

A comparison between the five contextual diagrams shows the following similarities and differences in the outcomes concerning the profile of the practitioners, the profile of the company and its commitment to education, their mission statements, their objectives and the possible influences on these objectives.

1. The profile of the opera practitioners is quite explicit: they are all female, come from a middle class background and had a relatively trouble free childhood. All practitioners have a strong family related link with the arts and music in particular. Their parents, grandparents or other relatives stimulated them artistically. They all have kept the desire to work in the cultural field later on and want to share their passion for music with others (pp. 216-220).

Four out of five had an educational training and worked as teachers before starting to work in and lead an education department/unit. They all have a strong family orientation to music/art and culture, and they were all one way or another invited to take the job of head of the department. All are passionate about the work they are doing, which makes them stay in the job (practitioner “B” and “C” started the department and are still there). People might move from one company to another (e.g. the shifts in the British companies between English Touring Opera, Welsh National Opera and the Royal Opera House), but they stay in education. Surprisingly this passion for education is not always a passion for opera. One practitioner very strongly stresses that it is not ‘opera’ but the ‘music pedagogy’, which made her accept the post, but they are all passionate about bringing art/culture to a wider audience, especially a young audience. They are all preoccupied with the experience this age group has when visiting the opera for the first time. Four out of five practitioners started to work as a teacher before taking the job of head of their department or unit and the third practitioner (“C”) had such bad experiences with the arts in school when she was little that she started to develop a project to bring opera and schools closer together shortly after beginning to work at the opera company.

2. The profile of the companies involves two major houses (ROH London, ONP Paris), one medium size (TRM/KMS Brussels) and one small company (As. Li. Co.). Three out of four are the major opera companies of that country. The fourth

company, As. Li. Co., runs a regional theatre but plays an important role in the diffusion of opera in the smaller theatres of northern Italy. All Houses/Companies receive state funding; three of them (ROH, ONP and TRM/KMS) receive the largest funding of all cultural institutions of their country. These three have a visitor level of more than 80% for their Opera performances, which means they are almost always sold out. Though reaching a new and/or wider audience is part of their educational mission. Therefore in the course of their history the Houses developed a programme for young people and families that takes place in the new alternative performance spaces from the House (Linbury, Clore, Amphitheâtre, Studio, Malibran, Fiocco). For practitioner “B” this alternative space is even compulsory in order to be able to offer high quality performances to young people (pp.119, 121). All other practitioners combine performances in the alternative rooms, with performances and/or performances in the main auditorium. The situation of practitioner “C” is somewhat different since her company moved from a nomadic existence (the company did not have a theatre, they travelled throughout northern Italy) to a fixed space when in 2002 they started to run a regional theatre, marked though the increase in audience since then and the growing success of their educational project (see table 10 p. 143 and table 11 p. 147).

3. The length of experience in opera education within the company illustrates that ROH and ONP have a long-term experience (ROH 29 years and ONP 23 years) in educational work addressed to the audience, TRM/KMS and As.Li.Co. both have about 10 to 15 years experience. This does not have impact on the way opera education is integrated in the House/Company, because *Opera Domani* is almost at the centre of As. Li. Co.’s work, whereas the *Programmation et Animation Jeune Public* has to fight for its space within the Opéra National de Paris. But the length of experience indeed seems to have impact on cross-disciplinary collaborations. Although all practitioners see the artform in a broader cultural picture, practitioners “A” and “B” seem to go a little further down that line. When starting they were pioneering and as such all they did seemed to be vital, as for today they are not alone anymore. More and more cultural as well as non-cultural houses/companies started with educational programmes, which changed the position of the pioniers. In order

to reinforce rather than overlap with one another the participants in this research highlight the importance of partnerships, if possible partnerships on a long-term basis, in order to develop a richer cultural provision. For instance the project *Emmenez-nous au spectacle* (take us to a performance) in Paris where cultural institutions from different disciplines (ONP, Cité de la Musique, Centre Pompidou, and others) joined forces to promote their artforms to families and to develop joint projects for this audience. Another example is that of the *Turtle Opera* in London, involving children with autism in an opera performance. ROH initiated the project and filled a gap in the provision when the project started. This work is now challenged, because other partners took over the work so that there is room for ROH to focus on other challenges in the field, as long as they are related with the artforms ROH is known for. “A” stresses ‘*it is important to know what your department and your company is good at in order to add that extra part to the partnership through which it becomes stronger*’. As such the overall cultural provision for (potential) participants becomes richer and more complete since each partner adds its experience, and expertise to the overall provision.

4. The commitment from the company to opera education is not defined by the size of the company nor by the length of experience in educational work, but by the investment/interest of the management. This study shows that the smallest company invests up to 7% in their education project, whereas one of the major opera houses invests just about 1% of their overall budget. Secondly there is no real trend to be defined in the naming of the department/unit: *Animation et Jeune Public* in Paris, *Opera Domani* in Milan/Como, *Service Educatif/Educatieve Dienst* in Brussels and *Education & Access* in London. Whereas the educational link is present in all departments, the work involves a wider range of activities reaching a diverse audience, as was learned from the RESEO questionnaire (see appendix A; pp. 1-2) and illustrated through the case studies. There does not seem to exist an agreed terminology to name the work involved, simply because it is so variable. In the end it seems that the naming matters less (ROH still has Education in the title as is TRM/KMS) than the work involved.

5. The place of the department in the company differs a lot. There is no consistency in the way the departments/units are constructed and integrated within the company. In two cases the educational aspects are spread over different units or departments and each unit/department has its own head of unit/department (TRM/KMS, ONP), whereas in one house they are all integrated in one department (ROH) and in a fourth one the programme functions as one of the major projects within the company (As.li.Co./TSC). Some are related to communication (TRM/KMS and ONP) but artistically they depend on the general management and one department has its own director, who is member of the senior board (ROH). Apart from ONP all departments (As.Li.Co./TSC, TRM/KMS, ROH) developed from one person to a department or unit over time and raised their profile in and outside the House/Companu over time.

6. Three out of five practitioners (“A”, “D” and “E”) recognized a higher degree of integration within the company over time and experience this as a positive development. Education is not something that happens in a corner of the company but is part of the whole company and interrelates with all departments. The better the work is integrated in the house, the more likely it is to reach a better result. Education is one of these departments that in fact work with every department of the company. It is by nature part of the services related to the public and as such completes and strengthens the work that is mainly executed by the communication and/or marketing department. Where the latter is in charge of getting the audience to the opera, the education department deepens the work with the (potential) audience once they are joining an activity at/from the company. But not only the link with communication and marketing is important, also a close link with what happens on stage is crucial. One might have a nice project introducing the audience to a performance, but if the performance does not match expectations this might lead to disappointment or a bad experience after all: e.g. the positive experience practitioner “D” had with the performance of Benjamin Britten’s *Golden Vanity* where she had close contact with the stage director when developing an introductory project to the performance. Project and performance were tailored to one another and lead to a richer experience for the participants. Practitioner “D” also expressed the importance

of being part of the decision-making in works to be presented to a young audience, in order to introduce them to opera in a gentle and positive way. Indeed some operas are considered too difficult to digest as a first experience, but as was noted in the literature review (I.I3) any opera is unfamiliar and might be difficult to a new audience. So rather than being part of the artistic decision-making, finding ways to introduce the works suggested seems to be crucial in the relationship between the audience and the performance. Take for instance practitioner “B”. When programming her *Programmation Jeune Public*, attended by youngsters and people discovering the ONP, she looks for qualitatively strong work but not necessarily ‘easy to access’ and this seems to work.

