

An aerial photograph of a dry, dusty landscape. The ground is a mix of light brown soil and patches of sparse, low-lying, brownish vegetation. The overall scene conveys a sense of aridity and desolation. The text 'EUROPE CITY CULTURE' is overlaid in white, outlined letters in the upper portion of the image.

EUROPE CITY CULTURE

Europe City Culture

Hedy d'Ancona, Carla Delfos, Giep Hagoort, Ben Hurkmans

On the occasion of ELIA founder Carla Delfos leaving her position as Executive Director, a round-table discussion was initiated by Pia van den Berg, Giep Hagoort and Ben Hurkmans.

Participants of the round-table:

Hedy d'Ancona,
Former Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture

Han Bakker,
Intendant

Pia van den Berg,
Municipal Councillor PvdA, Amsterdam

Kees Boonman,
Journalist

Carla Delfos,
ELIA Founder & Executive Director (until October 2017)

Astrid Elburg,
Advisor Governance & Diversity

Lars Ebert, (moderator round table),
ELIA Policy Advisor & Programme Director Castrum Peregrini

Giep Hagoort,
Creativity Professor

Ben Hurkmans,
Dramaturge

Jan Jaap Knol,
Director Foundation for Cultural Participation

Lena Shafir,
Designer

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Introduction

Looking back at ELIA's achievements, I am proud to see that ELIA has developed into a well-established and influential organisation, but I also see that up to now the old reasons for initiating ELIA are still valid, while new pressing themes have also emerged.

In the context of my leaving ELIA, a group of close friends offered me the best farewell present imaginable, a round-table discussion with a group of experts on themes close to my heart: Europe, City and Culture.

The idea is to provide an outline of the socio-political and cultural context in which the arts and higher arts education can continue to contribute to the Europe of the future. Seven experts, led by Hedy d'Ancona, former Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture (WVC), representing various sections of society took part in this discussion. Their names are mentioned in this booklet, with much appreciation and thanks for their contribution.

On September 15th 2017, we will present the results of the round-table discussion via this booklet. It is not an academic paper, just some thoughts, ideas and reflections that might inspire the reader. One of the eye-openers for me was the observation that while one is born into a nationality, the awareness of being a European is connected to a specific moment (during a far-away travel, a political incident, a remark), a moment when suddenly you realise: I am a European citizen.

My reasons for starting ELIA were:

- To create a voice to argue for a better understanding of the role, value and importance of the arts and of arts education in our societies;
- To create awareness of the importance of a united Europe. I share the criticism that the European Union is complicated and bureaucratic, but I find that no price is too high for peace, stability and freedom of movement;
- To create a platform for teachers, leaders and students of higher arts education institutions to share, compare, discuss and to start international projects in a structured and informed way.

The Amsterdam University of the Arts supported my proposal to organise an international gathering of arts schools and so ELIA was born in 1990. In 1989, when we started the preparation of ELIA's founding conference, the Iron Curtain was still standing. We wrote in the registration brochure:

'Falling Borders... Will the establishment of an open market bring about an unprecedented mobility of people, services, goods and capital? What will mobility and internationalisation mean for an institutionalised art education?'

On the first day of the founding conference of ELIA, Imagination and Diversity, Europe's richness, on the 3rd of October 1990, Germany was reunified.

So much has happened since, so much to tell, but my most important message is that today the *raison d'être* of ELIA is more crucial than ever. We live in challenging times; new problems, needs and opportunities emerge in our societies and the importance of art, creative skills and arts education need to be emphasised and defended. Busy times ahead for ELIA.

I know ELIA is in good hands with my successor, Maria Hansen, and the ELIA team. I look forward to seeing how ELIA will continue addressing the urgent issues that our institutions deal with. In the end, it is all about our students and about creating the best possible conditions to educate the artists of tomorrow.

