



## **Practicing Art with Ambition**

### **Towards a local stimulus and facilitation active programme for seniors' active artistic practices**

(This paper is an English translation of selected parts of the Dutch publication *Kunstbeoefening met Ambitie. Naar een lokaal stimulerings- en faciliteringsprogramma voor kunstbeoefening door ouderen.* (2012) Utrecht: LESI.)

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## Preface

This year, 2012, is the year of the greying population. This invokes bleak pictures: too many older people, rising costs, not enough personnel helping bedridden patients, infirmity and loneliness. Fortunately, the reality is different than that. Research shows that many seniors experience this phase as the happiest of their lives. It takes longer than it used to for them to become dependent on others, they belong to a category that is better educated and has more money than previous generations, and they have time on their hands. The 65+ age category now constitutes 16% of our population, and will be 20% in 2020 – this is an increase of about 1.5 million. This is not a terrifying picture but a sign to be taken into account when designing our future society. We therefore shouldn't moan that 'the public is getting old' when we talk about something like cultural participation, but should rejoice about the growing group of seniors who visit museums and attend theatre performances and concerts. Because of the constant focus on youth this growing group of clients is not taken into account sufficiently.

Being actively involved in artistic creation, playing in amateur theatre groups, painting, doing film and photography, singing in choirs – in that respect our country is extraordinarily active. Throughout the years the government has stimulated and institutionalised this via the sector institute Kunstfactor. Being involved in theatre, music or the visual arts enriches your life; you develop your talent and strengthen your self-esteem. This has an added value for persons in their third or fourth life phase: contact with others, being involved in something together, being part of a social network. It is because of this that much research shows that being actively involved in artistic endeavours fosters the well-being of seniors. And that is logical too, as being involved passionately and seriously relativises certain discomforts that are part of becoming older, it reconciles you with your now-smaller world or the unavoidable loss of loved ones.

With the latter in mind, two important organisations for seniors, the Sluyterman Fund and the RCOAK Foundation, have joined forces, and together with Kunstfactor have delineated the contours for a project aimed at the active practicing of the arts by seniors. The central question here was how this could be stimulated and facilitated at a local level. This is a question that has to be investigated through research. The National Expertise Centre for Social Intervention, LESI, deployed a research team led by Professor Roelof Hortulanus for this task. For the duration of the research, expert meetings, a congress and several other meetings took place with the clients.

The results of these efforts are represented under the challenging title *Practicing Art with Ambition (Kunstbeoefening met Ambitie)*. This is a report written with love and care. It includes, in the first place, an extensive literature study into the connection between cultural activities and the well-being of seniors. This is followed by a qualitative study of 12 selected projects in which participating seniors, initiators and key persons were interviewed. In the third place a force-field analysis was conducted which included governments, financial institutions, senior associations, arts institutions, and senior care and welfare institutions. This is all done with the purpose of being able to figure out what role they could play in developing a stimulus and facilitation programme.

The many recommendations that were made on the basis of this research are interesting, and deserve follow-up. The wishes of the researchers to realise three experimental fields with the knowledge acquired also deserve attention. After all, it would be fantastic if seniors can be encouraged to do something they never got to do earlier in their lives. If this report leads to an initial impetus in the year 2012, the greying of the population will shine as silver.

Hedy D'Ancona

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and motivation of this project**

Throughout the centuries major thinkers have reflected on ‘the art of aging’, but seldom has anyone found the way to what it is that the expression actually entails, namely the role of the arts when becoming older.

In the Netherlands there is a strong greying trend. In 20 years about one quarter of the population will be 65 or older. The first stream of baby boomers has already passed that age boundary. On average they have a large number of healthy years of life to look forward to, they are active and independent in life, and providing it with meaning is an important motivation for their new activities. They are ‘the new seniors’.

This longer life span results in increasing numbers of seniors arriving at what is known as the fourth life phase. This phase is characterised by an increased vulnerability. Seniors in this phase can be affected by old-age diseases, chronic conditions, loss of loved ones and a thinning-out of their social networks. The balance between their load and what they can do can thus be threatened.

The increasing number of seniors in the Netherlands makes paying attention to a valuable and useful content of the ‘third’ or ‘fourth’ life phases ever more urgent. This urgency exists on the personal level but also very much at the social level. The well-being of seniors will demand increasing attention from political and social institutions. The already high costs of care what rise even more. It will therefore be useful to conduct research into and invest in possibilities to stimulate the well-being and health of seniors, thanks to which they may need less care.

The arts and the practice of artistic endeavours by seniors can play a relevant and special role here, not only because it is precisely seniors who account for a large share of artistic consumption and amateur artistic practice, but also because it can be assumed that art can contribute importantly to motivation and well-being in the latter life phases. For their well-being and motivation, seniors can fall back to a decreasing degree on trusted social bonds, and will have to give content on their own to the things that have meaning for them and foster their well-being. Being involved in artistic endeavours can play an important role in fulfilling this content. Artistic practice requires physical energy and mental power. It is a catalyser of emotions and needs intrinsic needs and ambitions. It also offers a pleasurable social environment in which one works together, delivers a performance, people feel at home and can make use of their talents. For vulnerable seniors, artistic practices can have a special meaning: they can work as a sort of compensating buffer with which the ability to do things is enhanced, for example as a distraction from disease and pain, and in some cases also as alternative medication or therapy.

On all societal terrains, independence, the ability to cope on one's own, participation of citizens, connecting with talents and residents' powers have become keywords for policies. This also includes the context of the Dutch Social Support Act (WMO) for supporting persons with limitations, as well as when reorganising the welfare sector (used our welfare) and when cutting government subsidies. In this context, extra attention will be needed for that group of seniors that cannot sufficiently cope on their own, but who do not live in an intramural setting either.

The policy with regard to living, care and welfare is aimed at optimal facilitation of seniors in their own residential and living environment. When giving content to the welfare dimension of this policy concept, which is strongly geared at participating in society and combating social isolation, active participation in a form of amateur art can be of great value.

All these developments are recognised on a societal level but so far have not translated into extensive attention for the amateur arts sector or studies into amateur art. Seniors' artistic practices do not yet belong to the regular supply of arts, welfare and care institutions, and personal initiatives of seniors are not optimally stimulated or facilitated in practice.

Despite the growing group of seniors in our society, and despite the presumed positive effects of artistic practice on their well-being – as a great deal of international research also shows – artistic practices by seniors are running behind the possibilities. There is also a need for research into the effects of artistic practices on the well-being and motivation of seniors in relation to the possibilities and hindrances that there are for their active artistic participation.

The RCOAK Foundation and the Sluyster van Loo Fund, as well as Kunstfactor, a sector institute for amateur arts, are interested in the effects of artistic practices on the well-being of seniors. Kunstfactor wants to know which aspects of projects bring about positive effects. The funds for seniors want to know how active artistry practices benefit the well-being of seniors in terms of useful ways to spend time, social contact, health and motivation in the sense of a general meaning of life. These questions are central in the research and advisory project 'Seniors and Artistic Practice' ('Ouderen en kunstbeoefening'), commissioned by funds for seniors and Kunstfactor to the National Expertise Centre for Social Intervention (LESI), under the supervision of Prof. R.P. Hortulanus.

