Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact

in a Nutshell

Lifelong Learning Programme

MAPSI
Managing
Art Projects with
Societal Impact

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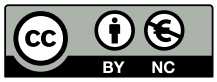


Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact – in a Nutshell

For a Start

In contemporary economies, the intentional use of art to help overcome various societal issues has increased, and new ways of integrating art, society and overall well-being have emerged during recent years. The arts' impacts are highly topical, and thus, cultural and social managers are expected to have skills in managing art projects that aim for broader societal impacts. The arts and art projects are increasingly required to demonstrate their influence and impact on society, not only within the arts and among their actively participating members but within communities and society at large.

The *Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact* project has been created to increase the level of knowledge and competence of cultural managers who engage in managing and mediating art projects with societal impact. The published study book by the project *Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact* meets the demand for developing specific management skills by discussing the intersections of art, society and impacts and their relation to different policies, as well as identifying the central managerial aspects that are relevant to increasing the societal influence of the arts.

This guide, based on the contribution of project's study book, presents some tools and models with illustrative cases and examples, which seek to reflect diverse reader experiences, learning methods and ideas for managing art projects with societal impact.

The topics presented here are discussed in more detail with references in the publication: *Managing Art Projects with Societal Impact: Study Book for Students, Stakeholders and Researchers*. The online version of the entire study book can be downloaded from www.mapsi.eu.

Key concepts

social = relates to aspects of human interactions and is commonly used to refer to activities in the context of various minorities, such as the elderly and different genders and cultural groups, and is also used in the context of well-being practices that relate, for example, to health.

societal = refers to various human activities in communities. 'Societal' has a broader perspective than 'social', encompassing, for instance, social activities (e.g. urban development).

The general objective of societally influential art projects is to do good: to reduce poverty and suffering, bring change and development to society and help people and society locally or on a wider level.

CASE: Seeing others through artistic activities

In the Well-being at Work programme, the artists' role was to coordinate and guide the process. In two projects, artists developed new approaches to support well-being and productivity in work places through art. At the same time, the projects provided work opportunities for artists. The projects' key participants were artists, employees and their supervisors. For example, the artists acted as instructors to create a safe atmosphere, enhance participants' creativity and encourage them to use it. Much of the time, the artists and other participants succeeded in creating open, respectful and confidence-inspiring relationships. The artists needed to listen to and take into consideration other participants' needs and wishes – not just develop their own art and artistic ideas. Interestingly, the participants often wanted to do and express something that they did not normally do in their everyday work. The artists' intervention also helped other participants to look at their work from different angles: librarians wanted to make noise, the social office staff wanted to show that they were more than public servants dressed in grey and nurses wanted to make a humorous movie about an imaginary night shift. These examples show that the projects created a sense of trust and willingness to exit comfort zones and act at intersections of different groups.

Different kinds of impacts of the Arts

Art can be seen as input and an accelerator for other areas of life. Different forms of the impact of art can be identified, such as economic, cultural and societal impact.

Societal impacts include any action's social and cultural consequences to people, which cover all the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and, in general, cope as members of society. *Cultural impacts* involve changes to an individuals' norms, values and beliefs that guide and rationalise their view of themselves and society. *Economic impacts* include the benefits art projects generate for society and individuals. However, economic impacts are not merely concerned with financial or commercial influences but also cover different non-use and option values for people.

An art project's societal impact can be understood as a change in individuals' and/or groups' thinking or actions due to engagement or participation in the project. However, this impact can only be observed in the long run, which means that the link between the project and its perceived impact might also have been affected by other factors in individuals' lives or in the community.

The societal impact of art projects can be seen as two-fold:

1 Impact of participation in art projects (e.g. social, cultural, aesthetic and economic)

2 Impact on passive surroundings of arts and cultural projects

Managing arts projects with societal impact as an experience entails the creation of a vision, strategic thinking and distribution of roles as important, integral parts of every project. When talking about art projects with societal impact, naturally, possible impacts the project should have need to be taken into account and analysed in advance. Even though certain impacts might be unexpected, being aware of the potential for these is important.

Value of Arts

Intrinsic value is seen as 'art for art's sake'. This perspective sees art as valuable because of its aesthetic, symbolic and spiritual essence.

If art is seen as a tool to achieve other goals than the artwork itself, it is considered to have instrumental value. Art for social, regional, economic, political and environmental purposes reflects an instrumental approach.

The institutional value of art relates to techniques, structures and processes that the arts, art projects and organisations create to build up shared values.

Many debates have developed around the different values of art. Values and valuation are closely related to the perceptions of impacts. Values can be seen as the inherent tenets people hold that define who they are, what they believe in and what is significant for them.

