames of reference for studying theater organization, work and territorial extend. On the other hand, preceding studies we have done

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about theater groups, their artistic professions, organizations and labour markets will also be used in this paper (Borges, 2007; Borges, Costa and Graça, 2012).

Not intending to review this literature in this article, we aim instead to articulate the main theoretical hypotheses expressed by these diverse authors, applying them to the specific empirical field of theatre, using a comprehensive methodology and a comparative perspective, and applying a new typology, developed specifically for this purpose. That will be the support to our empirical observation of professional theatre groups, located in the Lisbon region, which are receiving central government grants via DGArtes³. We consider 34 professional theatre groups working in the Lisbon area and receiving central government grants via DGArtes, encompassing all the entities supported in 2010, in the four types of funding schemes provided by DGArtes: 4 year grants; biannual grants; annual grants; and three-party agreements (involving also municipalities)⁴. Theater groups that benefit from public funding are permanently monitored and assessed by a regional commission⁵ that produces individual annual reports. These commissions base their reports on six major sources: comparative analysis of the programs from the different structures; comparative analysis of the plans and reports of accounts; collection and analysis of information obtained by attending the plays/performances; follow-up meetings; visits to structures' venues; and permanent communication with the theater groups.

Finally, some words on the methodological strategy we used. The materials upon which we base our analysis are drawn from In 2009 and 2010, we conducted 34 semi-structured interviews with artists and directors⁶, and held numerous informal conversations. The interviews focused on individual careers; what artists are looking for in a theater group; on practices and discourses; constraints and professional dynamics of theater groups; internal divisions and main factors that weight in the process artistic creation. The field work - observation, regular viewing / attending of plays, informal talks - was very important to develop a detailed characterization of some theater groups. The charts are based on several types of general documentation collected by DGArtes and information collected from the original reports we produced. The authors were

³ DGArtes, Direcção-Geral das Artes, General Direction of Arts, from Secretary of Culture

⁴ In parallel to these funding schemes (all of them dedicated to support the group/structure) it exists also a funding scheme based on the support to specific projects ("apoios pontuais"), which is not analyzed in this paper due to its distinct nature.

⁵ CAAs, Comissão de Acompanhamento e Avaliação, Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. The authors take part on this Commission, which allowed to accede to the groups and all the materials.

⁶ The interviews were conducted by José Pedro Caiado, Susana Graça, Pedro Costa and Vera Borges.

responsible for the treatment and analysis of the quantitative data presented in this paper, which was kindly provided by DGArtes.

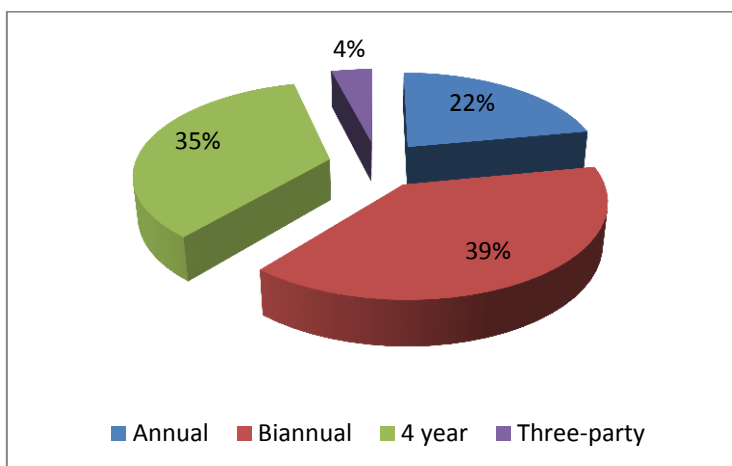
3. PUBLIC SUPPORT, ARTISTIC WORK AND ORGANIZATION: GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THEATER GROUPS

A preliminary framework for our analysis can be drawn from some stylized data concerning the general characteristics of theater groups in the Lisbon area. The analysis of public support for theater shows the relatively high weight of the structures of the Lisbon region in national terms, representing approximately 50% of the total structures supported at the national level (for a population that is one-third of the country's total).

The extreme asymmetry of support granted within this LVT region is also very clear: more than 80% of those are specifically in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, which is in part explained by the fact of the municipality of Lisbon itself polarizes more than half of the supported structures (following an internationally confirmed tendency for extra concentration of this activity in capital cities).

In this context, we can broadly identify the distribution of funding amongst the four types of national scale public support categories concerning theatrical structures: 4 year grants; biannual grants; annual grants; and three-party agreements – see distribution on Graph 1.

Graph 1 - National Level Public Funding for Theater 2010 (by length period categories)

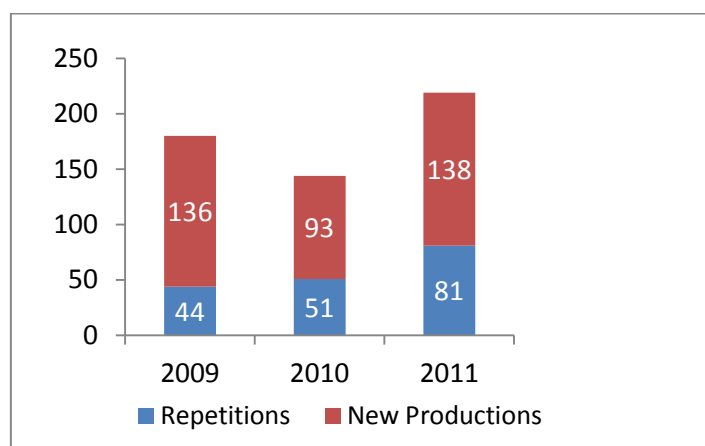


Source: Own elaboration based on data from DG Artes.