In the research attention is needed for the complexity of the concepts of well-being (and motivation), artistic practices (the bandwidth of passive to active, individual or collective) and seniors (variation in background, needs, life situation, health, etc.). Especially when it comes to the fourth life phase of seniors, the connection between artistic practice and care for seniors is as important. Artistic practice can importantly contribute to senior care in that respect.

Possibilities and hindrances for artistic practice aren't present exclusively in senior care. In a more general sense, both in the sphere of public facilities and on the basis of private initiatives, access to active artistic practices can be hindered or new opportunities may not be taken advantage of. It is therefore important to make an analysis of the force field of involved actors if we are to effectively stimulate and facilitate seniors' artistic practices. Receding public investments, the unexplored possibilities of applications to private funds, lack of familiarity with the need for support of initiatives

from seniors themselves, the participation goals of the Dutch Social Support Act (WMO) and the discussion about supplementary care in nursing homes and homes for the elderly evidence the societal relevance of a stimulus and facilitation programme.

To arrive at a good assessment of the impact that active artistic practices can have on the well-being of seniors, this research will firstly fall back on studies already conducted into the effects of artistic practices on well-being. Next, several projects of active artistic endeavours will be selected and examined. Interviews with participants as well as key persons will be conducted. The literature study and the analysis of both the impact of practical projects and actual and latent needs and initiatives of seniors, as well as an inventory of the force field of existing or potential organisations involved, will make up the ingredients for a programme to stimulate and facilitate active artistic practices by seniors. In this way the research attempts to contribute to a strategic vision and local cooperation between governments, portfolio funds, professional social and cultural organisations, health care and welfare institutions, and formal or voluntary associations of citizens, aimed at the individual well-being and social participation of seniors.

## **1.2 Presentation of the goal and question**

With a summary of the above we arrived at the following goal and research questions for the present research project.

### **Goal**

To acquire insight into the impact and experienced benefits of seniors' active artistic endeavours on their well-being, and on that basis formulate a stimulus and facilitation programme in which more possibilities are created for seniors' artistic endeavours.

### **Central research question**

The central research question reads as follows: What role do artistic practices play in the well-being of seniors, and how can seniors' artistic endeavours effectively be stimulated and facilitated on this basis?

We will explain this question further through seven partial questions:

1. What categorisation of seniors is relevant, and what are the factors in artistic practice that play a specific role for various categories?
2. How are existing practices of active artistic endeavours designed, what are factors that influence the well-being of seniors, and how do participants experience these practices?
3. What are the experiences and needs of seniors who do not or only temporarily participate in such practices, compared to those who participate on a permanent basis?
4. What actors are involved or should be involved in seniors' artistic endeavours in general and in practical projects in particular, and what is their influence?
5. What criteria can be formulated that projects and activities aimed at seniors' artistic practices must act on if they want to meet the needs of the selected categories of seniors?

6. What are the content-related criteria to evaluate effective projects and activities aimed at seniors' artistic practices, and what policy, organisational and financial preconditions must be made in the process?
7. What are the contours of a stimulus and facilitation programme for seniors' active artistic practice?

### **1.3 The setup of the project**

The research consists of four partial studies that build on each other.

1. A literature study into seniors, welfare and artistic practices.  
The research starts with a focused literature study in order to arrive at:
  - giving more comprehensive, scientific content to the relationship between seniors' artistic practices and their well-being;
  - a reconnaissance of evaluative research into practical projects with the goal of mapping out the main factors that are relevant for the relationship between seniors' artistic practices and their welfare;
  - a reconnaissance of the force field.
2. An empirical study into selective practical projects 'seniors' artistic practices and well-being'.  
The goals of this partial study are multiple and can be summarised as the inventory of:
  - active elements in the content and design of the project;
  - arguments of initiators as to why the projects are designed in this way and what their power signifies (both for the participants and for the political and societal environment);
  - the experiences, perceptions and wishes of seniors in the projects;
  - the composition and role of the existing 'force field'.

The design of this research consists of a multiple case study. Twelve projects were specifically selected. The case studies were chosen in such a way that they represent a wide variation in types of projects. The variation is based on the conducted literature study, with attention being paid to characteristics such as: domain of artistic practice, categories of participating seniors, types of initiators, societal embedment, degree of organisation of the connections. Before the selection the projects were screened for relevance (e.g. presence of information, degree of activity).

In all cases seniors, initiators and other key persons were selected for interviews. For most projects 10 seniors were interviewed, as well as about five other involved persons. Some projects had smaller numbers of interviews. In total, 55 participants and 33 key persons were interviewed. The interviews were conducted and transcribed literally by a limited number of specially trained interviewers. In addition, project documents were studied and observations conducted at the locations. Besides participants in the projects, some seniors were interviewed who participated in the projects but stopped – the dropouts. The wishes, views, needs and previous experiences of the seniors were used to obtain a sharper picture of the active elements in the arts projects.

The choice for the selection of cases is substantiated on the basis of a literature study. In the first place there was a parallel selection, in which the cases were determined for the data collection simultaneously. In the latter stage it appeared however that there were certain gaps, particularly with respect to informal initiatives, community art and participation of migrants, and a choice was made for a number of extra cases. The internal validity of a case study was ensured by a focused literature study and by using a diversity of data sources per case. External validity was optimised by a focused variation in the cases (select patterns and mechanisms in various domains and in the different subcategories of seniors could be determined), and by keeping certain context-related factors as comparable as possible. Subsequently, comparable categories of seniors were examined who permanently or temporarily halted participation in the investigated practices.

### 3. A force field analysis of the actors that are involved in seniors' artistic endeavours

The force fields surrounding the investigated practical projects were analysed on the basis of the information that came forth from the interviews. In addition, a more general force field analysis was conducted around seniors' artistic endeavours. After all, around the examined projects a wider field of organisations and parties can be found that play or could play a role in seniors' artistic endeavours. To also gain insight into this field, cross-over case interviews were conducted. The analysis involved arts institutions, informal associations of seniors, governments, financial institutions, funds, seniors and artistic unions, universities and vocational schools, and health care and welfare organisations. It was examined which actors and organisations are relevant for the stimulus and facilitation programme to be developed. The conditions under which people will participate as parties and how this influences the process are investigated.

### 4. Formulation of the stimulus and facilitation programme

Its goal is to develop a differentiated stimulus and facilitation active programme for seniors' active artistic practices, with the desired effects on their welfare and motivation. In this programme the findings of the three previous partial studies are processed and translated into a programme applicable in practice. In addition to existing practices offered by professionals, important points of attention are indicating the possibilities for facilitation and support of those things that are already taking place on an informal basis, taking into account the mapped-out force fields. Here specific attention will be given to the role that volunteers, welfare organisations and private funds can play in that force field. The programme also comprises criteria for the evaluation of effective projects and a description of relevant policy, organisational and financial preconditions.



## **1.4 Concepts used in this research report**

Several concepts are presented in the research questions that necessitate further definition. In practice concepts are often used interchangeably, but before we continue we want to clarify the choices we made with respect to the concepts we used. The following concepts are used successively: seniors, artistic practice, welfare, force field, stimulus and facilitation.