A key aspect to consider in determining the relationship between impact and value is the alignment of value bases and the impact of an art project's goals. The project's targeted impact cannot be formulated as instrumental, as it is trying to achieve broader societal impacts, for instance. This is what is meant by the alignment of values and art projects' impact. One needs to be aware of value bases in such a way that art projects do not try to create impacts that are in conflict with the projects' values.

CASE: Creating a dialogue between the arts, immigrants and communities

In Marseilles, authorities felt a need to make various nationalities' cultures more visible in this extremely multicultural city. Officials believed that, by making this characteristic more prominent through valuing the city's multicultural nature, this perceived default could be turned into a benefit. The project of showing Marseille's cultural diversity took the form of a book collecting the recipes of local women from different cultural backgrounds. In the project, people were given the means to show their special background and cultural heritage. This project was a success, and it highlighted the city's special characteristic as a multicultural city with many immigrants. The project gave the city a more positive image after the art project managers created a dialogue between the arts, immigrants and communities.

How different policies might make an impact

Art projects are reflections and representations of societal contexts. In this way, these projects act as input for different policies.

Policy is not something made 'out there', but instead, political decisions are rooted in societal contexts: policy is determined by its time and surroundings. Whenever the issue of the impact of art is addressed, the interdependence of both the arts and society needs to be emphasised. Understanding art projects' context, including political environments, political agendas and influences on and from politics, is a prerequisite to managing projects and their impact. All engaged actors related to art projects (i.e. artists, managers, audiences, funders and other stakeholders) are subject to policies or political influences.

Any art project can be considered as representative of a context by policies, which is the reason why artists and managers need to stress this. On some occasions, pointing out the contextual issues that influence policies through artwork could be extremely valuable and make society and politicians realise what the actual reasons for, and influences on, different political decisions are. Therefore, artists and art projects can be seen as in partnership with policymakers and co-creators of political contexts.

Social, cultural, educational, environmental and economic policies each have their goals, tools and measures that, either directly or indirectly, affect art projects. Cultural and/or creative policies focus on a coherent sector, and, therefore, different approaches and angles are needed to analyse the arts from different perspectives.

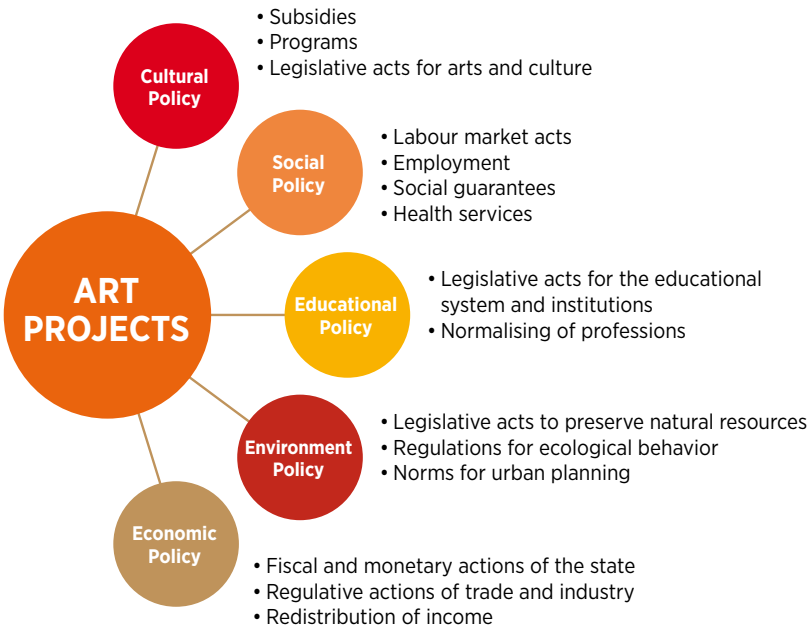


Figure 1 Policies affecting art projects and their management.
Source: Authors

Need to understand:

- How art projects and cultural organisations are related to different policies
- Why policies and political environments are relevant to managing art projects
- How different policies need to be understood in connection with art projects and their societal impact
- How politicians influence and support cultural organisations and art projects

Ethics

Ethics addresses the question of morally right or wrong behaviour. When artists and cultural managers work with participants on art projects, every actor has an equal right to self-determination, to participation, to holistic treatment and to privacy, as well as to the right and responsibility to develop professional skills and their own well-being. Thus, the critical issue is to respect these rights from the beginning of projects by carefully listening to every actor's needs and priorities.

Values intertwine with human rights when working and making artwork with human beings. Artists or project managers seeking to follow ethical codes of conduct in art projects with societal impact consider how their projects' planning, implementation and evaluation reflect important basic values: democracy, responsibility, cooperation, honesty, equality, social responsibility, respect and fairness.

