

Steyn Bergs and Rosa te Velde

Changes in cultural policy in the Netherlands received a fair amount of attention in newspapers and in public debates following the severe budget cuts of 2011–2012. However, the form that these changes have most recently taken seems largely to have escaped critical attention. For this reason we were very pleased when Lara Garcia Diaz and Cristina Marques Moran approached us with the idea to edit a *Kunstlicht* issue that would delve into the historical grounds and present implications of arts and culture funding policies and programmes, such as *The Art of Impact*. We would like to warmly thank them both for working together with us, and we are confident that *Cultural Policies: Agendas of Impact* offers a counter perspective to the under-theorized and under-examined rhetoric that all too often accompanies cultural policies.

This publication also marks the stepping down of Jesse van Winden as editor-in-chief, whose vivacity has been fundamental to *Kunstlicht* since 2009. This became all the more important with his promotion as editor-in-chief in 2012 and his premiere issue *The Public Market* in 2013. We are extremely grateful that Jesse will remain on the editorial board. A single editor-in-chief could by no means possibly substitute Jesse's inexhaustible energy and *joie de vivre*. We, Steyn Bergs and Rosa te Velde, have therefore decided to take up this challenge together and will henceforth share the position of editor-in-chief.

More changes on the editorial board include the resignation of Marlies Peeters, Tim Roerig, and Veerle Spronck. We thank them for their contributions and hard work. Fortunately, we also have the privilege of introducing a number of new editors: Fabienne Chiang, Isa Fahrenholz, Juliette Huygen, Rosa Mulder, and Iris Pissaride.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Your Co-Editors-in-Chief,  
Steyn Bergs & Rosa te Velde

Lara Garcia Diaz & Cristina Marques Moran

The usage of terms such as 'collectivization', 'participation', 'social value', and 'impact' in political discourse surrounding artistic practice has grown exponentially since the 1980s. Notions about art as a producer of utopia, with the institution as its engineering platform, and the artist as the initiator, have resulted in the problematic of state-funded art as the proposed provider of social progress. In the Netherlands, the use of art as an effective practice of intervention in situations of 'crisis' is also being tested.

On December 1st, 2014, the Dutch Ministry of Culture (OCW) announced the new temporary Art and Culture programme, *The Art of Impact*, which over the two years to follow would delegate seven million euros to multidisciplinary art projects that have a 'clear' social effect. It asks: "[h]ow can art make a difference for the quality of life in the neighbourhood and the city, for energy and the climate, for healthcare, welfare and the life sciences, and for the circular economy?"<sup>1</sup> *The Art of Impact* seeks to fund initiatives that are

able to enforce and highlight the relation that art can have with other social, political, environmental, and economic domains and establish solid connections with mediators from inside and outside the cultural sector. Artists, designers, mediators, as well as cultural institutions and commissioners are funded as agents of change or 'impact producers'. As the question above foreshadows, the programme demands from these agents that they produce beneficial results in one of the following domains: 'society', 'circular economy', 'energy and climate', 'the quality of life in the neighbourhood and in the city', 'healthcare, welfare, and sport', 'cultural participation', 'privacy', and 'the refugee crisis'.

With this programme, the government declares that it has a renewed faith in art, and acknowledges its importance to society. Certainly, minister Bussemaker seems to conceive of art as an agent for change and cohesion, leaning towards a liberal conception of art and culture that highlights its universal benefits.<sup>2</sup> Art is no longer regarded as a mere hobby of the elite, and it is publically supported by the minister as a beneficial tool that can intervene in domains outside the cultural sector.

However, in our current period of economic austerity, where creativity and innovation are fuelling neoliberal agendas, one wonders if art is really conceived of in liberal terms as politically and socially beneficial; or, despite

<sup>1</sup> "Hoe kan kunst verschil maken voor een leefbare wijk en stad, energie en klimaat, zorg, welzijn en life sciences en circulaire economie?", trans. by *Kunstlicht*. Rijksoverheid, 'The Art of Impact: kunstprojecten met een maatschappelijk effect', 1 December 2014. Accessed through: [www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2014/12/01/the-art-of-impact.html](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2014/12/01/the-art-of-impact.html), on 10 March 2015.

