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NEW PERSPECTIVES
ON ART ECONOMY
THROUGH
EXPANDING
THE PERCEPTIONS
OF THE FRAMEWORK
OF ART

INTRO- DUCTION

The conditions of art in Nordic societies have traditionally been discussed through the lens of public funding, subsidy systems and priorities within the public welfare economy. In recent years it has become evident that this perspective is no longer sufficient when we try to understand and tackle the many challenges related to the work and livelihoods of artists and creative workers.

In a time characterized by social uncertainty, economic precarity, competition and urgent ecological needs, new types of agency, approaches and collaborations are needed to lay the foundations for a more sustainable, just and inclusive future.

We have to expand the perceptions of the framework of art and explore how we in collaboration can build roads to more equitable futures.

This discussion paper takes its starting points in the following notions in a/nordi/c's research in the *Living Catalogue*:

The world of work for artists is changing

Traditional occupations no longer seem to provide a stable and permanent point of reference in terms of work for artists. Professionalism in the arts is at the same time becoming more open and fluid, often including collaboration across disciplines and different modes of employment. We need to discuss what kind of agencies and approaches are needed within this reality.

Large areas of artistic production remain invisible and unrecognized

Is it possible to move away from the project-based economy and expand the notion of what counts as artistic work and open our views to new ways of using time?

Creating new futures means working in collaboration and imagining new things together

Can we actively use perspectives that have previously been invisible as stepping stones to build something new. The question is for instance, what a future economy, building on ecological awareness, equity and social justice would look like?

The paper offers a brief insight into some of the current issues related to existing funding structures for the arts. The section is followed by insights and signals from the Living Catalogue that point towards the focus areas of the meeting.

Best regards,
a/nordi/c

BACKGROUND: THE STEPPING STONES TOWARDS A MORE RELEVANT CULTURAL POLICY

The welfare oriented cultural policy in the Nordic countries has traditionally relied heavily on public funding. The subsidy systems have aimed both at ensuring opportunities to create art and making sure that everyone has an equal access to art and cultural activities. Despite staying fairly resilient over time, the ability of the existing systems to support a viable future of the sector is uncertain. Many of the existing structural fragilities and inequalities within the sector were only enforced by the covid-19 pandemic - especially when considering the working conditions for individual artists and freelance cultural workers. In many Nordic countries we see a growing gap between the objectives and remits set by policy makers on the one hand, and the financial resources made available for cultural bodies to fulfill these objectives and remits on the other.

Some of the major changes in the premises for art economy are connected to the alleged neoliberal turn in cultural policy. As cultural policy is now expected to interact closely with the competitive economy, the art funding is also increasingly being rationalized according to economic values and other gains they produce. The arts are expected to have a positive effect on a variety of things and the allocation of resources is often based on concretely measurable effects and benefits. When the license to operate is based on economic efficiency, resources are increasingly directed at artistic contents and productions that are intended for the well-established audiences with the aim of attracting large audiences and maximizing the profits. This affects the general understanding of who 'is worthy of' living and working as an artist and what kind of art they can do. On the other hand, a significant part of the cultural ecosystem still depends on smaller organisations, platforms, freelancers and creative professionals. These smaller and heterogenic initiatives are ultimately also the prerequisite for the viability and resilience of the ecosystem as a whole.

To build a relevant cultural policy, we need to discuss and change the frameworks over the coming years to ensure the resilience of the cultural sector. We also need to make sure that the sector becomes better equipped for the challenging, rapidly evolving global environment, where unexpected external shocks are likely to become more recurrent.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE MEETING

- 1** THE WORLD OF WORK FOR ARTISTS IS CHANGING
- 2** UNDERSTANDING THE TEMPORALITIES AND SOCIALITIES OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE
- 3** CULTURE & EQUITY: CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

1. THE WORLD OF WORK FOR ARTISTS IS CHANGING

Experiences from recent years have emphasized the need for financial and institutional frameworks to better adapt to the evolution of the art and cultural sector. During past decades established structures of artistic production have been destabilized and art-based methods and practices are being applied and introduced into more diverse, hybrid and democratised contexts. There is thus much to indicate that professionalism in the arts is becoming increasingly open and unpredictable, often including collaboration across disciplines, and different modes of employment and ways of using time.