Carla Delfos
ELIA Founder and Executive Director

Art and culture to inspire the soul of Europe

The inclusion of a culture paragraph in the EU Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 was a cheerful event in my opinion. As President of the European Council for Ministers of Culture, I had managed to convince my colleagues to agree with the regulation of European Cultural Policy (after months and months of enlisting the civil servants involved in cultural policy). This was the start!

But my relief somewhat clouded my view of reality. At stake was a reconciliation of very diverse opinions and these led to impassioned discussions, both between the member states and inside them. At the core of these debates was the attachment to the national culture versus the desire for a shared European one. What made it complicated was that defenders of the latter – myself included – were not at all interested in harmonising our national cultural policy. We cherished our culture budget and the way the money was divided and we shuddered at the thought that this subsidy would be considered unfair competition. All these complications resulted in us sitting on the fence while drafting article 128 of the EU Treaty; while honouring “our own identity”, the pluralistic meeting at a European level should be stimulated and European heritage should be protected. We had found a way in!

Meanwhile it is 25 years later. What is the state of affairs after that cautious but hopeful beginning?

It doesn't inspire much joy. Certainly, a lot has changed in the field of culture. Contacts and exchanges, co-productions, European theme years, recognition of diplomas. And a lot more, made possible by regulations and subsidies.

But what I had hoped for: culture as an important pillar supporting the European building – forget it. It was replaced by market and money! A good chance missed, as there was and is no better opportunity to create European citizenship. To develop a communal identity. It is not news that the founding fathers of the European Community, among whom Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, advocated education and culture, precisely because of the importance of communal feelings, of a shared identity. Fortunately, they didn't live to see that the strong emphasis on economic collaboration and the accompanying financial agreements often brought

about the opposite: nationalistic and populist emotions, Brussels as the scapegoat.

However, this trend can be adjusted. Events such as the Brexit and Trump's attitude appear to have that effect. Besides, internationalisation and Europeanisation are irreversible. Young people and artists in particular, are looking towards the European continent.

For those young artists, ELIA has played and plays an essential role. I am convinced that this orientation will help revive the now lacking soul in Europe.

Hedy d'Ancona

Former Dutch Minister and former Member of the European Parliament

Past Present Future

In the summer of 2017, the participants in the round-table discussion received a warm welcome at the Castrum Peregrini in Amsterdam (the 'stronghold of pilgrims', a cultural centre for meetings that cross borders – of culture, disciplines, age, gender and ethnicity). During World War II, artist Gisèle D'Ailly van Waterschoot van der Gracht took in here European artists, offering them refuge from the threat of the occupying Germans and their stooges. The story of the house, the tangible memories in the form of drawings, paintings and sculptures, and the realisation that freedom should not be taken for granted but needs to be won and maintained, all lend a special historical context to the meeting in her atelier.

But still. Is it always a good thing to keep history alive or are we allowed, or better, should we also be able to forget, to get rid of dead weight and create space for the new? Is it necessary perhaps to break with the past to move forward?

The participants all have their own stories about Europe. About the fall of the Iron Curtain, for example, on the 9th of November 1989, followed immediately by reciprocal curiosity about arts and culture in East, Central, South and Northwest Europe. A cultural exchange came into being that made the European identity tangible to those involved and that contributed to more solidarity among the countries themselves.

A short critical comment is appropriate here: what does 'past' mean for those whose grandparents died in a German concentration camp? Or those born into a family with slavery in their history? And what if your (grand)parents came here to do the dirty work in factories, and you, as the second or third generation, are not accepted by this society? Does it really exist, a shared past making it possible for us to have a shared dream about the future?

And: when we look around us, can we ignore the fear that is in Europe today? And how do we deal with the politicians and the media that exploit this fear?

Questions that need to be asked, even though we don't have a satisfying answer.

Nevertheless the conclusion of the round-table is that art and culture move and remove borders and lend significance to a European identity. But if it only concerns a privileged group of citizens, living mainly in the centres of capitals, is that proposition still valid? Hence: European culture – most manifested in cities – wants to be inclusive and contains more and more points of recognition for newcomers. Paradoxically, this means that a European identity cannot be Eurocentric - from the first generation of migrants to the newcomers, everybody brings along their own non-European culture, thus enriching the existing European one.