Ethical codes of conducts and questions related to human rights and values concern all actors in art projects. Ethics is not only an issue dealt with by managers but all actors in art projects with societal aims as well. A dialogical approach in planning and implementing these projects ensures that space and time are dedicated to discussing the rights and values of every actor and to building a new joint understanding of the projects' goals, actions and impacts.

Figure 2 illustrates the impacts on, and interactions between, individuals, groups and communities that are considered in ethical thinking and behaviour. How the individual and community levels constantly interact and how they affect each other must be fully understood.

CASE: Finland's representatives in the Eurovision Song Contest 2015

The Finnish people voted as their representative the punk band Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät. The band consists of four intellectually disabled adult men. In this example, many different points of view need to be considered on an ethical level. How could managers ensure that the band would have the possibility to take advantage of their success? On the other hand, what should the limits of publicity and of their self-determination be? In this case, the basic work was done in the Resonaari Music School, which is set up for intellectually disabled students. The band has their own manager and supervisors who take care of their mental, physical and other needs and who have done an excellent job of making the band visible and popular. At the same time, this band has affected attitudes towards the intellectually disabled throughout Finland and now even in Europe.

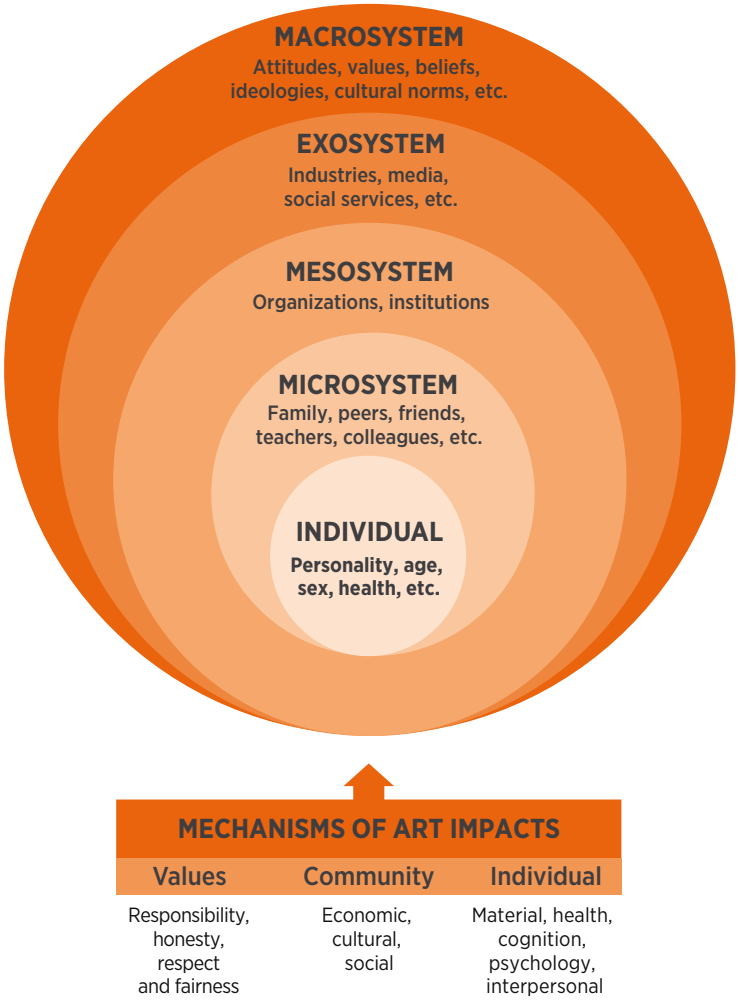


Figure 2 Individuals' interactions with wider systems
Source: Adapted from Bronfennbenner (1979), Carthy (2002) and Talentia (2007

The role of manager in projects with societal impact

Art projects may have many positive but unintended societal impacts, but only through conscious and systematic planning, organising, controlling and evaluating can impacts possibly achieve sustainability and different stakeholders' support. Through this support and sustainability, projects can implement changes in society.

Managers in the arts have responsibilities towards artists, their respective communities and society in general. Managing art projects means that, throughout all the main managerial functions, managers have to be aware of not only the project's general goals but also any broader impacts that activities may have on surrounding environments.

Managing the societal impact of art projects is necessary when projects seek to induce long-term effects and changes in the surrounding society any artistic objectives. Thus managing societal impact adds an extra layer to the general management of art projects.

Art projects seeking to have a societal impact occur at the intersection of different fields. Art project teams usually consist of actors from different communities of practice with distinct, internally shared norms, values and practices. Each actor brings to the project activities their own way of doing things, and different actors have different roles within the project. Artists are, in one sense, providers of solutions and, in another, the heart of activities. The project manager's main task is to bring together these different actors, facilitate interaction, ensure development of common practices and evaluate final outcomes and broader impacts.

