In this Newsletter I regularly report on what I notice in the world around me. To a large extent, this is the art world, but related topics are also discussed: working conditions, social value and innovation. Everywhere in society where art is and can be of significance.

The use of art and culture in social challenges

The social value of art and culture is a hot topic. In the cultural policy, the former State Secretary for Culture, Uslu, has included it in her policy, under the motto: insufficient use is still being made of the use of creativity in social challenges. It is also included in the criteria for applications for the state funded cultural institutions: show what the social value is of your organization and your offer. This can be done in various ways, including a contribution to social challenges. A considerable number of people are opposed to this policy, no one should be asked to do anything other than art. And they believe that art should only be valued for its own sake. The remarkable thing is that those who consider the social value of art important also believe that it starts with art and creativity. I don't think there is any difference of opinion about that. The time when art was only about the product is over, the idea that setting up and executing the creative process is an inseparable part of the artist's profession is increasingly gaining ground. And using that creative process not only has artistic value, but when used within or outside the art sector it can also create social value.

A great many artists are active locally in all kinds of areas: sustainability, social cohesion, welfare, loneliness, science. You can name all possible locations and themes, you will find active artists everywhere. But: much of that work suffers from the same ailments as work within the cultural and creative sector, it is temporary, project-based, poorly paid and dependent on all kinds of different (mainly cultural) pots and short-term financing is gaining ground. Certainly if you really want to achieve social impact, a much longer-term commitment with much more continuity is needed. In addition, more and more artists and other creatives are seeing that contributing to social issues cannot be limited to a local level or one organization, but that interventions are needed at a more strategic and/or system level to actually bring about change. How to achieve that?

This realization is also increasingly penetrating at Kunsten92, the national interest

group for the arts and culture sector, they supported a Manifesto on this subject and published an article on a financial safety net for artists on the one hand and suggestions on the other hand to promote the social commitment of artists by, for example, making existing government programs and subsidy flows in research and social issues accessible to artists. The House of Representatives commissioned a report on increasing earning capacity by contributing to social issues.

However: there is still very little knowledge about the effect of the commitment of artists and creatives to social issues. And certainly not if you want to work on changing the existing system, if you want to work on social transitions. Everyone is now trying to reinvent the wheel.

You see various strategies emerging to increase the commitment and impact of artists and creatives in social issues. Time to try to map these out in a short sketch.

Roughly speaking, I see five (with intermediate variants):

The long march through the institutions
The coalition
The bottom-up movement
Transition management
Artistic research.
These are not completely mutually exclusive categories, but they do differ in terms of starting point.

The long march through the institutions
The long march through the institutions focuses in particular on the contribution of the artistic method/artist mindset/creative making power (various terms in use) in the way of working in larger organizations and institutions. Think of ministries, companies and other institutions that play a role in forming the policy agenda and its implementation in our country. The assumption is that governments and other organizations will have to start working in a different, more creative way, because the current working method has come to a standstill. One way is to use artists and creatives inside other ministries than just Culture. That is not really easy, outside observers are not direct welcome and why do we need art at all, other than what hangs on the walls of our offices? One of the reasons that OCW has achieved little in this respect with other

ministries up to now, was the lack of evidence to convince civil servants elsewhere that the input of artists and creatives really yielded something. This problem has been an issue in healthcare for a long time, but with the research reports of the WHO and in the Netherlands of ZonMw, there are now enough best practices to be found. And through the Samen Cultuur Maken scheme of the Fonds Cultuurparticipatie and supervised by LKCA, so many projects in healthcare and welfare have now been supported and evaluated that there is enough evidence. ZonMw has now started an SROI project (Social Return on Investment) to demonstrate that the use of art in long-term care is not only socially but also financially rewarding. The recent presentation of the Arts in Health white paper with a strategic future agenda provides a good direction for the next steps. Artists and creatives are now also active in other places, at Transport & Water Management, at Justice & Safety, at the Innovation department of the police and some municipalities also employ designers. In most cases, this involves designing and implementing creative participatory processes in which many more groups of stakeholders are given a voice and different outcomes are expected than in the usual policy processes.

However, it is not just about the efforts of artists themselves, it is also about changing the way of working within these institutions. Creative and participatory methods must be integrated into the working methods of policy making and implementation, which will thereby gain more support and make it possible to step outside the paper reality. This means that civil servants themselves also develop the skills to use more creative processes.

This way of working is boosted via the PONT programme, a three-year programme financed by OCW to investigate how the impact of design practices can be strengthened, particularly in various government bodies. A large collection of creative methods that can be used in different phases of projects and programs has been collected under the name of Knowledge Enabling Methodologies, or KEMs.

The coalition

To tackle social issues, you need representatives from as many stakeholders as possible: a coalition that wants to find a solution together. Artists and creatives fulfill multiple roles within this: making the issue visible and tangible from multiple perspectives, helping to shape the process of change and helping to come up with

different types of solutions. A condition is that they are involved from the start (otherwise they may only make a picture for the talk at the end) and participate on an equal level (otherwise they are seen as the client's assistant). Project Idols was a (unfortunately one-off) project that investigated how this could work. World Design Embassies form coalitions for various social issues such as mobility, health, circular and biobased construction, food and other topics to find new directions for solutions. The emphasis here seems to be more on research than on implementing found approaches.

Another way of forming coalitions is one that focuses on one sector, for example the Arts in Health whitepaper. Artists, researchers, clients, intermediaries from both the healthcare and the arts sectors have worked together to draw up a strategic agenda for the healthcare and arts world. Where art and healthcare have so far mainly worked together on a project basis, financing is fragmented (and largely from cultural funds), the whitepaper focuses on long-term and strategic cooperation at all levels, both at the responsible ministries and at healthcare institutions and financiers. An important condition for a convincing agenda is that sufficient evidence is built up to show that the art interventions work and that usually takes many years of hard work.

