

AWAKE

Growing a Viable Entrepreneurial Model at the Intersection of the Arts and Wellbeing

INSIGHTS FROM FIVE CASES

AWAKE

**“WE KEPT ASKING
OURSELVES:
HOW CAN WE
CONTRIBUTE?
HOW CAN WE
TRANSFORM?”¹**

“IT HAS GIVEN ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE — A NEW WAY OF SEEING AND CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE. I BELIEVE THIS SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE HAS ALSO REFLECTED POSITIVELY ON MY WORK COMMUNITY AND CLIENTS, ENHANCING THEIR WELLBEING.”²

**“ART IS AMONG THE MOST
IMPORTANT FACTORS
WHEN CREATING A
HEALING ENVIRONMENT.”³**

“AS A RESULT OF MY MENTAL ILLNESS, I LOST MANY THINGS I LOVED. I FELT LIKE MY WHOLE LIFE COLLAPSED. I THINK OF THE THEATRE GROUP AS A LITTLE GARDEN PLOT WHERE MY LIFE WAS GIVEN THE CHANCE TO FLOWER ANEW.”⁴

**“I HAVE ALSO
TRAINED MY
LAUGHING
MUSCLES.”⁵**

¹ **Julie Läderach and Sylvain Méret**, Co-founders of Collectif TUTTI

² **Jonna Maier**, Public health nurse, vocational teacher in caregiving, and practitioner of the Empowering Photography method

³ **Peter Tammeling**, director of the rehabilitation centre Revalidatie Friesland

⁴ **Augustine**, Participant in anti-stigma theatre workshop by Dejviska Production

⁵ **Conrad**, Social Gym participant

Abstract

This casebook delves into the intersection of arts and wellbeing through the lens of creative entrepreneurship. It highlights five entrepreneurial ventures — ranging from emerging to more established — developed by professional artists. These initiatives aim to directly benefit various groups, such as infants, older adults, and individuals with chronic illnesses, through tailored approaches in diverse artistic disciplines. By exploring their set-up, ecosystems, scaling strategies, and impact, the casebook showcases five distinct entrepreneurial journeys and their future outlooks.

Keywords

health, wellbeing, artistic intervention, social innovation, creative entrepreneurship, sustainable business model

About the casebook

This casebook is part of the “AWAKE: Arts & Wellbeing as a Creative Business and Future Livelihood” project, co-financed by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed to the development of this casebook, which explores viable entrepreneurial models at the intersection of arts and wellbeing. A special thanks to the AWAKE project’s associated partners, practitioners, artists, healthcare professionals, and participants in the featured initiatives. Your insights, experiences, and dedication have been invaluable in highlighting the potential of creative entrepreneurship to drive innovation in the arts and wellbeing sector.

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INTRODUCTION

The “AWAKE: Arts & Wellbeing as a Creative Business and Future Livelihood” project, co-financed by Creative Europe, explores the intersection of arts and wellbeing from the perspective of creative businesses and future livelihoods. The project aims to foster entrepreneurial ventures and business opportunities in this dynamic and evolving field by identifying models, enablers, and obstacles that allow arts and culture professionals to bring their offerings, expertise, and methods into the healthcare and wellbeing sectors.

By emphasizing innovative collaborative practices between the arts and wellbeing sectors, the project offers a range of training opportunities, including masterclasses, insightful roundtable discussions, and valuable educational materials. Among these is the casebook “Growing a Viable Entrepreneurial Model at the Intersection of the Arts and Wellbeing — Insights from 5 Cases”, which highlights key insights and strategies.

The interview below, featuring project partners, delves into the motivations behind creating this casebook, its potential to contribute to the growth of the arts and wellbeing sector, and why you should explore this resource.

What is the aim of the casebook, and for whom is it designed?

In many arts and wellbeing initiatives, we observe that practices are often not designed to serve as sustainable sources of livelihood or business opportunities.

However, the casebook “*Growing a Viable Entrepreneurial Model at the Intersection of the Arts and Wellbeing — Insights from 5 Cases*” explores and proves the powerful

synergy between arts and wellbeing, focusing on its potential for fostering creative business development and career opportunities.

This comprehensive casebook, alongside a variety of initiatives within the AWAKE project, aims to inspire practitioners and policymakers working in the growing arts and wellbeing sector. We hope this valuable edition will foster innovation, support entrepreneurial ventures, and highlight viable pathways in this dynamic field.

How do you define “wellbeing” with regards to this project? Why didn’t you choose “health” as a central theme?

While health can be seen as a crucial component of overall wellbeing, we wanted to tackle the topic from a broader perspective.

Wellbeing is not simply defined as health; it interacts with various emotional, social, and psychological dimensions to form a more holistic view. Wellbeing can be understood as a resource that encompasses a broad and dynamic range of factors that contribute to a person’s overall quality of life. But naturally, many of the arts and wellbeing initiatives we explored place a strong emphasis on the healthcare sector.

What is the current level of awareness about the benefits of the arts within Europe’s health sector? And how do you hope that AWAKE will contribute to this?

In Europe, the health sector is increasingly aware of the benefits that art and health projects can offer to patients, healthcare practitioners, artists, and others. While there are notable national differences due to varying levels of political support for such projects, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened societal awareness of the importance of a healthcare system that incorporates cultural considerations.

However, the economic challenges facing the health sector in European countries, such as a shortage of professionals, hinder the development of arts projects within the sector.

We hope that this casebook will inspire both artists and the health sector to develop more collaborative projects at the intersection of these two fields.

In many European countries, professional artists rarely see themselves as potential entrepreneurs. What is AWAKE project doing to change this?

What is an entrepreneur? An entrepreneur is someone who is in charge of the development of their own activity. Therefore, most artists are entrepreneurs. Yet, many don’t consider themselves as such because it is a word most closely associated with the business world — where artists don’t feel they belong.

Nevertheless, many professional artists already display robust entrepreneurial skills — the ability to passionately present and discuss their work, manage stress, adapt to unforeseen circumstances, stick to a budget, write reports, etc.

With this project, we aim to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to raise awareness of their work in both the wellbeing and art sectors and foster new economically sustainable initiatives.

How can we support the work of artists who develop and implement their practices for health and wellbeing? How do we ensure artists maintain their own wellbeing while fostering that of others?

Artists in this field often require substantial support throughout their journey. Supporting artists and cultural practitioners in this realm is not solely the responsibility of the cultural sector, other sectors must also play a role. Creating wellbeing through artistic practices represents a shift in focus, from artistic creation to the process of participants engaging with creative practices under the artist’s guidance.

Artists working at the intersection of art and wellbeing may struggle with professional identity and the sustainability of their work, as well as the emotional challenges and potential confusion arising from their participants. To address this, it is crucial to advocate for targeted grant funding for artists in health and wellbeing, provide professional development opportunities, such as workshops, training, and mentorships, and establish spaces for community support and networking to help them grow and sustain their impact.

To conclude, what is needed to scale the impact of entrepreneurial practices within the arts and wellbeing sector?

There are two important elements. The first is raising awareness in society about the benefits of arts and wellbeing activities. The second is knowledge — the need to develop a better curriculum for those working or aspiring to work in the arts and wellbeing sector. This was highlighted in the recent

CultureForHealth report¹ and other evidence-based policy recommendations for Europe.

This curriculum should cover all cultural, social, and health-related aspects of the sector. It should be for university students, experienced professionals, and people working in social institutions, such as museums and hospitals.

One of its key elements should be the knowledge and practical know-how of sustainable entrepreneurship, empowering professionals in the creative and health sectors to operate independently of sole reliance on public subsidies.

From our perspective, these initiatives would help grow the arts and wellbeing sector in a sustainable and successful manner.

¹ <https://www.cultureforhealth.eu/knowledge/>, CultureForHealth Report. Culture's contribution to health and well-being. A report on evidence and policy recommendations for Europe

Interview with project AWAKE partners conducted by Ariane Vitou & Annabelle Türkis, November 2024

Ariane is an independent consultant working in the field of cultural transformation for organizations and territories. She has an extensive experience in purpose-driven transformations and innovative business models. Previously, Ariane worked as Director of Partnerships and Communications for a private foundation supporting the cultural development of French rural territories and led strategic advisory missions for C-Level executives.

Now, Ariane focuses on building collective resilience through cooperative approaches and strategic partnerships.

Ariane Vitou

Annabelle supports the cultural sector as a freelancer, specializing in collective intelligence, peer-to-peer learning, international monitoring and content curation.

Her expertise encompasses the transformation of museums and heritage institutions in the context of social and ecological transitions. Within this framework, she focuses on social innovation and the intersection of arts and health, with a particular emphasis on creative aging.

Previously, she held leadership roles in development and communication at the Palais de Tokyo and the Centre Pompidou-Metz.

Annabelle Türkis

THE AUTHORS' APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

As this casebook is dedicated to an emerging field, we felt it required a tailored approach. Leveraging our expertise as cultural and social innovation experts, we designed a research and assessment process while also utilizing peer learning, collective intelligence, and content curation methodologies.

The process began in June 2023 with a collaborative online session to co-define research and selection criteria with the consortium members. The criteria included:

1. Professional profile: Arts, culture, or creative professionals with high-quality artistic work in health, wellbeing, or social contexts

2. Business model: Microbusinesses and other enterprises that are not solely dependent (or not meant to be solely dependent) on grants, subsidies and public funding, with a clear operational and revenue-generating logic.

After this first session, we led a large outreach phase over a period of three months. Initially, we approached cultural and SSE incubators across the EU. Then, during a second outreach phase, we utilized our personal and consortium networks to connect with arts and health experts, EU cultural networks, curators, heads of foundations, and academics. This effort uncovered 115 entrepreneurs across 19 countries throughout the EU.

The outreach phase allowed us to build a detailed database and deepen data collection through website analyses and research. In September, this initial mapping of initiatives

was assessed and discussed with consortium members to narrow the list down to 20 pre-selected cases.

After conducting additional assessments through entrepreneur surveys and interviews, we facilitated a final collaborative session with the consortium to identify the five finalist projects. These projects were selected based on their alignment with the criteria mentioned on the left, as well as their representation of a wide variety of artistic disciplines, health and wellbeing topics, and countries. We then conducted an in-depth interview with each entrepreneur and their key stakeholders to gather first-hand material about their purpose-driven model, ecosystemic approach, and social impact.

This structured process showcased entrepreneurial innovation at the intersection of arts and healthcare, while providing insights into the diverse profiles and varying levels of emergence or maturity among artists and cultural professionals working in the fields of art, health, and wellbeing. It also clearly highlighted which European countries primarily subsidize this sector and where artists and cultural workers adopt a more entrepreneurial approach to health and wellbeing, structuring their practices in a resilient and sustainable manner.

DANS OP RECEPT

COUNTRY

Netherlands

ARTISTIC SECTOR

Dance

MAIN HEALTH & WELLBEING FOCUS

Improving the quality of life of people with long-term illnesses, such as Parkinson's, non-congenital brain injury, and chronic pain

DATE OF FOUNDING

2017

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Foundation

- dansoprecept.nl/over-ons
- www.revalidatie-friesland.nl/over-ons
- www.lkca.nl/wp-content/uploads/Kunst-als-verwondermiddel_DEF.pdf
- Dance classes improve self-esteem and quality of life in persons with Parkinson's disease | Journal of Neurology (springer.com)



Marlien Seinstra

Founder and Managing Director of *Dans op Recept*

After beginning her career as a dance teacher at Arts Center Parnas in Leeuwarden (Netherlands), Seinstra began collaborating with dance companies as a performer. She later created her own dance performances dedicated to social topics with her foundation, DeDansDivisie, and most recently with her dance company, Leefmeesters (Masters of Life). Since 2016, she has been teaching weekly dance classes to people with Parkinson's and has since expanded her expertise in dance to work with people facing non-congenital brain injuries and chronic pain.

"I've always wanted to address life's most difficult challenges through art."

Marlien Seinstra

With a vision of confronting life's struggles through dance, Seinstra developed a dual approach to vulnerability: Firstly, through storytelling rooted in the lives of the dancers, creating performances with those experiencing difficult life circumstances or physical vulnerabilities; and secondly, by teaching dance to groups of individuals in fragile health.