7. All practitioners were **challenged by changes and by events**: e.g. physical changes: more performance spaces led to another programme (practitioners “A”, “B”, “C”, “D” and “E”) and more inhouse activities; e.g. choices by the management led to change of programme (practitioner “B”) and political changes might influence priorities within education work (see the influence of policy changes in France, Italy and the UK). Some believe that the international meetings initiated by RESEO influenced their thinking, but again these meetings had more influence on their way of working and functioning within their company: e.g. the family workshops (practitioner “D”); e.g. defending the place of the department in the company (practitioner “A”). On the whole these changes seemed to have more effect on their way of working than on their thinking and beliefs, since the main reasons for taking the job seems to stay the same throughout the practitioner’s career which can be best illustrated with the second case study. To practitioner “B” the work she does stays an exercise in balance between what can be done within the company and what the practitioner wants to do. A change of management did lead to other ways of working, but did not impact on her thinking about the job. This implies that the philosophy within the education unit or department depends on the head of department, not on the overall management of the house. In other words when a new chief executive is appointed, the way of working in a department may adapt, but the philosophy in the department does not alter as long as the head of department does

not change. This might have positive and less positive effects: positive because one works with a long-term focus, less positive because the philosophy of a department might become very rigid and thus might have difficulties in meeting the challenges present in a 'dynamic' society.

8. Accessibility, work with schools and young people, bringing opera/ballet closer to audiences that normally would not be in contact with these artforms are reasons raised by all participants when explaining **what they understand opera education to be**. The differences between the practitioners can be found in the detail, mostly linked with how they fill out their education programme. At first sight **the ways of working are similar**, whereas the way projects are developed, depends on the partners involved as well as with the situation of the department in the House and the socio-cultural context they work in.

9. Although the main views on opera education expressed by the practitioners seem to resemble each other a lot:

- Creating an openness to the artform, transmitting knowledge about the artform, offering opportunities to actively take part, to encourage appreciation and to make young people like/love opera.
- Involving the assistance/support/complement to the formal education system and to develop young peoples' artistic and cultural skills.
- Show that opera is part of European cultural heritage, show the strengths of the artform in society and offer a wider as well as a richer cultural provision.

There is a **big difference to be identified in the interpretation of these views** due to the personal and cultural background of the practitioners; a thought that will be developed further in the next chapter.

10. Cultural choice and cultural identity within a changing society are present throughout the lines of thinking and are related more to the question ‘why opera’ than ‘why opera education’. Wanting people to choose opera depends on a lot of factors that cannot be easily controlled, such as social setting, finances and schooling. Wanting people to like the artform is understandable when one works in opera and when one wants to share this passion with others, but taste is something personal, subjective and is also partly determined by family, education and other cultural as well as social aspects. What is appreciated and valued in one culture might not be in another culture. Within society, even within one country, different cultures function each with their own values and tastes, thus it seems more realistic (but no less complex) to see culture as a dynamic aspect within society. As such the wish to share opera as part of ‘our’ cultural heritage with a (potential) audience is a problematic view, since there is – even at a European level – not ‘one cultural identity’, but a rich diversity of identities each giving its own interpretation of that specific cultural heritage.

Therefore finding answers to these societal and cultural changes is the biggest challenge to the education departments and the opera houses/companies since (list drawn from Chaney 2002; Bennett 2005; Castells 2001):

- Our occupation during our leisure time has altered (one evening we go to a football match, the other night we might go to an opera) (see the blurring between genres and the cultural omnivore pp. 15-16).
- Our neighbourhoods become more and more ‘multicultural’ (enlargement of Europe and migration from third countries).
- ‘Interculturality’ is part of our every day life (our houses are full of objects from different cultural backgrounds, and cultural expressions are interrelating with each other) (see p. 15, Chaney 2003). This point will be developed further in the next chapter.
- New technologies and the recent developments in on and offline media offer new perspectives (the virtual cultural participant is as important as physical one). Internet is more present in our everyday life than it was ten

years ago. In the early nineties it was an exciting new technology reserved for a small group of users, today it is accessible to everyone and became thus embedded in all levels of society (Wellman, et al. 2003). Networking (online and offline) evolved and moved from a place-to-place to a person-to-person way of domestic and community life (see Wellman et al. 2003). People connect but as individuals. They can switch rapidly from one network or community to another. With the flexibility of today's communication technology they keep in touch with what interests them at the time of being. This mode of what has been termed 'Networked Individualism' (Castells 2001) can now be supported in an appropriate way though the Internet and through the communication.

Society is continuously changing, these changes are becoming an integral part of every day life and as such challenge us about the glocal (local importance in a global society) importance of our cultural Houses. Instead of setting these aspects apart (which often happens because cultural policy stresses them differently) it is more interesting and challenging to see them as an integral part of the audience policy of the Houses, not as something different. Thus either one tries to answer these changes or one continues to work as one is used to with the risk of becoming an island within society. Through the nature of their work, opera education practitioners seem to be the ones in the company who are most confronted with these changes and as might be learned from the interviews are still daily challenged by them. At least two practitioners ("A" and "B") offer a way forward through long-term partnerships with cultural and non-cultural partners, stressing the fact that they are aware of the fact that one should do what one is good at and as such enrich the arts provision instead of creating overlap. Interesting to mention here is that the practitioners talked about (inter)national collaborations, (inter)national networks and intermediates to reach a diverse and wider audience, but they do not really seem to address the above mentioned challenges, or if they do the way they address these changes is muddled and confused.

The elements highlighted under points 7, 9 and 10 need a more thorough analysis. In the discussion chapter the issues related to cultural diversity, cultural choice and cultural diversity will be developed further through an analysis of the narratives in their particular context, comparing them to the literature and relating back to the research questions.

Chapter V Discussion

As briefly indicated in the Results Chapter (points 7 and 9), cultural backgrounds, events and circumstances shape the practitioner's views and ways of working. This discussion will attempt to illustrate the richness and the complexity of the available research material, focussing on the practitioners' views and beliefs. The participants explicitly mentioned some of them, others could be realised throughout the personal histories. Since the socio-cultural framework is crucial to understand the personal views I will first focus on the possible influences to their views and then relate these back to the other research questions. Using this information I will show how this research addresses and develops the key ideas from the relevant literature and the implications of this knowledge for future research and practice.

V.1 What are the influences bringing the practitioners to their views on opera education?

When looking in more detail at the personal diagrams (Fig. 15 a to e, pp 216-220) and relating them back to the narratives one notices that there is indeed a clear interaction between the views of the practitioner and their context, not just on a cultural basis but also professional, educational and social. These backgrounds proved to be determining in shaping the practitioners' patterns of thinking as well as their way of working.

Thus the five profiles illustrate that, when looking at people's views, one needs to take their context into account in order to be able to analyse their views in full. This is in line with what is stipulated by theorists such as Pring (2000) who highlighted that certain aspects are implicitly part of human action, and socio-cultural theorists such as Engeström (1987), Daniels (2004), Dundeeide (2005) and Popova (2004) illustrating that the socio-cultural context is important when analysing a human action. One cannot understand or learn what the object is about, if one has not been able to understand the position of the subject. Thus the socio-cultural theory proved helpful to this research, although it is more used in studies on human collective

action, it can also be used on peoples' thinking process. When applying Engeström's Activity Model (fig. 1, p. 38) on the views of Opera Education practitioners, one could say *the subject* are the practitioners, *the object* the practitioners' thinking and *the outcome* their diverse views on Opera Education, with the cultural & educational policy, the situation within the opera company, personal backgrounds, educational backgrounds as *influential factors* on the outcome.