The blurring of structural boundaries is at the same time connected to the increasing uncertainty of the working environment. Traditional occupations and state supported institutions no longer seem to provide a stable and permanent point of reference in terms of future work, principles and values, and professional identities. This has in turn created new dilemmas and demands for practitioners, organisations and arts education institutions in terms of reviewing their understanding of the purposes and roles taken up by artists and creative workers in society. While the arts education system has traditionally been focused on narrow discipline expertise, current contexts emphasise the need for a more holistic approach to professionalism, as well as an expanded understanding of the increasingly diverse roles and values of art and artists in society.

Maintaining the institutional autonomy of the sector has been considered a prerequisite for artistic freedom, democracy and for ensuring art's ability to criticize the established. However, it seems that a view of art as autonomous and independent from the rest of the society is becoming more and more difficult to justify in increasingly complex societies. The traditional notion of professional and disciplinary autonomy is being balanced between aspects of societal responsibility and reflexivity, highlighting the importance of art, institutions and their policies to rethink their ways to exist more actively in and for the society and in relation to the rapid changes within it.

Following signals from the living catalogue illustrate new and alternative ways of viewing the potential of art and arts education in society.

FIG: SIGNALS FROM THE LIVING CATALOGUE

Institutions of higher arts education need to grasp the 21st century art world's diverse rationalities

The signal refers to a book which highlights the need to reconsider the idea of professionalism in music and how such reflections ought to inform professional music education.

The book 'Expanding Professionalism in Music and Higher Music Education: A Changing Game' addresses the ongoing paradigm shift in the arts that impacts the role of art and the artist in society. It also sheds light on the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and social responsibility, which has been often taken for granted and tacit in music and, more generally, in the arts.

The book underscores that a shift towards expanding professionalism in higher arts education is essential to appreciate increasingly diverse values, objectives, products, and outcomes of the art world in the 21st century.

Source: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-edit/10.4324/9781003108337/expanding-professionalism-music-higher-music-education-helena-gaunt-heidi-westerlund>

LungA School - experimenting school-making as a collective artistic practice

The independent, artist-led institution in Seyðisfjörður, Iceland, strives to give students an experimental educational experience as a foundation for further artistic or land practices and studies, work life and life in general.

The LungA school was founded in 2013 and is structured as an indeterminate performance. The school exists two times a year, 84 days each time with participants from around the world.

The open-ended concept of a school is brought into being through the articulation of a space of learning and the corporealization of roles and responsibilities in relation to this space of learning.

Source: <https://lungaschool.is/about.html>

Sisters Hope - Home - A co-creative laboratory and base for sensory learning and anchoring in a changing district

The signal refers to the project Sisters Hope HOME, created by the Copenhagen-based performance-group and movement Sisters Hope.

Sisters Hope operates at the intersection of performance art, research, activism and pedagogy. Their artistic practice is based on a vision of a future society, The Sensuous Society, where the sensuous and poetic form the basis of all action and interaction.

The notion of a sensuous society reshapes the role of art and artistic practice, challenging the constructed hierarchies and perceptions brought forth by the ideal of rational thought and dominance of the economic dimension in Western societies. Opposing the idea of artistic genius, which is conceived as someone with a very special (transcending) intelligence, in a Sensuous Society it is believed that all people have the creative potential within them, and if their outset and mode of being in the world is the sensuous, this potential will be released.

Source: <http://sistershope.dk/sisters-hopes-new-platform-for-sensuous-learning/>

2. UNDER- STANDING THE TEMPO- RALITIES AND SOCIAL- ITIES OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE

The normalization of precarity of artistic and creative work has directed attention to the historically constructed perceptions of the nature of artistic work and to the relation between art and life. Nowadays, the everyday life of artist and creative worker is often characterised by a project-based temporality, filled with application writing, project management and other tasks that are increasingly the key to obtaining financial support but do not traditionally count as real artistic work. Even though the perception of the artist as a creator of autonomous artworks no longer seems to correspond to the realities of working in today's art world, it seems that quality assessments in arts education and funding bodies continue to be partly based on a dichotomous distinction between artistic quality and secondary non-artistic qualities and competencies.

These assumptions still echo an idealist view of an individual artist with natural talent, and as somebody whose works can be separated from the life of its author. An alternative view to emphasizing talent and originality of the soloist artist genius is offered by approaches building on feminist-materialist aesthetics of production (i.e. Kunst 2015, Ullerup Schmidt 2022). In these views the focus is shifted from artworks to the sociality and temporality and economy of artistic work and productions. When different social and economic circumstances and relations are seen as active and necessary co-producers of the artwork, the notion of artists' work is expanded and the attention can be drawn to the areas which are usually not included in the budgets and project descriptions approved by funding schemes.