In all project phases, managers must engage and commit project participants from the beginning to the end. Project managers' roles also transform during the course of projects. Role transformation during projects means that project managers need to be sensitive to different needs and requirements during the entire project and to adjust their leadership style to the specific phase at hand.

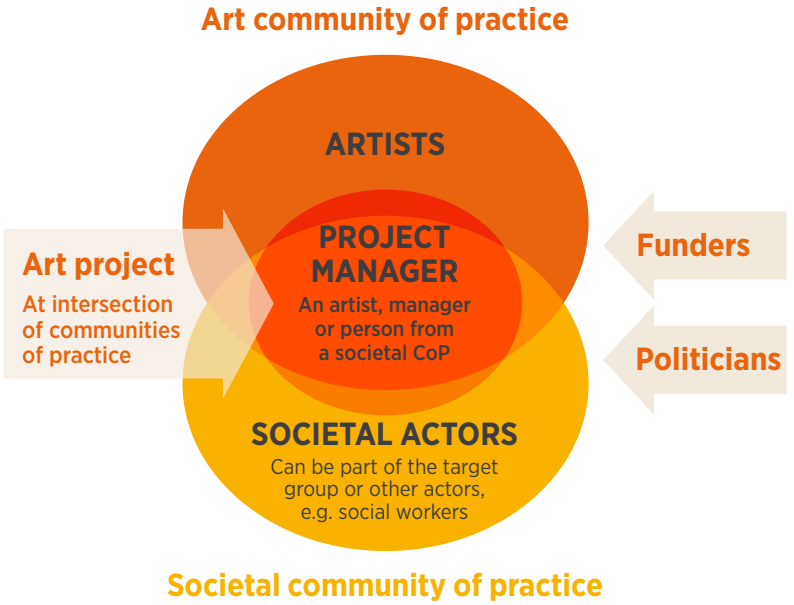
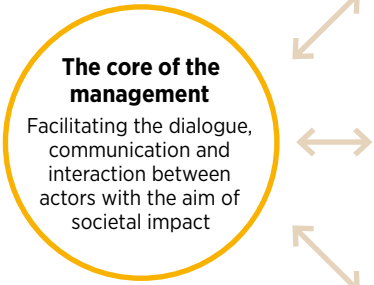


Figure 3 Actors of art projects with societal impact.
Source: Adapted from Jyrämä and Äyväri (2015)

CASE: The role of artistic facilitators in engaging children

The case of The Blue Kites of Melilla involves actors from several communities of practice in Spain (ES) and Finland (FI). The project includes cultural services of a Finnish city, pupils and teachers at elementary schools (FI), the Spanish non-governmental organisation Acoge Melilla, which focuses on immigrants' human rights (ES) and children living in the Centro de Estancia Temporal de Inmigrantes Melilla (CETI) (ES). The Blue Kite Collective contributes two people: a graphic designer and an art educator (FI). The aim of this project is to find the right instruments for working together in a way that allows the CETI children to portray and narrate their life and experiences through the artistic process. The project also seeks to enhance communication between children living in FI and ES. Various forms of art and artistic activities have been used: drawing, building and flying kites, photographing (i.e. by the children) and sending messages, photos and videos to children in another country. The project has succeeded in establishing the role of artistic facilitators who are able to engage the children in a safe, and at the same time creative, environment.



The phases of project	The roles of manager	The tasks	The aim of outcomes in management
1 Initiating: 'think tank thinking-it-through'	*Explorer, ethnographer*	The sensemaking of project landscape, content, main actors and needs, goals, threats, risks, whises and opportunities	Understanding of the contexts of artists, organisers, audiences and stakeholders for better knowhow for the art's influence with societal impact
2 Planning: 'creating the to-do list'	*Broker, cultural intermediary, translator*	Creating meanings; framing and planning the practices; acting in the area of over-lapping communities of practice and mapping the interests for cooperation	A proficiency to create interaction and facilitation of intersections of differing practices with explicit manner towards the set of goals
3 Implemen-tation: 'doing all the to-do things'	*Activist, supporter of identity building, cultivator of caring*	To bring different people and groups together to create knowledge; to foster learning understood as becoming; to facilitate the collaboration and co-creation	Creation of a sense of trust to enable collaboration with reflection on project goals and activities among team members
4 Control: 'checking up and measuring'	*An invisible hand*	To create structures and facilities for joint action; to minimaze the distance between original plans and emerged new ideas	Overall ability to orchestrate the quality and societal impact of art project with relevant manner
5 Finalising: 'Wrapping up and packing away'	*Impact assessor*	Evaluation of project (internal and external); translation of impacts and outcomes on one community of practice	The assessment of the societal impact (short and long term) and outcomes with the ways that are presented as relevant to each stakeholder and target group

Figure 4 Managing Societally Influential Art Projects
Source: Authors

Necessary leadership in projects with societal impact

Managing art project with societal impact is not just about implementing a toolbox through mechanistic actions but requires a broad understanding of how to engage, inspire, coach, motivate and support the network of project participants, including artists, target groups, funders, producers, audiences, technical staff and other stakeholders.

