



LONG LIVE ARTS CONFERENCE 2015



May 21-22 2015
The Hague



Over 450 participants – individual visitors, professionals and artists from 15 countries and five continents – attend the Long Live Arts conference at the Theater aan het Spui in The Hague. The conference is the Dutch contribution to the European programme Long Live Arts, which raises awareness of Older people and Cultural participation among both policy makers and policy executors.

Three days packed with presentations by national and international speakers, interactive excursions, workshops and peer-to-peer meetings. Additionally, performances by older entertainers, musicians and artists and the attendance of Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands. Hedy D'Ancona, ambassador of the Dutch initiative Lang Leve Kunst (Long Live Arts), acts as chair.

This report includes summaries of the peer-to-peer meetings with regard to content and of the keynote speeches on the opening day of the conference.

Wednesday 20 May 2015

During the **peer-to-peer meeting PRACTICE** at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the dementia programme 'Onvergetelijk' (Unforgettable), as presently executed in the Netherlands and abroad, is discussed. The participants review organisational matters, the collections of the participating museums, but also the training of volunteers and working with paid tour guides. Research shows that 'Onvergetelijk' has a positive effect on the museum employees taking part in the programme. Interestingly, these results may be compared to the results of care professionals working with people suffering from dementia.

The MoMA (Museum of Modern Art, New York), home of the dementia programme, is currently developing a new programme called 'Prime Time'. A small group of older people is actively involved in preliminary research for the programme. They indicate the following criteria as essential for older people to participate in a project: social, engaging, aimed at various target audiences and set at a specific moment in time. The group also points out potential obstacles to participation, such as financial, physical, informational and attitudinal barriers.

Advice from the participants:

- Consider the role a museum wishes to fulfil in society.
- Consider including older people in the programming; in particular those who experience different thresholds (literally and figuratively).
- Choose a unique approach that fits the particular arts institution.

The relation between the arts and health is examined in the **peer-to-peer meeting RESEARCH** at the Boekman Foundation in Amsterdam. The topic of illness is regarded from different points of view: for example, novels reveal much information on the personal experience of illness, which may be helpful to the practice of care professionals. Improving patients' lives, even of those who can't be cured, is the starting point of a special pilot around 'art dialogues' with patients at the Leiden and Amsterdam medical centres. The attention for complementary care (also called occupational therapy) has mainly been focused on physical improvement. Participants agree that **the policy on prevention and research is too focused on disease and diagnosis, and not enough on patients and prevention**, for example healthy ageing through the arts. There is obviously a gap between supply and demand. To bridge this difference, evidence-based research regarding the efficiency of arts programmes and interventions is needed. Within this context, policy makers and care institutions are particularly interested in the cost-effectiveness effects.

To discuss the topic from a local/regional, national and European point of view, a brainstorm is held during the **peer-to-peer meeting POLICY** at The Hague City Hall. The participants continue to proceed along the directions and strategies as formulated at the working conference Long Live Arts in London, in the fall of 2014. The importance of sharing, connecting and inspiring has already been addressed there. The main question of the brainstorm is: **how to improve active cultural participation by older people, from the perspective of policy makers?**

Some suggestions made at the meeting:

- Make sure to bring arts to older people.
- Form a working group, consisting of an artist, a care provider, a policy maker and a member from the Older People's Alliance.
- Start an international research database.
- Appoint prominent institutions as programme leaders.
- Promote the voice of older people in policy.
- Lobby outside the sectors of welfare, care and the arts.
- Activate the immediate network of older people: children, relatives and friends.
- Critically review the current distribution policy when looking for new ways of financing.
- Propose mutual objectives, in order to enable co-financing by several departments.
- Provide a targeted, realistic evaluation.
- Influence the image of older people positively by choosing positive, up-to-date images.



Thursday 21 May 2015

In his welcoming speech, **Paul Broekhoff**, Director Culture & Sport at the city of The Hague, also stresses the timeliness of the conference theme. He refers to recent research which shows that out of the 2,9 million people over 65, over 900,000 older people feel isolated. Amongst them is a group of **200,000 older people that only have some form of social contact once every five days**. More attention for cultural participation is not only beneficial to older people, according to Broekhoff. It is an excellent chance for the cultural sector to significantly contribute to society, and to access a completely new market. Furthermore, the sector will benefit from older people's maturity and knowledge, which allows them to experience art more intensely.

Moving from the European agenda to the United States: as from 2000, **Susan Perlstein**, the 'godmother' of Creative Ageing, is committed to bringing creative expression for all ages under the attention. The recurrent conferences in Washington on this theme are proof of her successful approach. Perlstein has good news: **the emphasis is shifting, from 'the problem' of older people to 'the potential' of older people**. The United States are carefully working towards the adaptation of relevant laws. For the upcoming year, Perlstein will focus on building a sustainable network of contacts and organisations (including health care institutions, transport service providers, libraries etcetera). **Perlstein points out the importance of data to support this goal**. For instance, she has presented her calculations to the American government, proving how active cultural participation by older people is saving the country a total of 6,3 billion dollars in medical costs.