After launching dance classes for people with Parkinson's disease in the Friesland region of Northern Netherlands, Seinstra has since broadened her offerings in this area to include other vulnerable groups. Recently, *Dans Op Recept* has begun expanding its dance programs for individuals with Parkinson's to other cities in Northern Netherlands, including Groningen, Drenthe, and Limburg. At the same time, she is diversifying her offerings and reconnecting with performance creation on a deeper level through her new company, *Leefmeesters* (Masters of Life).



© Christian Kamminga

Project Genesis

Seinstra's journey towards creating *Dans op Recept* entangles performance creation and her experiences with vulnerable individuals. This path was accelerated thanks to three key figures: two from the healthcare sector and one representing a local authority.

It was after her first dance workshop for older adults in 2014, enriched by her discussions with them, that Seinstra created her first performance on the theme of loneliness, featuring amateur dancers.

Soon after, she was invited by a physical therapist, Ronald van der Heijden —who would later play a pivotal role in the founding of *Dans op Recept* — to teach dance to people with Parkinson's. Recognizing the beneficial effects of dance on these individuals and wanting to express this on stage, Seinstra created a performance in 2016 in Leeuwarden, featuring twelve participants

from her Parkinson's class alongside five professional dancers. The show went on to tour the Netherlands.

"People reacted in a highly emotional way because they saw on stage what I was experiencing every week in my dance classes — people feeling better, not from pills, but through art", says Seinstra.

Among the dancers in this performance was another of the three key figures in the launch of *Dans op Recept*: Wya Feenstra, then a doctor at Friesland's rehabilitation centre, Revalidatie Friesland, who would become a leading partner.

After the premiere, Seinstra was offered an unexpected opportunity: to expand her dance classes for individuals with Parkinson's throughout the Friesland region.



© Christian Kamminga

Project Set-Up

Alongside her collaborator, Ronald van der Heijden, Seinstra initially established one class per week, eventually growing to nine classes per week across the region. For these classes, she brought on five additional dance teachers, training them in her method. This marked the beginning of *Dans op Recept*.

Until that time, Seinstra's projects had been carried out with her initial organization DeDansDivisie. But, as the *Dans op Recept* program grew, she created a new dedicated structure under the same name. Structuring it as a foundation was essential for administrative purposes, enabling her to secure subsidies from the Friesland region.

At that time, Seinstra had gathered a core team consisting of physician and dancer, Wya Feenstra; physical therapist, Ronald van der Heijden; and Marloes Schreur who worked at the Leeuwarden City Council. The team combined essential and complementary skills for launching the initiative — two individuals with medical backgrounds and one skilled in securing grants.

Dans op Recept then pursued two complementary strategic goals: implementing dance classes for people with Parkinson's

and encouraging doctors to prescribe these classes to their patients. This was a significant challenge and required long-term effort: "In the beginning, health professionals weren't aware of the benefits dance could have for their patients and didn't understand our approach", Seinstra explains. "At that time, in the late 2010s in Northern Netherlands, music therapy was already integrated into healthcare, but dance was a new concept. Furthermore, turning to dance was far from a natural choice for patients either, especially if they had never taken a dance class before."

As a result, Seinstra needed to raise awareness and build support for the approach, breaking down barriers by implementing workshops for professionals and presentations to the public.

When approaching health insurance providers about covering dance classes for their clients, Seinstra realized she needed to provide evidence of the benefits of dance for patients with Parkinson's. Accordingly, she sought research partners who could conduct a study demonstrating the impact of dance on wellbeing.

© Christian Kamminga



Ecosystem

To carry out the study, Seinstra connected with the rehabilitation centre, Revalidatie Friesland, through her collaborator, Wya Feenstra who was a physician at the facility as well as being a dancer. Revalidatie Friesland treats adults, young people, and children diagnosed with brain injuries, cerebral palsy, amputations, chronic pain, trauma, and developmental coordination disorder, helping patients regain self-reliance. “Our rehabilitation centre believes it is very important for our patients to be able to participate in society again and start on a path towards de-medicalization”, says Peter Tammeling, Manager of Revalidatie Friesland and an advocate for the role of art in society.

Tammeling made the resources of his research department available to Seinstra. The department collaborated with research teams from Utrecht University and the Radboud University Medical Centre in Nijmegen (Department of Neurology, Centre of Expertise for Parkinson and Movement Disorders), where renowned neurologist Bas R. Bloem practices.

© Christian Kamminga



“Dance classes seem to improve self-esteem, quality of life, and motor symptoms in people with Parkinson’s disease.”

Feenstra, W., Nonnekes, J., Rahimi, T. et al. Dance classes improve self-esteem and quality of life in persons with Parkinson’s disease. J Neurol 269, 5843–5847 (2022).

Impact

Conducted in 2020, the study focused on a sample of forty-nine people with Parkinson’s who participated in weekly dance classes for a consecutive period of 22 weeks. The study concludes: “Dance classes seem to improve self-esteem, quality of life, and motor symptoms in people with Parkinson’s disease.”

Participants share that the dance classes not only have a positive effect on their body, but also on their social life and overall psychological wellbeing: “It’s not just that you start moving more comfortably and freely, it’s also the connections with my fellow participants with Parkinson’s. Over time, we’ve become a close-knit group. Not only are we active together, dancing, but we also share coffee and exchange experiences, and this is just as valuable.”

Peter Tammeling adds, “Dance has had a positive effect on patients. They enjoy physical activity again. They get more pleasure from going to dance class than to therapy. It has also added something for the staff; the therapists enjoy dancing more than practicing their traditional treatment methods”.



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Project development

This impact study enabled *Dans op Recept* to take a huge step forward: Seinstra and her team succeeded in convincing an insurance provider to cover dance classes for people with Parkinson's and to reimburse its patients — a first in the Netherlands, according to Seinstra.

During this collaboration with Revalidatie Friesland, Seinstra decided to broaden her scope to include some of the other vulnerabilities treated at the facility, such as chronic pain and brain injury. She began developing new prototypes involving various members of the medical team from different specialties. Following a testing phase, Seinstra, working closely with the medical team, created a new training program for dance teachers.

Working with these patients was a radically new and deeply instructive experience for Seinstra and her team. On a different level, while her efforts to expand activities for people with Parkinson's were supported by established professional networks, this was not the case in the context of non-congenital brain injury and chronic pain: "We had to help build these networks, which is a long-term endeavour."

More recently, *Dans op Recept* has expanded its reach through adapted formats in retirement homes, called "Dance Labs". Today, 17 retirement homes offer these dance classes to their residents year-round.

Future Perspectives

Today, *Dans op Recept* is renewing its focus on performance creation under the new company *Leefmeesters* (Masters of Life), founded in 2023, which features amateur dancers with chronic illnesses, such as Parkinson's, non-congenital brain injury, and chronic pain, alongside professional dancers.

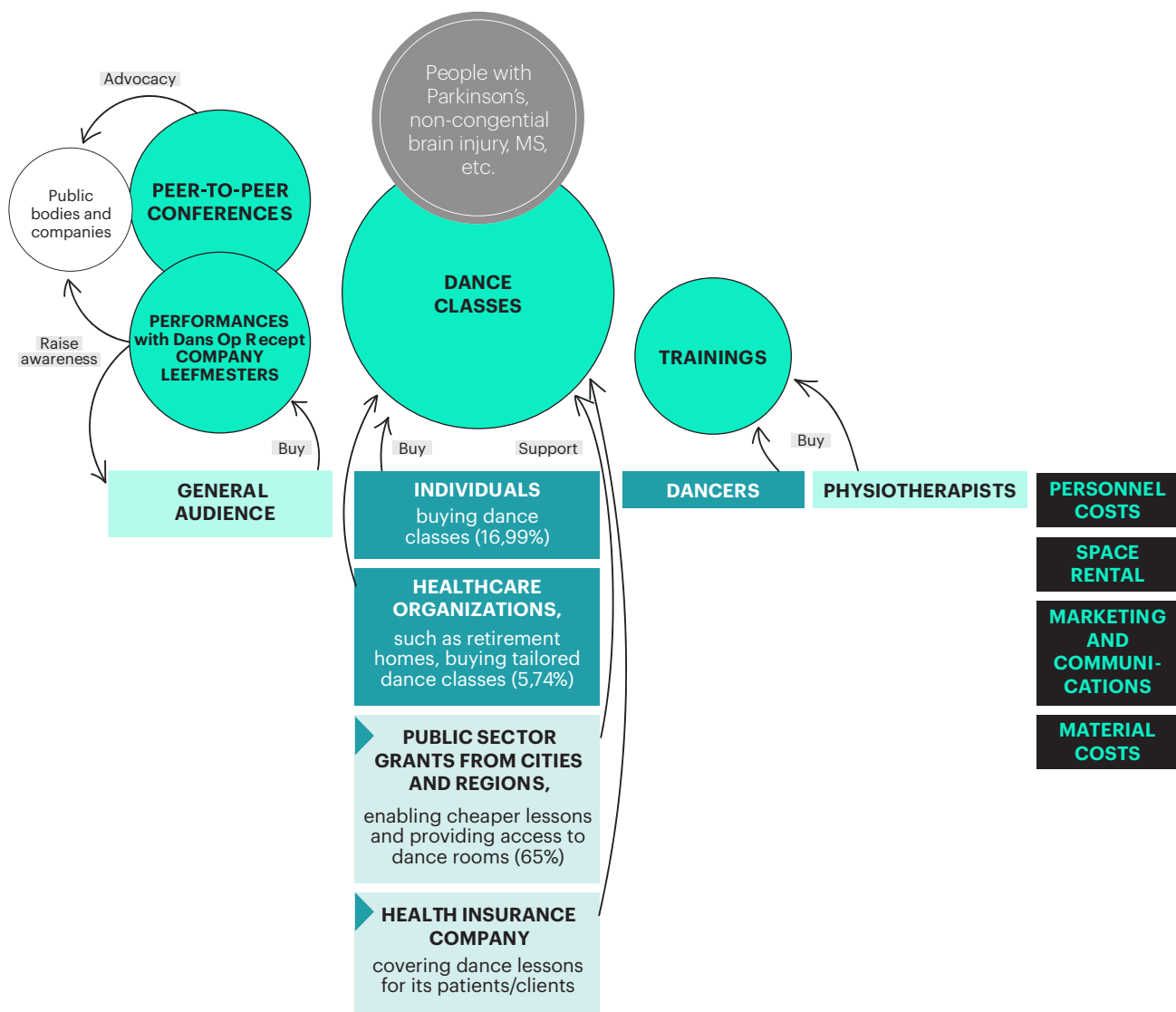
In terms of collaboration with the healthcare sector, new opportunities are emerging with the project *Dansante Fysiotherapie*, in which *Dans op Recept* works with physiotherapists, training them to better integrate dance into physiotherapy treatments. Through this approach, they become intermediaries, encouraging people to start taking dance classes. This initiative begins in Friesland but could potentially expand to other parts of the Netherlands. However, as *Dans op Recept* grows, Seinstra asks herself: "How big do we want to become?"

As a witness and strong advocate of the impact art can have on health and wellbeing, Peter Tammeling recommends, "any healthcare organization incorporates art, in the broadest sense, into its processes and treatments". He explains, "Art can contribute to de-medicalization efforts, it can be a solution to keep the treatments affordable, to cope with impending staff shortages and to help patients and ex-patients take pleasure in life again". However, funding remains a major challenge, and Tammeling calls on authorities to "take responsibility" by subsidizing artistic participation in healthcare.

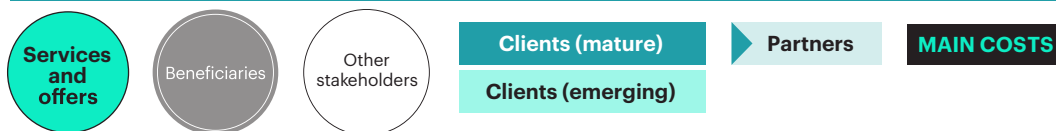
Leefmeesters © Vincent Schiphorst



DANS OP RECEPT ECONOMIC MODEL



LEGEND:



AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Seeking collaborations to conduct impact research that demonstrates art's therapeutic benefits and positive effects on community connection has been crucial for Dans op Recept's development and credibility.
- ▶ A virtuous cycle has been created to raise awareness and engage all stakeholders. This has involved performances featuring vulnerable individuals, professional conferences, and strong partnerships with the Revalidatie Friesland organization, insurance providers, retirement homes, and local authorities.
- ▶ The continuous training of dance teachers in this method provides a solid foundation for the project's scalability.
- ▶ Recent collaborations with physiotherapy practitioners highlight the programme's adaptability while improving resilience as it helps to embed dance in healthcare.