### **1.4.1 Seniors**

A brief further definition of the concept of 'senior' is necessary. Just like the term 'youth', the concept of 'seniority' is surrounded by a myriad definitions, views and perhaps also prejudices, and in any event there are different ideas about it – theoretically informed or otherwise. It is not uncommon to assume an objective measure, as has for instance been done in recent SCP reports, where three age categories were distinguished, i.e. 50-65, 65-80, and 80 and older. The last two categories correspond more or less with what is identified elsewhere as the 'third' and 'fourth' life phase (Liefbroer & Dykstra, 2000). If we look at these different groups, we see that the first category, those aged 50 and older, are in the phase of life in which the aging individual is still active in society, as a rule also professionally. The second group (the 'third life phase') is in a subsequent stage; these individuals are generally no longer active professionally but are often still in good health. Finally, there is the group of those aged 80+ (the 'fourth life phase'), who are in the autumn of their lives and generally have to deal with physical infirmities.

This classification into categories is logical but also problematic. Why, for example, has the boundary for the first category been set at age 50 – why not at 40, or 55? More important is that this 'objective' measure makes all kinds of explicit and implicit assumptions about old age. Explicit is the assumption that physical problems play a role in well-being, and that active participation in society is important for this well-being. Implicitly it is assumed that having a partner and/or children play an important role. These, however, are domains of well-being that fulfil a function in every life phase.

For this research we defined the following age categories: younger than 65, age 65-75 (the third life phase), and older than 75 (the fourth life phase). For the rest, old age is not only a question of age. Old age can also be seen as a situational or context-bound condition, where things depend on how people experience their age. Westerhof and Barrett (2005) found in a comparative study that there is a link between the degree of well-being and the question of how old you feel: people who feel younger than their actual age experience more well-being, and this applies more in the United States and Germany, which also suggests that 'old age' is a culture-related concept.

### **1.4.2 Artistic practice**

We distinguish the concept of artistic practice from the more general concept of artistic participation. With the first concept we refer to all those forms and practices that say something

about the active practice of some kind of professional or amateur artistic form. The second concept identifies a broader meaning, namely also the more or less passive forms of artistic consumption, for example attending theatre performances or going to a museum exhibit without playing a clearly recognisable personal role in the process. The difference between the two forms is gradual, not absolute. There are all kinds of forms of amateur artistic practices conceivable in which there is relatively little input required from the practitioner and the added value can lie in 'going along with it'. On the other hand one can also imagine that what is known as passive consumption of art can be accompanied by a high degree of involvement and immersion. Nonetheless, the emphasis in our research will lie on artistic practice, that is, on those forms of participation in which the participant fulfils a clearly recognisable active role as producer. In this project we consider an amateur artistic practitioner someone who is involved in an artistic endeavour on a nonprofessional basis, as a hobby or pastime and not with the intention of producing an artistic performance for which material remuneration is expected.

#### **1.4.3 Well-being**

The literature survey extensively delves into the description of the concept of well-being and the distinguished domains of well-being. For us it will suffice to provide the definition that is given in the literature. Well-being can be defined as the degree to which an individual manages to accomplish quality of life for himself in his social environment.

#### **1.4.4 Force field and playing field**

By force field we refer to the various forces that are determinant to or influence the design, the activities and the continued existence of the investigated amateur artistic projects. In the force field analysis of part 4 a distinction is made into an analysis of the involved actors and an analysis of the disability and sustainability of the project. In part 5 the concept of playing field will be introduced. A playing field is interpreted as a potential force field for seniors' amateur artistic practices. A playing field can be typified as a specific constellation of key actors in combination with specific goals, which underlie initiatives for amateur artistic practices.

#### **1.4.5 Stimulating and facilitating**

In the programme we make a distinction between stimulating and facilitating. The bandwidth of supportive practices cannot be covered exclusively with the term 'stimulating'. Stimulating can be aimed, for example, at activating seniors towards more active artistry (e.g. socially isolated seniors, seniors who need care, seniors in a transition phase of their lives). Stimulating can also be aimed at organisations in order to integrate artistic practices (or seniors as a separate target group) more into

their goals, arrangements and programmes: examples are programmes for living/welfare/care, training offerings, number of arts centres or neighbourhood-oriented arrangements.

Facilitating, by contrast, can be aimed at informal initiators and groups of vital seniors who are already active in the arts as amateurs or want to do that. It is also aimed at those actors who with their programmes run into problems, in education, in making intermediaries available, etc. The distinction between facilitating and stimulating in the stimulus programme is important in order to find the right match between problems/goals, impact and suitable measures, as well as for purposes of choosing the proper angle when it comes to agreements and communication.

## **1.5 Categorisation**

One of the partial questions for this project reads as follows: Which categorisation of seniors is relevant, and what factors in artistic practice play a specific goal for the different categories of seniors? A categorisation can be aimed at general background characteristics of seniors themselves, for example life phases, degree of independence, receptiveness to artistic practice, dwelling forms, etc. For this research we first seek a specific categorisation that enables a better perspective about the relationship between seniors, arts and well-being. What well-being aspects of seniors do artistic endeavours influence? The answers to this question are relevant in order to discover differences with other age categories. In part 4 and part 5 we will discuss the categorisation possibilities.

### **Current typologies for living, well-being, care and happiness of seniors**

Classifying the target group of seniors into typologies is not a new phenomenon. In recent decades seniors have been increasingly difficult to categorise as a single target group. An important reason is that they are ever less predictable and represent the third and fourth life phases less homogeneously. In addition, thanks to their active lifestyle and relative affluence, 'new seniors' have become an interesting market for those offering services and products in the areas of living, well-being, health and happiness. In different sectors, seniors are increasingly classified into target group typologies from a marketing perspective.

For example, with respect to the supply of living and well-being services, housing association *Woonzorg Nederland* distinguishes 'actives', 'relaxers', 'contact-seekers' and 'status-conscious' (Woonzorg Nederland, 2010). In order to innovations in care and prevention the 'less self-sufficient', 'pragmatic' and 'socially critic care clients' are distinguished (Motivaction, 2009). For the supply of recreational activities the 'hedonists', 'curious', 'wrestlers' and 'platen calibration' are distinguished (Overbeek, 2011). 'Home artists', 'association members', 'networkers', 'hoppers', 'makers' and 'shoppers' are examples of general profiles of amateur artists (Kunstfactor, 2010). These profiles are about the way in which they practice their art. No distinction is made into age categories.

When developing a suitable typology for this research, we investigated whether the current typologies for seniors in terms of living, well-being, care and happiness can be relevant. Which typologies fit with this project, considering the specific findings from the interviews? And on which points must the current typologies be adapted or supplemented by older amateur artists?

### **Categorisation into types of supply**

A switch in perspective from target group to the supply side is another option for the use of typologies. We could think of a typology that is based on types of art forms, initiators, organisational methods, precondition-related measures, actors, contexts and settings in which supply is initiated. Such a typology can be helpful for a better coordination of supply, a better interplay between the supply of amateur art initiatives and the needs of seniors, and good facilitation of individual amateur arts initiatives of seniors themselves.