Hence, leadership is a crucial ingredient in managing art projects with societal impact which requires a good understanding of the specific cultural context at hand for success. Notably, culture in this context has different levels, starting from ethnic, regional, subnational and national levels, and includes smaller units such as family, project, religious and organisational entities consisting of the beliefs, shared values, assumptions and expectations of both a group of people and individuals.

Leaders of projects with societal impact have to make sense of different situations, roles, relationships, norms, values and situations to ensure coordination and joint problem-solving by people with different cultural backgrounds and/or different forms of expertise. These sense-making skills are related to coaching and communication abilities. Successful leadership of creative efforts will also require wisdom, persuasion, flexibility, social intelligence, social perceptiveness and social appraisal skills with the core aim – societal influence.

CASE: Engaging community with symphony orchestra practice

The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra's (HPO) godchild project sought to involve townspeople through taking on all babies born in Helsinki as HPO's godchildren. This involved the HPO's musicians, pedagogical and communications staff and families with babies born in 2000 in Helsinki, and later, in 2012. In this project, its managers soon realised that they needed to add to the project organisation people with specific skills related to engaging with babies and children in the context of music, including a well-known artist with a specialisation in working with children. People with these skills and the relevant participants were included in events and integrated into the existing community of practice of musicians and orchestra administrators. The original project managers were music pedagogues but not specialised in babies or children. Therefore, this realisation enabled the project to become a success.

Evaluation

In its broadest meaning, evaluation entails the assessment of an object's value. A project's impact is the sum of its outputs and outcomes in an overall analysis of its results.

What?

Paying attention to the project's impact is a crucial part of the project's initiating and planning phase. Managing art projects with societal impact requires a broad understanding of the evaluation of impact. Project leaders must distinguish between *the evaluation of project outputs* and the *evaluation of outcomes and impacts*. In addition, when projects begin, leaders should develop different indicators that will indicate the *direct* and *indirect societal impacts* that occur after finishing the project. These processes need to be designed with a project team to achieve common understanding and engagement among actors. Thus, the evaluation can be optimally effective only if the project's mission and goals have been first laid down, since effective performance measurement rests on a clear mission statement.

Why?

Reasons to evaluate impacts are numerous:

1. Planning a systematic way to evaluate the societal impact of art projects enhances the probability of gaining more influence and thus having a broader and/or deeper impact on society by engagement.
2. Impact evaluation increases public accountability and demonstrates projects' efficiency on a long-term basis. This may increase the opportunities to strengthen the funding of future projects.
3. Impact evaluation activities provide a forum for communication and interaction between funders, audiences, policy-makers, other stakeholders and community members who did not participate in projects but who can be identified through the evaluation (e.g. through a survey of non-participants).

How?

Evaluations of organisations are fundamentally different from project evaluations: evaluations of organisations are more independent and focus more closely on organisations' needs, while the criteria for project evaluations do not take into account the entire organisation but only a *particular project, event or action*. It is noteworthy that the project should budget resources for evaluation.

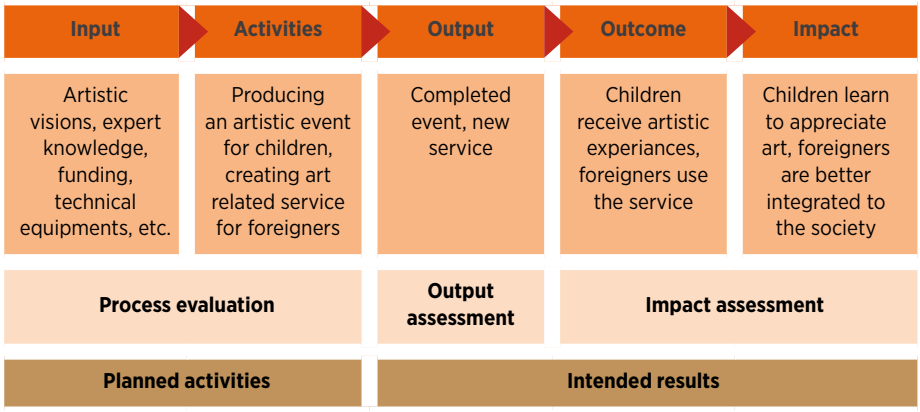


Figure 5 The chain of evaluation.
Source: Authors

To get reliable results, evaluations should *combine qualitative* and *quantitative* data. Because planning indicators depends on a project's goals and its evaluation objectives, no common list of performance indicators exists that is suitable for every project. Each project needs to design its own system to measure outcomes, processes and structures. Nevertheless, some common indicators might be determined:

What are the indicators of art projects' societal impact?