DEJVISKA PRODUCTION

COUNTRY

Sweden

ARTISTIC SECTOR

Theatre

MAIN HEALTH & WELLBEING FOCUS

Developing expressive, creative, and relational skills for people suffering from mental health issues through an innovative practice of *anti-stigma theatre*

DATE OF FOUNDING

2018

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Company

➤ www.idunn.no/doi/full/10.18261/issn.2535-7913-2020-01-06

➤ www.regionstockholm.se/49563a/site-assets/kultur/publikationer/rapport-drama-och-teater--kollektiv-skapande-for-existentiell-halsa-i-psykosvarden.pdf



Emma Lundenmark

Founder and Director of Dejviska Production

Emma Lundenmark is an author, poet and journalist. She holds a master's degree in literature. When she was a journalist, Lundenmark worked as a producer of a radio show about people with mental health issues. Later, she decided to expand on this experience, becoming more interested in making a difference "on the ground". She has always been writing and collaborating with different performing arts, notably musicians and artists. She has contributed to films and has a strong interest in fantasy, dreams, and surrealism.

"The aim is to make the patients believe in their own creativity and help them grow. I really engage in meeting all the members at their point of departure and encourage them to sharpen their poetic perspective on the world to see other possibilities in their lives."

Emma Lundenmark

Since 2018, Emma Lundenmark has been developing her innovative *anti-stigma theatre* concept to support people in psychiatric care with developing creativity and expression through writing and drama. She creates conditions that enable patients and care professionals to work together in a creative process and develop performances.

Strongly influenced by surrealism and automatic writing, she has designed a process that allows patients to explore their imagination and modes of expression in a respectful environment, creating from their own unique worlds. With this approach, she demonstrates that supporting the creative expression of people suffering from mental health issues can improve their self-esteem and strengthen their confidence in relationships with others.

Anti-stigma project, Region Stockholm © Liza Simonsson



Project Genesis

While working as a journalist, Lundenmark realized the field wasn't for her, as her true passion lay in storytelling. She started working for a media company in the suburbs of Stockholm, working on a radio program about mental health issues. Rather than reporting about the increasing challenges in mental health, Lundenmark wanted to work on practical solutions. This led her to reflect on building a platform for unheard voices — something that resonated with her own family experience: "In my family, I have relatives that did not have an outlet. It was important for me to help people in need build their voices and support them in speaking about their reality."

Lundenmark was inspired by the work of Leonora Carrington and the ability of surrealism to let the "mad man" speak. When she suffered chronic fatigue during her work at the radio programme, Lundenmark reflected on the idea of language as medicine: "I was writing every day. I wrote a collection of poems exploring different perspectives on what was happening to me at that time. I wanted to understand my condition in my own language — not just settle with descriptions from the media and doctors."

"I wanted to understand my condition in my own language — not just settle with descriptions from the media and doctors."

Emma Lundenmark

"The project only became a reality thanks to the people involved."

Emma Lundenmark

Those reflections and experiences led her to work with poetry and theatre for people with mental health issues beyond the radio show. Later, her colleague met a manager in psychosis care at the Competence Center for Culture and Health in Region Stockholm, and they discussed the idea of using theatre in this practice. Through this meeting, the unit manager was exposed to an area of expertise which is rarely included in the education of healthcare professionals, but which can be a valuable addition to other forms of care and treatment."

After securing funding for culture and health initiatives from Region Stockholm's Cultural Administration, Lundenmark launched a pilot of her *anti-stigma theatre* project. Her goal was to craft a new creative process that would guide participants through feelings of loneliness towards a sense of community by adapting the rules of drama to the mental health context. Key elements in this practice included a nuanced sensitivity to recognize and nurture each participant's creativity and to foster a co-creative environment where every group member was valued as a vital contributor.

Project Set-Up

In October 2018, Lundenmark started working in psychosis care integrating newly diagnosed patients with members of staff. She used different sources of inspiration to encourage soft focus, sensitive awareness, and spontaneous movement, charging the participants with emotional energy that fuelled their ability to act. She harnessed automatic writing and poetry to draw out material for the play, which benefited from the support of a scenographer for costume and décor. The play was performed to close relatives, staff and other patients. Throughout the process, Lundenmark was driven by a single question: How could the audience see that they shared the same longings and fears as the patients?

This approach was radically different to existing workshops offered in clinical settings, explains Augustine, a participant in *anti-stigma theatre* since 2021: “Most group activities in hospitals and clinics focus on skills training and work rehabilitation. I just wished for a place where I could be me and meet other people living with psychosis — doing something playful, creative and collaborative together.”

By positioning staff members on an equal footing with patients, encouraging participants to express their fragility, fostering collaborative expression, and utilizing the expertise of a professional artist, this approach created an experience far removed from art-therapy. Augustine highlights the value of working with a professional artist: “It feels like an amazing gift to have a trained artist leading

the group and giving us artistic guidance. The process of gradually transforming fragments of improvisations and poems into an actual manuscript is something far beyond therapy. Finding meaning out of these different narratives together is a magical experience.”



Costumes created for the play “Amazing” © Lou Fallenius

As the project was a success, word spread and new wards in other hospitals wanted to offer the anti-stigma theatre experience to their patients as well. Implementation was made possible thanks to staff members and managers who wanted to try this new approach. From the hospital's perspective, the method was also a way to involve care professionals in different functions says Mårten Berglund, Psychiatric Unit Manager in Region Stockholm: "As a manager, I also collaborate with the production. We discussed the model and how we could work with the artist/production before starting."

Since the start of the project, Lundenmark took notes after each session to determine what worked and what didn't so she could develop a protocol. Now she accompanies up to 30 patients and half a dozen of staff members in psychosis care. But she emphasizes that "it's good to not have too many groups in order to properly care and take responsibility for those at hand". This is why she has started thinking about creating trainings so that she can share her method with other institutions.

Lundenmark has also adapted her approach to work with children aged 11 to 18 in inpatient care, using movement and poetry. However, she does not go as far as to create a performance with these children since they are normally treated over shorter periods.

Lundenmark also gives courses in patient-relative associations.

Impact

Eva Hallgren and Sofia Cedervall, Senior Lecturers at Stockholm University's Department of Teaching and Learning, have been working on a report financed by the Competence Center for Culture and Health. The report highlights the positive impact the *anti-stigma theatre* had on relationships between care professionals and patients. This scientific analysis was crucial in bringing forward evidence on the value of the project.

The report demonstrates improved relationships between care givers and patients. From the patient perspective, it highlights positive impacts at two levels. Firstly, patients connect with each other in hospitals and develop intimate relationships: "We now know each other deeply — we feel every movement, we make poetry". Secondly, patients become more relaxed, more daring, and conscious of their capabilities as they start to trust their creative instincts and learn from each other.

"It had a great impact on the patients. They found a way to express their feelings and emotions. The project is an excellent complement to standard practice for some individuals."

Mårten Berglund

Psychiatric Unit Manager in Stockholm

The report insists on the notion of “existential fragility”. Being fragile, it suggests, signifies an openness that fosters a deepened sense of community — a transformative shift for individuals who otherwise feel isolated. For participants, fragility comes to mean being open and present, which carries a positive connotation. The report highlights the emotional impact of collaborative creative work, where seeing others unlock their creativity and experience personal growth inspires a similar courage in oneself. In respectful settings like these drama and theatre groups, participants feel a shared understanding and emotional connection to each other. Harmony prevails, both emotionally and cognitively, social bonds are strengthened, and a sense of pride flourishes.

This scientific analysis reflects the testimonies of participants such as Augustine:

“When you live with psychosis, you deal with a lot of shame and internalized stigma on a daily basis. Previously, I felt so bad I didn’t dare look other people in the eye when in the waiting room. Through the theatre group, however, I met other people living with psychosis and felt a deep and mutual sense of understanding. Now, instead of shame, I feel solidarity and strength. This experience has helped me relate to myself and my place in the world; instead of silently withdrawing, I can now speak out in the company of others.”

The report proves that the healthcare professionals involved also perceive the project’s value: “It had a great impact on the patients. They found a way to express their feelings and emotions concerning stigma and existential thoughts about their health. They grow and become more active, which is important for regulating and managing negative symptoms in psychosis.”

Ecosystem

From the beginning, Region Stockholm’s Culture Administration has been a key partner of the project. Not only did it finance the launch, but it also supported the creation of a scientific report to evaluate the project’s impact. The Competence Center for Culture and Health also played an important role in relaying documentation produced about the *anti-stigma theatre* and communicating results with health care institutions.

In addition, Region Stockholm — through its Innovation Fund — continues to support the development of a manual, which builds on interviews with managers, staff, and patients who have been involved in the *anti-stigma theatre* experience. The group leading the project consists of two researchers, one focused on psychosis disorders and the other from the field of drama, Emma Lundenmark herself, and one of the project’s participants. The group is managed by a strategist at the Competence Center for Culture and Health.

“The theatre gives a bird’s-eye view on life.”

Lee

Participant in anti-stigma theatre workshops

Future perspectives

Lundenmark considers that (i) communicating the impact of her practice and (ii) passing on her method to new trainers will be the main drivers of the project's development:

- ▶ To tackle the communication challenge, she emphasizes the importance of disseminating the scientific report (published by Region Stockholm's Competence Center for Culture and Health) about the anti-stigma theatre in psychosis care among congress, study organizations, and patient-relative associations: "We need to demonstrate how we can work with self-stigma, understanding how art and creativity can strengthen participants and facilitate their recovery."
- ▶ As for the training, Lundenmark thinks the anti-stigma theatre manual (funded by Region Stockholm's Innovation Fund) will be the key for Region Stockholm to develop and disseminate the method. She is also planning a course at Stockholm University with Eva Hallgren to train new teachers in the method: "Helping participants to become teachers themselves is a great opportunity and would enable the project to grow from within."

Lundenmark has also considered diversifying her activities by developing relationships with patient unions and artists while also exploring potential collaborations with theatre associations to allow patients to continue the practice outside the hospital.

From an organizational standpoint, these perspectives require a long-term, structured team as Lundenmark is still mainly working alone on the project.

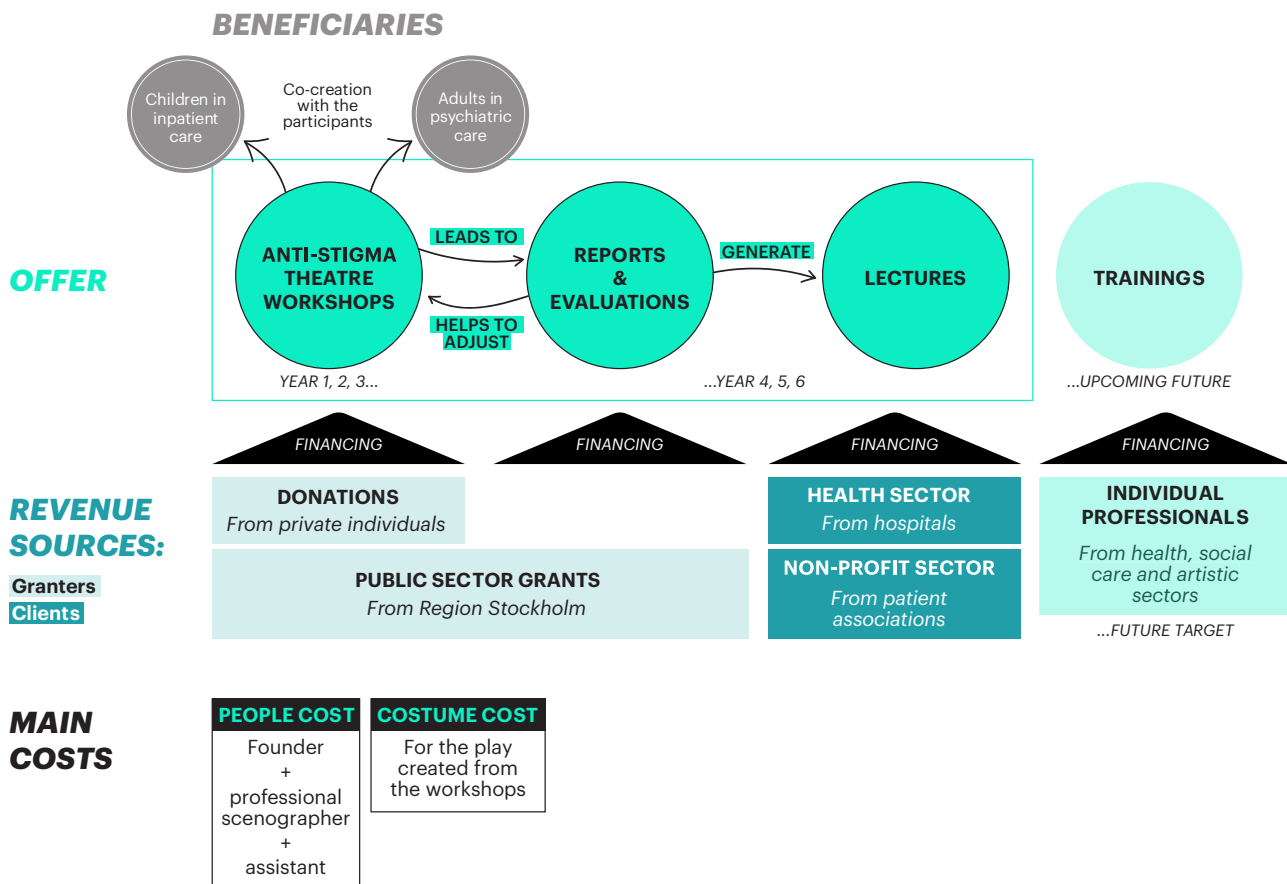
Focus on the entrepreneurial journey: Challenges to overcome and tips for other entrepreneurs