### **Multi-stage categorisation**

We will try to examine whether it is possible to deploy typologies in the facilitation of the stimulus programme in stages, not using one single typology as a dominant connecting thread but using several typologies in different ways when formulating suitable stimulus and facilitation measures, depending on the angle of approach. Such a multi-stage approach can help discover which groups of seniors in the amateur arts world can receive more or different stimuli or facilities, as well as which amateur arts projects for seniors with specific arts-oriented measures should be facilitated and in which way general amateur arts initiatives and courses can be made more accessible to specific groups of seniors.

## **1.6 Selection and introduction of research cases**

We have discussed different aspects related to welfare that are important for the connection between artistic practice, well-being and seniors, and are relevant for the development of a stimulus and facilitation programme. Below we describe the way in which the selection of the projects to be investigated took place and on what basis it was done. The intention was to represent a wide variation in types of projects in which different characteristics recur, such as various disciplines of amateur artistic practice, categories of participating seniors, types of initiators and organisers, societal embedding, motivation and intended goals, and degree of organisation of actors. The approach is that in their variety the selected practical projects can tell a good story about the usefulness of active participation in amateur artistic endeavours for the well-being of seniors, and can answer the question of how hindrances can be removed from nonparticipating seniors. This means that the starting points in the selection of the practical projects are based on a mutually

enhancing contribution to that story. In that sense, the practical projects form a pallet within which the separate projects can become whole in their uniqueness.

After describing the selection criteria, a brief delineation of the investigated projects follows.

### **1.6.1 Selection of the research cases**

The established selection criteria are substantiated by the conceptual framework that emanates from the literature survey and the empirical reality of seniors' amateur artistic practices. The selection of practical projects that are eligible for the advisory reconnaissance took place on the basis of established selection criteria. The selection criteria related to the organisation method of a practical project had a leading role in this process. This means that there was an emphasis on ensuring that the pallet of projects displayed a variety of the different artistic visions that are interwoven in the goal and design of the project as well as related organisational criteria such as informal and formal organisation methods and the corresponding financing. The most important reason for this prioritising is that the way in which projects are organised has the most direct relationship with (policy-related) preconditions that are necessary for the realisation and thus the facilitation of a practical project.

#### **Selection category 1**

##### **Amateur artistic practice in a practical project**

##### **Active artistic practice**

Central in this advisory reconnaissance is active artistic practice. This means that projects are selected which have as goal the creation of art by participating seniors with an observable result – the seniors are producers. Arts projects that fall outside the selection are those in which seniors are used by non-seniors as a source for making art (e.g. non-seniors writing life stories). Also, we did not primarily select practical projects in which seniors are consumers of artistic presentations as spectators or participants. Still, this category of interested seniors is important too because they can give insight into any unfulfilled needs, views and hindrances in relation to active artistic practice.

##### **Amateur arts**

In this project we defined an amateur arts practitioner as somebody who practices art on a nonprofessional basis. The person practices the art as a hobby or pastime and not with the aim of delivering an artistic performance for which material remuneration is expected. This does not take away the fact that there are arts projects in which amateurs participate where the artistic practice is

of such a level that individual or collective financial income can be received. Such qualified artistic practices, placed on a continuum, can be somewhere in-between amateur artistic practice and professional artistic practice. When selecting the projects, room was left over both for projects in which older amateurs receive no material remuneration and projects in which they do but where it does not constitute an a priori motivation.

## **Disciplines**

In the selection we took into account different disciplines of amateur arts practices:

visual arts (including painting), dance, new media (photo/video/computer), music (including singing), writing (poems, life stories) and theatre.

Seniors are active within all disciplines, but especially within the categories of music (singing) and the visual arts (painting). In the selection of the projects we aimed at representing the different types of artistic practices.

## **Selection category 2**

### **The target group of seniors in the practical project**

#### **Age boundaries, sex and ethnicity**

The age delimitation has been taken very broadly in the selection of projects. From the literature survey it has become clear that further determining 'seniors' or 'old age' is problematic because of a strict demarcation of age or age categories. For this reason we chose to select projects in which seniors above age 60 participate. The most important motivation is that this age heralds a life phase in which work obligations and care tasks for the family fall away, and this brings about a renewed, purposeful life content. Artistic endeavours can constitute a realistic motivation that can fill in for the new lacuna in how to spend one's time, self-affirmation and fulfilment that used to be met by work and care. In the analysis of the research findings we will take a look at the different age groups of seniors corresponding with different life phases that are represented in the projects.

To get a picture as representative as possible of the meaning of artistic practices for the well-being of seniors, we made sure that both men and women participated in the selected arts projects. This doesn't mean that there will be some projects where one of the sexes is overrepresented. We did strive to select at least one arts project specifically aimed at the participation of migrant seniors. The reason is that migrant seniors are generally underrepresented in the practice of amateur art. By selecting a project in which amateur seniors participate, more insight can be gained into the special output that is needed to motivate this group and facilitate its participation in amateur arts practices.

### **Skill and arts practice (incidental or structural)**

In the selection we focused on short-term projects in which seniors participate (incidental) as well as on continuous artistic activities in which seniors participate for prolonged periods (structural). The idea is to gain more insight into what involvement in artistic endeavours does to the well-being of seniors, and whether it is necessary to stimulate artistic practice as a self-evident useful part of life or as an occasional experience.

### **Degree of self-sufficiency**

We sought projects in which the participating seniors were self-sufficient and they themselves were able to take the initiative to participate, as well as projects with participating seniors who were more vulnerable in the sense that they were dependent on care and assistance and the input of others was needed to achieve participation (for example an indication or assistance from an intramural care situation). The importance of this difference is that seniors' degree of self-sufficiency influences the input that is needed to motivate them and make it possible for them to participate in amateur artistic endeavours.

### **Selection category 3**

#### **Organisational method of the practical project**

The selection criteria distinguished in this category will be substantiated together at the end because the motivation of the criteria are interrelated.

#### **The aim for goals of the project**

The practical projects were selected on the basis of the four different artistic views that we will subsequently distinguish in the literature survey of part 2. These artistic views are derived from the aimed-for goals and design of the selected practical project. We took into account that the practical projects simultaneously comprise several artistic views within them. For this reason, in the selection we focused on the one with the highest priority. We also aimed for the selection of the practical projects to represent all four artistic views. In this way we aim to gain insight into the question of whether there is a connection between the various artistic views, represented in the goals and design or signature of projects, and the motivation of seniors to participate and the impact of participation on their well-being. In short, these are the artistic views:

1. Art as a goal unto itself: the intrinsic value of art.

2. Art as a means towards a goal: spending time meaningfully, having company and meeting people. The participation itself is more important than the artistic production.
3. Art as strategy: developing and/or strengthening identity. There is a (societal) emancipation goal.
4. Art as therapy: art as a means to improve mental and physical health.

### **The social setting**

Starting point in the selection of the practical projects has been that this involves amateur artistic practices organised in a group context. A presumption is that the social aspect of amateur artistic practices produces a complementary positive contribution to the well-being of participating seniors. This doesn't mean that there may not be practical projects in which one will work in a group setting, but the focus lies on individual and autonomous practicing of the arts by the participants.

### **The organisation: informal and formal**

In the selection of projects there are various organisational structures that have been taken into account. We have some projects that have arisen from informal private initiatives and eventually became formalised in an association context, becoming organised into projects from formal organisations such as cultural, social and health care institutions, advocacy groups and private organisations. We also look at the question of whether professionals are involved in the organisation and execution.