And no, the participants at the table will not be searching for a new Utopia, a new blueprint, a new all-encompassing story. But they do feel that new stories should and can be told. Stories that unite European citizens. This way a European citizenship can develop which contributes to an inclusive culture, with fundamental democratic liberties; a Europe whose citizens are able to look through the eyes of others, because they have acquired so-called 'intercultural competencies'. Because they can be compassionately empathic.

There are so many stories worth telling. Art and culture are of utmost importance here, of course, with higher arts education institutions as the hothouse.

From this perspective ELIA has accomplished a great deal since its foundation.

EUROPE

Europe anno 2017

Europe is such a rich source of inspiration! The continent West of the Ural Mountains and East of the Atlantic Ocean, from the Northern island of Nova Zembla to Southern Malta has taught us what human rights are, what a constitutional state is, and how freedom can take you to places far beyond the horizon. And after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, Europe successfully reinvented itself. Numerous exchanges took place thanks to curiosity about each other's cultural worlds. The newly founded ELIA played a leading role in relation to European art schools. But also, elsewhere in this new Europe, cultural networks and collaborative efforts came into being.

We have witnessed how fertile and inspiring the collaboration of artists and art schools in Europe can be. The institutions in the former Eastern Bloc were able to directly exchange experiences with Western ones at a moment when they both needed to rewrite their curriculum. All this happened in the context of developing more transparent educational structures in Europe with the purpose of promoting mobility and quality. On this subject and other relevant ones, ELIA organised many congresses, seminars and workshops which brought together 500 to 600 people every year.

Eurosceptics

But Europe has a negative sound to it as well.

Much is being said about the dangers of excessive bureaucracy in the managerial design of Europe – this damnable EU with its headquarters in Brussels. Is this negative view – inspired by fear and ignorance – going to prevail? Nationalist parties successfully play the anti-Europe card when they loudly proclaim that their own country should cast aside the 'yoke' called Brussels; that an exit from the EU will contribute to national welfare and progress. When, after negotiations in Brussels, politicians announce in their own country that with great difficulty they again have managed to get European contributions, European unity is farther away than ever.

Needless to say, Europe and the European Union (EU) are two different entities and should not be confused with each other. Europe – including the foundations as articulated by the Council of Europe with 47 members – is a moral and constitutional entity. The EU itself is the way in which 27 European countries come to agreements on relevant social (but particularly economic and financial) sectors and issues. The introduction of a common European currency, the Euro, was such an agreement. Not all EU member states participate, but in the cases where they do, generally speaking financial stability prevails. Some countries draw heavily on this stability. Portugal and Greece, for example, at present feel more like Brussels protectorates than proud European nations.

In the case of the EU, therefore, constant evaluation and improvement of managerial design is necessary. But improvement can only originate in a renewed 'European thought' and awareness. Perhaps some kind of 'constructive journalism' can help establish this uniting and leading thought, that is to say, a journalism which offers alternatives and solutions and generates ideas, instead of bringing only bad, inflammatory and 'fake' news.

The regimes of Turkey, Hungary and Poland, for example, ask for a measure of vigilance and criticism, but without the moralistically raised finger. Many mutual personal and cultural relationships have been established, but there is considerable concern about the (continued) existence of freedom of speech and the educational, scientific, journalistic and artistic freedom. Even just functioning in a European network can lead to imprisonment without trial for a Turkish artist, researcher or teacher today.

Wherever undemocratic forces gain the upper hand, freedom of speech and critical art are muzzled.

Politics in Europe and outside it

Post-World War II Europe has known a period of over 70 years of relative peacefulness. Nevertheless, The 1990s Balkan wars also demonstrated how vulnerable this peace is. During the civil war in Ukraine, we were once again confronted with brute force and violence. In 2015, it proved to be almost impossible to deal with the immense stream of refugees from the Middle East; it rocked Europe to its foundations and led to

considerable dissension between the member states. Greece and Italy in particular were made to carry very heavy burdens. The fragile solidarity between the various states was sorely tested and still is.