According to Lundenmark, the main challenges are the time and financial pressures on the health sector, which make it difficult to suggest care professionals undertake more work. The recruitment of staff members has also been difficult at times: "Many staff members are hesitant to try it, particularly if they are not personally into performing. This can, in turn, make it hard to recruit participants." To overcome this challenge, Lundenmark suggests open workshops for staff members and managers to try out the practice and see the impact it can have.

As for artists and cultural professionals collaborating in the health sector, Lundenmark recommends to engage with the research community early in their project. This connection can help to demonstrate the impact of their work on patient outcomes.

She would also like policy makers to support the narrative of arts and culture in healthcare and to recognize the importance of creativity in overall wellbeing.

DEJVISKA PRODUCTION ECONOMIC MODEL



AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Emma Lundenmark’s transformative anti-stigma theatre approach removes barriers between psychiatric patients and care professionals by integrating them into a common creative process. The project’s success demonstrates its potential for replication and expansion across healthcare settings, particularly when combined with well-developed training materials and partnerships.
- ▶ The ongoing development of a manual by Region Stockholm, as well as collaborations with academics, has built a foundation for wider dissemination and sustainable growth. Structured teams and ongoing support are essential to scale the initiative while maintaining its integrity and quality.
- ▶ To address recruitment challenges, engaging workshops for healthcare staff and evidence-based advocacy can build trust and enhance participation, ensuring resilience in implementation.

SJAAK LANGENBERG AND ROSÉ DE BEER

COUNTRY

Netherlands

ARTISTIC SECTOR

Design

MAIN HEALTH & WELLBEING FOCUS

To encourage physical activity among the elderly while combating loneliness by connecting them with young athletes

DATE OF FOUNDING

2014

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Foundation

➤ www.sjaaklangenberg.nl/art_projects/art_projects_sociale_sportschool_eng.html

➤ www.socialesportschool.nl
(IN DUTCH ONLY)

➤ www.sjaaklangenberg.nl/art_projects/art_projects_geisha_eng.html



Sjaak Langenberg

Sjaak Langenberg was trained at the Royal Academy of Arts and Design in Den Bosch. He started his professional career making sculptures and installations in art institutions. Early in his career, he felt the need to remove his practice from the “white cube” of cultural institutions to a social context, expressing his vision through “art and public space”. In 1997, he was nominated for the Prix de Rome, winning the basic prize. From then on, Langenberg decided to devote his career to addressing societal issues through art, working alongside his partner Rosé de Beer.



Rosé de Beer

Rosé de Beer was also trained at the Royal Academy of Arts and Design in Den Bosch in fashion design before studying interaction design in Maastricht. Design, in the broadest sense of the word, is her core business. Since the late 1990s, Rosé visualized Langenberg’s designs and made presentations for him. From 2005, they have been working together full-time, with Rosé also co-developing concepts and projects.

“A lot of organizations are in despair and eager to find new ways to address crises and issues through the arts and social design.”

Sjaak Langenberg

Since 1997, Sjaak Langenberg and Rosé de Beer have been experimenting within social and work-related communities, aiming to challenge routines and offer new approaches for those involved. By placing local issues within a larger societal perspective and bringing seemingly irreconcilable worlds together, they create scope for new perspectives. The Social Gym project began in 2014 and crystallizes 25 years of research. Langenberg and de Beer have designed new practices for integrating younger and older generations and, in the process, developed new horizons for art to respond to the major social challenge of ageing well.

They have also pioneered a new model by creating a foundation to support their project and make it sustainable over the long term.



Social Gym © Ben Nienhuis

Project Genesis

In the late 2000s, Langenberg and de Beer began reflecting on how they could address issues in healthcare based on their own families' experiences. Art and public space commissions were mainly linked to the construction of new neighbourhoods or infrastructure in the Netherlands at this time. But, Langenberg and de Beer felt the intrinsic need to tackle societal issues was missing from these art projects, believing art in public spaces could be used to influence behaviour and support social change.

In 2008, they came across a call for volunteers to visit lonely elderly people in a retirement home in Utrecht. Answering this call, they commissioned a Japanese dancer to appear at the windows of the home in a window-cleaners cradle, performing a dance and making contact with the residents in their project High-Rise Visitor. This kind of experimentation sharply contrasted with the prevailing approaches of art exhibitions in care organizations, which remained quite traditional. They were among the first artists to work with the health sector from a social design perspective.

The Social Gym project started in 2014 with a commission from the Design Museum Den Bosch that pursued a theme of "reinventing happiness" within the city. Langenberg and de Beer had heard of some care organizations looking for young volunteers to interact with elderly residents, but after researching at old people's homes they came to the conclusion, "if you are looking for volunteers, don't say it out loud".

From this starting point, they developed a series of bootcamps where young athletes and elderly care home residents could



High rise visitor © Joep Lennarts

exercise together. This was not only a practical approach, it had a performative dimension and was also presented at the Design Museum. At the end of an initial test bootcamp, participants were keen to find out when the next session would be scheduled and Langenberg and de Beer got to work developing the rest of the project.

Project setup

After this initial stage, Langenberg and de Beer realised their project had long-term potential and decided to make this innovative bootcamp format available for other care organizations. They reflected on creative ways to use wheelchairs and rollators as fitness machines and worked with a trainer to design interactions with the elderly, helping them encourage and support the athletes or participate in modified exercises according to their ability.

The concept included a reflection on image-building and societal perceptions of the elderly, demonstrating how we can foster social cohesion by wearing the same clothes and having common brand aesthetics.

As the project started to take shape, they considered how they could make it a viable model that would allow them to work on other social design projects. The first prototype of the Social Gym project was financed by the Design Museum Den Bosch as well as other grants, but in order to develop the project on a larger scale, Langenberg and de Beer needed new sources of revenue. They took the decision to create a foundation that would gather funds to support the project while allowing them to remain executors for future projects.

Around the same time, they met Peter Hop, a healthcare consultant, who understood the added value of artists and social designers in this space. Together, they started a project commissioned by an organization for people with intellectual disabilities. Langenberg and de Beer also asked Hop to become the Social Gym foundation's chairman of the board — his expertise in the field of care along with his ideas for business cases within this context were a good addition to further developing the project.

The first financial contribution to the foundation came from three care organizations, a bank, and the Doen Foundation (the postcode lottery fund). This support enabled the artists to create a national platform for the Social Gym initiative, covering costs for special clothing and trainers, a communication package, and an online agenda detailing event dates and application information.

Project development

As the project developed, it became clear that an entire "social sports school" was emerging with its own independent business model. The care organizations would ask for a quote and finance the implementation of the concept

either themselves or through a hybrid funding model with the support of their municipality. To complement this direct funding, Langenberg and de Beer obtained the support of the Vriendenloterijfonds (Friends Lottery Fund).

While the COVID-19 period slowed things down, it provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress of the project and its business model. To consolidate the structure, they brought two project leaders onboard to run the program — one focusing on research and the other on acquisition, establishing local matches between healthcare organizations and trainers, and procuring new Social Gym bootcamp locations. By 2024, Social Gyms existed in 9 cities in the Netherlands that together hosted 99 bootcamps in 19 different locations with 234 seniors and 486 athletes participating in one or more bootcamps.

Ambassadors from healthcare organizations who truly understand and want to promote the project are essential to its success. At Vitalis, a residential care group and client of the Social Gym project, Social Network Coordinator Sylvia van Aggel explains, "My work consists of knowing the district, understanding local needs, and finding adapted responses in collaboration with artists and with the support of the municipality. These new activities help expand the social network of elderly residents, making them happier and healthier." According to van Aggel, the Social Gym is definitely innovative and different: "The magic is in the energy released from exercising together!"

This magic prompted the Vitalis residential care group to implement the concept in five of its locations and generate new partnerships: "There is a network of sports coaches, and we work with the foundations Samen voor Eindhoven" (Together for Eindhoven) and "Pak de Vibe" (Get the Vibe) to encourage young athletes to join through school or the business

community. Next year we will put the Social Gym on the program 12 times a year in my location, Berckelhof — doubling the number from 2024.”

Van Aggel also confirms that the Social Gym needs innovative funding methods: “Now, after 5 years, we can partly finance our involvement through the municipal subsidy for basic day care, but we are looking for ambassadors from the business community. This way, companies can join in, exercising with their employees while making a meaningful impact in the community.

To expand the initiative further, Langenberg and de Beer must find new partnerships with private companies which understand the project’s social value at the crossroads of culture and wellbeing. As Langenberg puts it, “We never made a sponsorship plan to be less dependent on grants, but there is great potential as corporations want to keep their employees fit while supporting social entrepreneurship. At the Social Gym, those two things come together — the runner’s high and helper’s high combine”.

Ecosystem

Because Langenberg and de Beer have created their own niche at the borders of art, social design and care, their projects often serve as good examples for both the art and care sectors. Therefore, they work in close collaboration with a group of researchers at the Art Academy of Utrecht to capitalize on knowledge and extract insights about projects, identifying the elements that work so users can adapt their experience into new contexts and cases.

Impact

As the Social Gym project took shape, Langenberg and de Beer began assessing its impact — not only on the participants’ health and mindsets, but also in terms of its monetary value. In 2024, a report was conducted by a researcher from HAN University, Nijmegen with the support of the Agis Innovatie Fonds (Agis Innovation Fund).

Client testimonies consistently confirm the positive impact the project has on its participants. As Sylvia van Aggel puts it: “A woman in a wheelchair spontaneously throws her legs in the air, a woman who usually only walks tries to jog; a participant who doesn’t talk much suddenly becomes chatty. Everyone is challenged within their abilities. We always end our sessions with a cup of coffee, giving everyone the chance to rest before going home. The participants spend the rest of the day with smiles on their faces — they’re happier, more alert, and sleep better at night. Initially, participants varied, but now we have a stable group, and word-of-mouth has become our best way of attracting new participants. The Social Gym has provided us with new volunteers who want to help others and contribute in a unique way. Staff at the Berckelhof location have also embraced the Social Gym, helping ensure residents join on time. Some of the staff even participate.”

“Art and culture have always played an important role in our organization as they inform our joint mission — the art of growing old happily.”

Sylvia van Aggel

Social Network Coordinator at Vitalis, residential care group

Focus on the entrepreneurial journey: Challenges to overcome and tips for other entrepreneurs

“Entering the health sector with this project was relatively easy”, recall Langenberg and de Beer. “Care organizations were very interested in what we were doing. The project sold itself, and because of our creative approach — the way we designed and communicated the project — care organizations were excited to get on board.”