<sup>2</sup> By using the expression 'liberal conception of art' we are making a direct reference to the political philosophy and doctrine of liberalism based on the idea of freedom, equality, and liberty. Expressed in the 18th century by authors such as John Locke or Thomas Paine, and prominent in American and English discourse in the 20th century, the basic principle is based on the protection of the freedom of each individual by laws, judges, or the state. It is believed, thereafter, that the government is a necessary institution to protect the individual from being harmed by others. However, as Thomas Paine argues in his pamphlet 'Common Sense' (1776), government is at best a "necessary evil". That is, the government itself can also pose a threat to liberty. The aim of liberalism is hence to devise a system in which government assures the liberty of the individual while also preventing those in power from abusing their positions. A 'liberal conception of art' appeals then to the idea that art can universally promote ideas of liberty as well as improve social relations.

Bussemaker's statement to the contrary, if this embrace of art is a result of its perceived functionality as a tool that proves advantageous for the market. Back in 2015, the year when *The Art of Impact* started to operate, with a few exceptions, no proper discussion took place to discuss the highly problematic way the new minister was presenting the role of art in society.<sup>3</sup> Concerned with the lack of debate, we have thus used this issue of *Kunstlicht* as a platform to open up a discussion on the effect and consequences of such interference by the state on the potential production of critical art. Our main objective is to create the grounds for a discussion that must be taken up publicly.

The theoretical basis of this publication is sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's differentiation of two developing hands within the state. As Bourdieu puts it, the right hand firmly liberalizes the market in the name of efficiency, increasing social class differences and the precarization of labour and social conditions. The left hand demands that the public sector repairs the inequalities generated by the economic sector, while simultaneously imposing budgetary restrictions under the guise of notions such as 'the participation society'.<sup>4</sup> Crucial for the configuration of this issue has also been the forms of instrumentalization to which social practices have been subjected historically, both by the state and by the market. The Italian Neo-Marxist theorist and political activist Antonio Gramsci used the theory of 'cultural hegemony' to show how the ruling class is able to manipulate society's values, opinions, or beliefs through the use of culture.<sup>5</sup> Gramsci's concept of hegemony is based on the success of the dominant classes in presenting their definition of reality and in the acceptance of that reality by other social classes as 'common sense'. The will for social 'consensus' within 'common sense' emphasizes the use of social unanimity and harmony as a form of mental anestheticizing by the ruling class. Nonetheless, far from having a single dominant class, Gramsci describes our society as a shifting and unstable system in which different social classes are involved in a permanent 'war of positions'.<sup>6</sup> As political philosopher Andrew Heywood suggests, Gramsci defends struggle as a necessary condition for pluralistic democratic politics and rejects the idea of a single 'common sense', in order to create meaningful participation in social, cultural, political, and economic decision-making.<sup>7</sup> From this standpoint, artistic practices have a necessary relation to politics because they either contribute to the reproduction of the 'common sense' that secures a consensus for a given hegemony, or, to the contrary, they challenge it.<sup>8</sup>

Questioning how hegemonic ideology conditions artistic practices through policy, Bram Leven opens this issue with an outline of the development of Dutch cultural policies from the post-war period to the present. His article 'Destructive Construction: Democratization as a *Vanishing Mediator* in Current Dutch Art Policy' shows how a shift in system, from welfare state to neoliberal state, is reflected

<sup>3</sup> A discussion about this fund emerged as a side topic in the event *It's very political: Engagement in de kunst*, organized by Platform BK. Accessed through: [www.platformbkn.nl/2014/11/its-very-political-het-trippenhuis](http://www.platformbkn.nl/2014/11/its-very-political-het-trippenhuis) on 13 May 2016. When the fund was announced Domeniek Ruyters questioned the nature of this fund in his column 'De week van Jet Bussemaker, Xi Jinping en John Ruskin', *Metropolis*, 9 December 2014. Accessed through: [metropolism.com/opinion/de-week-van-jet-bussemaker-xi-ji](http://metropolism.com/opinion/de-week-van-jet-bussemaker-xi-ji), on 20 June 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, pp. 1-9.

<sup>5</sup> Gramsci's translated writings contain no direct definition of the notion of 'cultural hegemony'. What could come closest is his often-quoted reference to hegemony as "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production." Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers, 1971, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 106-14.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts: An Introduction*, London: Macmillan, 1994, pp. 100.