Looking at this model from a European point of view; the different European cultural backgrounds enrich respective beliefs and perspectives. The examination and illumination of results provides a more complex view on Arts Education and on Opera Education in particular than the one reached through the previous pilot study (Laenen 2003). So what seemed obvious at first, is clearly more complex when comparing the five views within their socio-cultural context. Take for instance the strand on accessibility. *Subjects* are here the practitioners, *object* is the belief that it is important to open up the art from to a wider audience; and the *outcome* is the rationale behind this belief influenced by the different contextual backgrounds of the practitioners, which offers a more nuanced view on this belief:

- **Practitioner “B” & “E”** work in a policy strong in ‘citoyenneté’, and I deliberately use the word citoyenneté instead of citizenship, because the French word has a slightly different meaning compared to the English translation. The following definition captured by the authorities of Toulouse, best illustrates – according to me - the current vision on citizenship in France: *Chaque citoyen doit se sentir reconnu, entendu et doit pouvoir s'exprimer. Il doit pouvoir participer activement à la vie de la cité* (Each citizen needs to feel (s)he is respected and understood and needs to be able to express her/himself. (S)he needs to be able to participate actively in the life of a city (Démocratie et citoyenneté (*Democracy and Citizenship*)[online] 2006). This is a more humanistic approach than the more technical and political explanation in English. Though “B” works in Wallonia and “E” in France they share both this underlying belief not only for the respect of the audience but also that taking part in something beautiful/positive makes better

citizens. “E” is thus closer to the thinking to “B” than to her Dutch colleague working in the same Opera House.

- **Practitioner “D”** working and living in the Flemish part of the country with a policy strong in active ‘participation’ in culture, has a view that is more strongly linked with giving people the chance to practically participate in opera and as such get into a dialogue with the (potential) audience. Within one company this leads to two different ways of working and two visions on opera education.
- For **practitioner “A”** this accessibility is related to the wider community when developing long-term and creative partnerships to develop a richer provision which links in with the English policy on culture. Accessibility is meant to give participants the possibility to enjoy, benefit from and take part in a creative process.
- For **practitioner “C”** this provision is about sharing an important part of Italy’s cultural heritage with people, with the focus on the preservation of that cultural heritage, which is part of Italian cultural policy. She does not want this part of Italy’s cultural heritage to be forgotten.

So for practitioners “B” and “E” making the artform more accessible is necessary because of the fact that it is part of the ‘citoyenneté’, creating better citizens. For practitioner “C” is linked with the remembrance of a part of Italy’s cultural heritage. Practitioner “A” sees it as enriching the cultural provision and giving the participants the opportunity to be creative, which links in with the rationale expressed by practitioner “D” and closely linked with the Flemish policy. This indicates that the Flemish policy is more closely linked to the UK-policy than to the Walloon policy, whereas the Walloon cultural policy is more closely linked with the French view on culture.

These nuances illustrate heretofore that when looking at the results through the research, it is necessary to explore and discuss them within the socio-cultural

framework to reach a richer view on the rationale behind Opera Education in a European context.

V.2 What do the opera education practitioners working in an opera house/company understand opera education to be?

When looking at the central research question **Why Opera Education?** three major issues could be identified that were shared by all practitioners: *the accessibility of opera, the development of young people as artistic and cultural human beings and the understanding where opera fits within the wider artistic/cultural setting*. The opera education practitioners' concern for these issues might seem obvious, since these topics are supported by the literature on participation in the arts (Bevers 2001:33; Hogarth, Kinder et al 1997; Tambling and Harland 1998) and on the discussion about high/low arts (Vulliamy 1977; Storey 2001) which place opera in the 'high arts' category and therefore less accessible.

However, although all practitioners shared these three reasons to be involved in opera education, the different ways they formulated each of these reasons show that they do not always see/interpret them in the same way. By interpreting the outcomes of the interviews in context of the 'nested' situation of the Opera practitioners within the opera house/company and within the country the house/company is based in, it has been possible to understand why the practitioners hold these views/beliefs in that particular way.

Building further on the example used in the section above **opening up the artform to a wider audience**, apart from the cultural differences the provision is even more complex than what could be learned from the responses of the practitioners. The results show that it is a priority to the opera education practitioners, because however opera is steeped in Western European cultural history for over 400 years now, Opera is still perceived as an 'elite' artform ('elite' in the sense of being related to a 'select' group of people that has leadership in some sphere of social life, is understood to be relatively homogeneous and with a largely closed membership) (Edgar 2000:124-125; Rosselli 1996). According to the practitioners this perception

is due to socio-physical barriers such as the high ticket prices and the impressive buildings where most operas are performed, as well as cognitive thresholds in a sense that there is the impression that one needs to know certain rules and regulations before attending a performance (Rosselli 1996: 318; Roussel 2002). Though it is a highly subsidized artform; three out of four Houses/Companies (ROH, ONP and TRM/KMS) in this research receive the highest level of cultural funding as compared with other cultural institutions in their country. Therefore opera education practitioners see it as their duty to open up the artform to audiences that in normal circumstances would not attend an opera performance. Two practitioners directly pointed to this responsibility during the interviews. According to **practitioner "A"** there is a duty to make people aware of what happens at ROH since the British Taxpayer is funding the house, which is in line with what the authorities expected from the opera house when it reopened in 1999, and for **practitioner "E"** as TRM/KMS is a funded institution this introduces an essential democratic aspect towards her work. The matter is taken further and becomes more complex when as practitioner "E" puts it *one has to enable students to take part in something unique and offer it to all Belgians, whether they are of Belgian by birth or second or third generation Belgians*. Indeed *everyone has the right freely to enjoy art freely* as is stated in the 27th article of the Human Rights (UN 1948). But this is a passive right. Or as Simon Mundy explains it in his concept of right (2000:17-18): *Access, however is for most part a passive right. It does not require a contribution from the receiver other than the act of receiving. The only positive decisions that have to be taken are to travel, to pay the entrance fee, to choose which part of the exhibits or books on offer to avail oneself of, and – for the enthusiast – what preparatory research to do before the visit.*

Thus people decide for themselves whether they want to attend an opera performance. Opera has to compete with so many other leisure activities that it is hard to tell why someone would decide to go to the opera. People nowadays tend to switch from going to a football match to going to a rock concert to attending an exhibition (Van den Broek, De Haan et al. 2000:39; Peterson 1992). Cultural choice

is led by what one knows (Johnson 2002). This can be instigated through school (Bourdieu 1979 a and b; Hagenaars 2002; Reay 2004), through family (note here that to all practitioners their culturally stimulating family background seems to have influenced their future cultural interests) or through friends/partners (Lievens and Waege 2005; Haerland and Kinder 1999). But even when the artform is known, and one of the above factors worked positively on the cultural choice of the participant, it is still possible that s/he would not attend a performance or an exhibition because of the financial aspect or the subtle but strong impact of a “social group” s/he is part of.

When looking at the history of opera, and of the opera tradition in the four countries involved in this research one might conclude that the artform basically has been attended by middle and upper class Western European citizens. Through the education activities the Opera House / Company might introduce the artform to people from different backgrounds, but if the cultural participant does not have any affinity with the artform, and does not have any of the stimuli mentioned above, it is quite unlikely that s/he is going to come and enjoy the artform, even if it is part of the cultural heritage of the country s/he lives in, because of lack of affinity with it. So as raised by practitioner “E” *Opera might be there for ‘all Belgians’*, but this does not imply that *‘all Belgians’* will get in touch with the artform. They might not like it, but at least they should know that opera is also part of their heritage (p. 202). And thus as practitioner “A” sees it, it would be wrong for the education department to assume that what they do is correct and that they need to impose it on people. Instead one should offer people the opportunity to see for themselves if it is interesting for them or not. This illustrates that although “E” and “A” are both concerned about a wider knowledge and a wider access for the artform, they both express it differently. It can be explained by the different cultural backgrounds as demonstrated in the previous heading (p. 231-232) where the view of person “E” is steeped in the philosophy of the ‘*citoyenneté*’, and the view of person “A” is more in line with the UK legislation on culture.