However, a significant challenge was overcoming language barriers and finding people within the organizations who could think beyond their own language and were willing to become ambassadors for the project: “It’s sometimes hard to find people within organizations who are truly open-minded, adventurous, and able to open doors for us. In all our projects, we aim to inspire participation by establishing ourselves as creators from the start. This approach transcends language and produces entirely new types of conversations. When people are approached in a creative context, they tend to be open to new ideas and are more willing to step out of their comfort zone. That’s how it worked with the Social Gym.”

The second major challenge was securing funding; transforming the project into a sustainable model remains a challenge today. With the addition of two project managers, the organization grew, but so did the costs: “We continue to find new ways to iterate the revenue model, responding to what works in practice and drawing on insights from both the board and project managers.”

Taking a long-term perspective is also essential to achieve system-wide change. “Achieving change within the system is challenging, but it’s something we’re gradually working towards”, Langenberg and de Beer explain.



Social Gym © Sjaak Langenberg

Future perspectives

When envisioning an ideal model for growth, Langenberg and de Beer state, “A significant next step would be for our practice to drive change at a deeper, systemic level. This would be possible if the Social Gym was funded through health insurance companies or prescribed by general practitioners.”

The artists believe there is real momentum around art and social design because governments are increasingly interested in innovative approaches to the health and social care crisis. Creatives and artists can have a decisive impact because they have the capacity to connect different sectors of society that might not otherwise communicate with each other.

Expanding the project to other countries would offer an opportunity to develop their practice through different cultural contexts. Langenberg and de Beer have already started working in Norway and are interested in expanding their social design projects further, paying particular attention to the specificities of the local context.

Langenberg and de Beer are convinced that time is on their side regarding the expansion of arts and culture in the health sector and their contribution to societal issues more broadly. They see new communities of researchers, creators and artists emerging to design innovative approaches to societal issues. But according to them, this commitment is not for every artist: "It has to be right for you. You need to stay close to your own interests and make connections to social issues from there". They believe organizations could support these burgeoning communities as long as they empower internal "connectors" — individuals capable of transcending language barriers and uniting different worlds.

As for policy makers, they have a clear stance: "Be courageous and have guts. There are so many good examples of arts and health integration. Learn from creators'

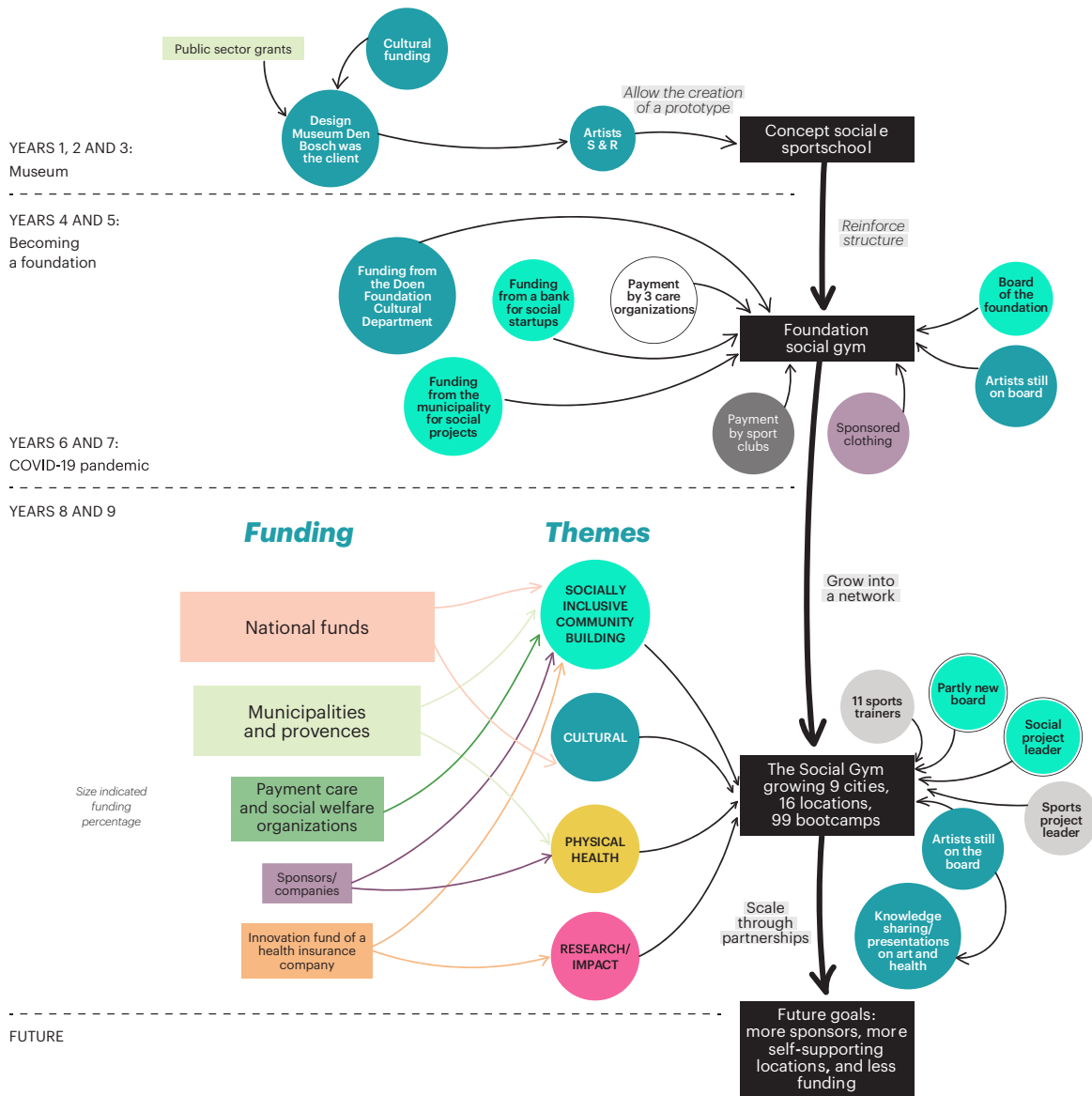
"Many organizations take to conducting research and investigations, but these can become an excuse to delay action. Taking the first practical step can feel daunting."

Rosé de Beer

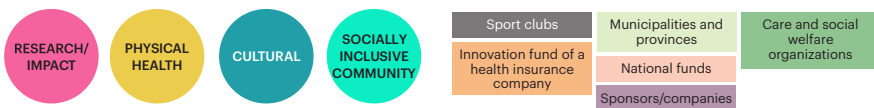
new approaches to long-standing issues." Policy makers need to get out of the delay mindset that favours investigations that do not have a concrete impact as well as the bureaucratic processes that require you to "prove everything before you even start". Langenberg and de Beer strongly advocate for the importance of experimentation and individual initiative: "There isn't only one way of doing things. There's no single formula. It's about your own initiative, luck, and meetings that open doors. Art, social design and care can practice together."

They also insist on communication with the younger generation. They strongly believe these new ways of working at the intersection of art and social design should be shared with young artists. This is why they are making every effort to involve young people in their projects, giving them hands-on experience to complement what they learn in art school.

SOCIAL GYM ECONOMIC MODEL



LEGEND:



AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

- ▶ Through the *Social Gym* project, Sjaak Langenberg and Rosé de Beer demonstrate the innovative approach design can bring to social challenges. By creating a foundation, they have laid the infrastructure necessary to disseminate the project on a national scale with clear non-profit ideals while also helping gather support from both the private and the public sectors.
- ▶ They have already demonstrated an ability to replicate their solution. To take the project further, the next challenge will be to build coalitions with large companies, demonstrating the value of initiatives based on social and cultural dimensions in caring for the elderly. This would help create national recognition and lead to changes in public health policy.

COLLECTIF TUTTI

COUNTRY

France

ARTISTIC SECTOR

Dance, music

MAIN HEALTH & WELLBEING FOCUS

Artistic awakening of infants from 3–36 months old

DATE OF FOUNDING

2013

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Association

- collectif-tutti.com/eclosion
- collectif-tutti.com/bb
- collectif-tutti.com/3pm
- apimi.fr
- sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport-1000-premiers-jours.pdf



Julie Läderach

Cellist, co-founder of COLLECTIF TUTTI

Julie Läderach has a dual connection to contemporary and improvised music. Alongside her work as a performer and composer where she collaborates closely with companies and artists, her career is marked by numerous performances around dance, image, text, and architecture conducted throughout France, Europe, and around the world. She works at the intersection of styles, human connections, and anything that stimulates research and creative processes.



Sylvain Méret

Dancer, co-founder of COLLECTIF TUTTI

Initially trained in visual arts, Sylvain Méret explores worlds and boundaries where creativity, performance, somatic and therapeutic processes, education, and movement arts intersect. He studied contemporary dance at P.A.R.T.S (Brussels, BE) and dance therapy at CODARTS (Rotterdam, NL). He has danced in various countries across Europe and Asia, as well as in Cuba. He also works as an independent teacher, performer, choreographer, and movement therapist.

“For us, the artist’s mission is to shine a light on the most overlooked audiences and create practical, engaging projects for everyone — from older adults to infants.”

Julie Läderach and Sylvain Méret

In collaboration with various artists and researchers, Julie Läderach and Sylvain Méret have developed an experimental artistic practice focused on “feeling, sensitivity, and poetry” that aims to intimately connect with audiences. Their non-verbal performances are presented in theatres as well as unconventional locations, both in France and internationally. In France, they are pioneers in the field of artistic awakening for infants and the adults who care for them, connecting through participatory performances combining music and dance.

Läderach and Méret are at the beginning of an entrepreneurial venture: the *Tutti Box*, developed for nurseries. Set to launch soon, the *Tutti Box* combines artistic initiation and caregiver training to enhance early childhood development and empower nursery staff. After a phase of research and experimentation, a prototype of the *Tutti Box* has been developed in collaboration with the nursery APIMI.



BB © M.G Costa

Project Genesis

When Collectif Tutti began creating performances for infants in the early 2010s, performing arts festivals for small children under 3 didn't exist in France. In other countries, like the Netherlands, advances in this area were already underway and an invitation to create a performance for infants at the 2 Turvenhoog Festival in Almere, which came through dancer Makiko Ito, a long-time collaborator, gave them the opportunity to develop a pioneering artistic practice for audiences in France. This is how their first dance and music performance, *BB*, designed for infants 6–18 months old, was born: "Through *BB*, we learned a lot about how to engage with small children of that age".

Until then, the work of Collectif Tutti had been focused on bringing small children and their parents to theatres and opera houses, rather than engaging with them in their everyday environment. This changed with the COVID-19 crisis, which raised questions about how they would be able to continue working with infants in a close and engaging manner. This was when they created *3PM*, an interactive performance for young children from 6 months old, designed to deepen active collaboration between the children, their parents or caregivers.

Meanwhile, in France, approaches to early childhood development were evolving with the release of a government report titled "*First 1,000 days*". Following this report, the French government implemented a number of early childhood support measures, including funding for cultural actors working at the intersection of arts and early childhood care.

It was the innovative approach of *3PM* towards the infant ecosystem, including the adults around them, that led to a crucial encounter with a nursery that would play a decisive role in their entrepreneurial journey: The APIMI nursery in Bordeaux.

3pM © Camille Greatorex



Project Set-Up

Collectif Tutti was first invited to perform *3PM* at the APIMI nursery in 2022.

“Collectif Tutti’s extensive experience with infants, parents, and people with disabilities aligned perfectly with our specific approach to parenting as fundamental to the overall health and wellbeing of children”, remarked Dany Billès, director of APIMI. Beyond this alignment of expertise, need, and vision, this type of artistic offering was rare at the time. “There were very few artistic formats suitable for infants”, confirmed Billès.

The APIMI association operates two innovative, inclusive nurseries where 30% of their intake is disabled. APIMI’s progressive approach to inclusion and parenting is also reflected in its role as a family support and professional training centre. When asked what role artistic creation plays in this vision, Billès replied: “Inclusion is a societal project. And the artistic approach brings a fresh perspective to it.”

Following the performance of *3PM* at the nursery, Dany Billès and Collectif Tutti decided to deepen their collaboration through a research residency at the nursery.

“When the residency started, we didn’t know which direction we would take”, explained Läderach and Méret. But after immersing themselves in day-to-day life at the nursery, they defined their idea as “a prototype of a dance and music workshop for infants that could be replicated in other nurseries by caregivers themselves and become part of a nursery’s service catalogue”.