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In spite of the dramatic crisis scenario, the dynamism and the intense artistic activity of these theater groups is visible by the number of their own productions/performances. In a comparative analysis, from 2009 to 2011, the new productions/performances and the repetitions continue to enliven the theater season in the city (Fig. 1).

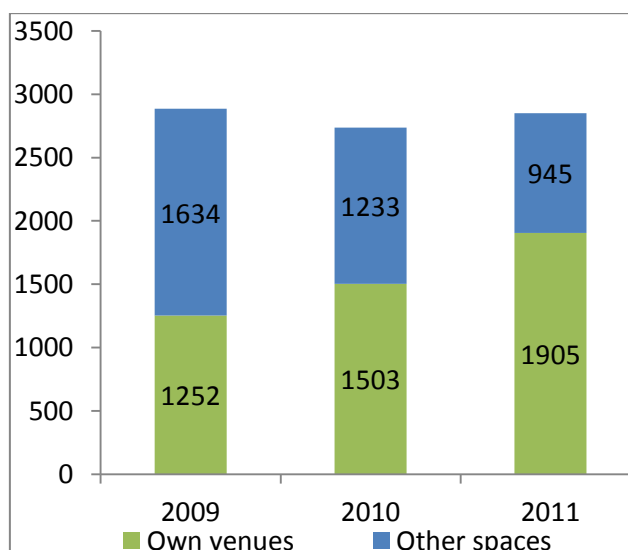
Fig. 1 - Number of new productions and repetitions realized by Lisbon theater groups



Source: Own elaboration based on data from DGArtes.

Nevertheless, the data analysis also reflects an increase in the number of performances presented in own venues and a decrease in the presentation in other spaces (Fig. 2). This movement from 2010 until 2011 could result from the adaptation theater groups have done to face feebler economic conditions.

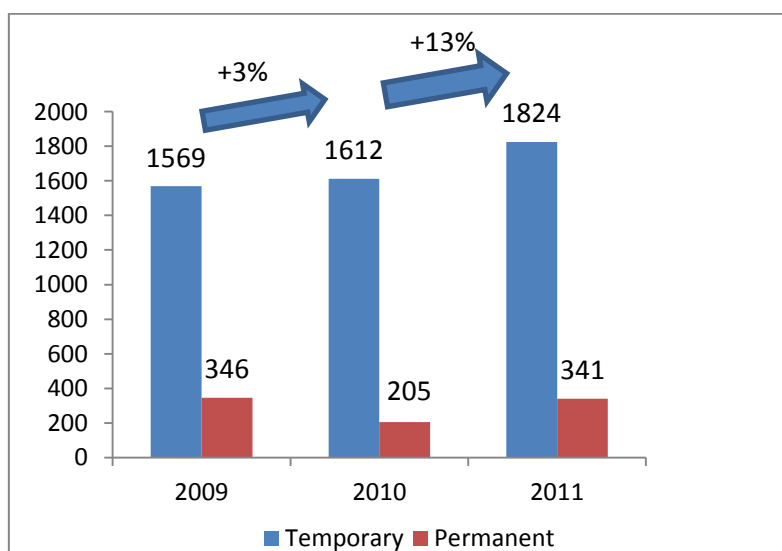
Fig. 2 - Number of performances in own venues / in other spaces



Source: Own elaboration based on data from DG Artes.

In 2011, the number of new productions and repetitions indicates that the activity of theater groups is more intense than in the previous years and this suggests an increase of the work developed by the different teams of the theater groups. We analyzed in detail the variable size of the teams (see section 3.) which was one of the key variables of a previous research (Borges, 2007). This was one of the most profound changes experienced by theater groups and represents the basis of the reorganization of their work teams designated "turntables of artists". A longitudinal analysis shows now that the trend of a fixed artistic core - a platform model - accomplished by small size teams and associated when necessary to temporary teams, "teams on harmonium" in the words of the director of O Bando, is a paradigmatic model of behavior of theater groups.

Fig. 3 - Work Team (temporary / permanent)



4. TYPOLOGY FOR CLASSIFICATION OF THEATER GROUPS

In our previous research (Borges, Costa and Graça, 2012) we developed a typology based on five “analytical criteria”, each of them subdivided in several dimensions which were defined for the classification of the theater groups (see a summary on Table 1). Each of these dimensions of analysis was typified in different possible categories, which were operationalized by specific indicators (see details on Borges, Costa and Graça, 2012). Quantitative and qualitative data have been collected by the authors in order to give substance to each of those indicators.

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Table 1: Dimensions for classification in the theatrical groups' typology

Criteria for analysis	Dimensions for theater groups classification
1. Organizational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age - Production structure - Artistic structure - Technical structure - Leadership
2. Artistic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dynamism of the structure - Aesthetic and creative attitude - Kind of shows - Audiences (types)
3. Insertion in the art world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to cooperate with other entities - Logics of reputation - Types of external communication - Training activities - Programming types
4. Economic structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of dependency on public-grants - Diversity of funds raised - Structure of allocation of funds - Strategic positioning towards the market - Long-term economic decisions
5. Geographical scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location - Target markets (geographic) - Degree of internationalization

Source: Adapted from Borges, Costa and Graça (2012)

In parallel to this quantitative analysis, we developed a discussion, regarding each of these five dimensions, in order to identify the fundamental dilemmas and key challenges that can be considered, concerning to structures sustainability and to public action needs. The main results of this discussion are presented on the next section, and these dilemmas are summarized on Table 2.

These criteria, and subsequently the respective dimensions and indicators, obviously do not exhaust all possibilities of analysis of theatre groups. They are indicative, however, of major distinguishing tendencies that the observation of the field provided. Furthermore, these dimensions are all intertwined and overdetermined. The philosophy of a theatre group in respect to its artistic work shapes its organizational setting, conditions its investment and marketing

decisions, determines its insertion in the art world and may be both determined and determine its geographical range of action. The same argument could be made for all dimensions, showing how each is simultaneously a determinant and is determined by the other dimensions.