The ways to achieve this wider accessibility are multiple (see educational programmes of the four companies) including workshops, performances tailored to a

specific audience, introduction sessions, guided tours, training sessions for teacher, long-term projects... and are comparable to what the RESEO questionnaire showed (appendix A). Although the basic methodologies are similar, there are clear differences in the details and/or interpretation of these methodologies between the different case studies, which are only understandable through a comparative cultural frame of analysis. For example whereas **practitioner “D”** pleads for the fact that young people should be mixed with the rest of the audience and treat them in the same way if one wants to lower the thresholds properly, because only then they can enjoy the performance as a full spectator and not as a student attending a performance with his/her class; a thought that has its roots in her personal experiences with opera as a child and as a student. **Practitioner “B”** is accepting the fact that when young people visit opera for the first time, they cannot be received in an auditorium with 2000 seats, which relates to her personal view on the circumstances to watch a performance. Smaller auditoriums where the audience and the artists sit closer together are crucial to make the performance work (pp. 119, 121). Therefore the initiating programme ‘Jeune Public’ is performed in alternative spaces: the amphitheatre and the studio.

But lowering the thresholds is not limited to the physical restrictions that an (potential) opera-goer might experience but also to **the perception or belief that one needs a specific level of knowledge to be able to attend a performance**. This is not only a perception of the (potential) operagoer. There is also a strong belief shared by the practitioners that by knowing more about the performance, one would be able to enjoy it differently, more deeply. **Practitioner “D”** explicitly mentioned that unprepared groups reacted in another way to the performance than those that learned more about it beforehand (pp. 189-190) and to **person “B”** the performance and the introductory work before are one. Just having a performance for children or young people without a preparation does not make sense. She goes a step further than her other European colleagues and links in with Anne Ubersfeld’s vision of *L’école du spectateur* based on giving the audience the tools to understand a performance and become a spectator (1996). This is a line of thinking about the audience that can be found throughout cultural institutions in France when they

develop an audience programme. The examples raised by the practitioners might indicate that indeed preparative work before a performance leads to a different way of enjoying an opera, but as Nicholas Cook pointed out '*one has to be aware of the fact that there is little hard evidence that instruction in music leads to an enhanced enjoyment of it*' (1990:174). Therefore we cannot take it for granted. He continues by saying '*that for each empirical study expressing the positive effect of instruction on aesthetic enjoyment, one can cite another study that shows little or even a negative effect on a spectators' experience*' (1990:174), because *too much introductory work might turn enjoyment into boredom* says Isher (cited in Cook 1990:19) and because there is more at stake than just a communication between the spectator and the stage. It has to do with the complex area of aesthetic understanding in which according to Peter Abbs cognitive, perceptual and affective operations are combined in a unique form of 'sensuous' knowing (1994; Plummeridge 2001). So one does not have control over each element within this form of understanding, since they happen within the character of the participant. Even when s/he had an introduction to the performance s/he is attending it depends also on the way s/he feels, what s/he expects of it, his/her personal perception of what happens on stage and the willingness to connect with it or not. Therefore a cultural institution can indeed offer tools to learn more about the artform they present, but it is up to the participant – as mentioned at the beginning of this heading – to decide whether s/he wants to engage in it or not.

Once the potential participant has become an actual participant, **s/he 'takes' part in an activity or engages in a performance**. This engagement may be positive or negative, but in any case it is an action that involves a two-way process. The wording 'active' participation was quite present during the interviews. The practitioners express the belief that accessibility reaches further than getting in contact with, or learning about the artform. It is also about actively taking part in the performance or in activities linked with the performance such as interactive workshops. So here the belief of practitioners seem to be stronger than the empirical evidence available through research literature.

It is remarkable that they explicitly mention the words ‘actively taking part’, since even when a visitor is just attending a performance, one could say that there is a specific engagement of the participant towards the cultural activity s/he is going to take part in and therefore they both imply a level of activity as well as a level of interaction. The reason interviewees mention these ‘interactive’ or ‘active’ workshops explicitly might have to be found in the fact that the opera education practitioners and the audience enter in a different relationship with one another.

Through the workshops there is a direct dialogue possible between them; a dialogue that can be a learning process for both the practitioners and the participants as mentioned by **practitioners “A”** (p. 90), **“B”** (p. 120) and **“D”** (p. 190-191). All of these have been trained as teachers and that their particular training has shaped their view. Practitioner “B”’s view of this interaction for instance is influenced by her personal view on musical pedagogy; a view that was shaped when she studied music and a view that was influenced by Jean Vilar’s *Ecole du Spectateur* (pp. 121). To “B” it is a creative process that enables children and young people to understand what the artform is about. If they understand the different aspects of opera, they will be able to engage during the performance and as such make the interaction between audience and artists work. “A” on the other hand, interprets the value of an interactive workshop in totally a different way. She suggests that this two-way process might bring the artform forward (p. 90-91). This could indeed influence the artform in the future, because it offers the chance to bring new/fresh components in, although there is no real evidence yet that workshops have influenced opera as an artform. The interaction might have influence on the way workshops or educational projects are developed but it is hard to say whether it will actually bring the artform forward. It would be interesting though to see in future research what the dialogue between practitioner and participant really implies.

Interesting to note is that whilst interactive workshops were raised as possibilities to make opera more accessible, none of the practitioners mentioned activities through television and new media as possible ways to make a new audience participate in opera. These are other ways of creating awareness for opera, and at least three

Houses have already developed television programmes and/or new media applications: e.g. the Top Score series on *Don Carlos* created for the BBC was a collaboration between ROH, ONP and TRM/KMS in 1997. In the series a well-known sportsman presented the programme and thus introduced opera to youngsters. The link between 'top sport' and 'top singing' was present throughout the programme, to illustrate that sports and singing had something in common. The programme developers and ROH Education hoped that through using 'sports', which is more part of young peoples' everyday life, they would be able to create an awareness for Opera with this young target group. Another example is the interactive software package, In2arts, developed by ROH Education and Immersive Education on *Peter Grimes*, giving secondary school children the chance to create their own version of the opera, using gaming software, since new media and internet are becoming more and more part of young peoples' daily life. It is probable that (new) media were not mentioned during the interviews, because the practitioners were not actively involved, with these projects at the time of interviewing, thus it was not at the front of their minds. This is in line with the literature on interviewing (Riesman 1989) that suggests that people are most likely to express what they are currently involved in. However the lack of attention to this was surprising because the Arts Council of England in its recent vision statement acknowledges that *the Ipod generation can already be an audience wherever and whenever they want through new technology. They are no longer passive recipients but willing participants in the creative process* (2006:1). And a recent survey on the use of new technology by the members of RESEO – of which the five practitioners are members - highlights that *there is an awareness of the importance in integrating new technologies in educational work, but that there is need for money, time and the sharing of expertise in order to be able to realise these aspirations* (O'Shaughnessy 2006). Today most of the opera education departments involved in this survey still concentrate on the opera companies website (with the booking of activities online, a small music game on the site, information about educational activities), some mini-websites linked to a specific project (basically giving more information about the project involved), CD-rom's and DVD's on Opera, whilst the youngsters already have moved on to a higher gear because recent developments in hard (digital camera, mobile phones)

and software (e.g. Apple's *iLife* suit) have made it possible for anyone who wants to be creative to publish online, to compose their own ring tone, to make their own video or music creation and share it with others on the Internet. The success of websites such as youtube.com, video.google.com and flickr.com worldwide illustrate this creative trend, although this kind of participation is not yet really integrated in (inter) active opera projects or activities of cultural organisations. Therefore the vision document of the Arts Council of England concludes with saying that *our institutions need to go further to ensure that their content and services can rise to the challenges of these changes* (ACE 2006:1). At the Victoria & Albert museum in London this led to other ways of working in education linking the work of participants created in workshops at the museum with virtual visitors on the web and in Linz (Austria) *Ars Elektronika* developed a new concept of a museum where new media and creative work with new media are at the centre. This type of creative participation does not exclude the visit to a performance or an exhibition, but is another possibility to get acquainted with the artform. Through recent research that my colleague and I conducted for a youth theatre in Antwerp we learned that 11% of the 'virtual visitors' took part in the online activities of the theatres and that through these activities, took the chance to go and see a play (Laenen 2007:44,48). Thus this way of interacting will possibly become another important way to bring the arts and its audience into a dialogue and to make young people aware of the arts through a tool they know well.

