

## Social and Artistic? Oups!! Can we? ... and for whom?

*Introduction for the closing meeting Unplugged! - Arts in Society Award, 1th of October 2022, by Heike Langsdorf and Simone Basani (radical\_hope).*



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As introducing thought we want to mention that right now, as we are speaking, one of the biggest art-events in Europe today, Documenta 15, in its final days at the moment, is giving a huge platform, to what radical\_hope would call the 'social-artistic' in the arts.

We could say that with such an exposure (again, in the Central Europe art sphere), the social-artistic 'goes mainstream'.

Being exposed, criticized, admired, recognized in their value or not understood in their nature, the main works & projects exposed at Documenta 15 do question the following for both lovers & haters the same : *where are the artists and for whom do they do what they do?*

This brings us to us, the group we are today, here... and to what we, Simone and Heike, did and experienced in the context of working with many of you in the context of AISA.

When we are asked as radical\_hope to work 'as mentors' we always start with looking at the situation of the people we work with. In this case the candidates of AISA, and Cera & Dēmos as organizations supporting artists to develop (or start exploring) their own participative art practices.

The decision of developing socio-artistic practices is never easy in a cultural sphere where this link (between social and artistic) is still seen as diminishing one or the other in their 'pure value'. This has all to do with some fixed ideas and expectations stemming from those contexts. Often artists who engage their capacities in the social are seen as deriving from a purely artistic parcours and on the other hand, people working from out the social field are seen as not apt for an artistic career.

The challenge for us is how to challenge the relationship between these two fields, how to (attempt to) go beyond this separation actually.

When working with the candidates of AISA we have aimed at supporting the practitioners — be they informed by the social, by the artistic, by other spheres or both — behind the work/s they are developing. We wanted to foreground the practice and — for a moment at least — suspend looking at the results.

AISA functions as one of the ambassadors for the social-artistic within the Brussels-Flemish scene, so we think that in this context it is very important to acknowledge the conditions for existence for these practices mentioned above and their field. To do this together with AISA candidates/artists we proposed that we would all work with an approach called *Through Practice*. This is a methodological approach to artistic research that radical\_hope is constantly developing. Working *Through Practice* means to examine 'by doing and by interrogating the doing' what lies at the core of our research desire — what we are really busy with when 'at work' - and to show and share precisely this core of practice with an audience who does not necessarily dwell in the same field.

Why?

Because this is the job of artistic as well as social practitioners: both are (still) struggling to get rid of an aura they are carrying — either an aura of genius or helpaholic.

It is worth exploring the 'core interest' of both fields, the artistic and the social: we might discover unexpected possible relationships, maybe that in

some cases they are interestingly complementary, if we want.  
The artistic uses 'showing', 'making seen, felt, sensed' as the main tool for addressing a public — for the social field the public *IS* the other, receiving a service.

Here might lie the question following the reflection above: when did we lose the complementary character of 'living' and thinking through practices?

The live-presentations presented during the public closing event Unplugged! are attempts to include both 'natures': the aesthetic (showing, proposing) and the social (being with and engaging others).

And ending with a short dive into the etymological dictionary \* - we were surprised again that we had forgotten: 'social' historically means "devoted to or relating to home life" "living with others". This word comes from Latin *socialis* which means "of companionship, of allies", which in its turn originated from the proto- Indo-European root **\*sekw-** meaning "to follow." So, yes, being in a place where we make (even unfamiliar) things familiar, where we make kin, remain in trust and be well together — for a moment not in some kind of competition and production mode.

Cheers!!

\* etymoline.com / entry: "social" (24/10/2022, 07:01AM)