### **Means of subsistence**

For the selection there has been an approach to bring back the various means of subsistence of the practical projects. This involves material preconditions that are often related with the way in which the arts activity is organised. The most important source of subsistence for informal amateur arts initiatives is thus often membership in a club, association fees and/or donations from sponsors and private individuals. Formally organised projects, by contrast, often depend on collective, regular private flows of subsidies, and it is a reason why goals and the intended target group are often distracted from the programmes that are linked to these subsidies.

### **Successful participation**

When selecting the practical projects we took into account their degree of success. There are projects that are going well, others not so well, in terms of numbers of participating seniors. Two projects were selected that appeared to have high chances of success and/or seemed to be successful, but were nonetheless discontinued due to a lack of interest and/or organisational and financial obstacles. The intention is, by means of a reconstruction of the design and organisation of



these projects, to get a perspective on hindrances that were not foreseen or have not been (yet) overcome and/or opportunities that have not (yet) been taken advantage of.

## **Motivation**

The different ways in which the practical projects are organised reflect different force fields that play a role in the realisation of amateur artistic practices. Here we mean the actors that may or may not be constructively contributing to the success of the projects. This is about interested parties in a broad sense and their relationship with organisational and policy questions (from micro to meso). This relationship can be of influence to the ability of getting initiatives started and making them blossom. To get a representative picture of the reach of the various force fields we have taken into account a variety of actual and potential involved actors. For this reason, we looked at various types of initiators (individual/informal, professional) who in the process of facilitation and stimulus could play a present or future role, directly or indirectly. Examples are leaders and policymakers within various institutions, governments and sectors such as living, health care, welfare, the arts and philanthropic legislation (WMO and AWBZ), indication criteria and access to participation, financing possibilities.

## **Selection category 4**

### **The research possibilities in the practical project**

#### **Data collection**

In the selection we have taken into account the realistic possibility to gather empirical data that are needed to answer the research question. This involves observation of the artistic practices and interviews with at least 10 participating seniors and five other involved persons (initiators, organisers, key figures). In addition, all projects were selected with a running time that overlaps the planning of the period during which empirical data are gathered (spring/summer 2011).

#### **1.6.2 Introduction of the research case studies**

On the basis of the selection criteria, practical projects have been gathered in different ways. An Internet search was done and projects were submitted by the parties via professional and personal sources of information and via the advisory committee of this advisory reconnaissance. To obtain a good, realistic picture of a practical project use was made of notifications and descriptions of the project on the Internet as well as mail and telephone contact with those involved. In this way a first impression was obtained of the practiced disciplines of amateur art, the intended and participating

target group, the organisation of the project and the possibilities of doing research into the participating and nonparticipating seniors and other involved persons. Next, contact was established with the organisation of the project, and based on verification of the information and added pieces of information, cooperation on the project was requested. In the process, the organisers were informed about the goals and design of the advisory reconnaissance. Two of the approached projects fell through, one because cooperation was not obtained in the end and one because, upon further consideration, the project did not meet the criteria.

Five projects were initially selected: Art atelier (Kunstatelier), the Zeist Men's Choir, the No-Longer-Young-Show (Niet-Meer-Zo- Piep-Show), Tangoplus and Seniors in Perspective. After a first round of interviews there appeared to be a need to involve a few other projects: the LOV (Life Course Older Refugees Project), Introdance, and the Alkmaar Senior Symphony Orchestra. In the course of the research there seemed to be another need for information about informal initiatives and community art projects, which resulted in several interviews around the project Seniors! Art in the Districts and interviews and observations for Classic Café and Café Chantant.

Below we introduce the selected practical projects by way of a general description and an additional description based on the selection criteria.

## **Project 1**

### **Arts atelier**

General description: Seniors paint in a health care centre under the guidance of an artist/activity counsellor.

Artistic practice: Focus on amateur artistic endeavours. There is also a semi-professional presentation of the produced artistic pieces but the focus doesn't lie there. There is also a special publication with paintings of the participants.

Target group: Participants are diverse in terms of age (but are primarily seniors), sex and ethnicity; vulnerable neighbourhood residents and residents of the health care centre (AWBZ indication for 'activating assistance' is needed).

Organisation: The goal 'activation, structure, useful way of spending the day and contact' works therapeutically (fostering health through useful ways of spending the day), also attention for intrinsic value of artistic practice; initiator is an artist, in service as an 'activity counsellor', formally organised within the health care sector, financing from the AWBZ; great motivation among seniors for participation.

## **Project 2**

### **Zeist Men's Choir**

General description: A men's choir with an extremely varied repertoire under the baton of a professional conductor. The repertoire includes works by the greatest composers. The choir sings in different languages, from classical and light classics to folk music, from opera to spirituals and from musicals to church music.

Artistic practice: Semi-professional expert singing aimed at performance level for a broad (international) audience and publication of CDs (collective source of income).

Target group: Men, including many seniors above age 60 of different ages; self-sufficient seniors; structural arts proficiency, some of the seniors have been doing this since they were younger (here artistic practice as motivational capital is interesting).

Organisation: The goal is mainly intrinsic, also a means and strategy (useful way of spending time, meeting people and strengthening identity); the choir is already in existence for 100 years in an association/membership context, sponsored by funds and private persons; par excellence a group-oriented practice (cooperation is the precondition); choir is struggling with decreasing motivation/wants new members.

## **Project 3**

### **Theatre No-Longer-Young-Show (NMZP)**

General description: The No-Longer-Young-Show (NMZP) is a show about the new way of aging, about what to do after you go on pension. This is a staged show full of sexy, rebellious, cheerful, grouchy and brave seniors. With live music by the NMZP home band and choir, 20 special people aged 65 to 90 share their experiences about aging in a hilarious and moving show. This is aging from a humorous perspective.

Artistic practice: Participation in a professional end product by amateurs, artistic practice on stage done by seniors, aimed at performances for a wide audience (old and young); incorporation of participating professional actors; skills-training of participating amateur seniors ('pearls' in the show/talent discovered late in life); motivation of participating seniors is not primarily aimed at financial remuneration.

Organisation: The goal is art as strategy (establishing a positive image about older people and old age), as well as attention for art as intrinsic value; originally an informal initiative of an older actor, Bram van der Vlugt, formally organised by a theatre bureau, Harry Kies Productions; means of subsistence: regular funds and private sponsors as well as commercial income (reduced rates, profit perspective is a question here); decreasing participation of seniors in the singing choir.

## **Project 4**

### **Tangoplus**

General description: A course on tango dancing organised for seniors in 2009 at a senior meeting point in a health care centre with a neighbourhood function. The course offering in this form has not been continued.

Artistic practice: Dance practice was not aimed at performance for a wide audience.

Target group: The project was aimed at older neighbourhood residents; incidental artistic skills training (temporary course).

Organisation: The goal is aimed at moving and meeting; formally organised in cooperation with 'Beweging 3.0' dance school Cheek2Cheek and a volunteer organisation; course money (reduced rates); too little enthusiasm of participating men; discontinued due to lack of someone who wanted to continue working on it. An informal initiative of one of the course participants to offer the course at another location too did not go through in the end.