The next generation of educators/practitioners are likely to bring this cultural knowledge with them to the job though, since the lack of attention by the practitioners taking part into this research may on the one hand be linked to lack of personal interest and on the other hand be linked to the age of the practitioners, which is above 40.

V.3 Why are they engaged in it?

The practitioners are engaged in opera education for various reasons. Here it becomes clear that although some issues raised seem similar at first, there are

significant differences when looking at the interpretation of the views by each practitioner. I illustrate this through four commonly held beliefs: the fact that a good first experience might lead to future visits and as such revitalizes the artform; the belief that arts education has influence on the personal development of people actively taking part in opera education; the belief that opera education might bring the artform forward; and the belief that opera is part of our cultural heritage and as such needs to be shared with young people showing that it is also part of their culture. I will address them one by one:

- The belief that **a good first experience might lead to future visits** (practitioner “B” p. 121; practitioner “C” p. 1561; practitioner “D” p.190, 197; and practitioner “E” p. 197), and as **such revitalize the artform** (practitioner “C” pp. 155-156).

The first belief links in with the third level of contact between performance and participant mentioned under the first sub question (p. 230). It is situated at the stage when the participant is actually engaged in the performance, and s/he might like or not like it; s/he might even become passionate about what s/he is or has just experienced. Although the three practitioners share the same belief, they look at it from a different perspective influenced by their personal backgrounds, and thus lead to a different outcome of the same belief. **Practitioner “B”** focuses on the pedagogy and relates to the interaction between audience and artists. An experience is good when all parameters are right and when the interaction between audience and artist takes place. **Practitioner “C”** develops the thought with a focus on the preservation of cultural heritage. A good experience is important so that children and young people may be tempted to attend another performance in the future and as such guarantee an audience for the future. **Practitioner “D”** interprets a good first experience from a personal point of view and in a holistic way. All parameters have to be right: a good performance, a good preparation and the right piece for the right audience, which might hopefully engage young people for future visits. **Practitioner “E”** wants to share high quality opera with youngsters and show them that it is also part of their heritage. They might like it or not but they should at least know about it.

Practitioner “E” is also convinced that through sharing this positive experience with youngsters, it might have a good influence on them personally (p. 202).

But these beliefs are even more complex than highlighted by the different interpretations, since all practitioners see the exquisite character of an opera performance as a strength rather than a constraint. As such the ‘elite’ label given to opera (Edgar 2000:124-125) is fully used here as an asset. It seems to distinguish ‘going to the opera’ from attending other art performances and therefore underlines the uniqueness of it. It was agreed that a performance needs to be of an artistically high level (in presentation as well as in content) and must be presented in the best circumstances in order to give the audience the chance to experience something unique and thus encourage an appreciation for what they just witnessed as audience. Indeed contextual factors might motivate us to like/or dislike something. Furthermore, as mentioned under the previous heading, a participant’s perception of what s/he just witnessed might be influenced by cognitive elements and by his/her social context. And last but not least one has to take into account that individuals set standards influenced by personal and social aspects, driving the appreciation of the participant (Hallam 2002; Scruton 1979; Abbs 1994). This shows the complex relationship between the participant and his/her social context, which underlies the complex and ongoing debate within anthropology, sociology and aesthetics on ‘taste’, ‘value’ and ‘class’. It is quite difficult to define these terms since judgements of taste are subjective; set by the individual him/herself on the one hand and defined by the time and the place we live in on the other hand. As Susan Hallam puts it *‘within a particular culture, different types of music may be differently valued. Different groups in society may value different types of music and the value placed on music may change over time’* (2002:233). Furthermore each group has its codes to express itself, which results in a multitude of codes defined by a multitude of social groups. Jon Cook who suggests taste might find its social expression hierarchically also raises this point, *but we then also have to be well aware of the fact that it is not necessarily class-linked since an exchange of styles can go across boundaries of class* (2000:17). This addresses the 21st century context where society is increasingly becoming subject to de-differentiation and fragmentation, meaning

that the traditionally established hierarchies such as high and low culture are effaced (McLean 1997:25; Storey 1999), which has an influence on how we ‘perceive’ and ‘experience’ culture today (Bennett 2005; Storey 2001).

So even when participants live through a grand experience, it is not evidenced yet that they might attend another performance. The Opera Domani-questionnaire gives indications in that direction, but these results are too preliminary to draw conclusions yet (pp. 152-153). On the other hand what can be noticed is that through opening up programmes for children to families, the Opera Houses/Companies seem to attract an audience of an average between 30 and 45 of age, that discovers or rediscovers the artform together with their children (i.e. success of the family workshops and family performances at TRM/KMS and ONP).

- The belief that Opera Education has an **influence on the personal development of the people taking part** (practitioner “A” p. 90, practitioner “D” p. 194 and practitioner “E” pp. 200-201), and the belief that **taking part in a high quality artistic project, creates better citizens** (practitioner “E” p. 202).

Whether they are school or not school-linked there is a strong agreement in the beliefs/views of the practitioners, that interactive workshops, long-term projects and performances involving children/young people actively in a project have positive influence on their personal development.

The experiences discussed during the interviews imply that by giving the youngsters the chance to express themselves in an open and creative way, hidden skills might be unveiled. Teachers might thus discover that their pupils have skills they were not aware of, and thus learn to see their pupils differently (**practitioner “D”** p. 189). As such this may have an effect on the pupils’ personal development and on their self-esteem as illustrated by **practitioner “E”** when she raised the example of her work with young adolescents (p. 200) or as illustrated by the results of the questionnaire on 10 years Opera Domani in the third case study (pp. 151-152).

The best projects are judged to be these where each partner (teacher, artist, cultural institution and school) knows what his/her part in the process is (c.f. Harland et al 2005; Bamford 2006; Tambling 1999). As such each project with a school is unique, since every partner brings in something special (**practitioner “D”** p.190). When there is overlap, there is tendency of failure and inconsistency. ‘*The danger of education work is that you can do almost anything and justify anything*’ says **practitioner “A”** during the interview. She feels very strongly that one always has to relate to the artform your organisation delivers and ‘*see where one can be helpful, because an opera company is not there to deliver healthcare, formal education or rehabilitation. It may contribute to that, but it is not its primary purpose*’, and as such enriches the cultural provision and development of young people.

Practitioner “E” takes this thought a little further and likes to believe that the work might create better citizens (p. 198) a thought that is influenced by her cultural background (see p. 230). This is underpinned by the findings in the evaluation of the *Dix mois d'école et d'opéra* project at the Opéra National de Paris (2001:124). Though the later is difficult to prove, since it involves other human aspects such as welfare and health, as well, and it is ‘*seldom accompanied by any serious consideration of what better people might be like*’ (Carey 2005:103). But as Carey continues ‘*this supports literature testifying the deep wish among art-lovers to believe the arts make them better and more understanding of other people*’ (2005:108) and there is reason to believe that the opera educator’s work can have a positive influence on those taking part in arts education (see Best 1995; Gill 1990; Boughton et al 1996; Robinson 1997) since it is not just about cognitive development, but about a *cognitive-affective construction process* as David Elliott defines it (2005:93). Thus there is also the emotional aspect linked to the arts that plays an important part in a child’s overall development.