New types of artist platforms and communities building on more collective and participatory practices have also aimed at offering alternatives to the individualization, competition and precarity of the art world. The aim of these communities is often not just to critique the system but also to offer more caring, inclusive socialities of productions for the artists themselves. They can provide an opportunity to break free from existing structures and try out alternative forms of expression and practice. The communities are often working in the cross-field between art and activism and go hand in hand with the ambition to achieve greater diversity and inclusion in the sector.

The new communities also prompt new collective agency and power of artist workers when they address and change their working conditions together. However, due to a lack of ongoing support they may still operate under precarious conditions, and the community can risk becoming laborious in the long run. The question is whether, and to what extent, the various agendas can in the future come together in a common understanding across practices and institutional frameworks? And whether alliances between small and nomadic platforms and larger institutions can lead to benefits and continuity for more of them?

Following signals from the living catalogue illustrate how new types of communities are emerging in alternative environments in response to the homogeneity of our cultural landscape. The new ways of organising can also be seen as a result of changing economic conditions in the art world, which call for new ways of financing artistic practice.

FIG: SIGNALS FROM THE LIVING CATALOGUE

An alternative way to distribute money

By using the feminist art-collective, Marronage as an example, the signal asks whether monetary distribution is a way to cope with increasingly precarious working conditions for artistic and cultural agents in the future, and whether more art collectives can start to co-own and co-share their art pieces.

Marronage is a collective of feminists bringing stories of resistance forward through editorial work, writing, and events. Marronage journal launched in 2017 on the 100th anniversary of the sale of the former Danish West Indian Islands. The journal is dedicated to exposing the west's and, in particular, the Danish repression of colonial history.

Marronage does not pay its members by effort but by need. An alternative form of collective redistribution. When one member is on a fixed income and the other works as a freelancer with an uncertain income, they attempt to redistribute the fee as effectively as possible.

Source: <https://marronage.dk/>

Agencies of Art - How to fathom the implications and values of smaller arts institutions and independent curators within the greater art ecosystem?

The signal refers to a report from 2021 by Jonatan Habib Engqvist and Nina Möntmann. It suggests that the internalised neoliberal logic in the arts are bringing pressure to artists and adding financial insecurity of small arts organisations and independent curators.

According to the report, smaller institutions and initiatives often occupy a role of a “trendsetter”, producing deferred or delayed value for the art field in being among the first to show younger or less established artists, using experimental curatorial approaches and with their willingness to take risks. The authors suggest that this attention could be consciously directed and used to spread values that undermine forced complicity with the neoliberal operational models of the art system at large, for example through slowed-down or long-term organisation models.

Source: <http://www.tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/208-Agencies%20of%20Art.pdf>

Verdensrommet - Scandinavian support network for foreign artists

The signal is based on an interview in Kunstkruttikk with artist Rodrigo Ghattas-Pérez, and the co-founder of Verdensrommet (or, “World Space”), a support network for foreign artists and cultural workers in Norway.

According to Rodrigo Ghattas-Pérez, artists and cultural workers with a temporary residence permit in Norway face a lack of access to crisis support, including financial, social assistance, unemployment benefits, and other support schemes.

Ghattas-Pérez is critical of what he calls a “semi-inclusive cultural policy” where foreign artists are considered an expense and social burden without considering what they potentially contribute to the Norwegian economy. He sees two opposing political agendas in play: “On the one hand, you have government-driven efforts towards internationalisation and profiling of the art field and work on diversity within the cultural sector. But, on the other hand, you have regulations working against it by toughening immigration laws and ‘shielding’ the welfare system from non-EU artists.”

Source: <https://kunstkruttikk.com/a-change-to-norways-immigration-policy-for-artists/>

3. CULTURE & EQUITY: CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The increasing awareness of escalating ecological breakdown and other global challenges have prompted discussions on how art and culture can play a part in thinking differently about challenges and in coming up with solutions. These processes have direct connections to acute questions regarding the livability of the planet, but also to questions regarding the resilience and future of the art world.

Even though an increasing number of artists, organizations and leaders in the creative sector have paid attention to global challenges and to the need to mobilise the cultural sector towards more sustainable practices, on a policy level, the role of culture in terms of sustainability has been poorly understood and operationalised. Climate action initiatives and projects that are forged from narrow environmental and economic perspectives can themselves pose a threat to cultural rights and fundamental freedoms, if the essence and benefits of culture and heritage are not actively considered.