The project’s remarkable innovation was to place adults at the heart of the process and develop a replicable offer: “The project aims to nurture a societal awareness around the importance of empathetic adult engagement”, added Méret.

From January to June 2023, Läderach and Méret spent three to four mornings per month in the nursery, where they gained a concrete understanding of the needs of both children and caregivers. This observation phase led to a prototyping and testing phase that included workshops with seven caregivers and resulted in the creation of the Tutti Box: a kit containing a manual, an instructional video, music, a loudspeaker, a drum, balls, and other objects.

During these workshops, Läderach and Méret gradually stepped back, allowing the nursery workers to take the lead autonomously. Upon reflection with APIMI director, Dany Billès, it soon became apparent that the *Tutti Box* could not be distributed to nurseries without accompanying training for professionals. Consequently, a training program was added to the Tutti Box and has already been tested at a number of regional nurseries. When developing the content, Läderach and Méret drew from their experience in adult mediation from their performances *BB* and *3PM*, as well as from APIMI’s expertise as a training centre.

Impact

While the *Tutti Box* as a whole has not yet been tested, all elements of the prototype were evaluated during these workshops. And, although a formal impact assessment has not yet been conducted, Dany Billès observed, “very positive effects on how our professionals interact with the children, developing sensitivity, enhanced observational skills, and increased composure”.

She added, “Now, with the *Tutti Box*, nursery professionals are better equipped. The artistic approach to their work allows them to be more daring”. As one nurse explained, “It allowed me to think differently..., empathising with the children — putting myself in their shoes to understand what they might be experiencing”.

Incorporating art into inclusion practices reduced caregivers’ stress and enhanced their sense of well-being, particularly in caring for children with special needs.

As for the parents, “they discovered a new side to their children”, according to Billès.

“The *Tutti* approach helps develop a quality of conscious presence with children, which is not an easy thing to achieve.”

Nurse
APIMI nursery

Ecosystem

As we write this article, the first 10 *Tutti Boxes* are being prepared for launch as a package that includes the 3PM performance as well as in-person training sessions — aimed at both the cultural sector and the childcare sector.

The production of the first 10 *Tutti Boxes* has been co-financed by the following public bodies: REGION Nouvelle-Aquitaine and its SSE Innovation Fund, DRAC Nouvelle-Aquitaine, ARS — Agence Régionale de Santé, FDVA — Fonds de Développement de la Vie Associative, IDDAC — Agence Culturelle de la Gironde, Fonds de Recherche du CND — Centre National de la Danse, as well as supported by APIMI and sponsored by the bank Crédit Mutuel du Sud-Ouest.

Among these partners, the co-production partnership with IDDAC is unique in that it also includes dissemination within the regional cultural sector: In exchange for its funding contribution, IDDAC has free access to the tool within its cultural networks. Additionally, to expand into early childhood care networks, APIMI is developing the dissemination of the training programs and the *Tutti Box* within its national network in France.



© Denis Cointe



© Denis Cointe

Future Perspectives

To expand the promotion and distribution of the *Tutti Box* both in France and internationally, Collectif Tutti hopes to establish partnerships that will help them develop a comprehensive entrepreneurial project. Discussions with a publishing house are also underway to release the Tutti Box manual (including the videos and music) as a standalone product, which could also be available in bookstores for use by parents, childcare professionals and artists who engage with small children.

Läderach and Méret conclude by explaining: “The *Tutti Box* allows us to diversify our cultural offerings beyond performances and outreach activities, exploring new ways to promote cultural rights at the intersection of art, health, and overall wellbeing.” On the level of societal resilience, they underline that “the entrepreneurial dynamic surrounding the Tutti Box can help to highlight an essential phase of life by underscoring the importance of adult-child relationships and incorporating recent scientific findings about the significance of empathetic connections”.



THE TUTTI BOX CONSISTS OF:

- ▶ A book to guide the practice in a simple, visual, and direct way
- ▶ 1 QR Code which leads to an online video resource demonstrating the principles of non-verbal mediation and interaction between adults and very young children
- ▶ A second QR code which gives access to a recording of original music, along with an audio mix tailored to the acoustic requirements and specific environment of the nursery
- ▶ A loudspeaker
- ▶ An octopus-looking object with fabric strips that enable experimentation with space, exploring the concepts of centre and periphery

To bring the Tutti Box to life, Läderach and Méret collaborated with various artists: The book was designed in collaboration with illustrator Camille Ulrich, the video was produced by La Troisième Porte à Gauche and directed by Denis Cointe, original music was composed and performed by Julie Läderach and Chris Martineau from Collectif Tutti, the "Octopus" sensory object was designed by Marion Bourdil, the box was designed by Clémence Valade and the drum by Matthieu Chalet-Mathoulin.

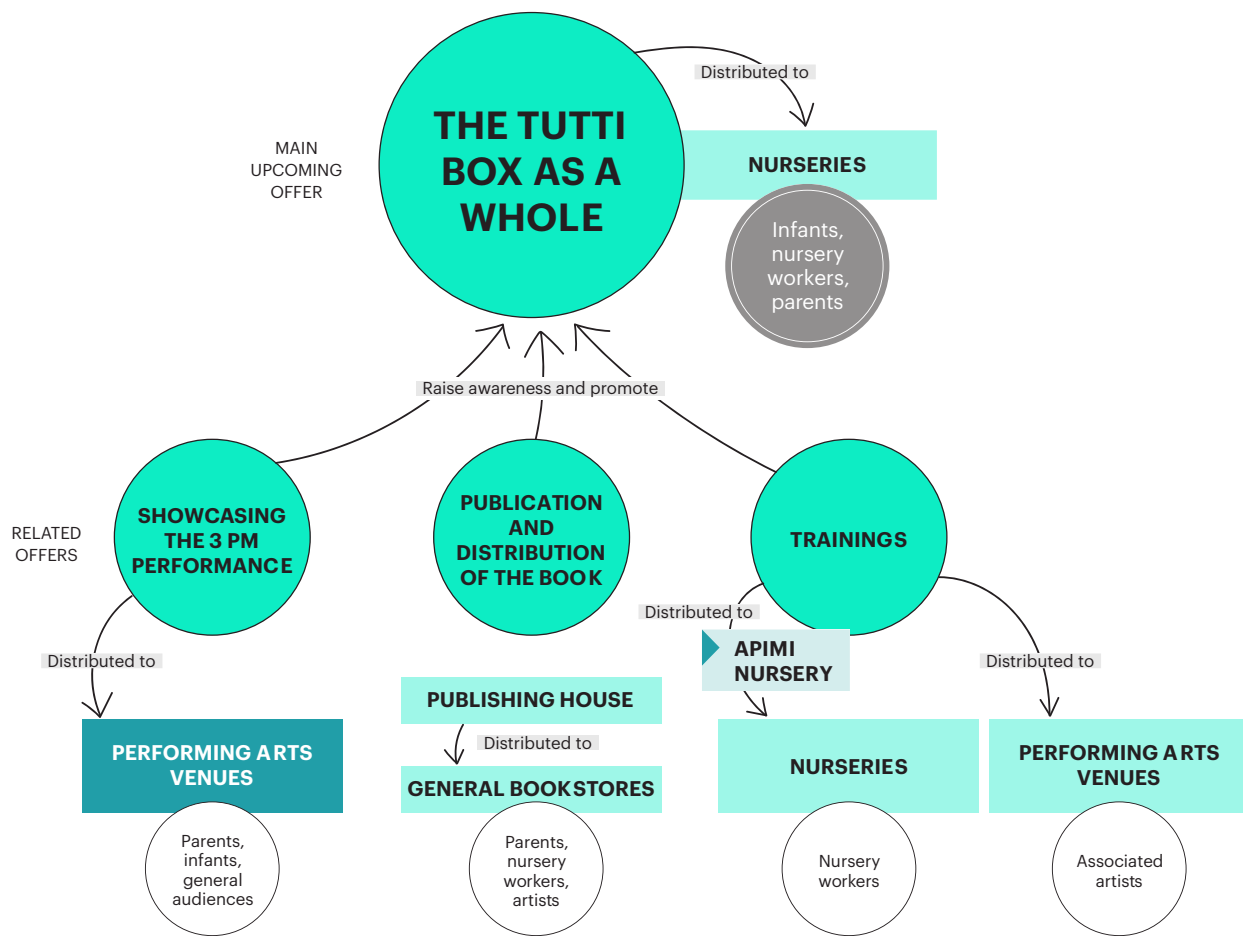


Boite a tutti generique © Camille Ulrich

“As professional artists, our creative work can have a transformative impact on the entire childcare ecosystem: the children and their parents, caregivers, and nursery workers. This transformation is our motivation.”

Julie Läderach and Sylvain Méret

LAUNCH STRATEGY OF THE TUTTI BOX



LEGEND:



AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

- ▶ The Tutti Box demonstrates a thoughtful approach to integrating art into early childhood care. The artists’ collaboration with APIMI reflects their commitment to meeting real-world needs in nurseries, uniquely positioning the Tutti Box to support child development.
- ▶ The focus on caregiver training, along with APIMI’s network partnerships, ensures a strong potential for scaling the project to other nurseries. Integrating feedback from early adopters will help refine the project.
- ▶ Conducting an impact study in the near future will also be key to establishing solid foundations and credibility as Tutti seeks partnerships for broader distribution.

EMPOWERING PHOTOGRAPHY

COUNTRY

Finland

ARTISTIC SECTOR

Photography

MAIN HEALTH & WELLBEING FOCUS

Transforming the way we view ourselves and others through an empowering practice of photography. The method shifts power dynamics, allowing the observer to experience reality from the emotional perspective of the main character.

DATE OF FOUNDING

1998

TYPE OF STRUCTURE

Private company (established in 2005)



Miina Savolainen

Founder and Managing Director of Empowering Photography

Miina Savolainen is trained as a social educator and holds a master's from the University of Art and Design of Helsinki. As a pioneer of applied arts and arts and wellness since the late 1990s, she is a Member of the Union of Finnish Art Photographers, the Union of Finnish Non-Fiction Writers, and the Social Policy of Creativity Network. She has been creating and developing the *Empowering Photography* method over the last 20 years and has trained approximately 3,000 field professionals in her method. She is the founder of the Society of Appreciative Gaze, a professional network. She has won several awards for her work, notably the State Award for Children's Culture, the Cultural Award of the Finnish Medical Society Duodecim, and the Christina Award of the Institute of Gender Studies.

- Article in Nova Science Publishers, *Empowering Photography: Participating in someone else's world*
- The Power of Photography TV series by Yle Areena
- The Human Factor (2012), *The Loveliest Girls* by Yle Areena

“Being seen is a core human need. By answering this need, we develop wellbeing for individuals and communities.”

Miina Savolainen

Since 1998, Miina Savolainen has been developing a social innovation that reverses the usual power dynamics of photography. She has structured her method as a training programme to be disseminated in different healthcare and social contexts.

As this approach has demonstrated its strong emotional and social impact, a new phase of development is emerging to bring the method to a larger number of communities and contribute to a paradigm shift in interpersonal work towards client-centred, respectful dialogue, moving away from diagnosis- and disorder-centred problem-solving.



Jenna Pysto & Miina Savolainen 2000 from "The Loveliest girl in the world". A mother and her teenage daughter take turns photographing each other in an abandoned house. The Empowering Identity Process workshop in progress.

Project Genesis

As a young social educator and art education student working at a Helsinki public children's home in the late 1990s, Miina Savolainen had an insight into the power of the gaze. Her work with children in care and their families led her to ethical reflections on how professionalism in care work is traditionally viewed. The long-standing tradition of professional distance clashed with children's need for love and mutual emotional connection with their caregivers.

From that experience, Savolainen observed that verbal language did not work as a corrective tool because the children's trust had already been broken through language. It was also difficult for both adults and children to express the children's traumatic experiences respectfully and sensitively enough, coming to the realisation that another tool was needed. Savolainen observed that the ability to read facial expressions and convey emotions through gaze was crucial in the children's home context. She wondered if children could perceive the affection directed towards them through photographs and recognize their own worth: "I wanted to photograph the children and young people in a loving way that reversed the usual power dynamics of photography, putting the children's autonomy and self-determination at the forefront."