The recognition of the organic dynamics in the functioning of theatre groups is not, however, an impediment to the analysis. Quite the contrary: our analysis was enriched by the fact that we refused working with hermetic categories and crossed data and insights drawn from the observation of different aspects and phenomena present in the theatre groups' behavior. The global image we got in the end seems accurate and identifiable with the observable reality

5. CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS TO THE THEATER GROUPS' SUSTAINABILITY AND TO PUBLIC ACTION

Following the application of our typological grid of analysis, the identification of some dilemmas and key-challenges to the sustainability of these structures (and of the situation of each of group in relation to it) as well as the consideration of scenarios for public intervention in the sector, were the natural corollary of our previous work. That is what is presented in this section. The positioning of each group towards aspects such as the organizational structure, artistic work, insertion in art world, economic structure and geographical scope provide us important guidelines for understanding the general objectives and conditions of each artistic entity (Table 2).

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Table 2: Main challenges to the sustainability of theatrical structures

Analytical criteria	Dilemmas and challenges to structures sustainability and to public action
1. Organizational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure (permanency) vs Project (flexibility) • “Core” (creation / production / programming) vs Large scope / multi-functionality • Personalization vs Collective • Permanence vs Change/rotation
2. Artistic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crystallization / stabilization vs Ability for permanent reinvention • Diversity / multiplicity vs Focus in niche (thematic or aesthetic) • Coherency-identity vs Contact-integration-contamination
3. Insertion in the art world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation / closure vs collaboration / cooperation • Trans-disciplinarity / transversality vs Extreme specialization in the theatrical field • Variety of scopes of action vs Concentration / polarization on creation • Investment on divulgation / communication vs self-centering strategies • Recognition / legitimization by peers vs Other reputation logics
4. Economic structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sufficiency vs External dependency • (Almost) mono-funding vs Diversity of funding sources • Long term strategy (structure enhancement) vs Short term vision (flexibility) • Strategic action vs Management of contingencies
5. Geographical scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmopolitanism vs Parochialism • Embedness vs De-territorialization

Source: Own elaboration.

At the same time, listing and characterizing these criteria allows us to: (i) identify what distinguishes theatre groups and what they have in common; (ii) choose the options that best fit the requirements of the scarce funding possibilities to theatre; (iii) strike a balance between the increased funding requirements of theater groups and the difficulties of the present economy. Our effort in this section will be directed at a comprehensive description of theater groups’ organizations and we will use a detailed illustration of each dilemma and challenge experiences they generate.

5.1. Organizational structure

A first set of features and challenges can be identified concerning the theater groups’ structure, their organizational mechanisms and their members’ characteristics. In this domain, four main dilemmas seem to be central when analyzing the organizational structure of theater groups in Lisbon area: (i) the option between more “permanent-structure” based models, vs more “project-based” models, centered on flexibility of the structure; (ii) the option between a focalization of activity on the “core” action of the group (be it creation, production or programming) vs the assumption of a large range of activity, implying a concern with the multi-

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functionality of the structure; (iii) the balance between organizations structured around personalization vs others, organized in a much more collective oriented direction; and, finally, and intimately linked to the later, (iv) the option between permanence on the leadership vs more “rotating” directive solutions.

The first of these dilemmas can be exemplarily illustrated by two groups which can be assumed almost as archetypes of this distinction between structure/project and permanency/flexibility: Teatro Experimental de Cascais (TEC) and Mundo Perfeito. On the one hand, TEC is a clear example of more “permanent-structure” based model (like others such as e.g. A Barraca or CT Almada). It was created in the 70’s and, since then, this group has a permanent staff: all the teams have employment contracts and, in general, this is a group with the capacity to generate permanent formal contracts. TEC also has a school for training young actors. This is very important for the renewal of the casting team, to professionalize them and promote their insertion in the labor market. All the teams - artistic, technical and production - are consolidated and at the same time rejuvenated.

On the other hand, at the opposite extreme of our typology, we have Mundo Perfeito (as well as T. Vestido, or others), as an example of a much more flexibility oriented structure. This theater group has a structure with a kind of vitality that usually occurs in young artistic Portuguese structures. Although fragile and vulnerable to the lack of public support, its members develop a considerable amount of work, with some successes arising from strategic partnerships with recognized institutions, “facilitators” of the dissemination of their work. The artistic team is the director who works 25% of his time in the structure, and the financial and administrative team consists of one more collaborator. Mundo Perfeito has no producer, nor an artistic permanent team. It is a project, with an almost inexistent fixed structure, very fragile without any other financial resources, despite the strong commitment of the director in their task of artistic creation and the internationalization of the project. The structure is based on the relation/commitment with other parallel structures and a very strong and proactive leadership, a dependence of the current activity and partnerships (particularly public) that may suffer in terms of budget in the current crisis.

This kind of reasoning can be extrapolated when we analyze each of the other dilemmas identified. It has been identified a clear divide between some groups that choose to organize their activity with a clear focus on the “core” theatrical activity of the group (e.g. CT Almada;

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T. Comuna; T. Cornucópia; T. Garagem, A Tarumba; although some of them more centered on developing creation itself, others on production activity or others on programming and organizing special events and festivals) and others that assume a large scope of activity and assume an organizational structure more coherent with that, implying a concern with the multi-functionality of the functions and activities developed. That is e.g. the case of Ar de Filmes (assuming clearly a part of the team dedicated to theatre, other to film production, and other to the programming of their venue); Artistas Unidos (combining multiple activity on theatre, publishing, visual arts, cinema); JGM or TPraga (articulating transversally multidisciplinary work through the combination of diverse skills); or T. Extremo (combining their performance activity with a wide training and audiences development program along with schools).

