

# **Art can help involve citizens in local planning processes**

**Home > Impacts of arts and culture > Neighbourhood impacts of arts and culture**

This research was conducted by **Marian Stuiver and three others** at **Wageningen University and Research Centre, Utrecht University, and the University of Leiden, The Netherlands**.

## **Summary**

This study looked at the potential of art as a way of involving citizens in the processes of regional transitions. In this article, researchers asked whether artwork based on narratives and created in collaboration between artists and local residents can help planners achieve a more community-based process for planning. They found that artists working with local communities can reveal valuable information about local people's connection to a place.

## **People use narratives as a way to understand their living environments**

In the last decade, Haarzuilens has gone from an agricultural village to a recreational destination for the region. This change caused a significant rise in house and land leases, and affected locals' sense of place. In 2008, Government Service for Land and Water Management and the Society of Nature Conservation gave workspace to a theatre company called 'D\*Amor', which commissioned two theatre-makers to create a production in and around an empty farmhouse. The artists worked closely with villagers and their narratives about the village in order to develop material for their show. The performance expressed the mistrust and hurt the villagers felt as a result of the spatial and social changes imposed on them.

# Art can give visibility to local citizens' narratives about their locality

This information can be used by planners. However, it is a challenge to match citizens' narratives on regional transitions with the planners' narratives. The paper suggests three possibilities for future cooperation between artists, citizens and planners: active cooperation between artists and planners, attracting a diverse group of citizens in a genuine consultation process; giving the artists free reign to carry out their project before any development plans are planned; and artists and planners working separately.

This summary is by **Paula Serafini, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

**theatre** **development** **planning** **the netherlands** **placemaking**

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