Discussions on sustainability in the art world and wider society necessitate also the perspectives of justice and social equality. Despite the bold objectives of equal access and participation set by cultural policies, recent research has pinpointed a variety of excluding mechanisms and practices in the art world and society which serve to maintain inequality both among creative practitioners and the ones experiencing and taking part in cultural activities. The notion of cultural equity has a long tradition in the United States, but has just recently gained attention in arts institutions and organisations in the Nordic countries. The term embodies the values, beliefs, policies and practices that all people are represented in the development of arts policy, support of artists, nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial and informational resources. This also includes specific commitment to people who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status or religion.

A foundation for a new vision for cultural policy and its role in sustainability was laid recently at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 in Mexico City. The final declaration of the conference reflects on the value and fragility of the cultural ecosystem in the context of multiple global challenges and proposes a new conceptual framework for policies that affirm culture as a global public good. Nevertheless, there still seems to be a gap between policy statements and the logics of the art world. For example:

- The sensitivity to the interconnected and ecological dimensions of artistic processes often clashes with established notions of authorship, sectoral autonomy and the temporality of exhibition and artistic practices.
- A clear discrepancy is seen between ecological practice and the internalised logics of art institutions based on short-term planning, cost-effectiveness and high-tempo production requirements.
- Sustainable cultural production can conflict with the funding-systems' logic which prioritizes new productions over prolonging or developing existing artworks.

In other words, there is a profound need for a wider vocabulary around

the topics considering the intersections between cultural sector and sustainability. We need to foster a broader understanding and practical implementation of the ideas, among a broader variety of stakeholders in and outside the arts sphere.

Following signals from the Living Catalogue illustrate both opportunities and challenges in fostering sustainability and equality in the arts and cultural field.

FIG: SIGNALS FROM THE LIVING CATALOGUE

Educating the cultural field in responding to eco-crises

Punos is an organisation seeking to drive social change within the cultural sector through research, training and art.

Punos recognises art organisations as important drivers for nourishing regenerative mindsets and practices, and provides support for organisations in their sustainability work. The starting point is that actors and institutions of the cultural sector have the ability to permeate just socio-ecological methods more widely into societies. The organisation is founded by two curator-researchers: Anna-Kaisa Koski and Ki Nurmenniemi. Their current research focuses on the role of artist residencies in sparking and spreading sustainability transformations (Nurmenniemi), and perspectives on the connections between fossil energy and contemporary cultures through art research (Koski).

Source: <https://punos.org/>

Weakened by national borders – The problem with national funding schemes for Sami artists

A report initiated by the Saami Council describes how national arts funding structures and schemes in the Nordic countries don't recognize and acknowledge the Sapmi region and community as one nation.

The report states that most of the funding opportunities for Sámi art and culture comes from outside the Sámi authorities, which gives national policy instruments a great deal of decision-making and definition power. Projects are expected to fulfill requirements and expectations based on nationally defined relevance and quality objectives. Many Sámi artists therefore feel that they need to make compromises and adapt to the Nordic and Western prevailing approaches. This directly affects the working possibilities and conditions of Sámi artists.

Source: <https://www.saamicouncil.net/documentarchive/kulttuurisaamen-ajatushautomon-2021-2022>

ArtsEqual - A game changer introducing a discourse on equality and wellbeing in the arts

The signal refers to a research project at Uniarts Helsinki which has sought to identify mechanisms of exclusion that hinder participation in the arts and arts education.

The ArtsEqual Research Initiative has had its starting point in international human rights and the Constitution of Finland. They argue that the opportunity to participate in the arts and culture, develop oneself and one's community through them throughout the life cycle, and express oneself freely are fundamental cultural rights.

The argument is defended not only by the constitutional requirement of equal treatment but also by welfare concerns: Personal encounters in art generate meaningful aesthetic experiences. More broadly, they also generate cultural inclusion. Consequently, far-reaching positive ripple effects impact people's health, wellbeing, and quality of life and increase the common good in society.

The opportunity to participate in the arts is not automatically realized in society. In addition to identifying inequality mechanisms, the project has produced research-informed policy recommendations to help decision-makers implement such measures that help break the cycle of disadvantage.

Source: <https://www.artsequal.fi/home>

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