## **Project 5**

### **Seniors in Perspective**

General description: Seniors in Perspective is a social-societal arts project that has been carried out eight times since 2008 in various Dutch senior centres, with decreasing subsidies. At each institution five residents were approached who were able to learn to work with a photo camera in order to make portraits using stories of other residents. After the subsidies ran out there was no follow-up, although that had been the intention.

Artistic practice: The artistic practice was always concluded with a book or an exhibit at the corresponding senior centre, not aimed at presentation for a wide audience; they did have skills training for photography; the project itself received a lot of media attention.

Target group: The seniors that participated and were considered for follow-up were vulnerable seniors who lived in senior centres; the idea here was incidental artistic practice.

Organisation: The aim was geared toward arts as a means, as well as meeting and fostering social contacts between residents; group-organised meetings and individual practice of photography; formally organised, idea, initiative and execution by an artist, organised by ANBO and partly made possible by different types of financing, including regular funds.

## **Project 6**

## **Life Course Older Refugees Project (LOV)**

General description: About 10 meetings of older refugees to tell their life story, among other things by means of creative expression. The idea of the LOV projects came from the Dutch Council for Refugees, and the Foundation for Fostering Societal Participation wrote a manual to this end. LOV is a format executed in many places in the Netherlands. In Wageningen it is organised by the Central Gelderland Council for refugees, with a municipal subsidy.

Artistic practice: Telling life stories; creative forms of expression such as painting, drawing, moulding, making collages and the like. The artistic practice is subjected to the goal.

Target group: Older refugees starting from age 50. In practice there is no hard age limit. Refugees generally tend to 'age' sooner, and often have physical and psychological troubles.

Organisation: The goal is to break through the social isolation by means of creative expression. Guidance by an artist, who is required to have social skills in addition to artistic skills. Continuity in Wageningen is unclear. A follow-up project has been started there, Grey is Colourful, which includes migrants as well as Dutch participants and where practicing the arts has assumed a different role. The exchange of life stories has remained the same though.

## **Project 7**

### **Introdance A, Arnhem**

General description: Dance courses organised by the education department of Introdance. The course also offers familiarisation with all aspects of the dance company Introdance, such as a tour of the building, attending a rehearsal, contact with choreographers and the like. In lessons the limitations of older persons are taken into account.

Artistic practice: The dance practice was not aimed at performance for a wide audience.

Target group: Age 55+; course participants from Arnhem and nearby areas.

Organisation: The goal is to dance to music and become acquainted with the dance company in all its facets (educational goal).

## **Project 8**

### **Introdance 2, Arnhem**

General description: A district-oriented, short-term project that was executed twice (Swing On South and Swing On 2). Initiators were the municipality as represented by the cultural scout and SWOA (Arnhem Foundation for Senior Welfare). The latter was partly responsible for recruiting seniors. Introdance contributed with the cooperation of a foreign dance company.

Artistic practice: Dancing in the context of the neighbourhood and neighbourhood activities. Performances at Musis Sacrum as intermezzo during professional performances of Introdance. There was a lot of social assistance.

Target group: Active participation: all ages, but extra efforts to involve seniors. Passive: district (neighbourhood) residents.

Organisation: The goal was to involve the district (neighbourhood) residents in dancing; continuation of dance projects in community centres or parish halls.

## **Project 9**

### **Alkmaar Senior Symphony Orchestra**

General description: A Symphony Orchestra with a specific composition of seniors whose goal is to perform light and playable compositions. This came from a private initiative. There is a relationship with the welfare organisation De Wering, but it is limited to a small financial contribution.

Artistic practice: Weekly rehearsals and several performances per year, mainly in nursing homes.

Target group: Seniors want to make music in a symphony orchestra. The age limit has been relaxed, but lies on average high above age 60.

Organisation: The daily management arranges everything. The conductor has an important role: he chooses the repertoire and decides on the choice of the arrangements of the pieces to be played. The imminent departure of the conductor is a threat to the orchestra's existence. The financial situation does not allow for the higher costs of a new conductor. Nursing homes are participating less and less in terms of performances.

## **Project 10**

### **Seniors! Art in the Districts**

General description: Seniors! This is one of the projects of Arts in the Districts (Kunst in de Wijken) a project developer set up by the municipality of Delft and now on its way to becoming independent. This is a one-time project but they are attempting to continue it. Seniors tell the story by means of songs, sketches and the like. Welfare institutions helped recruit participants.

Artistic practice: Subjected to the stories told by people, but must have some level of quality. Giving meaning to your life through art. Performances in community centres, also outside one's own district and city.

Target group: Active participation: 65+ from the district, living on their own, often lower in the socioeconomic ladder. Passive participation as active/interactive spectator in performances: older district participants.

Organisation: The artistic guidance of the group is in the hands of the conductor/arranger, the social guidance in the hands of the project leader. The goal is to work on liveability of the districts through art.

## **Project 11**

### **Classic Café, Amsterdam**

General description: Originally an informal initiative by an Amsterdam resident who loved singing and made his kitchen available for anyone who wanted to sing. After 25 years it grew to a group of about 50 people who get together twice a month in a community centre to sing and/or listen to each other, accompanied by a professional pianist. At the end of the afternoon there is a meal. The café stopped at the end of 2011 because the accommodations were no longer available, and no new accommodations can be found. The advanced age and poor health of the chair and lack of a successor also play a role.

Artistic practice: There are no selection criteria, but one should be able to read music. If the aptitude level is really low, gentle pressure is applied to no longer perform.

Target group: Advanced or beginning seniors who are looking for a low-pressure stage. In practice, many seniors aged 65+ perform, but younger people also sing. Singers and listeners, from Amsterdam and the wider surroundings (North Holland above the canal; the greater Amsterdam/The Hague/Rotterdam metropolitan area).

Organisation: The chair arranges things together with his wife. There is an important role for volunteers (cooking, serving, cashier management). Income comes only from admission monies.

## **Project 12**

### **Cafe Chantant, Amstelveen**

General description: This project can be compared with Classic Café. Here too there is an informal initiative of a low-pressure stage for singers once a month, and unfortunately discontinuation is also impending. The major difference with Classic Café is that in this project a welfare organisation has played a large role.

Artistic practice: Singing under the guidance of a professional pianist.

Target group: Seniors who want to sing or want to enjoy performing.

Organisation: Informal initiative. The website looks professional. There is cooperation of a welfare organisation and there are sponsors (shopping centre).

### **1.7 Set-up of the research report**

In the introduction, part 1, the backgrounds of the research were explained and the research questions and concepts used defined. After some words about categorisation, the selection and description of the investigated cases were presented.

In part 2 reports will be presented of the literature survey, which consists of three parts: a more theoretical part, the report of a quick scan into research conducted about artistic practices of seniors, and a reconnaissance of the force field within which amateur artistic practices of seniors take place.

In part 3 the concepts from the literature survey will be further operationalised and the practical research into participants and previous participants will be described. This will be followed by a presentation of the recent results and conclusions, linked back to the partial questions of the research.

In part 4 the force-field analysis around the investigated cases will be central. Use has been made of information obtained from interviews with key persons of the corresponding case as well as information obtained from additional, case-related interviews.