A strong divide can be also perceived when analyzing the dilemma between “personalization” and “collective”. Several organizations are clearly structured around a strong personalization, most of them intimately linked to the process of creation and early development of the group. Some of them assume the clear role of one/two historical leaders (T. Cornucópia, T. Rainha; CTAlmada) while other do not assume it clearly, preferring the rhetoric of the collectivity and the group project (e.g. A. Unidos; Bando; Barraca), but all of them have a very strong leadership which strongly conditions the organization of the group. On the other extreme of this typology, there are other groups, organized in a much more collective oriented direction (e.g., T.Praga, Truta, Primeiros Sintomas, Projecto Teatral), where even in the presence of several charismatic and strong personalities, the structure of the group is organized in a more collective way.

The last dilemma is somehow linked with the precedent one, although not directly. The option between “permanence” vs more “rotating” structures can be observed when we compare groups such as TEC; T. Aberto; T. Garagem (all of them keeping a more stable framework in terms of their structure, even with occasional personal changes) with other groups such as Primeiros Sintomas and T.Comuna (where the rotation leads to more flexible and less permanent structuring schemes of the team).

5.2. Artistic Work

In our understanding three dilemmas affect the artistic work of this panel survey of the Lisbon theater groups: (i) crystallization/stabilization versus the ability for permanent reinvention; (ii) diversity of works versus a focalized artistic conception of theatrical work in order to address a thematic or an aesthetic niche; finally, (iii) the artistic coherence /identity versus the contact/integration/contamination of the artistic work.

In the first case - crystallization/stabilization versus the ability for permanent reinvention - we highlight two main examples: Teatro da Cornucópia, created in the 70s, as a case of stabilization; and Teatro Praga, created in the 90s, as a case of permanent reinvention. Not questioning its very-acknowledged quality (and capacity of reinvention inside that coherent framework), the case of Cornucópia (such as T. Rainha or others) is a good illustration of a solid artistic path which can be seen in the light of a certain crystallization and stabilization. Although they work temporarily with different generations of artists, Cornucópia maintains a strong dependence on its two “anchor members” who continue to centralize all the decisions about the different sectors of the structure during all this years. The professionalism and the excellence of this artistic team and “anchor members” – one of them is the director and the other is the set designer – seems to hide a minor concern for a long-term strategy and a certain inability to fully renew the artistic team, moving for new forms of experimentation and generational challenges (as can be also clear in the analysis of their organizational structure and their economic challenges).

By contrast, a paradigmatic case in the Portuguese performing arts world is Teatro Praga (but also e.g. Cão Solteiro or Mala Voadora), with their capacity of permanent artwork reinvention. Teatro Praga has a set of characteristics such as youthfulness, dynamism and multiplicity of working experiences in the field of contemporary performing arts. At the same time, Teatro Praga also searches to recruit new markets/new publics. The theater group invests in creating arenas for discussion of ideas with the public, showing the audience how they think and organize their performances. In their venue, the group programs and hosts different artistic entities trying a really transdisciplinary interaction focused on the field of performing arts and, more recently, on the field of the visual arts.

Concerning the second challenge – diversity/multiplicity versus focus on a thematic or aesthetic niche – we highlight two cases, Teatro do Vestido and Artistas Unidos (but we could mention others, e.g. Comuna, Chão de Oliva). These two entities seek to be innovative, show a permanent restlessness and they promote the discussion and the environment intervention, and

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many times they are politically committed. From the social point of view, they appear linked to social intervention, able to create and develop a diversity and multiplicity of theater performances. Assuming this diversity at several levels, they work simultaneously for different layers of audiences, and at the same time they can have plays aimed at more generalistic or specialized targets, at child audiences or at elderly people, for instance. In this versatility and will to diversify and comprehend these diverse faces of theatrical work, they seem to oppose to other groups which focus their activity much more clearly on a specific niche, be it aesthetically (e.g. Mala Voador, Praga, Cão Solteiro, Projecto Teatral) or thematically oriented (puppets and animated forms, child theater, women's work based theater, and so on). The case of Tarumba is paradigmatic of this approach, with an artistic work directed at a particular aesthetic niche and focused on a main event: the puppet shows for adult audiences and the FIMFA Festival in Lisbon.

Finally, artistic coherence and strong identity oppose a strategy of contamination of the artistic work. Two theatre groups' profiles may be confronted in this context: on the one hand, Teatro da Cornucópia, Teatro Meridional, Bando or Praga can be pointed out as examples of groups characterized by their artistic coherence and strong identity. On the other hand, Teatro do Vestido, Primeiros Sintomas, Escola de Mulheres or Artistas Unidos, can illustrate a trend to promote contact integration and contamination with other groups in their daily activity. The characteristics of their artistic work illustrate these two sets of groups. For instance, Teatro Meridional, is a self-centered structure, with a very strong identity regarding artistic work, marked by two "anchor members", as in Cornucópia. In spite their regular collaboration and programming of other groups, their own work is clearly focused in their own identity and rarely contaminated by external interactions. On the contrary, Primeiros Sintomas has been distinguished by the dynamism of its own space called *A Ribeira*, where they host and program regularly a broad diversity of other actors and groups. In this place, they provide informal support to other groups and emergent professionals from arts schools with whom they collaborate. Primeiros Sintomas may be viewed as an artistic lab for professional and learning experiences with peer interaction and contact with audiences. These interaction is also clearly reflected in their own productions, which are often contaminated and reflex of all this cross-fertilization activity.