- The belief that a creative and interactive way of working with the audience might **bring the artform forward**, (practitioner “A” p. 96)

It might be that in the dialogue between the young audience and the department (**practitioner “D”** p. 190), and/or the House/Company is challenged in their relationship with their audience, and it might be as **practitioner “A”** suggests that ‘*through education work the rest of the company might learn how the wider community sees opera*’ (p. 91), since the Education Department has a direct link with the wider community. But there is no research evidence of this yet and it seems difficult to hold this belief, because although the departments/units seem to be better integrated in the company, they do function still quite independently and most of the departments work with freelance artists. This still creates a large gap between what the practitioners witness through their work and with what happens in the wider society. It remains to be seen if the work with in-house artists at ROH will have a long-term effect on the artistic choices of the House in the future.

- The belief that this part of **our European cultural heritage should be shared with young people as part of their heritage** (practitioner “C” p. 155-156 and practitioner “E” p. 202)

Two practitioners raise this belief. Both practitioners interpret this belief in a slightly different way. Whilst **practitioner “C”** talks about the preservation of their cultural heritage, **practitioner “E”** points at the possible ‘humanising’ aspect of sharing the cultural heritage with those that have no immediate affinity with it. This difference is not surprising because their thinking is implicitly situated in their cultural and personal histories. Thus the difference can be illustrated through their backgrounds. For “C” this relates to Italian policy and Italian cultural history. Italy is the country where opera started about 400 years ago. There seems to be a longing to cherish a tradition that has faded over the years. In the nineteenth century people would sing arias in the streets of Milan and Giuseppe Verdi’s funeral in Rome (28 February 1901) can be compared with the funeral of a pop idol today (Porter 1995). When looking closer at the Italian policy one notices that preservation and outreach of culture are central to it. Similarly practitioner “E” is responding to the Walloon policy on culture, which is set much more in terms of humanisation like the French version of citizenship (citoyenneté). Another reason why practitioner “E” is so

focussed on opera as part of cultural heritage might be linked with her background as a history teacher who took great care to introduce social relevance in her courses before becoming head of education.

By drawing attention to the differences in interpreting culture in two European countries, one is forced to consider the meaning of the term 'European Culture'. Furthermore, when in a European country like Belgium each community has its own cultural policy (see case study 4 and 5) one can hardly speak of one cultural identity in Europe, but of a diversity of cultures. Article 151 of the treaty establishing the European Community context is clear about this stating *the Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore*. This cultural diversity is one of the strengths of Europe and with European enlargement it will only become richer. The genre opera is in fact an example of this European diversity. In a period of 50 years after the first public performance in Venice (1637) it spread over the rest of Europe (Weiss 2002:35; Robbins Landon 1991:87). Local customs and traditions adapted and developed the artform, take for instance the influence of French Theatre in opera or the mix of FrenchOpera and the English tradition of the masque in the first English operas.

Therefore a major challenge for the opera companies in the 21st century seems to be to look for answers in a society where the differences between 'high' and 'low' culture and between 'popular' and 'elite' are blurred, where the world is part of our backyard due to the developments in broadcasting and new media, and where cultural pluralism and interculturalism are becoming an integral part of our life (Storey 1999; Chaney 2002; Taylor 1993; Whiting 1998). This relates to Appadurai's concept of 'ethnoscapes' being landscapes of persons constituting '*the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups of people*'(cited in Bennett 2005:67) and raises the issue of the value of the 'local' since individuals retain a strong sense of their local roots in their new environment in order to frame their identity (Bennett 2005: 68). Thus it is possible to see the local as a metaphorical and discursive construct according to

Bennett, instead of framing it as a physical bounded space. (Bennett 2005:69). I mention this here, because this offers an interesting perspective in looking at the concept of 'European Cultural Identity' raised by some of the practitioners.

First of all, as the difference between the five case studies illustrates there is not 'One European Identity'. Secondly migration and thirdly the change in mobile as well as the virtual life, has resulted in urban centres becoming melting pots for *fragmented* and *diffuse cultural sensibilities* as Bennett describes the phenomenon (see also Dürrschmidt 2000; Chaney 2002 and Urry 2003). This change results in a multiplicity of cultural expressions living next to and with one another. So there is more reason to believe that new art expressions will start to emerge next to the existing European art expressions and thus create a richer and even more challenging cultural landscape in the future.

V.4 How do practitioners see opera education within the opera company and within the wider cultural setting?

The way they perceive their department/unit within the Opera House/Company differs from one practitioner to another, as mentioned under point 5 in the previous chapter (pp. 215-216), which is in line with what the three NfER-studies (Tambling and Harland 1998; Castle, Ashworth, et al. 2002; Downing, Ashworth, et al. 2002) highlighted and what can be learned from Malcolm Ross's research in arts organisations (2003). What proved different from the other literature is the personal focus of the practitioners on the place of Opera when looking at the broader cultural picture. Specifically **practitioners "A"** and **"B"** seem to go far down that line since they both state explicitly that the education department should be active in what it is good at, and thus fill out the gap in the overall cultural provision for people. Both practitioners have worked for the companies that have an opera education tradition for more than 20 years. When starting they were pioneering, now they have a lot of colleagues. Rather than overlap one another the participants in this research highlight the importance of partnerships, preferably partnerships with cultural and non-cultural organisations on a long-term basis, in order to develop a richer cultural provision. Take for instance the project *Emmenez-nous au spectacle* (take us to a performance)

in Paris where cultural institutions from different disciplines (ONP, Cité de la musique, Centre Pompidou, and others) joined forces to promote their artforms to families. They also develop joint projects for this audience group. Another example is that of the *Turtle Opera* in London, involving children with autism in an opera performance. ROH initiated the project and filled out a gap in the provision when the project started. This work is now challenged, because other partners took over the work so that there is room for ROH to focus on other challenges in the field, as long as they are related with the artforms ROH is known for. As such the overall cultural provision (local, regional and international) for (potential) participants becomes richer and more complete since each partner adds its experience.

At least four practitioners state that the exchange on a European level through RESEO has enriched their work and created cross-European experiences, which opened up their work on an international level and which made them work on projects that they would not have created if it had not been within a RESEO-project (i.e. practitioner “D” introducing family workshops). Practitioner “A” adds that in order to be able to do that properly she notes that one needs to be aware of the changes in society and take them into account when developing projects (p. 92). The interviews revealed that practitioners realized finding connection with that changing society is important, but when looking at these changes as mentioned in the writings of cultural sociologists (Storey 1999; Chaney 2002; Taylor 1993; Castells 2002) and as raised under the belief that this part of our European cultural heritage should be shared with young people as part of their heritage, and comparing these elements with what the practitioners raised, one might note that they do not always connect with these changes, since they are not part of their daily work and knowledge. This often seems to result in a gap between a world that has become common for certain age groups (Green and Hannon 2007), and the activities offered by the education departments. Thus taking into account that thinking and acting is shaped by personal backgrounds and education, it will be interesting to see how audience policy activities evolve in the next fifteen years, since a new generation will start to replace today’s seniors. Either they will evolve with the current trends, or they will stay as they are and, most likely, new formats using the ingredients of opera will appear

next to what we now know as opera, and give room to new cultural expressions (see the effect of interculturallity and ethnoscapes).