That was the starting point of her project *The Loveliest Girl in the World*. The process, involving outings and photo sessions designed by young people who grew up in the Hyvönen children's home in Helsinki, started in 1998 and lasted over 10 years. The founding principle of *Empowering Photography* began to emerge during this time: Turn the relational dynamics in photography upside down. Instead of the photographers deciding how they see their subject, the subject becomes the protagonist.

Savolainen was also determining a fundamental rule that would guide her practice — encouraging a safe, tender, admiring, and mutual gaze during photo sessions. *The Loveliest Girl in the World* is considered a pioneering work in art-based wellness, narrative methods, and lived experience.



Mother-daughter pair, Heli and Lyyti, practicing the Empowering photography method during an excursion

Project setup

After this first step, Savolainen worked on understanding what was happening in the moment of taking photos to harness this magic for social change. She began investigating her discovery about the gaze from two professional perspectives: therapeutic child protection work and art education. Savolainen insists, “The art-based wellness innovation and professional therapeutic skills used in *The Loveliest Girl in the World* and the development of the *Empowering Photography* method would not have been possible without both of these frameworks. The synthesis of these different approaches was essential. Demanding educational work in child welfare wouldn’t have been possible for an art professional alone. Likewise, new ways of seeing, doing, and finding meaning in gaze and visuality with concrete tools wouldn’t have been possible with only a care work background — art skills were also required.”

Savolainen continued developing her method during her studies in the Art Education department of the University of Art and Design Helsinki (now Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture). The project became her master’s thesis in 2005, gaining the university’s encouragement. She established that the method’s rules for looking, which ensure psychological safety, dictate that both one’s own and others’ photos must be viewed sincerely and appreciatively.

She began disseminating her approach in different care contexts. The first opportunity came in 2001 with the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health in their *Life Story Chain* project, which developed narrative methods for child

welfare. Another significant platform for the development of her project was the multi-year YTY project, which focused on balancing work and family life in workplaces. Here, the method was applied in female-dominated healthcare workplaces and male-dominated technical workplaces. Ethical conditions for applying the method, effective practices, and phenomena brought out by photographic work began to take shape.

Project development

Savolainen knew that developing training for the method was fundamental to demonstrating its transferability. Her first long-term professional development training programmes emerged in 2002, in collaboration with the Continuing Education Center at the University of Turku, the Department of Education at the University of Jyväskylä, and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. The targets were mostly professionals from interpersonal fields, but also researchers, foster carers, nurses and supervisors from sectors beyond care work.

She then designed two different education training programs: A basic professional training of one year that allows participants to practice in their professional context; and later a three-year specialization program that would enable participants to transmit the method.

Over the last twenty years, around 3,000 social, healthcare, and educational professionals in Finland have completed the basic training and can now use the method in

their professional contexts — for community development and interactions with clients, students, or patients and their networks. The specialization courses start every 3 years and there have been seven so far.

In practice, all of the people involved in the student's environment contribute to shaping the method's theory, ethical conditions, and artistic-interactional practices. Pia Viljanen, a primary school teacher in Kangasala said, "I've learned how to strengthen the connections between the students and support their relationships with their parents. The *Empowering Photography* method has become an incredibly valuable approach for helping my students develop emotional skills and the ability to connect with others." Jonna Maier, nurse and vocational teacher in caregiving also stated, "Once you get into the method and start to internalize it, it becomes easy to apply in your own work, and using it is very rewarding."

The basic training has also been organized for institutional use, including a specialization programme for continuing education centres at various universities and cities (like Aalto Pro, Aalto EE, and Omnia), as well as over 20 summer universities or folk high schools across Finland. Other individual institutions have also organized basic training courses over the years and recently there have been approximately 15 training groups across Finland annually.

Since 2006, Savolainen has had trainees working as her assistants and in 2012 she recruited one full-time assistant. Savolainen's main source of income is her teaching work.

Ecosystem

Savolainen has gathered several institutions as key partners, such as adult education centres and universities across Finland, including the The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) during the method's early years of development.

From the very beginning, Savolainen has collaborated with researchers to document her method and it has been the topic of several theses.

She has also been disseminating her approach in various formats through cross-disciplinary productions between science and art. These include exhibitions, such as *The Loveliest Girl in the World* exhibition which was shown across the world; a seven-episode national documentary TV series on using the method to improve family dynamics; and articles in several books.

Impact

For years, Savolainen has worked to document the theory behind the *Empowering Photography* method and produce a comprehensive non-fiction work complete with methodological guides. Savolainen explains, "This is essential for legitimizing the method's application more broadly and supporting the work of its practitioners. Since the number of trained professionals is vast, and the number of their clients, colleagues, and family members that have been in contact with the method is even larger, there is now a huge amount of data on how the method works. Unfortunately, this data still awaits systematic analysis, although some studies have already been conducted."



Mother-daughter pair, Heli and Lyyti, in the midst of a photography dialogue

To scale and further entrench her method, Savolainen's strategy has been to strengthen networks and collaboration among method-trained professionals, researchers, and project workers. The goal is to exchange knowledge and effort in order to find larger partner organizations capable of supporting long-term development collaborations.

The most recent published work is a peer-reviewed article using the method in the treatment of eating disorders, co-authored by Miina Savolainen and nutritionists Heini Kaartti and Outi Nuutinen. Savolainen has also been published in a Nova Science Publishers book on eco-art therapy.

To build on growing scientific validation for the method, Savolainen cooperates with her specialization students preparing their post-doc and thesis studies on the subject. She believes "that the method's communal and societal impacts present a number of interesting research topics and opportunities to develop entirely new pilot projects around the method."

Until a robust approach can overcome the technical challenge of data gathering, the practitioners' testimonies must speak for themselves: Tiina Yli-Kivistö, a specialist

in general and adolescent medicine at the Finnish Student Health Service states, "In my opinion, the *Empowering Photography* method has created a sense of safety, closeness, and a deepening of collegiality, especially in small workplace groups. We've been able to see each other beyond our professional roles. Feedback from the group has been consistently enthusiastic and grateful. My patients tell me they've had an opportunity to focus on what is important to them, to be seen as they are, without diagnoses or the complexities of care processes. The photography sessions have empowered those involved — benefiting from meeting others, experiencing closeness and being understood by peers."

Focus on the entrepreneurial journey: Challenges to overcome and tips for other entrepreneurs

One bottleneck in scaling the method is workforce resources: Savolainen can only train a limited number of people, and communicating the method also requires much time and effort. Other trainers for the basic courses were tried, but did not sufficiently support the professional learning of the students as they didn't possess the broad experience across multidisciplinary fields that Savolainen has developed. Savolainen also tutors and gives professional guidance to students — skills that take years to master. Thus, she has returned to teaching full-time. To overcome this scaling challenge, a new approach has been developed through partnering with multidisciplinary staff teams and peer groups of students within school organizations.

As the project expanded, another challenge was to protect the method and its ethics from plagiarism. To address this, Savolainen submitted the method's name as a registered trademark in 2005. The trademark limits use of the method by unqualified individuals or in ethically problematic ways. It helped to define how someone can be trained in the method, what qualifications are created, and what ethical and psychological boundaries are necessary.

Future perspectives

After the COVID-19 pandemic, Savolainen began gathering a network of method experts called *The Society of Appreciative Gaze* and, with a close-knit student community, they explored larger collaboration opportunities and pilot partnerships, as well as more long-term funding opportunities for projects. The aim is to contribute to large-scale cultural changes in education, healthcare and social work through method-integrated programmes depending on the needs of potential collaboration partners. The method is flexible and can be adapted to various contexts, which could serve as subjects for research and development and continuous grant applications.

Savolainen has also started further collaboration with other networks such as the Creativity in Social Policy project (University of Turku, Department of Social Policy) and continued to produce her own events, such as the Lempeä Katse community art exhibition and event series. With her specialization students, she co-holds a dialogical and therapeutic "living room" centred around the method, featuring workshops, seminars,

and networking events for professionals. According to Savolainen, Lempeä Katse is a response to the intensified discussions and polarities present in social media, creating space for appreciative dialogue among diverse groups of people.

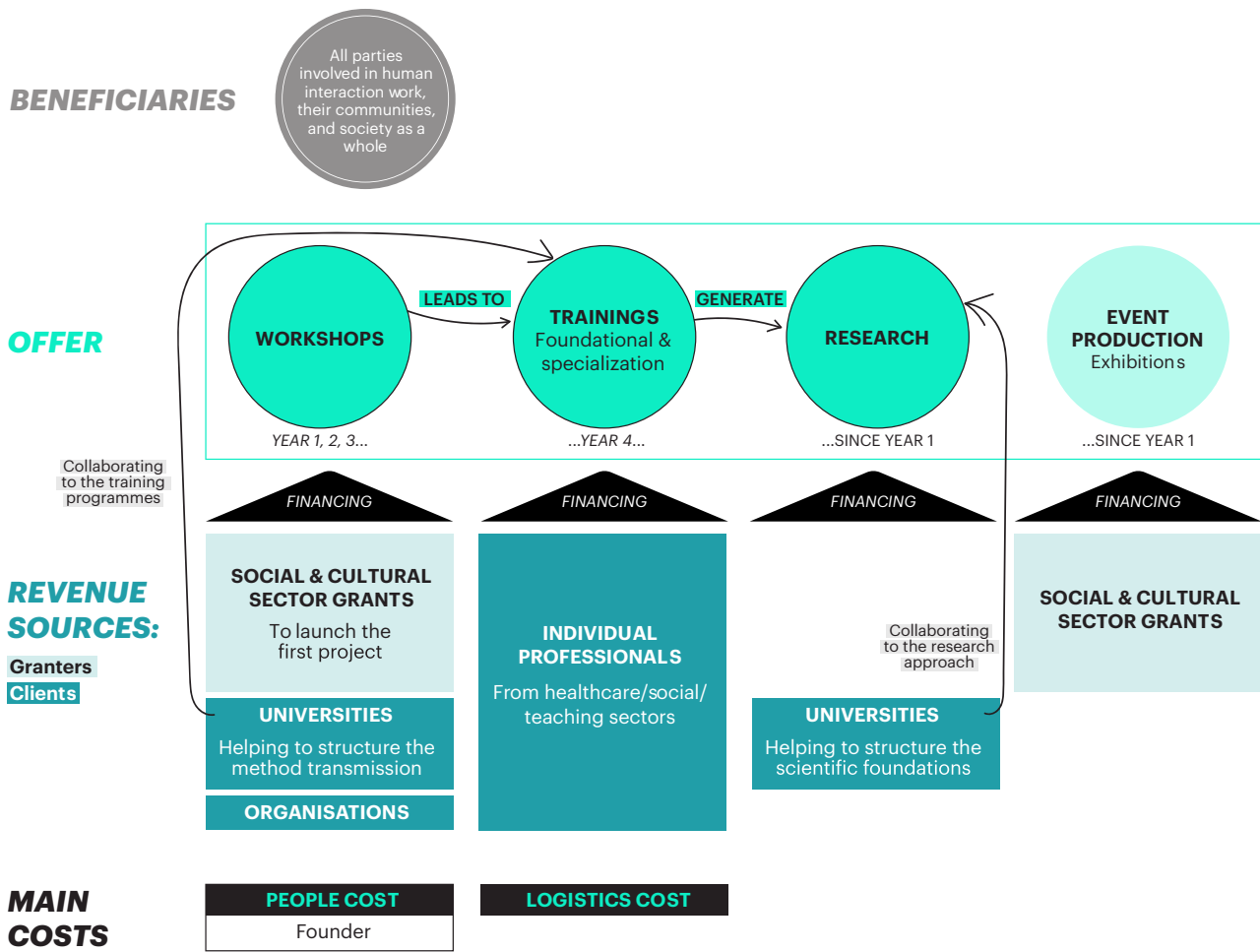
To support collaboration and contribute to real systemic change, consolidating human resources will be fundamental — especially in the realm of communications and advocacy. According to Pia Viljanen, a practitioner of the *Empowering Photography* method, "The method needs more visibility in education. In schools, many techniques and approaches are used to foster wellbeing, but the *Empowering Photography* method is still not well known by staff. I believe *Empowering Photography* training should be part of a series where all school staff — teachers, assistants, principals, school counsellors, etc. — are trained to use the method in their respective roles. I believe this method should be part of teaching throughout the entire school system and society."

"Since the tools include photography, photographs, and storytelling, there is an artistic dimension that brings a fascinating, almost magical, solution-oriented dynamic to the method."