<sup>8</sup> For Gramsci, it is the task of intellectuals to criticize the "chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions comprising common sense and so instill new popular beliefs [...], a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy." Gramsci, op. cit. (note 5), pp. 422, 424.

in policy making. According to the Leven, from 1945, the principle of Johan Rudolph Thorbecke has informed art and cultural policy in the Netherlands. This principle states that although it is the responsibility of the government to fund culture, it should refrain from judging its content. However, in the 1970s, demands for the 'democratization of art' rose. To be more democratic, it was then reasoned, art had to connect with the private sector while contributing to society. An artist's ability to connect to the market-place therefore was perceived as a sign of quality, and artists came under pressure to act as creative entrepreneurs.

This tendency gradually developed up to the point of Halbe Zijlstra's severe cultural budget cuts of 2011, which, dismissing art's social role, pushed it to further integrate with the private sector. Three years later, with *The Art of Impact* programme, policy makers posit that art should fulfil a social responsibility as a requisite to its funding by the state. For Leven, what may seem like a restoration in the belief of the social capacity of art, is, in fact, a new strategy that seeks to reconnect art with other sectors, namely with the 'free' market.

In a similar line, in his text '*The Art of Impact: Aspirin for Amputation*' Steven ten Thije analyzes the programme as an attempt to further connect the arts with sectors that are not yet dominated by the market. Problematizing the inherent contradiction between the aspirations of this fund and its temporal nature, Ten Thije recognizes the programme as a "child of neoliberal thinking", whose ultimate goal is that private capital will step in to support this artistic production once the government ceases to do so.

Deconstructing the ideology of a policy not only implies the reconsideration of its discourse, but also of its functions and methods. To that end, following Ten Thije's article, we have included an interview with Tabo Goudswaard, intendant, and Michiel Munneke, programme director of *The Art of Impact*. The interview helps to further clarify functional aspects of the programme that may not be readily apparent in public communications around the fund. In this interview, Goudswaard and Munneke emphasize the experimental nature of the programme and make clear that one of its main goals is to enhance art's collaboration with other organizations and sectors with artistic creativity put forward as an asset for producing potential solutions to confront social issues.

Following the interview, and to further unveil the intimate relation between neoliberal ideology, artistic practice, and cultural policies, Josephine Berry describes the rise of the 'cultural entrepreneur'—or 'culturepreneur'—in Britain. According to Berry, this figure is the outcome of neoliberalism's demand for a new form of subjectivity that ultimately combines "creative innovation and business skills". In her article 'Agents or Objects of Discontinuous Change? Blairite Britain and the Role of the Culturepreneur', she presents this figure as the embodiment of the interrelation of two parallel processes that crystalize through the 1990s in Britain: the entrepreneurialization of culture and the discovery of cultural creativity as an economic engine. According to the author, the discovery of cultural entrepreneurship seems as both a justification for the retraction of public funding and a further enforcement of entrepreneurship upon the creative sector. Berry's focus on the history of British cultural policies draws a clear

comparison between British ‘Third Way’ politics and current cultural policy in the Netherlands. Both use similar rhetoric with regards to the arts and entrepreneurial creativity as a factor of economic development. Moreover, *The Art of Impact* corroborates this parallel further seeing as the ‘social turn’ fundamental to its mission is the same as that which has been steering cultural policies in the U.K. since the late 1990s.<sup>9</sup>

In ‘Ends of Art: from Nul to Bijl’, Sven Lütticken looks back at avant-garde attempts to abolish art in order to overcome its instrumentalization by both the state and the market. Refusing to accede that the art object is non-functional or apolitical by nature, avant-garde artists have striven to transform art into a productive means for social change. Jumping ahead to the 1980s, artists such as Guillaume Bijl reverted this critique, revealing how the market had assimilated even the avant-garde’s ideology of usefulness by turning art into an ‘economic engine’. Lütticken considers the positions taken by artists in response to the loss of artistic autonomy in line with the functional expectations placed upon art by Dutch cultural policies of late, which push artistic practice to integrate with the market, or, if publicly funded, to subjugate to the social agenda of the state.

Considering the conditions of production, distribution, reception, and valuation of art in times of financialization, this issue also features an artist’s contribution by *Market for Immaterial Value*, which is introduced by Steyn Bergs. Thinking about the so-called ‘immaterial economy’, Valentina Karga and Pieterjan Grandry expose the cloudy correlation between artistic practices and market value, and create a discursive space by actively generating a market around a coin-like sculpture. With this project, the public is able to invest in the artwork and receive any potential surplus value generated. In this way, the artists aim to make visible the opaque process of valuation in the art market, and create “a more economically sustainable art practice, not dependent on external funds or the dictations of the speculative art market”.<sup>10</sup>

Crucial to understanding the effect of cultural policies on social practice is the perspective of the artist, and to give a voice to one of the participants receiving funding from *The Art of Impact*, *Kunstlicht* has conducted an interview with Jeanne van Heeswijk, who is currently working on the project *Freehouse Collective*. Despite her source of funding, Van Heeswijk critically questions and disrupts the ‘impact’ that *Freehouse* has on its surroundings. Drawing on her experience working in the field of social art for more than twenty-five years, in this interview Van Heeswijk reflects on the ‘participation society’, ‘the right to the city’, and the instrumentalization of social art practice.