Chapter VI Conclusions

Uniquely, this study has assembled practitioners' thinking on Opera Education. Practically no research has been done on Opera Education until today and if so it has been concentrated on education practices (Ackrill 1997; Leblé 1997; Tambling 1999; Kayas 2002; Saint-Cyr 2005) rather than on the philosophy behind the work. It was the belief that a clearer view on this philosophy, might lead to a better understanding of Opera Education in relation to the Opera Houses/Companies across Europe the education work is part of, and in relation to the wider community as mentioned by Yrjö-Koskinen in 2002. The present study has analysed through a representative sample of Opera Education practitioners in Europe, how the complex interaction of personal, social and cultural factors give rise to their answers to the question *Why Opera Education?*

During the course of the research the way to reach answers to these questions did alter quite a lot. In the pilot study, the research strongly focussed on the 'Why' – question (*For you, what should be the purposes of opera education, who should provide it, and what ways of working should they use to achieve these aims and Why?*), which lead to general and biased findings (Laenen 2003). This general question ended up with the same 'general' results as what can be learned implicitly from the existing studies on opera education (Kayas 2002; Saint-Cyr 2005 a & 2005b; Tambling 1999) and thus did not add something new to the existing knowledge on opera education. The pilot study was biased because most participants to this study, had difficulties to raise spontaneously the aspects listed as important when looking at opera education (Appendix B), so they were prompted and this coloured the participants' view recorded on the matter.

Therefore I realised that if I wanted to move the reflection on opera education on to a further stage and really reach the practitioners' views, the research question needed to be less linked with the issues the RESEO-working group identified as important and start from the way the Opera Educationists perceived the work they do, since it

seemed easier for them to talk about the ‘What’ than about the ‘Why’ (Laenen 2003). From the ‘What’ I then needed to find ways to move to the ‘Why’ without influencing the practitioners taking part in the research. Another issue that proved to be important was the context in which each of these practitioners work. It was necessary to explore, the way the practitioners think and the way they express themselves within their personal context (Pring 2000; Engeström 1987; Wertsch 1994; Daniels 2004).

This is why the overall research question has been underpinned by the following sub-questions: *What do the opera education practitioners working in an opera house/company understand opera education to be? Why are they engaged in it? How do they see opera education within the opera company and within the wider cultural setting? What are the cultural, personal, historical and political influences bringing them to this perspective?* Thus the views could be interpreted within their specific contextual setting (see contextual diagram p. 45). Through interpreting the views within their nested situation, it was possible to see how and whether the different parts of the context influenced the practitioners’ views. An interview technique was required to get a deeper understanding of these views, giving the participant room to express their own view on opera education without being prompted on issues related to the matter. A technique successfully used within other disciplines such as social and historical science seemed to come close to what I wanted to reach. The narrative approach (see p. 54-55; Miller 2000; Elliot 2005), indeed offered the opportunity to come as close as possible to the practitioners’ personal views on their work through offering them room to tell their own story. The narratives also offered the opportunity to learn more about the practitioners’ personal and educational background. As such the narratives completed the context of each practitioner needed to interpret these views in an in-depth way. This led to a more subtle and complex interpretation of their aims and objectives, than was reached in the pilot study (Laenen 2003; Tee and WG3 2003). It proved that the context is indeed significant for the interpretation of views that at first sight seem to be generally shared by every practitioner researched.

The principal finding of this study is that attitudes and beliefs can only be understood through their context. In this sense the current study goes beyond the good practice guides, and the studies based on educational methodology in opera education (Ackrill 1997; Kayas 2002; Saint-Cyr 2005 a & 2005b; Tambling 1999). Within these studies a certain level of rationale about opera education could be identified, but it was rather implicit and obscured by an emphasis on the strategies, such as providing access to opera, influencing future cultural choices, helping in the personal development of an individual and completing compulsory education. As such the present study is in line with the results of the three NFER studies (Tambling and Harland 1998; Castle, Ashworth, et al. 2002; Downing, Ashworth, et al. 2002) examining the rationale behind arts education in arts organisations involving professionals working in orchestras, dance companies and theatre companies. It is clear that a common vision on arts education does not exist, since the perception of education could differ between the participants (education practitioners, management, artists) depending on personal skills, experiences and interests. But the current study goes beyond the NFER studies in two ways. First of all the outcomes of this research question the NFER studies on the impact of influences on these visions. The view of the chief executive and the size of the company for instance do not seem to have impact on opera education practitioners' views, but it might either facilitate or complicate their work within the company (see practitioner "A" p. 96; practitioner "B" p. 123, 125). And secondly the current study focussed explicitly on the views of Opera Education practitioners and analysed these views in relation to their socio-cultural context, which resulted in a more diverse and critical view of opera education, since interpreting the practitioners' views and beliefs within their socio-cultural backgrounds showed that existing and known views, became more subtle and complex than at first could be expected. As such this is in line with what can be learned from other research where this approach has been used successfully (Daniels 2004; Popova 2004; Lim & Renshaw 2001). The fact that cultural differences implicitly guide the way people think and act, results on the one hand in a richer understanding of opera education and opera in general. And it explains on the other hand, why certain projects and activities are successful in one place but might not in another, and need to be adapted to local habits or local cultural changes.

The research also illustrated that asking critical questions about one's work, might show whether one links with the institution one works in and the wider society (Yrjö-Koskinen 2000:22) or not. It highlighted that this is not always the case, because certain technological and demographical changes are not part of the practitioners' life (Bennett 2005; Chaney 2002; Castells 2001). Although the departments these practitioners lead have a direct link with the existing audience, and with new target groups in the community surrounding the opera house/company, looking for reasons behind Opera Education in the end led, as I mentioned earlier, into another major question: *Why Opera today?* Practitioners are aware society is changing (the evolution in new technologies, as well as the developments in migration and interculturality) (Castells 2001; Urry 2003; Chaney 2002; Bennett 2005; Whiting 1998), and that this has influence on their work, although the responses to these changes are still rather general, and muddled, they needed to see their work in a broader perspective based on the added value of opera in the wider cultural provision, and based on long-term (inter) national collaborations with cultural and non-cultural partners in order to reach a wider and more diverse audience. The broader perspective is too influenced by what they know and are acquainted with, as well as what is part of cultural and/or educational policy (see the highlighting of diversity, participation, virtual cultural participation in the policies of the different countries pp.71-73, 164). So what this study highlighted on the one hand is that is time to challenge the practitioners with an 'inclusive' reflection on these changes (not see diversity, interculturality and virtual cultural participation as something special, but as something essential to the overall audience related policy of a House/Company), and on the other hand ask the question whether or not the Opera wants/needs to connect with the wider community. A community in where a majority of people does not have, probably will never have, and does not necessarily need to have a relation with the opera house/company. Cultural background, social context and personal taste drive our cultural choices (Johnson 2002; Cook 2000), and as this study highlights the views influenced by these factors doe not really alter. Challenging this conservatism might lead to more effective ways that link the Houses/Companies' with the wider society. It also raises reflections on

how one sees diversity and offers interesting thoughts for the future, namely how will opera education and arts education in general be regarded in 15 years time? Will they have closely followed technological and demographical changes in society, or will it still be seen as in the views presented here? It would be interesting to see whether there will be shifts in the views and what drives these shifts and whether the demographic changes within Europe might/might not have influence on the artform.

Taking this into account, the whole approach used in this research is therefore valuable, not only to opera education professionals, but also to other arts education professionals, arts marketing professionals, policy makers and people working in opera, because it offers a different way of looking at the relationships between the audience and the cultural organisation in today's society than research on opera and opera education has offered until now.

Since the study focussed on opera educators' views working in opera houses/companies, the results did not offer sufficient information on the impact of their work on youngsters and other participants, nor on the impact of their work on the artform. Although some of them strongly believe that their work revitalizes the artform, that the work has a positive effect on participants' personal development, and that it brings the artform forward, there is no written proof of this yet. Since this research focussed on the views and beliefs of the practitioners, it is not possible to draw conclusions on the impact of the work on participants of activities. In order to be able real conclusions from the above-mentioned beliefs, further empirical research is needed focussed on the impact of opera education on participants.