5.3. Art world commitment

These characteristics of the artwork and the organizational features of each group are naturally related with the kind of insertion each theatrical entity presents within their artistic milieu, and the commitment it reveals into that specific art world. In fact, as we approach the insertion of theater groups in the art world, the entities under study may configure multiple types of behavior, which conducted us to five key-dilemmas in this field: (i) propensity for isolation and a certain closure versus ability to collaborate with other theater groups and other art worlds; (ii) transversality in their activity and transdisciplinary insertion versus extreme specialization in the theatrical field; (iii) variety in their range of action (creation, production, programming, etc.) versus concentration of activity on one specific domain; (iv) investment on external communication versus a self-centering strategy; (v) reputation logics focused on evaluation by peers versus market reputation logics. We will make use of complementary sets of theater groups to briefly explain the differences among these types of art world insertion.

Regarding the first issue, related to the propensity to collaborate and cooperate within this art world, two poles can be identified: on one hand, structures such as T. Cornucópia or Karnart are known by their greater tendency to work in isolation or even closure, reflecting a strong determinism of their own identity traces in their projects. Cornucópia, for instance, even if quite broadly recognized as one of the most (if not the most) influential group in artistic terms, with clear direct influence and impact in all the art world⁷, has a creative process that is essentially self-oriented and not quite open to regular external collaborations. Karnart, for instance, often develops site-specific projects which are built in a quite self-reflexive relation with that external context, but intensively immersed in the own history and philosophy of the group. On the other hand, groups like T. Comuna, o Bando or Escola de Mulheres (among many others) are examples of entities with a strong orientation towards collaboration and cooperation within this art milieu. All of them live intensely from deep collaboration relations (more permanent or more occasional) with other groups, in which they feed their activity in terms of creation, programming or production. There is no artistic isolation here in these processes, and often there are permanent relations of cross-fertilization that are developed between specific groups or artists which go beyond organizational structure and help establishing regular collaborations through times (e.g, Bando and Utero).

⁷ The plays of this group are frequently cited by other groups as plays that were effectively viewed and appreciated by them.

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Concerning the second dilemma, a divide can be drawn between the entities which base their activity essentially in transdisciplinarity and transversal action (e.g., Ar de Filmes; Karnart; Artistas Unidos; JGM) and the ones which present an extreme specialization in the theatrical field (e.g. T. Cornucopia; T. Aloés; T. Meridional). In effect, some groups are particularly keen to develop their activity in the crossroads between different art worlds, be it exploring the relation between theatre and visual arts (e.g JGM), theatre and cinema and multimedia (e.g. Ar de Filmes), or the crossing between theatre publishing, cinema, and visual arts (e.g. Artistas Unidos), among many other examples. Karnart performances are an example of this recurrent incursion on transdisciplinarity and transversal action. For instance, the development of a specific thematic such as “the land” and “lives of real people” (e.g., performances developed in the Convento de Nossa Senhora do Desterro, Monchique, in 2011, or the Azores Islands, 2012) show the creativity of this group applied in the exploration of new artistic territories, promote discussion around eco-sustainability, defense of heritage and environment. In fact, with this strategy, Karnart gets also some visibility. The group has been awarded with a special mention given by the Portuguese Association of Theatre Critics, thus enhancing their reputation among peers. On the contrary, other groups opt to focus their interest in the core theatrical activity itself (e.g. T. Cornucopia; T. Aloés; T. Meridional), without the need to explore this boundaries, but redeveloping their creative efforts within the more strict theater field.

This second dilemma is often crossed by a third one: the option between developing activity exploring a variety of scopes of action (e.g, Primeiros Sintomas; Teatro do Vestido; C.T. Almada; Tarumba – e.g, organizing festivals, producing plays, hosting other groups, etc.) versus polarizing or concentrating on a specific main task: creation (e.g Cão Solteiro; T. Cornucópia) or other specific part of the theatrical activity (e.g, production activity, as made by Cassefaz, or programming, even occasionally, as Escola de Mulheres or Primeiros Sintomas do).

Teatro O Bando, created in the 70’s, is one good example of the kind of groups which develop activity on a broad range of activities, in this case going frequently beyond theatre itself. Bando crosses several activities, namely theatrical creation, young professional training, civic and environmental engagement with local entities, fundraising, promoting a strategy of multiple communication (even digital communication that gives them considerable visibility), in sum, different types of programs, plays and audiences. In consequence of all this, the media exposure of Bando is significant. It is clear that the results of their connection with art world, built over the last 35 years, is the real consolidation of this group's reputation and renewed by peers, e.g. Bando activities⁷ are recurrent in the major national newspapers. These final aspects of this

example lead us to the fourth and fifth dilemmas concerning the commitment of the structures within their art world, which are related to the issues of their visibility and legitimization.

In effect, we can identify a fourth dilemma, between entities which assume communication strategies as central for their insertion in the art world, and other groups which are not focused at all in these aspect in their strategies. In the first case, it is visible a clear investment and effort on divulgation and communication strategies (e.g. T. Aberto; Casa Conveniente; TECascais) as part of the mechanisms of affirmation and insertion in the art world. In some cases there is an explicit orientation to reach their specific target audiences (e.g. Casa Conveniente; T.Garagem), but in other situations that is made exploring broader visibility to larger audiences (e.g. Teatro Aberto, Cassefaz) or cultivating a continuous relation with the local community in parallel to more general audiences (e.g. TEC, T. Aloés, CT Sintra, o Bando). In the second case, assuming an approach where external communication is not one of the main key-factors, a more self-centered strategy is pursued (e.g. Truta, Projecto Teatral), aimed essentially to the self-recognition amongst more “initiated” circles of their specific art worlds.