According to **Bob Collins**, Chair of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, art and creativity aren't limited by age. Art is relevant to all of us and a substantial part of society. **Art must be widely accessible, just like education**. Collins points out the role of politics in this matter: they ought to acknowledge, respect and honour the potential. **Older people aren't adults in the waiting room, but people with a rich heritage of past experiences**. Too often the image of old and grey people with a cane prevails, whereas so many older people actively participate (e.g. Queen Elisabeth at 89, and Pope Francis at 78). Society often depersonalises this specific image and diminishes older people. In part, older people themselves are to blame, for thinking: "I'm too old for this..." Collins explains to the audience that ageing is more than just a health-related issue, just like art is more than a remedy to various health problems.

Keynote speaker **Andreas Kruse**, Director of the Institute of Gerontology, starts with Johann Sebastian Bach. Particularly Bach's proven capability in mastering misfortune makes him an interesting case study from a scientific point of view. Kruse states that the integration of J.S. Bach in a social context (he literally lived amidst the music) must have played a crucial part. Long-term research also proves that an emotional intensification takes place through knowledge of differentiation, enhanced reflection on experiences and expanded self-reflection. The ability of our mind to change and adapt in response to external challenges is key in this. This plasticity of the brain is visible at a very high age, when people learn, when they are challenged (also physically), when they communicate and when they are emotionally triggered. All the more reason to stimulate a social and culturally active environment for older people, in order for them to maintain their cognitive skills. Kruse also stresses **the necessity of a large degree of self-design in ageing**. The importance of the determination of personal goals and the creation of new ideas contributes to an open attitude to change and adaptability to new conditions.

Pier Luigi Sacco, Professor of Cultural Economics at IULM University, Milan, also believes that the well-being of older people is partially determined by cultural participation. In Italy, a so-called PGWB-index (Psychological General Well-Being Index) indicates levels of well-being. A large-scaled population survey (age 15-100) reveals that **cultural participation by older people (age 76-80) increases well-being**. This increase is already noticeable when someone visits the cinema or theatre three to five times a year. Attending a classical or jazz concert leads to an even greater increase in well-being, especially when older people attend more than ten concerts a year. Reading literature also results in a slow increase in well-being. The survey demonstrates an improvement in well-being after attending cultural events, such as concerts and movies, especially for chronically ill people, older people and women. According to Sacco, the most

effective way to force policies on culture and well-being, is to ensure an environment in which several social and cultural activities take place and to provide insight into the results of participation in these events.

Older dancers, singers, musicians, actors and storytellers share the stage during **Opening Night: Feel the Arts**. A unique line-up is presented, in the presence of Princess Beatrix: the Surinamese women choir Afimo, the Maastricht senior marching band, Chinese dance, stories from the World War II era by Ineke Brouwer and Kathleen Boet of Verhalenvertellers (Storycatchers), orchestral music by Symphonic Seniors, a personal story by Oudkast and the wonderful opera voice of the 84-year old Alberto Presilia. The audience is touched by the older dancers of the project OLD Fashion(ed), showing portraits from their childhood. The beautiful duet 'Imagine' by 80-year old Astrid Vatteroth and 16-year old Lisa Roth, both participants of Music Generations, is equally impressive. The local television station Omroep West provides a live stream of the show in 18 care residencies of the Florence Zorggroep, for hundreds of older people in The Hague.



We are feeling the arts!

The second conference day is completed with a **Generation Dinner** in the Nieuwe Kerk for 130 guests. Host Leoni Jansen, a well-known Dutch singer and presenter, shares her opinion on age in her introduction: "When people say that I don't look like sixty, I reply with: 'On the contrary, this is what sixty looks like!'" The conference participants are joined at each table by two couples of cultural participation projects for older people.

Joop van Dalen en Job Cornelissen, from the project **Care&Culture**, start the programme: Joop (91) attracts the attention of the audience by dancing with his arms. The couple with former Dachau prisoner Willemijn van Gorp and youngster Jop Bruin, who take part on behalf of the initiative 'Geen nummers maar namen' (Not numbers but names), deeply move the audience. In between dinner courses, remarkable presentations are held by projects that have received (co-)financing from the participating funds in the Dutch initiative Lang Leve Kunst. Benno Tempel, Director of the **Gemeentemuseum Den Haag**, praises older artists like Mondrian: "Most (visual) artists produce their best works after fifty." 'Foto's van Toen en Nu' (Pictures of Then and Now) is a fortnightly section on the back page of the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad: photographer Ad Nuis and author Arthur van Boogaard, both representing the project at the Generation Dinner, recreate an old picture at the same location and describe the time in between. Prior to the dessert course, Susanne Kuiper of **Studio Breedbeeld** explains ways to influence the image of older people in a positive way. One of her examples is the documentary **Herbstgold** (Autumn Gold) by director Jan Tenhaven. Tenhaven follows five athletes aged 82 and up, whose common goal is to take part in the World Masters Athletics Championships.