To conclude one may say that this in-depth focus on opera education practitioners within a socio-cultural theoretical framework offers insight into the complex and rich field of audience-related activities in an opera house/company. Through the methodology it has become possible to look behind the facts and figures. The daily challenges the practitioners are confronted with are broader and more complex than

just opening up the artform to a wider audience and are an integral part of the audience related activities in the opera house or company. Although there are some similarities in what the practitioners do, this comparative qualitative research has highlighted significant differences in their thinking. It has looked at the cultural participation debate from a different angle, illustrating what has influenced or not influenced thinking, and thus complements general knowledge about the impact of the management of a house/company or of changes in cultural/educational policy on an individual's view. As such this research has raised new questions about the 'role of opera' in today's society, about the impact of opera education and audience related activities on the artform, and about the role as well as the view of the opera/arts education practitioner in the future. These are questions that will hopefully be looked at in future qualitative research.

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Appendix A: Similarities profile and focus - results RESEO questionnaire 2002

- * received funding
- * managed their own budget
- * managed personnel
- * worked with freelance artists
- * worked with artists from their own Opera House
- * worked with children and teachers
- * worked collaboratively with Universities
- * created productions
- * commissioned work from artists – principally from composers and librettists
- * created workshops – principally with school children of all ages
- * created materials – principally for teachers
- * presented pre-performance talks
- * created study days
- * organised guided tours around the Opera Houses

Appendix B: Issues about opera education listed for the pilot study

A. Audience development:

- To provide an openness to opera

- welcome those visitors who want to come, but did not dare to come
- easy access

- To transmit a knowledge of opera

- familiarity/knowledge of basic aspects of opera e.g. repertoire (which repertoire), history, languages/countries,
- artform

- To encourage an appreciation of opera

- a love of opera
- to be able to enter another reality (the realm of imagination)

- To make young people like opera

- immediate – young people will(want to) come to the opera
- long term – they will come to the opera at sometime in their lives.
 - A) tendency to come to the opera
 - B) giving them the basis for deciding whether they want to come to the opera

B. Complement the formal education system:

- To assist, complement/ support the formal education system

- fill the gaps perceived in formal schooling
- promote pupils' personal and emotional development

C. Personal development outside the formal education system

- To develop young people's artistic skills

- Music
- Drama
- Art and Design
- Literature

- To prepare the opera creators and performers

- develop creativity

Appendix C: Interview agenda pilotstudy (Hierarchical Focussing Technique)

Opening Question: *For you, what should be the purposes of opera education, who should provide it, and what ways of working should they use to achieve these aims? And I'd would be very interested to know your reasons for these ideas... (then: That's a long question, so would it be helpful if I just go through it once again ? then repeat)*

Questions when needed prompting:

- For you, what should be the **purposes or aims** of opera education, and why ?
 - Do you think opera education should attempt to **develop audiences** and if so, in what way - and your reasons?
 - Do you think opera education should include the aim of **widening the audience** - to what - and your reasons?
 - Do you think opera education should include the aim of **promoting the existing audience** - in what ways? - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **assisting the formal education system** - with what aspects ?- and your reasons?
 - Do you think opera education should include **assisting the formal education system with opera education aspects** - with what aspects - and your reasons?
 - If **opera education aspects are not** on a formal education system's curriculum, should opera house education provision try to assist with this ? - with which aspects and - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **assisting the formal education system with aspects beyond opera education** - with what aspects - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **promoting pupils' personal and emotional development** - what aspects - and your reasons?

- Do you think opera education should include **offering value directly to society**, independently of the formal education system ? If so, what kinds of contribution - and your reasons?
- Do you think opera education should include **assisting arts education outside the formal education system** - with what aspects - and your reasons?
- Do you think opera education should include **targetting specific groups** to experience opera - which groups - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **promoting the interests of the opera company itself**? - in which respects - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **raising the profile of the opera house** ? - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **strengthening an opera house's own finances**? - in what ways - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **developing opera house personnel in the short and longer term** ? - in what ways - and your reasons?
- Do you think the aims of opera education should include **developing the opera artform itself** - in what ways - and your reasons?
- Who do you think should be providing opera education? **And your reasons?**
 - Do you think that **opera companies** should be involved in providing opera education ? your reasons ?
 - Do you think opera companies should **have education departments** ? your reasons ?
- **What ways of working or forms of provision** do you think it important for opera education to include? - and your reasons?
- Do you think it important that opera education should include **pre and/or post performance talks**- for which young people, by whom, where, - and your reasons?

- Do you think it important that opera education should include **performances for young people** - for which young people, by whom, where, - and your reasons?
- Do you think it important that opera education should include **participatory projects** - what sort of project, located where, assisted how - and your reasons?
- Do you think it important that opera education should include **use of modern technologies**, e.g. to **produce CD's** - - and your reasons?
- Do you think opera education should include **commissioning new works** - if so, what sort and - and your reasons?

Appendix D: Interview agenda (Narrative approach)

Thank you for taking part in this research and for taking the time for this interview. I'm going to address specific issues in order to have covered the same set issues with all participants. This is your story; it is your view on opera education.

- I want to ask you to give me an idea of your family background, your parents, their occupations, the place you grew up in?
- Could you tell me more about your first contacts with arts/music education?
- When did you first go to opera? What was this first experience like?
- From what age did music and opera in particular feature strongly in your life course? Why? What were the key moment and/or relations?
- How and when did you get professionally involved with opera education?
- How did you see opera education at first? Why? Who influenced you at that time?
- Which experiences shifted your views on opera education?
- Does your view depend on working following a certain approach?
- Are you open to new ideas and approaches or do you think your way of working is fine, does not contain too many risks? How do you feel about taking risks in a professional context?
- Are there any ethical concerns that you have in relations to your work?
- What is opera education according to you in the actual situation? How do you think it could be? And why?
- How does your view on and belief in opera education relate to your life story?
- How does it relate to the story of the company you think? Why, why not?
- Does it relate to the wider context of arts and culture in your country? Why, why not?

Appendix E: Outline of the coding process

1. Grouping the material of the five cases per interview item

- The practitioners' family background
- The practitioners' educational background
- The moment the practitioner started to work at the opera
- The practitioners' personal rationale about opera education
- Influences on their way of working
- Influences on their way of thinking
- The perception of the situation of the department within the opera house/company
- The perception of the practitioners' work in relation to the wider educational and cultural context
- Future perspectives

2. Grouping the above-mentioned items with the other contextual parts of the five cases in a comparative grid.

Data interviews	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5
Personal					
Educational					
Start working in opera					
Length of experience					
Situation of the department in the House/Company					
Situation in the wider educational/cultural context					
What is opera education?					
Why are you engaged in it?					
How do you achieve this?					
Influences					
Context interviewees	ROH	ONP	As.Li.Co	TRM/KMS	TRM/KMS
Education and culture					
Mission house/company					
Mission education department/work					
Place of education within the house/company					
Size of the department					
Length of education experience					
Targetgroups					
Education programme					
Number of audiences reached by Education					
% of budget dedicated to opera					

3. From that wider picture, focussing on the research questions per case

- What do the opera education practitioners working in an opera house/company understand opera education to be?
- Why are they engaged in it?
- How do they see opera education within the opera company and within the wider cultural setting?
- What are the influences bringing them to this perspective?

4. Focussing on the nested situation of the five cases, using the contextual diagram for each case.

The diagrams (see pp. 2004-2008) integrate the research questions and the contextual information important to analyse the views of the interviewees.