Finally and intimately related to this, we can distinguish a fifth dilemma between strategies which are essentially focused on assuming the importance of recognition and legitimization by their peers (e.g. Cão Solteiro) and other strategies more based on the importance of legitimization through other reputation logics (e.g. Teatrosfera). In effect, while some structures aim principally to be recognized and legitimized in a symbolic dimension essentially marked by artistic excellence, where the recognition by the peers is indispensable to the accumulation of prestige and their legitimization (e.g. Cornucópia – see note 12), other companies develop strategies that aim recognition at more diversified axes of legitimacy, most of the times combining multiple dimension of legitimation. These can be more related to the market (e.g. Cassefaz, FC); the good reception among the media and professional critique (e.g. T.Aberto, Meridional,...), the local community (e.g., Teatrosfera, TeatroExtremo,...), or the visibility related to other events and venues (e.g. Ar de Filmes, Chão de Oliva) or to the multiplicity of artistic fields of intervention (e.g., Artistas Unidos, JGM).

5.4. Economic structure

As we understand it, the economic structure of the entities under study pertains to their cost and revenue structures, to their strategic positioning towards their market and to their vision regarding long-term financial decisions. Cost and revenue structures provide information as to how resources are allocated in practice and what revenues are indeed raised; furthermore, the

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treatment of this data has allowed us to reach conclusions regarding an objective financial categorization of our entities. The strategic positioning towards the market gives us insight into the general objectives of the entities in economic terms. We pay attention not solely to their goals in terms of the artistic activity to be developed, but also to how they transpose those into economic matters. Finally, the vision regarding long-term financial decisions sheds light into their organizational dynamics, i.e. how the entities, at an internal micro-level, direct their own goals.

In the context of our preliminary conclusions, we first distinguished between entities that are self-sufficient and those that depend on external funds to survive. Of course, our concept of self-sufficiency is quite special in the sense that we are, from the outset, referring to artistic organizations that receive grants from the Portuguese government and have had, in 2011, an average degree of dependence from the central government grant of 40% and from local government grants of 17%. So, the self-sufficiency we are talking about has to do with the capacity to generate own revenue mainly coming from box-office and sales, but also from other sources excluding government funds. This is possible to confront with other situations that are characterized by a structural inability to generate revenue from the placement of the artistic work in the market or from fund-raising activities.

The three cases of self-sufficiency that we highlight at this point exemplify three different approaches to the raising of non-central governmental funds. FC – Filipe Crawford Produções basis its self-sufficiency in an investment in workshops and training initiatives that provide them with a return not only in financial terms, but also in human capital. This organization produces most of its performances with the actors that were recently trained in the context of their workshops and long-term courses. So, they are at the same time conducting a profitable training activity and feeding their own artistic creation with the creativity and know-how of their graduated students. Teatro Extremo invests in their local connection with schools and municipalities, so its self-sufficiency is grounded on the production of artistic work that is directed at a specific niche where demand is enough to guarantee the continuation of the project. The production of plays that meet the curricula of schools and that serve the children and youth market is a safe bet if one wants to make sure they will not go out of business. Finally, Cassefaz has a productive structure that is quite different from most of the artistic entities operating in Portugal. It is their explicit policy to simultaneously develop two strands of artistic and training work: one that is fully directed to the free market and another that develops

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alternative non-marketable projects. In this line of thought, the independence of non-marketable projects relies on the revenues raised by the projects that are sold in the market.

External dependence is applied to Cão Solteiro, Truta and Teatro da Cornucópia not because these are similar structures, but because they all share the feature of not being able or not wanting to raise funds outside the scope of the central government. While Cão Solteiro relies heavily on its own central government grant and on co-productions with other structures that are themselves dependent on the central government grants; Truta, once their own grant is not very relevant, is almost fully dependent on institutions and artistic organizations that depend on government funding, so they are subjected to the allocation decisions of other institutions. Teatro da Cornucópia configures a very different case in which their central government grant guarantees their full functioning and their system of beliefs prevents them from entering a scheme of commodification of their artistic work. Private money carries private interests that must be cared for so that sponsoring agreements can be reached. The complete independence from the private interests leads to a full dependence on public funding.

The analysis of the dependence leads us to another important distinction that has become quite obvious in our preliminary results: a distinction that lies between structures with non-diversified and diversified sources of funding. We realized that the entities with greater dependence on external funding are also the ones that tend to reveal lower numbers of sources of funding. (e.g., Cão Solteiro, Truta, Cornucópia). The entities that we identified as being less dependent on central government grants diversify their sources more intensively (e.g. T. Extremo, Cassefaz, T. Aberto). This emerges as a risk-averse attitude towards the market for funding. Artistic organizations that do not rely solely on government grants are competing for revenue from audiences (box-office), municipalities (sales), sponsors (sponsorship agreements), private donors (donations, crowd-funding), etc. So, they have to diversify their portfolio of potential and actual funders in order to guarantee the survival of the organization.

In terms of strategy, we identified two main focal points: one that emphasizes the allocation of resources between structural items and production items; and another that is grounded on the relation between the artistic work and the financial decisions that the entity actually reveals.

Some structures display a kind of behavior towards the allocation of their resources that stresses the importance of their structure, of the maintenance of a permanent staff, maybe even the

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maintenance of a building. This is revealed in their financial reports by a greater investment in those items in detriment of others that would promote the development of more and probably more diverse activities, like artistic temporary staff, logistics, and production items in general. On the first category, we can find structures such as Teatro Aberto, Teatro da Barraca or Teatro Experimental de Cascais, all of them structures that have been active for more than 25 years, that rely heavily on production dynamics that have been thoroughly tested, and that revolve around a very stable team. Teatro da Barraca has the singular characteristic of circulating intensely across the country, thus having an almost constant portfolio available to present anywhere at any time. This means they have a large number of actors that must be available for the performances and that, consequently, have to be hired for long periods, so their structural costs are very important.