Closing the issue, an interview with Pascal Gielen who offers various insights into the relationship between art and politics. On a similar line with Gramsci, Gielen asserts that culture can contribute to the consolidation of the dominant social order, or challenge and question it.<sup>11</sup> The Belgian sociologist problematizes how policy making, within what he theorizes as a system of repressive liberalism, designs

instruments of control and measurability that impede the function of all societal fields, not only that of culture.<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon not only hinders artists’ autonomy—and the autonomy of any professional—but in combination with the predetermination of art’s usefulness and the temporal nature of funding programs, it jeopardizes any real potential for art to have an effect on society. The idea of ‘the commons’ is central to Gielen’s analysis of the process by which plurality in democracies is articulated. Agreeing with Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe, Gielen questions a paternalistic, cohesive, and harmonious vision of society, and argues that agonism and dissensus are an integral trigger to revitalize democracy.

The cover of this issue is a work by Wok The Rock, an artist, musician, and cultural activist based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The cover presents a riso-printed, satirical cartoon executed in the same style as that of *Parasite Lottery*, a project initiated by Wok The Rok in the Netherlands as a response to budget cuts in the cultural sector, and the developments of funding policy thereafter. Among other things, *Parasite Lottery* was intricately connected to a number of debates on this topic, including a discussion on the closure of the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam organized by *Kunstlicht* in June of 2016.

We would like to warmly thank all the authors, artists, and the entire *Kunstlicht* team who, contributing on a free basis to this issue, are also free to express their critical views. Although we are more than aware that this issue is only able to compile a few select opinions, and that many others deserve attention, we hope to have provided enough food for thought to contribute to a discussion that we feel is lacking.

#### Cristina Marques Moran and Lara Garcia Diaz

Lara Garcia Diaz is an independent art researcher. Since 2014, she collaborates with LIMA (Amsterdam, Netherlands) and the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, Netherlands). Moreover, she is currently conducting her PhD on institutional contexts and sustainable creativity in collaboration with the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (ARIA) and the University of Antwerp (Belgium). Lara has contributed in books such as *What’s the Use* (Valiz, 2016) and “assist” in the configuration of the *Art and Autonomy Reader* to be published by Afterall.

Cristina Marques Moran studied the master Comparative Arts and Media Studies at the Vrij Universiteit and graduated in 2015. Her research revolved around artistic strategies that develop new models of institutional critique that respond to global transformations and go beyond the field of art.

<sup>9</sup> In his doctoral thesis, scholar and member of Free Art Collective, Andrew Hewitt exposes how Third Way cultural policy conditions publicly funded art to suit the purposes of social regeneration. He problematizes how the so-called ‘culture-led regeneration’—culture and creativity as a means to achieve social inclusion and reconstruction—is deeply tied to economic purposes and development. Andrew Hewitt, *Art and Counter-Publics in Third Way Cultural Policy*, 2012. Accessed through: [ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/5679/1/HEWITT.A.TPh.D2012-1.pdf](http://ualresearchonline.arts.ac.uk/5679/1/HEWITT.A.TPh.D2012-1.pdf), on 10 June 2016.

<sup>10</sup> *Market for Immaterial Value*, 2015, website of *Market for Immaterial Value*. Accessed through: [www.marketforimmaterialvalue.com/about](http://www.marketforimmaterialvalue.com/about), on 20 June 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Sander Bax, Pascal Gielen, Bram Ieven, ‘Introduction. ‘A Public Sphere for Example’, in: Sander Bax, Pascal Gielen, Bram Ieven (eds.), *Interrupting the City. Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Gielen often avoids the word neoliberalism and uses instead the label ‘repressive liberalism’. By doing so, he emphasizes how neoliberalism is not about the construction of a ‘new freedom’, but rather about the regression, or repression, of freedom. Pascal Gielen, *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Politics and Post-Fordism*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015, p. 11.