The 'success' of this societal impact can be determined by comparing indicators to:

- Other projects
- Previous years
- Set targets
- Target groups' feedback

Many tools have been designed to conduct impact evaluations for art projects, and one way to go is to look at existing evaluation tools. They need to be made to ensure that the *right aspects are measured*. Multi-dimensional impact indicators may best serve the need to show clear support for influences and 'changes' in society affected by particular art projects.

Different methodological approaches can be applied to evaluate art projects, e.g.:

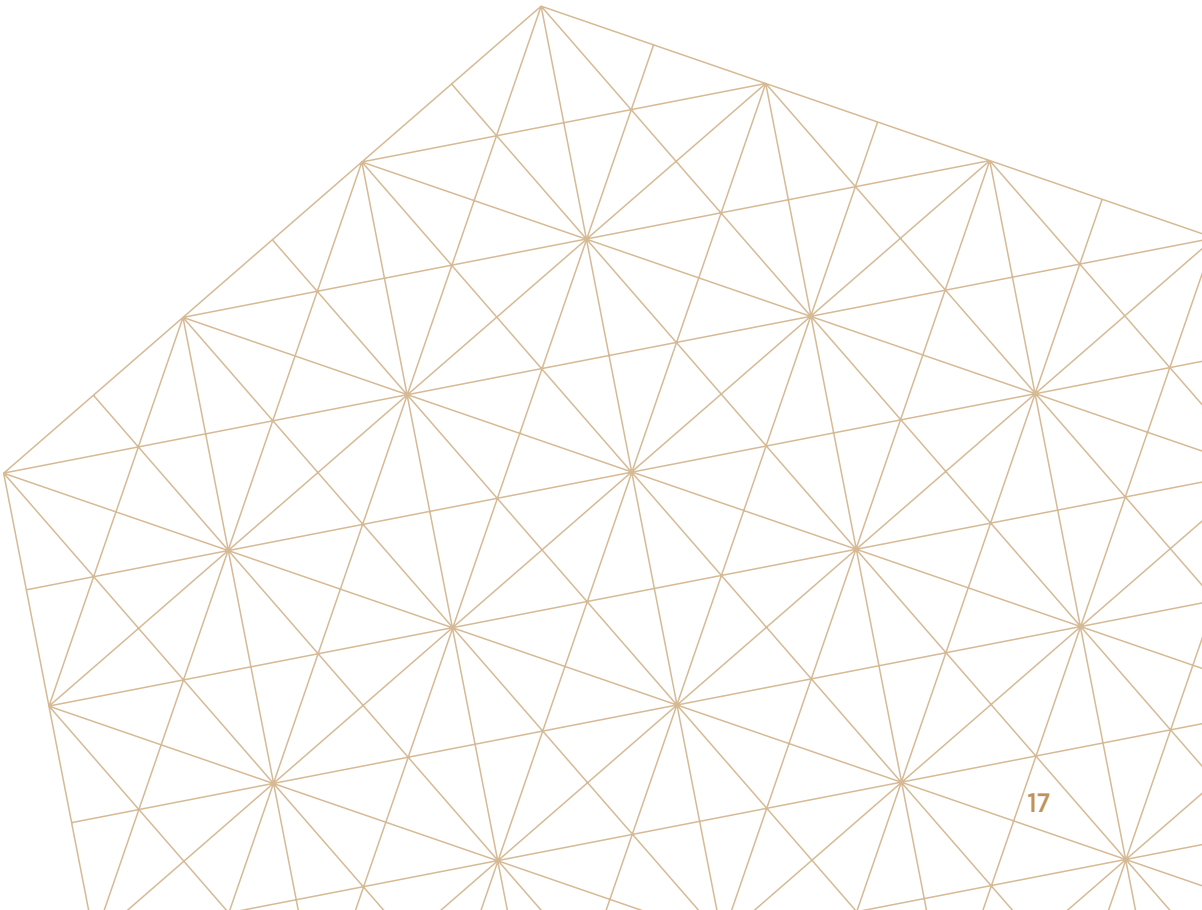
Matrixes – there are different tools based on matrixes that assesses the outcome and impact designed to help identify the values specific to those stakeholders who may need to be taken into account

Outcome mapping – is a methodology for planning and assessing development programmes that are oriented towards change and social transformation from a behavioural aspect