Peace, freedom and safety are far from self-evident. Not in Europe and not in the rest of the world.

Famine and chaos are threatening the African continent yet again. The situation in the Middle East is explosive and the Western powers are insecure about their interventions which are supposed to have a de-escalating effect. In Eurasia and Asia, dictators are standing firmly in the way of further development and freedom. In the United States, a recently elected President tosses aside all public conventions and decency. The impact of this political climate on these continents is putting world peace in danger. Again, there is the threat that nuclear weapons will be used as a military deterrent. World-wide climate agreements (Paris 2015) rejected by President Trump, will have consequences for peoples' fundamental living conditions. Due to rising sea levels, many people will need to flee their countries in search of safer places. German chancellor Angela Merkel has stated that Europe is thrown upon its own resources and no longer can or wants to be dependent on the United States.

Does today's Europe need these external factors to re-invent itself?

The increasing awareness that Europe's prosperity is partially based on exploitation and destabilisation of other parts of the world, will lead to a new role for Europe on the world stage?

Will the post-colonial debate play a part in achieving a European identity?

Europe, peace-loving and united

Perhaps Europe does owe it to itself to redefine its position on the world stage. Under the umbrella of the Atlantic Alliance, it has imagined itself safe for too long.

Let us not forget that Europe has a long history of wars. There always was a country that wanted to conquer all the other ones. And in recent history many battles were fought about the border area between France and Germany: Alsace-Lorraine, an area very rich in coal and steel. While during the 19th and early 20th centuries there were a few efforts to create a peace-loving and united Europe, this striving only became truly serious in the period of reconstruction after the devastation of World War II. As

Hedy d'Ancona also pointed out, Monnet and Schuman (and Adenauer) were the ones who really took action under the motto: No more war, ever again! This was the leading 'European thought' at the time of the creation of (the precursor to) the EU.

The question is whether Europe will be able to keep appearing on the present world stage as a peace-loving and united continent. To pose the question is to answer it: it is the only option. But it does require a great deal of wisdom on the part of our leaders and the commitment of all the citizens.

To that end, the EU and the individual countries should involve their citizens more closely when making political decisions. Western democracy is in need of innovation. Through all kinds of interactive participation, citizens can develop higher involvement. In other words: through a mixture of representative and direct democracy.

Idealism, but without naivety

A renewed 'European idea' also elicits new questions. Isn't this all very naive? In a world fraught with cynicism, fear and nationalist self-interest, is idealism not by definition the enemy of all the real ideals? (to paraphrase Robert Musil, a great European author).

But also: will the EU succeed in organising collective defensive forces in order to be and remain a continent of peace? After all, we can no longer count on the great protector, the United States.

'Those who want peace, prepare for war' – according to a Latin saying. This maxim has determined the actions of humans from antiquity via the Cold War with its arms race to the very recent threat of nuclear weapons. Will we stick to this opinion or will we succeed in leaving this way of thinking behind us? A passionate and lucid plea was made to leave it behind in a recent publication on the occasion of the attacks in Paris and Brussels (*Vrede kun je leren* [You can learn peace], by David van Reybrouck and Thomas D'Ansembourg, 2017).

For example, can Europe (continue to) have a constructive dialogue with Islam? And with (the peace-loving powers in) Russia, this vast country partly situated on the European continent?

There is reason for hope. We see that a new, young generation of

Europeans is coming forward, working in their own creative way for an inclusive Europe. This movement deserves more support than it is getting now – from politicians, the media, companies and organisations.

We also see a change in the Eurosceptics: the anti-European Front National lost at the French presidential elections. The population of Great Britain is worried about their country leaving the EU (Brexit) because contrary to what was promised, it does not guarantee more prosperity and safety. And during the elections (UK, France) it is mostly young people who openly advocate the advantages of a free and open Europe and tend to be against a scary nationalist adventure.