Friday 22 May 2015

On the last day of the conference, a broad scope of workshops and presentations takes place once more. The morning programme starts with various excursions: interactive workshops, at ten different locations in The Hague, showcase the 'gems' of cultural participation projects.

At the **conference finale**, at the end of the afternoon, **Peggy Olislaegers, Dominic Campbell, Mia Grijp** and **Johanna Kaiser** share experiences from their trip to Washington, where they attended the 2015 NCCA National Leadership Exchange and Conference 'The Creative Age'. These four specialists in cultural participation projects for older people acted as Long Live Arts ambassadors at the US conference. The ambassadors report an important question that was raised in Washington: what if politicians aren't convinced by research results? Participants suggested that the answer might be to focus on the experiences of older people and professionals. The different roles of professionals are also discussed. Therapists, artists and volunteers are involved in the projects, each one with his or her specific skill set and activities: how to deal with this diversity? In the extensive discussion that follows, the ambassadors bring up the differences in approach between the United States and Europe. Many Americans quit their job when they need to take care of a family member, resulting in changing relationships.

The ambassadors are inspired by their trip and intend to not just apply their new insights to their European activities, but also use them as topics for a future conference. We can zoom out even further on the effects of culture on older people and their environment, and many new partnerships may be established around this theme. After the discussion with the ambassadors, the floor is filled with older people in colourful clothing, for a dance performance by **Holland Dance** and **Grey Vibes**.

What's next?

The conference findings will be implemented in a series of essays. Potential authors are Rudi Westendorp (Leyden Academy on Vitality and Ageing) for Research, Arthur van den Boogaard (publicist) for Practice and Anne-Sophie Parent (AGE Platform Europe) for Policy. All authors will be photographed as part of the Then and Now series. The results of the conference will be used by the European partners of Long Live Arts, to formulate the European Manifesto. The findings of the peer-to-peer meeting Research will also be included. The Manifesto will be presented at the Creative Dinner on 29 April 2016 in Brussels: the fourth and last meeting of the Long Live Arts programme, which coincides with the EU Day of Solidarity between Generations.

This year, in **October 2015**, the third Long Live Arts meeting, an expert meeting for professionals, will take place in Remscheid, Germany. The main subjects will be professional training and the work of activities coordinators in the care sector. Altogether the European Long Live Arts programme revolves around four meetings, held between 2013 and 2016 in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.



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CONCLUSIONS

PRACTICE

- The arts can make a difference in improving the quality of life for older people.
- Older people have a lot to offer: their maturity and knowledge allows them to experience art more intensely.
- The emphasis is shifting from 'the problem' of older people to 'the potential' of older people.
- Ageing is more than just a health-related issue, just like art is more than a remedy to various health problems.

RESEARCH

- Medical professionals and occupational therapists need evidence-based research regarding the efficiency of arts programmes and interventions.
- A social and culturally active environment for older people has a positive effect on their cognitive skills.
- A large degree of self-design in ageing (the determination of personal goals and the creation of new ideas) contributes to an open attitude to change and adaptability to new conditions.
- Research consistently shows how much different generations can benefit from each other.
- The well-being of older people has been scientifically proven to increase after regularly attending cultural events, such as concerts and movies.

POLICY

- The policy on prevention and research is too focused on disease and diagnosis, and not enough on patients and prevention, for example healthy ageing through the arts.
- There is a need to promote the voice of older people in policy development.
- Cultural participation is not only beneficial to older people, it's also an excellent chance for the cultural sector to significantly contribute to society and to access a completely new market.

GENERAL REMARKS

PRACTICE

- Think inclusively instead of exclusively, especially where older people are concerned.
- Improve the participation of older people, by creating projects that are engaging, inclusive, social, and set at a specific moment in time.
- Be aware that older people can experience financial, physical, informational and attitudinal barriers when deciding whether to participate.
- Treat patients as equal human beings, instead of slipping into the regular 'passive' mode, and freely use imagination to connect patients with the world outside.
- Bring arts to older people.
- Find alternative methods to allocate cash flows (e.g. financing the process, not the results).
- Align objectives of different programmes to mutual objectives, in order to enable co-financing by several departments.
- Provide a targeted, realistic evaluation.
- Think demand-driven instead of supply-driven.

RESEARCH

- Start an international research database.
- Set up evidence-based research regarding the efficiency of arts programmes and interventions, aimed at increasing the mental well-being of patients in care institutions.
- Make use of novels as a source of information on the personal experience of illness, in order to guide the practice of care professionals.
- Turn to art to improve patients' lives, especially of those who can't be cured.
- Promote working beyond the traditional artist's studio (e.g. in a care institution), to create more value and meaning for both the individual artist and the arts in general.

POLICY

- Think outside the box in terms of involving departments (e.g. the Department of Transport).
- Choose innovative approaches and subsequently address new groups, in order to bring arts and culture under the attention on a European level.
- Develop training programmes for the arts, as well as health care.