Gap analysis – a technique for organisations to learn how to determine what steps need to be taken in order to move from their current state to the desired, future state by listing factors that need to be achieved in the future and highlighting the gaps that exist and need to be filled in

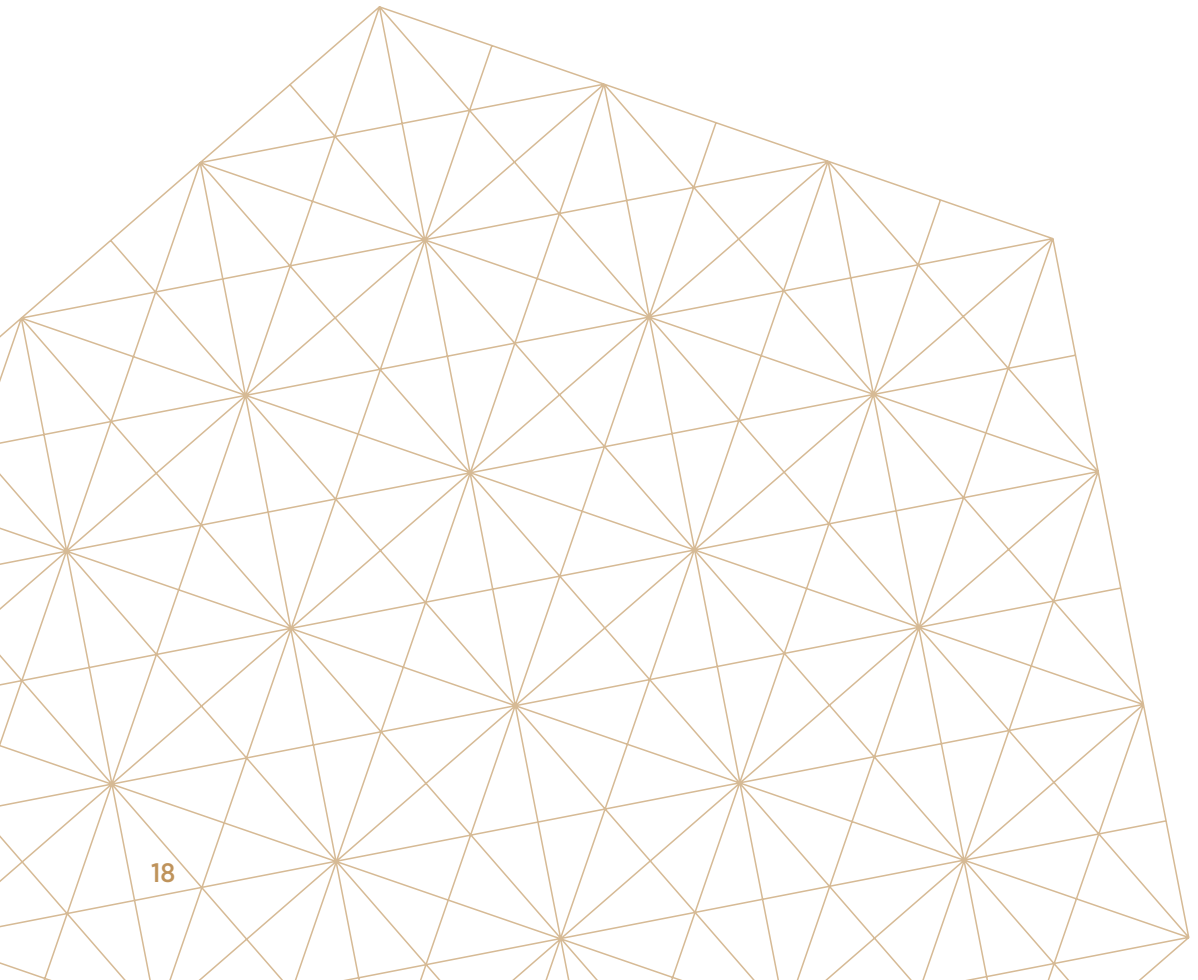
Benchmarking – is comparing one project or organisation's data with metrics from similar projects or organisations in the same area of activity

Social return on investment (SROI) – developed based on social accounting and cost-benefit analysis producing a quantitative summary of achievements that are usually based on cost-benefit analysis



Planned work		Intended results		
Inputs or resources	**Activities**	**Outputs or products**	**Outcomes or results**	**Impact**
What resources go into a project	What activities the project undertakes	What is produced through those activities	The changes or benefits that result from the project	Fundamental changes that occur in individuals, organisations, communities or systems as a result of a project after its completion
e.g. money, staff and equipment	e.g. development of materials and training programmes	e.g. number of booklets produced, workshops held and people trained	e.g. increased skills/ knowledge/ confidence, leading to long-term effects	e.g., sustainable change in individuals' behaviour/mindset or organizations' practices

