Many artists are committed to social issues such as sustainability, well-being and loneliness. Unfortunately, it is often temporary, project-based and poorly paid work. What is needed for improvement?
Joost Heinsius describes five necessary actions.

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It is a hot topic, the societal value of art and culture. It is included in the national cultural policy under the motto: insufficient use is made of the use of creativity in social issues. It is also increasingly found in the criteria of subsidy schemes: show what the social value is of your organisation and your offer.

A great many artists are socially active on a local level, for example in the field of sustainability, social cohesion, well-being, loneliness, science. But often that work suffers from exactly the same ailments as work within the cultural and creative sector in general: it is temporary, project-based, poorly paid and dependent on all kinds of different (mainly cultural) funds and short-term financing. Certainly if you really want to achieve social impact, a much longer-term commitment with much more continuity is needed. How can we ensure that such activities are sufficiently supported and financed? And not just from cultural funds? Because in order to stimulate the development of art and culture in other social areas, financial investments may initially be made from the cultural sector. But if we really integrate art and culture into another social area, they must also be paid for (decently) from there.

And how can we make it easier for artists and (small) cultural institutions to create social value outside the cultural sector? That is not so simple and requires much more effort than we can expect from artists themselves.

It requires a collective movement, and five different types of activities to achieve this. They must also be linked to each other. It is about doing, switching, researching and developing and implementing policy.

Doing: looking higher
Many artists are at their best when they can work in direct contact with a group, whether it is in healthcare, sustainability, in the neighbourhood or elsewhere. They see results, but at the same time also notice that changes in the policy of the

organisation they work for are only very slow. They are a bit of a sideshow or are not treated as equal professionals.
Then it is time to look higher up. With employees, management, the sector – take for example healthcare that is increasingly bogged down in too many rules, too little attention to prevention and a lack of employees.
And the longer you look at a subject such as sustainability, the more you see that it is not only about individual change, but also about system change. How can you, as an artist, exert influence on this with your imagination? For that you have to come to the table with many more and larger parties and that is not possible on your own.

The Samen Cultuurmaken scheme of the Fonds voor Cultuur Participatie also shows this development. The majority of the projects focus on executive projects and a much smaller, but fortunately growing part on structural change in the way in which art and culture collaborate with healthcare and welfare.

Switching and creating mass
For organizational or policy change you need more mass. You create that with organizations that can switch between doing and exerting influence, such as national, regional or local intermediaries. Organisations that can support artists and organisations, bring them together and reach and influence different stakeholders with the results. Because without ambassadors in the other field, you won't make it. Those ambassadors must first see and believe in what artists add.

Research and create evidence
Change requires more evidence than just doing. Research is needed that shows what works, usually in the jargon and according to the standards of the field where you want to integrate art and culture. For example: a health insurer only believes in the added value of art after extensive research into the results of using art and into possible cost savings. In the case of art and healthcare, that research is now widely available. The World Health Organisation, among others, has demonstrated the positive effects of art in healthcare. Since then, more research has been published and collaboration between art and healthcare is taking place more and more often.

Good research provides material and arguments, for both doers and switches. But you also want to know who the decision-makers are and what is needed to create longer-

term programmes and financing for each other. The PONT programme (Public Design Practice), for example, focuses on strengthening the use of design in social challenges, but this programme only lasts three years.

Developing and implementing policy
Together, policymakers, researchers, intermediaries and artists can develop a policy agenda, such as the recently presented white paper Arts in Health, which focuses on long-term integration of art and culture with another field. This often requires municipalities, provinces and ministries that are already convinced of the value of this and want to commit to reforming existing programmes and financing.

And then: a condition is that artists are involved from the start (otherwise they may only make a picture to accompany the results at the end) and participate on an equal level (otherwise they are seen as the client's assistant). You often need cross-border workers who are able to make connections between different fields and who master the language and jargon of both. Can trained artists function as cross-border workers?

Connecting: Setting up a targeted movement
There are many ways to create social value outside the arts and culture sector. As an individual artist, as a group, as an organization. Artists contribute by making issues visible and tangible from multiple perspectives. They help shape change and come up with alternative solutions.

But if we really want to have a creative impact on important social issues such as the crisis in healthcare, the transition to a more sustainable society, attention for groups that cannot keep up, you name it, much more is needed. For that we will have to create a strong movement. Doing, switching, researching and policy, and the connection between them, are five essential components for a joint and targeted movement in which you unite more and more stakeholders.