CITY

Active citizens contribute to a European citizenship

Most of the world's population will settle more and more in urban areas. This trend is also occurring in European countries. A peace-loving Europe pays attention to the quality of the urban environment of its citizens. An essential aspect here is that cities are considered to be a democratic biotope in which citizens' participation plays an essential part. European states have to learn to relinquish a lot of their power and hand it over to active citizens. Smart cities in Europe are only smart if they allow their citizens to determine the direction to their personal and communal lives themselves.

European citizenship, not as a life buoy for an almost lost Europe but as a perspective for action: 'looking through the eyes of the other' contributing to a communally experienced solidarity, first in Europe, but ultimately, everywhere, on all continents.

In many European cities, artists already show how neighbourhoods and districts are becoming more liveable if they commit themselves to a goal together with the residents (community art, collaborative arts, cultural sustainism). Art schools – but not only them – can stimulate artists to engage in the emancipation and diversity of their direct living environment.

This is not quite self-evident. Arts and peace do not have the same meaning, they are not synonyms. History has taught us that artists can also contribute to destruction and violence through their work. Artists who contribute to a peaceful world do this consciously and out of artistic and social commitment. Art education can strengthen this commitment and engagement.

Marginalisation of groups of citizens

We are not blind to a number of negative aspects of the urbanised Europe of today. We do see groups of citizens in the city that remain under the radar and are marginalised. They live in desolate suburbs, have no work,

risk bad health, often do not have any financial resilience and are discriminated against because of their immigrant background. On the other hand, they might feel uprooted because of the arrival of the migrants. They carry the burdens of 'Project Europe' and are therefore against it, even more so because they realise that the privileged fare well by it. A phenomenon demonstrated also in the so-called 'shrinking regions'. For a time, this phenomenon was described in the media as: the citizens are angry. Nationalists and populists use these feelings of discomfort to their own advantage and it stimulates them to further the cause of an anti-European policy.

The EU really needs to do more to remedy this social divide: by creating decent conditions of employment for everyone and by promoting a sustainable economic growth. To say it in a somewhat apodictic way: there will be a social Europe or no Europe!

We have to move toward a kind of 'ragelessness' – a term used by social philosopher Martha Nussbaum - in our cities. A diverse cultural policy and interactive cultural planning, such as specific forms of citizen's participation, are tools that can ultimately help us reach this goal.

Our current cultural heritage mainly consists of impressive but also intimidating witnesses of church authority and secular power of nobility and citizenry. Opening up the archives does justice to the dark, neglected side of European history (slavery, VOC, colonization, war records, etc.) and contributes to a new basis for a society in which everyone feels recognized and at home. Fortunately, an increasing number of institutions and organisations in the fields of education, science and art are taking on this urgent task.

CULTURE

Europe has many faces. The European continent is characterised by its enormous diversity of cultures and languages. The history of Europe itself, but most of all, of Europe in relation to the rest of the world, provides us with the materials for our current identity in a political and social sense, as well as in a literary, architectural, musical, theatrical and visual arts sense. And of course: we do realise that knowledge of history is not a shared and familiar 'possession' on the basis of which one can easily design a collective future.

Culture: too modest a part of the EU

In the EU it was agreed upon (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992, Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997) that arts and culture are part of policy, even if this fact was not given a great deal of attention in the agreement: 'The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.'

Even so, this central idea can be of great cultural, social and economic importance for the over 500 million inhabitants of the European continent. This 'cultural paragraph' was initiated and developed by Hedy d'Ancona, at that time Dutch Minister of WVC.

Education in arts and culture should become a more important item of the EU's agenda. For, as Hedy put it so aptly, only then will 'the soul now lacking in Europe be brought to life.'

New artistic expressions ask for innovative arts education

Besides traditional art forms, new artistic expressions are being developed thanks to digitalisation and trans-disciplinary activities, not only in the arts, but also in the scientific disciplines. As a result of the internationalisation of arts education, canons, doctrines and standard reference frameworks are no longer of importance. Students from all over the world bring along their history and stories and develop their personal signature during exchanges with others, under the guidance of their spirited teachers.