On the opposite side of the scope, we can find very flexible structures whose investment is focused essentially on the artistic activities they produce and not on the construction or maintenance of a fixed organizational body (although most of the times somehow involuntarily, as this is a constraint resulting at least partially uncertainty from uncertainty on funding...). Examples of entities with a rather project-driven vision are Gato que Ladra, Mundo Perfeito or Teatro do Elefante. All of them show little permanent staff and great reliance on temporary human resources that enter the projects to fulfill concrete tasks and then leave.

The relation between the work developed by the entities and their financial decisions has allowed us to divide them into those where strategic action is noticeable and those that focus on short-term decisions. There is great variety in the way in which entities put their strategic planning to work, so in this category we have entities like Teatro Aberto, which is a big structure with a program that has a specific target-audience, managing its costs and revenues in accordance with the aim, the size and visibility of their artistic productions; but also entities like Casa Conveniente, an alternative group with a non-conventional space to run, that has, for instance, decided for a strategy of short performance seasons, that they can later repeat, thus profiting from the momentum phenomenon and gathering all their audience in a few days of performance. This diversity can be also illustrated by cases such as Teatro Extremo (exploring the EU structural funds for training and other non-conventional funding possibilities) or Mala Voadora (seizing a permanent residence within one of the main transdisciplinary artistic platforms in the city – ZDB - and exploring co-productions and international collaborations). On the contrary, Truta, Gato que Ladra or Escola de Mulheres are examples of structures that ground their financial decisions on the contingent management of needs, i.e. management

decisions are fully submitted to the artistic work they would like to do and the short-term provision of means to attain one specific end is paramount.

5.5. Geographical scope

The task of understanding the geographical scope inherent to these structures' activity demands us to cross at least three intertwined dimensions of analysis: (i) the location of their activity (ranging from a huge concentration on the central urban pole to diverse peripheral locations in the metropolitan region); (ii) the hinterlands that are captured and mobilized by each activity (which can be very diverse, from a local/neighborhood focus, to the urban area, to the metropolitan region, or to national or international hinterlands, in some cases); and (iii) the territorial embeddedness of the activity of the group (in some cases clearly rooted on the its specific milieu and on the endogenous characteristics of the local community, and in other not). Another specific factor that can be added to those is the degree of internationalization achieved by each group, which is particularly relevant for some specific activities conducted by these groups (e.g. itinerancy and international digressions, but also organization of festivals with international dimension).

Considering and crossing these several layers of analysis concerning the territorial dimension of these theatrical groups activity, we've identified two main dilemmas and challenges concerning this topic in the Lisbon area: on the one hand (i) the tension between cosmopolitanism (more visible in the strategies of groups such as Teatro Praga, Karnart, Mala Voadora, JGM, Cornucópia) and parochialism (with traces of a more locally oriented activity dominating the activity of groups such as e.g. Teatro Extremo or Teatrosfera); and, on the other hand (ii) the tension between strategies firmly rooted in local milieus and on specificities of territories (e.g., O Bando, TEC, T. Garagem, Aloés) versus strategies oriented towards a certain de-territorialization of their activity (e.g. Mundo Perfeito, Cão Solteiro, Teatro do Vestido, Mala Voadora).

Concerning the latter dilemma, two examples – O Bando and Mundo Perfeito – can be highlighted as a sort of “ideal-types” in order to illustrate it. O Bando is a group that left the center of Lisbon some years ago and was established in a farm in the outskirts of the metropolitan area (in Palmela Municipality). Their strategy – aiming at target audiences that are not only local, but metropolitan (and even national) – has been focused on the development of a particular and very coherent work with the local community. They explore the specificities of working in a specific milieu and develop a strategy towards sustainability at the local level,

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aiming, in their own words, at “building connections with the different scales of the territory, which is structured through a mapping in concentric rings that span, according to the distance from our headquarters, different communities and agents: the neighbors of Vale dos Barris, the community of Palmela, the Polis that surround us, the territory of Portugal, Europe and the World.”

On the contrary, Mundo Perfeito, develops its activity in diversified sets, aiming at reaching diversified audiences, de-valuating these geographic constraints. They perform in multiple venues, and seize co-productions opportunities in such a way that the possibility of transposition and itinerancy often superimposes site-specific actions. Its director develops a program aimed at "eliminating geographic boundaries, intellectuals, thoughts and cultures", as indeed demonstrated by the type of artistic work directed at international audiences: "Long Distance Hotel revisited" and "The Jew". The concept of artwork is also applied to the art world insertion and collaboration with international teams. In this strategic line of action to the internationalization of the structure, e.g. "The Jew" had been presented in Netherlands; "Se uma janela se abrisse" in Brazil, Turkey and Romania, and they had done artistic residences / artistic collaboration with foreign artists from Croatia, Belgian, France and England.

Focusing on the first dilemma (cosmopolitanism vs parochialism), two archetypes can also be found. Some diversified examples can be pointed out when we assume the strategies oriented towards a more cosmopolitan perspective, each representing a different approach to this “cosmopolitan” perspective: e.g. Cornucópia (as the most legitimated structure within the art world, reaching higher hinterlands in specific markets); Praga or Karnart (developing work in specific milieus, but with a cosmopolitan attitude towards this action); or JGM or Mala Voadora (developing an activity with many international co-productions, explored in different contexts).