In part 5 the concept of playing field is introduced, and a look is taken at how, on the basis of the results of the practical research and the force-field analysis, the contours of a stimulus and facilitation programme can be delineated.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

The increasing numbers of seniors and the rising life expectancies stress the growing urgency of attention for a dignified and useful content for the third and fourth life phases. The expectation of ever-increasing costs of health care, together with higher numbers of seniors, also requires consideration. In this context, artistic practices can be a policy-relevant theme – relevant because artistic practices, in addition to being a form of expression, can constitute a means that has a certain impact on several life terrains and can supply important preconditions with which people can arrive or return to well-being and quality of life and independence. Derived goals such as activation, connection, participation or prevention take shape with the help of amateur artistic practices, at least when this is implemented strategically. The question is who will give concrete content to artistic practices as a policy theme in times of receding governments and changes in the funding world. Despite the developments and the recognised relevance, in the amateur arts sector and in studies into amateur arts little attention is still being paid to amateur artistic practices of seniors.



The funds for seniors RCOAK Foundation and the Sluyterman van Loo Fund on the one hand and Kunstfactor (sector institute for amateur art) on the other have commissioned LESI (National Expertise Centre for Social Intervention) to conduct a study into artistic practices of seniors with as goal to obtain insight into the impact and experienced benefits of seniors' active artistic practices on their well-being, and into the hindrances and success factors that play a role in the process.

This research consists of four partial studies: a literature survey, a practical study into 12 amateur arts projects, an analysis of the force field of actors, and an indication of the contours of a stimulus and facilitation programme aimed at active artistic practices at the local and regional levels. With the knowledge from the research, Kunstfactor and the funds for seniors wish to give shape to a focused stimulation and facilitation of initiatives.

## **2. Literature survey**

### **2.4 Conclusion**

Our notions of welfare, art and old age start out from the perspective that individuals can stand in life in different ways and arrive at 'well-being' in different ways. To this end, an environment that offers opportunities is important – an environment that speaks to us, literally and figuratively. Seniors in their third and fourth life phases will be confronted with questions that relate to a repositioning in society and the social field, with a changed perspective on social context and with a renewed search for meaning. Here we distinguish four different strategies, each based on a personal use of art, specific fitting goals and goals for well-being.

Research has shown that 48% of the Dutch population aged 6 and older is involved in some kind of artistic endeavour. For those aged 65 and older this is 35%. Upon closer look at that age group, it appears that 39% of those aged 65–80 and 35% of those aged 80 or older are active in artistic endeavours. The visual arts and music are the disciplines most often practiced.

The research literature into the relationship with artistic practice is not comprehensive, and the results are not always clear. These are mainly foreign studies. The literature discusses various success factors for the organisation of initiatives related to artistic practices.

## **3. Seniors, artistic practice and well-being: report of an empirical study**

### 3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

In the conclusion we will look back at the research questions of this partial research and will make some general recommendations for the stimulus and facilitation programme on the basis of the central question of this project research:

‘What role does artistic practice play in the well-being of seniors, and how can seniors’ artistic endeavours be stimulated and facilitated effectively on this basis?’

- 1 What categorisation of seniors is relevant and what are the factors in artistic practice that play a specific role for various categories?

In this research it was not possible to distinguish into categories the welfare needs and orientations that lie enclosed in the responsiveness of seniors, the positive effects of art on their well-being, and the stimulating and inhibiting factors that play a role in the process. On the basis of the research findings it is not a self-evident task to classify seniors into the third or fourth life phase and/or a degree of self-sufficiency. It is not possible either to make, from the senior perspective, a classification based on specific characteristics of the various projects that represent a specific relationship with well-being effects.

Positive effects that seniors encounter for their well-being play themselves out in different domains of well-being simultaneously, are dynamic, and do not depend on the art form that is practiced for the way in which the activity is organised. All the projects have a diversity of seniors when it comes to their ambition, their orientation towards the group, and social relationships. The receptiveness and well-being benefits for seniors in the third life phase are essentially no different than those for seniors in the fourth life phase. The same applies for self-sufficient and for frail seniors.

*In short*, the perspective of seniors on art and well-being cannot be logically classified or delimited within arts-well-being models: art is a goal, art is a means and art is a strategy. This does not mean that recommendations can’t be made regarding specific backgrounds of seniors in relation to the preconditions of initiatives. For example, it is recommended to take specific measures to reach receptive frail seniors as well as seniors in different age categories, maintaining their receptiveness.

- 2 What are factors at work for the well-being of seniors, and how do the participants experience these endeavours?

The perspective of seniors shows that they experience positive effects on their well-being in the various domains of well-being (material well-being is not considered here). Two domains stand out here: the domain of motivation and the domain of social relationships. They are the primary pivot in terms of what artistic practices offer seniors, also in the domains of well-being of health and activities. The research has distinguished factors that stimulate the benefits that seniors derive from an activity for their well-being. Seniors find it important that they ‘learn something’ in the arts,

receive expert guidance, have the opportunity of a 'stage moment', get support from their social network, get exercise and distraction, the artistic activity contribute with a positive image, and there is a positive group atmosphere within a time investment that fits with their activities agenda.

- 3 What are the experiences and needs of seniors who permanently or temporarily can no longer participate in these practices compared to those who participate on a permanent basis?

A remarkable conclusion of this research is that the experiences, needs and receptiveness of seniors who permanently or temporarily no longer participate in the artistic activity are not essentially different than those of seniors who still participate in the activity. Some inhibiting factors have been distinguished in the research, but they are not specific for permanent or temporary quitters or seniors who have doubts. They can constitute a hindrance for any senior to participate or be a reason to stop. The most important hindrance are health problems, going through a life event, missing social connections, an ambition level that does not meet the needs and expectations, a negative image about the activity, and more time investment than is being given.

The findings of the research do make it possible to sketch a profile of receptive seniors and of workable factors in order to stimulate more seniors to participate in artistic endeavours. This acquired knowledge can constitute a useful perspective to gain insight during follow-up research into the motives and orientations of seniors who are not receptive to involvement in artistic endeavours.

- 4 What criteria can be formulated that projects and activities aimed at seniors' artistic endeavours can comply with if they are to meet the needs of the distinguished categories of seniors?

The perspective of seniors on artistic practices make it clear that stimulating and facilitating more seniors can take place in the following terrains: recruitment, professional guidance, preconditions and image formation. Within each terrain different criteria can be formulated:

Recruitment of seniors for participation: this means identifying and utilising factors that make seniors receptive, in other words it is recommended appealing to seniors through experiences with art and their existing or latent intrinsic needs (and thus not on the basis of social interactions, active use of time and emancipation goals or therapy). It is also important to create an environment that offers many opportunities for seniors, and to take full advantage of it, as well as to appeal to socially active groups was seniors, seniors in transition moments, and seniors who harbour desires. A personal approach and invitation is essential here, especially for those seniors who are vulnerable. Via traditional recruitment channels it is also useful to tempt seniors who have always wanted to do an

artistic endeavour, and by familiarising them with artistic practices discover an experience-oriented talent.

Professional guidance of seniors who participate in an artistic activity means that the receptiveness of seniors is maintained. This involves criteria to stimulate the artistic and social quality of the guidance. It is recommended to fit the supply better to the various needs of seniors in order to perform artistically (offering diversity in ambition level) within a social context. The professional guidance is aimed at teaching artistic skills, challenging and performing on a customised basis, and at the same time also offering a socially safe learning and creative environment. This means that within each activity variation is offered in different artistic challenges to which the possibility is linked of public appreciation such as a stage moment, exhibits, jointly created final productions for a private circle of participants, partners, family and friends where the process is primary.

