

## **ART AND SUSTAINABILITY; ARTISTS AS EMERGING ACTORS WITH POTENTIALS FOR A VARIETY OF STAKEHOLDERS**

Hans Dieleman and Ceine Louche

*Erasmus University Rotterdam*

In the last year several stakeholders, who are concerned with sustainable development, discover the role of art and artists in the change process towards sustainability. This process is most obvious (but not exclusive) in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, the USA and the Netherlands. The authors follow this development, and are in the process of categorizing the links between art and sustainability. At the same time they are involved in organizing several events for the city of Rotterdam, the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2001 (see the web site: <http://www.artandsustainability.search.homepage.com>) The paper describes the way in which various actors are involved in art and art projects, and analyses four functions that art and artists can have in sustainability.

### **The involvement of stakeholders in art and artists in sustainability**

The paper explores the reasons for the sudden interest of various stakeholders in art. Our hypothesis is that it has to do with the need for creativity and building new alliances. We think that more and more stakeholders feel the need to develop new approaches and need creative input to keep the change process towards sustainability going. We see industries getting involved in art in various ways. We see artists become part of industrial working teams and we find industries involved in art through sponsorships of art projects. We see NGO's and (local) governments building coalitions with the art world, in their attempts to empower and educate people. We also witness research organizations inviting artists to give their view on issues of sustainability. The paper analyzes several concrete examples like the Dutch "Business Art Stage Plan", and activities of GAP-international, the Triodos-bank and the Dutch Advisory Council for Research on Environment and Nature.

### **The role of art in sustainability**

We distinguish four ways in which art can play a role in sustainability. The "art world" can help in creating new visions on reality, visualizing collective representations and developing creative approaches. Artists can also contribute by stepping out of the "art world", by working together with scientists in multi-disciplinary teams. Artists like Newton Harrison and Alan Sonfist show that this leads to positive results. Thirdly art can function as a tool to educate and empower citizens. Theatre, performances in public spaces and art-contests are used to engage citizens in visualizing their views on environmental problems and solutions. Finally art plays a function as it co-shapes the spiritual dimension of sustainability. Art is here a means for self-realization and touches upon aspects of sustainability like leisure and aesthetics.

## **Concluding remarks**

The involvement of various stakeholders in art and art projects is a very interesting development that has many potentials, as art can play a catalyzing role in sustainability. The paper will conclude by identifying ways to deepen the involvement of stakeholders in art and the communication with artists.