Table 1 An example: Evaluation criteria in the SROI model
Source: Authors



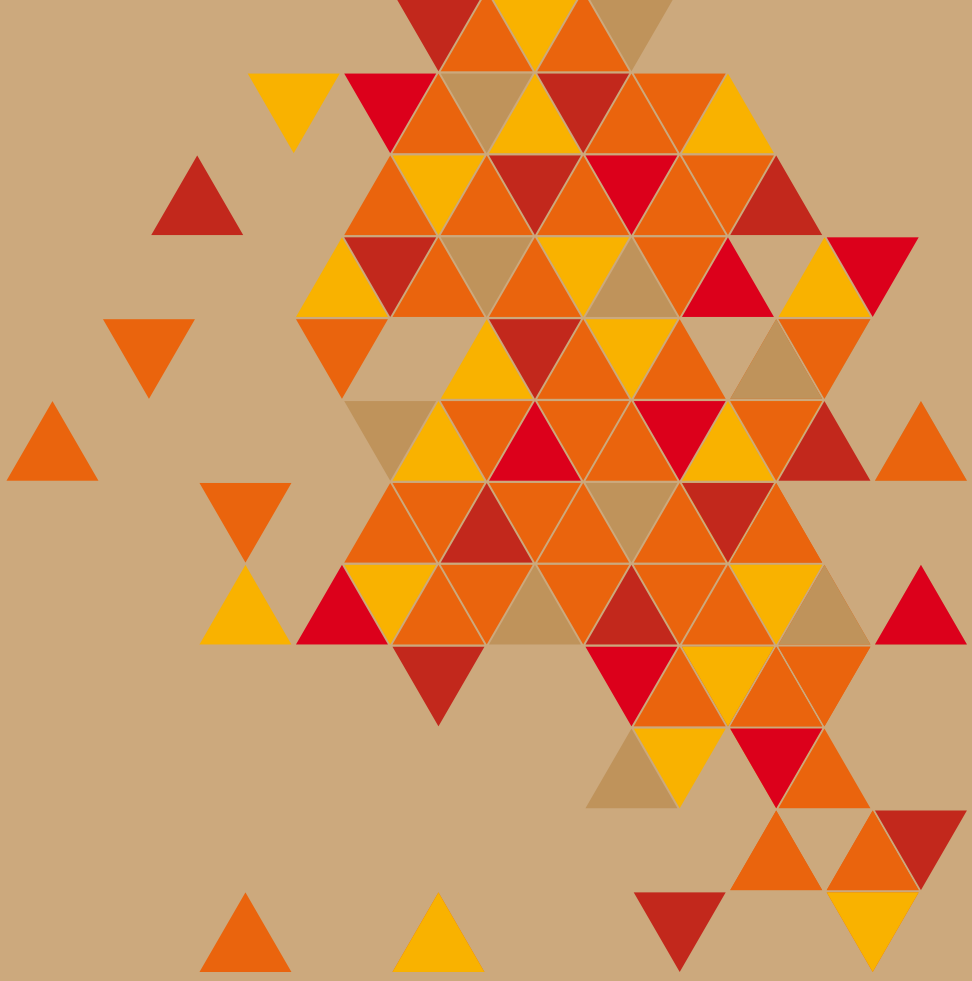
Summary

As society in general is not consistent but continuously evolving, the relationship between art and society must be considered dynamic and reciprocal. Every art project has an impact – on its audience, stakeholders, project team members, the community around it and so forth. Art has the capacity to trigger reflection, generate empathy, create dialogue and foster new ideas. Hence, artistic and creative practices are some of the most social, dynamic and participative human activities.

While managing art projects with societal impact, the key idea is to aim for social, economic, cultural or other kinds of impacts on people and society. The general objective of societally influential art projects is to do good: to reduce poverty and suffering, bring change and development to society and help people and society locally or on a wider level. Expressive art can be seen as a kind of nest building, a process of taking over a space as an individual or a community with a dialogical approach. The way art projects are designed and produced influences how the audience perceive the projects and what the potential impact will be.

The role of management and managers is seen not only as enabling interaction between different people and organisations but also as creating supportive structures and frameworks for artistic processes. Cultural managers are responsible for the interactions that occur between different parties and, later on, to reaffirm those parties' commitment to joint activities to achieve set goals. The processes of project management and the special challenges found within the context of art and societal issues are dealt with in detail and given the necessary emphasis. In these processes understanding the definition of different kinds of impacts of the arts, the influence of policies, the role of ethics, the requirements in management, the need for leadership and the necessity of evaluation of generated impacts is crucial.

In managing art projects with societal impact the key idea is to reflect what the difference is between doing something for someone and doing something with somebody.



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