The grassroots movement
The grassroots movement assumes that social change comes about when groups of people unite and start doing things differently themselves. They do not believe that governments are capable of tackling social issues in the right way themselves. They believe that governments should relinquish power or provide space for groeps of citizens to do it themselves.

A nice example is A World of Communities, a book with examples of local communities and residents' organizations that tackle problems themselves, often hindered by all kinds of rules, but that achieve more because they have support in the village, neighborhood or district. Floor Ziegler, one of the authors, once (in 2006) started from the cultural world by setting up an art program in the Noorderpark in Amsterdam Noord and soon discovered that this would not work without asking about the wishes of the residents around the park, who had lived there much longer than she did. She and her partner have developed this method into the core of their work: walking through neighborhoods, talking to residents and tapping into the energy that is

already there. In many of the examples from the book you come across artists and creatives. Over time, she is increasingly hired by municipalities that do not know how to do it themselves, want something different and then discover that they themselves have to change. And that often doesn't work because existing rules, money flows and interests are then compromised.

Another angle is the Right to Challenge. Groups of residents have the right to take over one or more tasks from the municipality. The tricky part about this is that municipalities tender out many tasks with very strict rules that only large (sometimes commercial) organisations can meet. Local cultural organisations that are actually active in the field of welfare work, for example through talent development and Third Spaces (open spaces accessible to everyone), are not included due to the tendering practices of municipalities.

A radical form is the commons movement, which moves even more outside the established institutions. This focuses on building (cultural) communities that are based on being able to show vulnerability, building trust and working radically democratically, free from interference by the market and the government.

A characteristic feature of many of these types of initiatives is that artists are involved who want to organise their environment differently and see this as an example for other parts of society.

Transition management
Transition management is a strategy that assumes that the new must be stimulated and strengthenend while the old system slowly destabilizes and falls apart. At some point, the new would gain the upper hand and become the norm, while the old is phased out. The big problem, however, is the vague part in the middle: how and when do you know that this transition is actually taking place and how do you steer this transition? You know that resistance to change is usually greater than the desire for the new.

In transition management, the term transition failure comes into play. We know that in the current economic market, the necessary (economic, sustainable, etc.) transitions do not come about because the current price mechanism does not include environmental costs in the price determination. Government intervention is

necessary. Government intervention is usually legitimised by market failure: in the current market, the intended (politically desired) result is not achieved because some values cannot be expressed in money. This is also one of the grounds for legitimisation of cultural subsidies. The ESB (Economic Statistical Reports) contained an article arguing that transition failure is also a legitimate reason for the government to intervene. In the case of system changes, the government has the task of creating new (legal) frameworks in which other markets can emerge. This legitimises, for example, the existence of a Climate Fund.

In addition, there is another problem: it is difficult for governments to work on transitions internally. How do you realise a transformative government? The government tends to invite all stakeholders to the table based on the principle of a level playing field for everyone, but then the parties that mainly have an interest in the existing situation and oppose transitions also come to the table. Ambition and support clash with each other and it is precisely then that long-term political support is needed with a clear direction for civil servants to get to work. Anyway, in the current fragmented political landscape that condition is rarely met.

Working on social issues also requires cooperation across the boundaries of departments, organizations and structures. In other words, we need cross-border workers who are able to make connections, to organize innovation, but also to deal with resistance from the existing. Research is now being done into the conditions under which they can do their work well. Could artists function as cross-border workers, is guidance necessary for this, an education?

The artistic attitude and social tasks
What does it mean for the artist to be socially active? Many use their artistic qualities for this without having the idea that they are no longer artistically autonomous. They also see the use of the artistic process outside of art as an artistic quality.

In her book The Artistic Attitude, Anke Coumans describes various ways in which the artist involves others in his/her artistic practice: participating within his/her artistic concept, the dialogue between artist and the other and the creation of an environment in which the other makes a meaning-forming contribution. Whereby the result provides a reflection on both the artistic practice and the social result. It is

interesting because it delves deeper into the artistic process and what it demands of the artist. And perhaps provides more legitimacy within the existing artistic thinking (also in education) for social activities. The NWO (science funding) has a ‘route’ Art: Research and Innovation in the 21st century, in which artistic processes serve as a model for research and innovation in other domains.

The advice of the Council for Culture on the future of the cultural system *Access to Culture* contains a chapter on the concepts of art and quality. It is a plea for accepting a variety of artistic views and a broader concept of quality because many artistic expressions are not sufficiently valued. In this plea, artistic quality is a combination of four perspectives: of the maker, of experts, of the public and of society. Traditionally, the maker and the experts are paramount, but it is time to see the perspective of the public and society as aspects that count when assessing artistic quality. This creates more space for artists who are socially active. In the descriptions of the artistic attitude it is striking that it concerns small-scale projects with a limited scope. That does not make them less important, but they only focus on a small-scale level on social issues, not on a strategic or system level, where it seems as if they are looking for the desired change in the individual person or in small groups. Or do they see themselves as the nursery for major changes? And is that a realistic idea?

Finally
Working on social issues is a tough process, it does not happen automatically and a few nice ideas are not enough. The use of artists and creatives can be very desirable and useful in this, but that route is not for everyone. We see different strategies emerging and no one really knows what works yet. Hopefully we will gain a lot of experience and knowledge in the coming years about the different ways in which artists and creatives are used in social issues. And that should take place in a broad coalition of research and policy institutions, both at national, provincial and local level. Because that is necessary to really learn!

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