Art is not static, it always moves, it is always developing and has for centuries been open to the cultural contribution of groups of immigrants. More than that: to a large degree, the arts derive their quality and significance from this cross-fertilisation. And, culturally speaking, are we not all (descendants of) migrants?

The cultural sector will also play an important part in the humane design of employment in a period of rapid technological development and robotising.

The World Economic Forum in Davos predicts: 'Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. With the avalanche of new products, new technologies and new ways of working, workers are going to have to become more creative in order to benefit from these changes.'

But the significance of art and culture transcends the economic interests involved in using creativity and innovation in a rapidly expanding creative industry. However important the connection between art and economy is for both sides, there is always a higher artistic and social goal.

The Holland Festival 2017 had 'democracy' as a central theme. With his performance, the French choreographer, Boris Charmatz, demonstrated his reaction to the omnipresence of heavily armed police and military in the capitals and at the airports of Europe. His statement: 'Let us replace soldiers by dancers thereby reconquering public space.' More and more, this public space will become the new arena for an active, culturally oriented European citizenship. In essence, it's all about reconquering the 'agora', the market, the place where people gathered together and public meetings took place in ancient Athens. However, today our own public space should not only be public and accessible, but also very diverse.

ELIA, a short retrospective and its mission

Since the foundation of ELIA in 1990, many congresses, workshops and masterclasses were organised in many European (and some non-European) cities, such as, Amsterdam, Strasbourg, Berlin, Budapest,



1. Robert Glas, *Slechte Vingers (Bad Fingers)*, 2017.
Courtesy of the Nederlandse Vreemdelingen-politie.
Caption: This photo was taken by the Dutch Immigration Police and depicts the mutilated fingertips of a person. It is one of the 19 photos that visual artist Robert Glas (NEU NOW 2013) collected and processed for his exhibition 'Slechte Vingers' (Bad Fingers), the Dutch term for this practice. The mutilation of the fingertips is a way to break the link with the so-called EuroDac database, in order to ask for asylum once again, despite having already applied for it within the EU.

2. International Gastronomical Society, *Eaten by the Skin*, 2014.
Photographer: Tendai Matare. NEU NOW 2015.

3. Gili Lavy, *La mere divine/The Divine Mother*, film still, 2015.
NEU NOW 2015.

4. Evelyne Hofer and Laura Zachmann, *Hotel Portable*, 2015.
Photographer: Regula Bearth. Courtesy of Zürcher Hochschule der Künste.
NEU NOW 2015.





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Prague, Ljubljana, Essen, Athens, Tallinn, Lisbon, Barcelona, Gent, Tilburg, Sofia, Glasgow, Brussels, Florence, Cape Town, Basel, Los Angeles, Vienna, London, Zurich, Porto, Helsinki, Gothenburg, Dublin, Montpellier, Graz, Vancouver, Bucharest, Hong Kong, Luzern, Utrecht, Brighton, Athens, Aarhus, Seoul, Cluj-Napoca, Warsaw, Vilnius, Chicago and Nantes.

While these projects were taking place, important contributions were made by people from the ELIA institutions themselves, as well as from the art world, royalty, politicians and academia at large, among whom, Marlene Dumas, Sir Ken Robinson, Peter Sellars, Yoko Ono, Hito Steyerl, Alain de Botton, Augusto Boal, György Konrád, Albee Sachs, Jane Seymore, Charles Handy, Judith Herzberg, Dragan Klaić, Kristen Linklater, György Kurtág, Gerard Mortier, Daan Roosegaarde, Peter Weibel, Jimmie Durham, Cecily Berry, Jin Xing and Luc Tuymans.