Several examples can also be pointed out showing the diversity of entities that assume a more parochial attitude in this art world: some because their activity is centered in exploring essentially local markets and their perspective aims essentially at these targets (e.g. Teatroesfera in Sintra suburban line; Teatro Extremo in their venue in Almada, but also exploring training niches in several towns across the metropolitan area); some other, even in the center of Lisbon, exploring specific markets and strategies with a strong local connection (e.g. Ar de Filmes, programming their venue “Teatro do Bairro”, exploring the specific cultural dynamics, conviviality and nightlife in the main creative quarter of the city – Bairro Alto).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

In the comprehensive description and analysis of our five classification criteria we have shown how differently theater groups work and how wide-ranging are the particular situations in this art world, in Lisbon region. The study has been concerned with organizational structure, artistic work, art world commitment, economic structure and geographical scope. For doing so, we focused on three different types of information, drawn from semi-structured interviews, from direct observation, with regular attending of plays and informal talks with group representatives and from general documentation and quantitative and qualitative information collected by DGArtes.

Some more specific conclusions can be drawn from this analysis, which reinforce this notion of diversity in the functioning, expectancies and work conditions of this region's theatrical structures.

In general, theatrical activity involves professionals far beyond the ties of an (often short-termed) employment contract, making the group and the theatrical creation itself central to their lives. There is an intrinsic motivation reported by these professionals, and an excessive assimilation of different tasks within the group. As we've noticed in the interviews and in the direct monitoring to the structures, in general, groups seek to respond to the expectations of its founders, directors or small teams of artists very concerned on their artwork and on participation, as agents of change and questioning. Artistic work is developed on the base of a deep involvement of its members and its audiences (e. g. regarding reputation, the way Praga comment via facebook their plays, as they think the shows and seek to engage the audiences - via theatre and via internet).

Small organizations often live in limit situations: data shows that the number of productions from these groups did not decrease, but the close monitoring of their activity shows that the production of new plays was often replaced by repetitions and programming of other structures' plays, or the development of other diversified artistic experiences (e.g. reading of dramatic texts or improvisation). Many groups, with weaker structures, are increasingly dependent on co-productions and on their bonds with stronger groups (or public institutions) that ensure the co-production of plays in the most renowned places. The work to create a collaborative network that allows groups' programming activity is here often fundamental, and at this level the interactions go further beyond the strictly institutional relations.

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In this context, Lisbon theatre groups must bet strong on the final quality of their activity, retaining their spirit of innovation and creativity that characterizes a good part of this artistic world, regardless of seniority or youngness of the structures. We found that most theatrical structures - even the younger ones - have a strong dependency on a strong and determined leadership (usually one or two members). At the same time, the activity of these groups is very dependent on a set of partnerships (particularly, public ones, as mono-funding is a real threat) that may be affected by the current economic crisis.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the structures, exposed to deep cuts resulting from the current crisis, it seems to be essential to explore innovative operating models - but aren't they already the theatre groups and the artists in general protagonists of the "self-entrepreneur" model? -, adapted to the vocations and particular conditions of each group defining and developing specific strategies that may change depending on the lifecycles and maturity of the groups.

Therefore, a set of adaptable measures could be suggested, adjusted to each kind of group: for instance, in the case of groups whose trajectory seems more geared to contemporaneity and transversal activity, maybe internationalization and the development of long-lasting strategic partnerships could be explored. In parallel, the flexibility and commitment of some of the pivots of the younger structures, for example, could be also explored in establishing bridges with more solid projects, less predisposed to itinerancy, both nationally and internationally.

In other cases, the sustainability could be reached by seeking to give visibility to the work of the theatre and its artists outside of specialized circuits, bringing theater to the streets, to the community and involving other audiences (there are already quite good examples of this, e.g, Garagem managed to create some local dynamics in the surrounding area with senior theatre). Or, for instance, crossing collaborations and seizing externalities with the co-location and collaboration in specific areas of the city (e.g, the development of a small performing cluster at Cais do Sodré area). These are just some examples of best practices, which naturally are not immediately reproducible or even desired in other contexts and situations. It takes an adaptation to the vocation, skills and needs of each structure. But the most important is their link to the territorial context in which they develop. The visibility and reputation of the groups is deeply connected with its sustainability and the creation of a territorial identity. Lisbon can explore here the diversity of its theatres.

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The bottom line here is that the groups will not be able to develop all at the same time and with the same tools, so they should focus on a specific strategy, which intimately combines their artistic and organizational features and expectations, in a coherent model. There is no one-fits-it-all solution, and each structure should pro-actively work on the solution which enables it to assure the sustainability considering its own objectives, vocation and resources.

Finally, this diversity of situations and challenges in the theatre art world of Lisbon region should be confronted with the public intervention models for the sector and their own challenges – the ultimate aim of our analysis. In effect, in this scenario, public intervention is confronted with a double challenge: on the one hand, it is facing an increasing diversity in the activity of theatrical groups (even a re-invention and complexification of their “activity”, in some cases), which leads to the questioning of which public interest(s) (or which public function(s)) should be supported (in terms of a variety of cultural policy objectives, but also in terms of other public policy goals, such as promoting social inclusion, boosting economic growth and employment or stimulating urban revitalization, for instance). On the other hand, it is being challenged by an increasing number of solicitations due to the persistent increase in the number of groups, in their work volume, in the number of practitioners involved, etc., confronted with a stable – if not decreasing, such as in most recent years – budget.

In this context, a new positioning of public authorities and of cultural policy makers is required. These new times and these new challenges demand a clear definition of public policy strategy, regarding two relevant issues: due to the increasing diversity of possible motivations for public intervention, there is the need for an explicit positioning towards these classification criteria, since they could be the backbone of the decisions put forth as the result of the public competitions for grants. In effect, to deal with this selection decisions, one must be entitled to understand which is the nature of the “public interest” that they are judging, and which are the main objectives, amongst the myriad of public interests and intrinsic motivations of the actors of the field, that should be most considered in their decision. Given the progressive budget constraints, these new challenges also demand a positioning towards to the global amount of funding available and the way it should be distributed by the diverse policy objectives and respective calls for tenders.

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