Preconditions should be created to make seniors receptive and remain so. It is important in any event to remove as much as possible obstacles in the access to and possibilities of artistic practice caused by physical or psychological health problems. This is about the availability of the artistic activity and accessibility of the activities location, as well as the frequency of the activity and the tempo of exercises, accessibility of didactic aids when practicing skills and during rehearsals. Older participants can also be offered the possibility to stop participating temporarily, offering them short-term artistic projects and taking into account their duration and the physical and psychological effort needed for the end production.

Influencing image formation is partially related to the identity of the seniors themselves and partially to public collective imagination. Negative or positive emotions about seniors and old age seem to hardly have any influence on the motivation of seniors in our research project in terms of participating in artistic endeavours or on the meaning and identity (age coding) that they derive from it. This doesn't mean that image formation and the influence of age coding cannot play a role for other seniors who do not yet participate in artistic endeavours, as a hindrance but possibly also as a stimulant to start participating in an artistic activity. To this end, in the first place a positive image formation is needed about seniors and the arts in the public domain. This means that on the one hand a public image is influenced about seniors in which practicing an artistic endeavour delivers good baggage for aging well (positive well-being), and on the other the message gets out that seniors' artistic endeavours are a serious pursuit and a relatively high-quality artistic production comes from that activity.

In short, the picture in which seniors' artistic endeavours have the status of an average hobby or 'knitting club' should be contradicted by the public image that shows that seniors can learn and perform in the arts, finding benefits for their well-being in the process. From the angle of an organised artistic activity the idea can be put forth that seniors' artistic endeavours can also be presented as serious artistic personal development in productions with ambition.

## **Final words**

This research has shown that amateur artistic endeavours can serve to compensate for support in dealing with loss at an older age, especially when it comes to loss of health, social and intimate contacts, and possibilities to do activities. From this research it has become clear that artistic practices, besides being a form of expression can offer possibilities for meaningfulness, can be a means that have an impact on several life terrains, and can provide important preconditions with which seniors can arrive at well-being as well as quality of life and self-sufficiency. Hence stimulating and facilitating artistic endeavours of seniors stimulates and facilitates their well-being. This is an important reason to stimulate and facilitate artistic practices specifically aimed at seniors.

## **6 Stimulating and facilitating amateur arts by seniors with ambition**

Seniors and amateur arts: this invokes a picture of people with a nice hobby, a pleasant way of spending time, good for social contacts. Little is thought about the vital meaning of active artistic endeavours for the well-being of seniors, as they derive physical energy and mental power from it. Active artistic endeavours are a catalyser of emotions, and meet intrinsic needs and emotions. From the research 'Artistic practices with ambition' of LESI (National Expertise Centre for Social Intervention), Kunstfactor and the funds for seniors RCOAK and Sluyterman van Loo it has become clear that amateur artistic practices – whether they involve the visual arts, theatre, dance, singing or another art form – are not only a source of expression and meaningfulness but have an impact on several life terrains, such as health and social contacts. Nonetheless, seniors' artistic practices are not yet part of the regular offerings of arts institutions, welfare organisations or senior centres, and initiatives of individual artists or of seniors themselves are not optimally stimulated or facilitated in practice. There are enough reasons to bring about a change here.

First of all, there is a discussion about an aging population, where we worry about the affordability of senior care, the social climate and the social cohesion of districts and neighbourhoods, as well as the social position of seniors in general. It seems as if seniors mainly cost money, are vulnerable, and have lost their economic significance. The negative image about seniors prevails, whereas we could also emphasise their life experience and their social and cultural capital. There are growing numbers of seniors who can look forward to an active, independent life phase without paid work, with other forms of self-development and meaningfulness that need attention. It is precisely the practice of amateur artistic forms which fills in this content.

Amateur art initiatives and projects show the love seniors have for their artistic endeavour and their ambition to learn and perform. The receptiveness of seniors to be active in the arts is primarily based

on this. Amateur artistic practice is not easy to model into other goals, such as fostering social contacts of participating in society. It is precisely its capacity to anticipate intrinsic needs of seniors for expression and motivation which has important positive spinoff effects in practice: for health, for social functioning, and often also for contributing to the local community. Amateur artistic practices help process experiences of loss, work preventively in the area of health, create bonds between seniors, and if necessary give social support and provide seniors with an opportunity to step out of themselves and be recognised.

From this perspective, actively practicing an artistic form has great significance for able-bodied and active seniors as well as for vulnerable and more dependent ones. For this reason Kunstfactor, the RCOAK Foundation, the Sluyterman van Loo Fund and LESI are making a plea for better facilitation of existing initiatives and projects for seniors' artistic endeavours. They want to mobilise individual artists, arts institutions, senior centres, welfare organisations, governments and other interested agencies to initiate amateur projects, and they also want informal initiatives that come from seniors themselves to be stimulated and facilitated.

And that is needed, because the research has shown that most projects demand great input and inventiveness from the initiators, whether these are initiatives of individual artists, projects of institutions, or self-organised by seniors. They have their own specific vulnerabilities. Individual artists, for example, are asked to come to terms with the logical rules of project-supporting organisations; arts institutions have to learn to meet specific needs and demands from potential participants; and informal associations of seniors are difficult to support financially, while their self-organisation requires major volunteer input from the participants and their informal network.

Amateur arts projects have different types of initiators, organisational support and financing is arranged for differently, and other project-specific sources of help are needed. Still, a certain structure can be brought into the diversity of force fields. This is about a constellation of specific main-role players in combination with specific goals as a basis for initiatives for seniors' artistic practices. We can distinguish three fields: one in which amateur art is a goal unto itself and the personal artistic initiatives of seniors are linked to what professional artists have to offer; a field in which societal participation is central, such as in Community Art projects and projects for refugees, where the government and other involved agencies play a role; and a field in which amateur art is linked to seniors in and around senior care institutions.

With a joint contribution to a stimulus and facilitation programme we can mobilise organisations in the three sketched force fields and increase the possibilities for seniors to participate in amateur arts projects or initiate them. Such a programme can, for example, organise local experimental fields in

which the performance practice of amateur arts projects is strengthened, as is the case in the area of recruitment and assistance of seniors and for purposes of an organisational approach aimed at continuity. Parallel to these experimental fields we can work on optimising external support of amateur arts initiatives and projects. Existing local organisations with expertise in the area of amateur arts can grow into service networks that can be addressed for all forms of support and facilitation. On a national level, innovative financing models can be developed and educational programmes can work on improving the expertise of artistic counsellors. Finally, a focused image campaign based on practical examples can make visible the vital meaning of amateur art for seniors.

The time is right. There is a need for positive images about older people. The latent demand for participation in amateur arts of the 'new seniors' is substantial. The costs of senior care benefit from preventive activities. The arts world is becoming reoriented. Governments are reducing their investments in the arts and culture sector. Private funds and societally involved entrepreneurs reflect on their local function. In short, amateur artistic endeavours for seniors offer possibilities for people and organisations with ambition.

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