From 2009 onwards, NEU NOW attracted a lot of attention as a transdisciplinary European platform, and until now NEU NOW has presented around 550 newly graduated artists in its live festival. A selection of works from some of the recent NEU NOW artists are featured in this booklet: Robert Glas from Amsterdam, scrutinises legislative processes around immigration and personal identification, his work was shown in Photography Museum FOAM, Van Abbe Museum, Gallery Joey Ramone; The International Gastronomical Society from Basel, creates imaginative spaces for debates about eating; Evelyne Hofer and Laura Zachmann from Zurich, present their fully equipped mobile hotel room and Gili Lavy from the UK/Israel, showcases her installations and large-scale video projections in, among others, the CICA Museum, South Korea, the Whitechapel Gallery London and the CAFA Art Museum Beijing.

ELIA has also fulfilled its role as an ambassador for professional arts education by publishing a Manifesto in 2000, which was translated into 12 languages. A document that is still being used today.

ELIA played a role in numerous advocacy initiatives; it was a founding member of Culture Action Europe and played a leading role in the critical discussion around the implementation of the Bologna Declaration (the creation of a European space for university and vocational training and developing a system of easily readable and comparable degrees). The proactive attitude of ELIA resulted in successfully influencing the decisions of European Ministers (29 countries).

Thus, the importance of arts education as a central player in the field of

vocational and scientific education was reflected in EU policy. For ELIA, it is a unique, European assignment to deepen and expand this role in the future.

Stories by the new generation, liberated from that one universal narrative

Again, we are not advocating a blueprint for a new society, nor pleading for a new Utopia. As a matter of fact, it is very likely that in the Utopia(1516) of Thomas More, the author himself would not have wanted to live. He liked a glass of wine now and then, was a family man and an individualist. He would not have been welcome in his Utopia. And let us not forget, there was no room for artists at all in the republic of Plato, that very first utopia. He considered any appeal to emotions as undermining the rational order, and thus the precarious balance of the state.

On the contrary, this booklet makes a plea for a diversity of stories. And gives arts education institutions and the world of arts and culture – mainly but not only in urban contexts – the wonderful and honourable assignment to represent these stories.

The younger generations are stepping up and they are sharing this wealth of stories as they commit themselves to find concrete solutions. They put their ideals into practice as a matter of course. Not bombastically, but practically and on a small scale. These initiatives should be rewarded and made more visible. Education means investing in our future. There should be more emphasis from the cultural sector – with the help of (newly graduated) artists, among others – on the importance of art in the curriculum of (primary, secondary and higher) educational institutions, in order to stimulate the creativity of children and (young) adults, as well as their capacity for empathy and compassion. For these are indispensable in the development of an involved citizenship.

We realise that these new stories are not welcome in various places in Europe. A strong European citizenship – what this booklet pleads for – makes it difficult for non-democratic leaders to newly develop an index with which they outlaw storytellers and their stories.

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‘The unification of Europe is very much in the picture. There is a great deal of discussion and speculation on the specific consequences for our country, with the emphasis on Dutch culture as subject of discussion. Worrysome expectations about the survival of our own identity are alternated with optimistic reflections on cultural internationalising.’

Hedy d’Ancona, former Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture, from: Voorwoord op de Nota Cultuurbeleid 1993-1996 Investeren in Cultuur [Preface to the Memorandum Cultural policy 1993-1996 Investing in Culture] (1992)

‘Expressions of art also form a European public space which is not translated into political action, but is of cultural value to the European community as a whole.’

Frans Timmermans, Vice President of the European Commission, from Broederschap, pleidooi voor verbondenheid [Brotherhood, a plea for solidarity] (2015)

‘Inner life is not a familiar subject these days. We can describe it as the capacity of every human being to create a space for developing enrichment, power of discernment and inspiration within oneself, making it possible for the different human insights to come together, ignoring the traditional differences. This state of being, of focus and inner coherence, allows for an inspired way of looking which encourages doing the right thing. Very few contemporaries realise that this inner life not only simplifies our active, creative and responsible participation in community life, but also enriches it.’

David van Reybrouck and Thomas D’Ansembourg, from ‘Engagement begint van binnen’, Vrede kun je leren [You can learn peace] (2017)



ELIA