Pia Viljanen

primary school teacher and former principal in Kangasala, and practitioner of the Empowering Photography method

EMPOWERING PHOTOGRAPHY ECONOMIC MODEL



AUTHOR'S ASSESSMENT

- ▶ The *Empowering Photography* method has demonstrated strong adaptability across education, healthcare, and community settings, with significant potential for broader application. The project could enhance its scalability by developing a network of trainers and digital tools.
- ▶ A robust ethical framework and partnerships support the sustainability of the *Empowering Photography* method, but further systematic research would help solidify its evidence base and foster justifiability.
- ▶ To ensure long-term impact, expanding institutional collaborations and integrating the method into national frameworks can facilitate its incorporation into societal systems and unlock its full potential as a driver of systemic change.

FROM OUR FINDINGS: OTHER ENTREPRENEURIAL CASES AT THE INTERSECTION OF ARTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

During the research phase, the following entrepreneurial projects, developed by artists or cultural actors in collaboration with artists, caught our attention.

They reflect a diversity of governance, economic structures, and approaches to social innovation at the intersection of arts, health and wellbeing, which we wish to highlight here as different types of models, regardless of differences in legal status.

NAME OF PROJECT	COUNTRY	LINK
ARTWAVE	Austria	↗ www.artwavewellness.com
BERDE	Spain	↗ berde.org
CLUBGOUD	Netherlands	↗ www.clubgoud.com
COMPAGNIE MALVISTE	Italy	↗ www.lecompagniemalviste.org
COMPAGNIE TRANSLATION	France	↗ www.compagnietranslation.fr
CONEXIONES IMPROBABLES	Spain	↗ conexionesimprobables.es/v3/Que-retos-abordamos-esp
CREATE ACT ENJOY	Romania	↗ createactenjoy.com
CUP OF THERAPY	Finland	↗ cupoftherapy.net
LE LIEU INSPIRÉ	France	↗ lelieuinspire.fr
LOVE FOR LIVRES	France	↗ www.loveforlivres.com
LUDWIG-MED	Austria	↗ www.ludwig-med.com
SINGING IN CARE	Netherlands	↗ zingenindezorg.nl
SOUNDING BODIES	Netherlands	↗ kunstakademiet.dk/da/sounding-bodies-resonance-and-between-bodies
SWITCH TO MOVE	Netherlands	↗ switch2move.com
THANKS FOR NOTHING	France	↗ thanksfornothing.fr

CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ARTS AND WELLBEING: A FIELD IN ITS INFANCY

This casebook reveals a seemingly evident yet underexplored fact: Within the evolving European landscape of arts and wellbeing, entrepreneurial projects initiated by artists are still in their early stages but are gradually shifting the paradigm of cultural action.

The landscape of arts and wellbeing, as defined here, includes artistic projects that actively engage beneficiaries, fostering positive emotional, social, and psychological impacts through a holistic approach. While many of these initiatives focus on healthcare, the AWAKE project explores the topic from the broader perspective of wellbeing.

Across Europe, the maturity of arts and wellbeing dynamics varies significantly. Nevertheless, artistic interventions in health and care settings, such as participatory artist-in-residence programmes and workshops, are often temporary and fragile. These projects largely rely on subsidies and, to a lesser extent, philanthropic funding, rather than operating as sustainable entrepreneurial ventures with a clear revenue-generating logic.

While reports from the WHO and CultureForHealth highlight the positive impact of artistic interventions on both prevention and treatment, durable frameworks to transform them into viable long-term economic models are lacking. This is also reflected in the fact that, for now, the specifics of entrepreneurship at the intersection of arts and wellbeing remain largely unaddressed by incubators across Europe — as observed during our survey of cultural, SSE, and general incubators.

Building and scaling arts-based entrepreneurship in wellbeing

From a cultural perspective, entrepreneurial ventures relying on direct artistic intervention with vulnerable individuals are more commonly found in dance, music, and literature than in visual arts. Multidisciplinary artistic approaches — sometimes combined with social and experience design — have also been observed on various occasions.

Artistic visibility in traditional cultural venues can help create opportunities within the healthcare sector. However, from what has been observed, artists become truly relevant to institutional partners when they directly involve beneficiaries in the creative process. Examples of this can be seen in the work of Collectif Tutti and Dans op Recept.

Early collaborations with universities, such as guest interventions and conferences, can also be beneficial. They provide valuable initial connections to the academic world.

A crucial and decisive step is establishing a strong initial partnership with a health or social care institution. These collaborations enable direct engagement with beneficiaries in their own care environments, which is useful for prototyping, testing, and providing credibility for further developments. Alliances between Dejviska Production and the psychiatric unit in Region Stockholm with the support of the Competence center for Culture and Health, as well as between Dans op Recept and Revalidatie Friesland, along with Collectif Tutti and APIMI, are excellent examples of how these partnerships support and empower artist-entrepreneurs in the early stages of their professional development.

In terms of development and growth, collaborations with universities for conducting impact studies have significantly enhanced credibility and attracted private partnerships. The impact study conducted by Han University on the Social Gym, as well as those by Utrecht University and Radboud University Medical Center on Dans op Recept, has proven to be a powerful driver of development for Sjaak Langenberg, Rosé de Beer, and Marlien Seinstra.

Scaling opportunities often arise when a tailored offer for the health or care sector is developed in partnership with a well-established actor in the sector. This was the case for Dans op Recept with Revalidatie Friesland. Their collaboration demonstrated how these programmes can target both creative and care professionals, fostering cross-sector skill development.

Main Challenges

This casebook highlights several challenges in developing an entrepreneurial model in the field of arts and wellbeing.

One of the initial challenges practitioners face is scepticism within the artistic sector and the impact this has on artist-led initiatives at the crossroads of arts & wellbeing. This scepticism is rooted in a longstanding dichotomy between so-called fundamental artistic creation and socially engaged artistic interventions.

Additionally, artists often struggle to recognize and position themselves as entrepreneurs in the traditional art world. While these initiatives clearly fall within the realm of social entrepreneurship and the concept of the artist-entrepreneur is gradually gaining recognition, artists can still struggle with how they are perceived by their peers and stakeholders.

This challenge is also linked to the initial and continued training of artists. A major obstacle to fostering these initiatives is the lack of training in entrepreneurial venture creation, which is crucial for establishing a resilient business model. As we observed, entrepreneurial projects in arts and wellbeing mostly emerge from intuition and/or opportunity rather than from a structured approach.

Additionally, during the setup phase, limited access to professional networks with health and wellbeing experts makes these initiatives highly dependent on initial connections and serendipitous encounters. Although this may present an opportunity, many artists rely on showcasing their work in “traditional” art settings to capture the attention of professionals. Dans op Recept and Collectif Tutti gained access to care decision-makers, and therefore opportunities, by presenting their artistic work on stage. However, this remains an uncertain and indirect path to reaching the right networks within the health and wellbeing sectors and building sustainable partnerships.

Once artists develop their practices in the field, they can encounter ethical challenges that must be clearly addressed from the outset. This ensures artists are not reduced to mere service providers while also preventing the misuse or unethical treatment of participants.

Another significant challenge is the need for human resources. As the field is still emerging, funders struggle to find new professionals with the necessary transdisciplinary training and experience — often leading to over-involvement by existing members. Developing the right skill sets and promoting multidisciplinary experience are essential for building sustainable teams and preventing burnout.

Artist-entrepreneurs must establish clear ownership of methodologies developed in collaborative settings to prevent misrepresentation or misuse in their transmission. This is a key concern, as strongly emphasized by Miina Savolainen, drawing from her experience with the Empowering Photography method:

“Establishing boundaries has been important, as in the early stages, enthusiasm for the method was so great that the concept of ‘empowering photography’ became generalized and began to mean anything that people perceived as empowering. (...) The photographer must relinquish their own authorship and control to the protagonist’s (not model’s) self-definition and identity work. In practice, controlling the use of the method’s name is not feasible as its use is so widespread. However, the trademark creates theoretical possibilities for this.”

Recommendations for Enhancing the Creative Business Ecosystem at the Intersection of Arts and Wellbeing

Looking ahead, we must focus on uniting our efforts to strengthen existing initiatives and foster growth in this new form of artist-led social entrepreneurship.

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

▶ Strengthening networks

Building local and European transdisciplinary networks to connect practitioners, researchers, and policymakers is crucial. These networks should facilitate the exchange of information and best practices between European countries — particularly from Northern European pioneers (Finland and the Netherlands) where the highest proportion of solid cases has been identified.

▶ Adjusting the funding schemes

To sustain the growth of this emerging sector over time, it is crucial to explore new funding opportunities and support from social investors. These projects require innovative hybrid funding mechanisms that acknowledge their social impact and recognize artistic cultural expression as a fundamental pillar of social cohesion.

These new funding schemes should be supported by policymakers through incentive mechanisms.

▶ Raising awareness

Targeted communication campaigns should highlight role models and success stories to enhance recognition, break down scepticism, and inspire new artists in the field. Disseminating testimonials to arts and cultural networks would help raise the profile of pioneers and encourage their peers to move beyond preconceived ideas.

The media play an important role in crafting narratives that enhance public understanding of the arts' transformative social power. They can help shift common perceptions of health and wellbeing while also encouraging broader public engagement and a more holistic approach to these themes.

▶ Supporting educational transformation

To empower a new generation of artists to embrace creativity as a lever of social change, arts and wellbeing social entrepreneurship must be integrated into educational programmes across the healthcare, arts, cultural management, and public administration sectors. Collaboration between art, business, and medical schools will be essential to develop hybrid courses that bridge these fields.

▶ Expanding the capacity-building offer for artists

Specialized training programmes and incubator initiatives can foster knowledge sharing and enhance business skills among artists, wellbeing practitioners, and health professionals. They can also support the creation of sustainable business models, while emphasizing the importance of ethical approaches and intellectual property protection.

Incubators can also play a strong pedagogical role for artists, helping them better navigate the field of entrepreneurship. They also support potential investors by helping them to identify and understand the social value of creative entrepreneurial projects.

FOSTERING ECO-SYSTEMIC APPROACHES BY SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTIST-ENTREPRENEURS

This casebook revealed how important it was for the artists to position themselves as creators of ecosystems and architects of social change — unearthing empirical findings to be evaluated by researchers. This approach leads us to three major recommendations:

- ▶ The first is to leverage the value created through training programmes early in the entrepreneurial journey. This can help to finance the long-term development of activities.
- ▶ The second is to embrace social R&D, using research-backed evidence to advocate for structural policy changes. Collaborations with other European actors in social R&D can provide the scientific validation needed to turn experiments into genuine sources of inspiration for new public policy frameworks.
- ▶ Finally, we believe building an advocacy campaign, or a coalition of cause, between European pioneers (supported by the media) would be a good way of raising the profile of this emerging sector.

Vision Moving Forward

As demonstrated in this casebook, these projects are redefining social entrepreneurship by combining aesthetic and creative dimensions. They generate profound positive effects at psychological, organizational, and societal levels while strengthening both individual and collective resilience — as proven by scientific studies and impact measurements.

This new social and cultural value emerges from the intrinsic ability of these projects to build bridges and create hybrid models. To help this sector reach its full potential for social change, we need funders and social investors who recognize its value and embrace hybrid models.

Beyond funding, ensuring the development and sustainability of this field requires structured support, interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and advocacy to establish an enabling policy framework.

With the right interventions, this emerging sector can redefine the role of artists in society, positioning them as key contributors to public health, wellbeing, and social innovation. By reshaping our collective approach to arts and culture, this field can make a critical contribution to social cohesion, economic vitality, and the future of democracy.

COLOPHON

Authors:

Ariane Vitou & Annabelle Türkis

Project consortium:

Cluj Cultural Center: Claudia Cacovean

Lapinlahden Lähde – Centre for Mental Wellbeing, Arts and Culture: Jennifer Ramirez, Ville Pellinen

Pôle Culture et Santé Nouvelle Aquitaine: Clara Bourgeois

The Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture: Dace Resele

Graphic design:

Liene Lesiņa

Proofreading:

George Thomas Burman-Lacey

Published by:

The Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture Secretariat, Grēcinieku Iela 9, Rīga, Latvija

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About the research:

This research is part of AWAKE: Arts & Wellbeing as a Creative Business and Future Livelihood Project, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

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An online version of this report can be downloaded at ndpculture.org

Published on 25/03/2025