

Art effectuating social change: Double Entrepreneurship in Conventions¹

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Introduction

Across the past century, a significant proportion of members of art worlds proclaimed that their art had a revolutionary potential and/or could bring about some social change, including outside the art world itself. The late 20th century saw major proponents of such positions rise to high visibility in the art world of contemporary art. A revolutionary faith in art was heralded through Joseph Beuys' social sculpture movement. Hans Haacke's reflexive criticism of the art world combined with social-political criticism attracted the attention of major art sociologists.² The second half of the 1990's and the years 2000 saw the multiplication of art projects aiming at concrete interventions in society, hoping to bring about effective social change at the local level rather than either prophesise revolution à-la-Beuys or keep playing in the sandbox of the art world.³ These different streams of artistic work are continuing to develop themselves.

Such claims are currently meeting renewed attention among art sociologists, even if a large number of researchers keep focusing on the art worlds themselves.⁴ A recent international art sociology conference illustrated this development.⁵ The time has thus come to conceptualise and investigate such claims seriously and to focus attention on the points of interactions between artists and the rest of society and to the border zones where art worlds meet the outside worlds. However, the present approach will not deal with social change in terms of its quantitatively measurable effects. The focus is not on so-called social impact studies⁶. Rather, it considers how social processes may occur through artistic processes, that would potentially generate social change.

The operational framework of the research is the *model of conventions*, which is introduced in section 1. Within this framework, the artist may perform *entrepreneurship in conventions* (section 2). However, the artist as would-be entrepreneur meets intricate difficulties, as the own conventions of the artist (and of his/her art world) may hinder entrepreneurship; the challenge being then to assume a *double entrepreneurship* (section 3). The exploratory study of two cases of Intervention Art in Rotterdam highlights the relative successes and shortcomings of such would-be entrepreneurs at work (section 4).

Section 1: Conventions

Determinism vs. change, agency vs. structure, methodological individualism vs. holistic structuralism... The social sciences are used to argue over the proper way to conceptualise social reality and to relate the levels of the macrosociological and microsociological.⁷ Within this ongoing conversation, the present article focuses on the framework of conventions. The

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² i.e. both Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Haacke 1994) and Becker (Becker and Walton 1986)

³ e.g. the Vienna-based group Wochenklausur (ed. Zingg 2001) and the Dutch artists Jeanne van Heeswijk (Eds. Berendsen and van Heeswijk 2004) and Joep van Lieshout (with AVL-ville).

⁴ For example, Heinich (2001) has the ambition to draw the attention of sociologists to the conventions of the art worlds ("se consacrer à l'art comme société" p. 108), in contrast to earlier sociological works on "art et société". The current work aims to reconcile those two perspectives.

⁵ i.e. the conference of the Arts Research Network of the European Sociological Association, Lueneburg, 2007, highlighted the research field of "sustainability" (i.e. the search process for global ecological and social justice) in its relationship to the arts as a major new frontier for the sociology of the arts. See chapter 4 by Kirchberg and Kagan in Kirchberg (2007).

⁶ Furthermore, given the operational framework of the present researcher, i.e. "conventions", social impact studies and quantitative 'questionnaire surveys' in general are inappropriate. For a critique of the inconsiderate use of such tools for arts policy advocacy by Matarasso and likes, see e.g. Merli (2002).

⁷ See e.g. the current discussion in cultural sociology over macro-micro linkages after Bourdieu and Giddens (Kirchberg 2007).

concept of conventions allows to understand both social conformity and movements away from conformity involving specific individuals. Before introducing the operational framework of conventions, the initial use of the notion of 'conventions' as most art sociologists know it, i.e. as used by Howard Becker (1982), is introduced.

Conventions: an old tune and some newer inputs

The concept of 'conventions' sounds as an old tune reminding, back in the early 1980's, of the resounding *Art Worlds* by Howard Becker. The framework of conventions indeed builds upon this existing tradition, but it systematizes it and is applicable to all forms of social organization. This more recent conceptualization of conventions was launched through the 1980's and 1990's in France among an interdisciplinary team of economists and sociologists and is labelled as "economics of conventions" or "economic sociology of conventions".⁸ It has general implications for the sociology of organizations and for New Institutionalism. It is a general model that was not especially designed to account for the specific case of art worlds. It is also a very lively concept that attracts the attention of innovative research communities such as "economic sociology" and "post-autistic economics".⁹ And because this model also applies outside the art worlds, it will become all the more useful in analysing the relationships between the artist and, so to say, 'non-art' worlds.

Of course, the roots of these uses of the concept of conventions plunge much deeper and allow different streams of interpretations, pointing at earlier sources such as David Lewis' definition of conventions, Herbert Simon's work on cognition and rationality, Rene Girard's 'triangular desire', Karl Polanyi's 'tacit knowledge' Keynes' 'conventional judgement' and further back with Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'rules' (implicit and explicit rules), American pragmatism (especially John Dewey), Max Weber and all the way back to David Hume's understanding of convention as reciprocal referentiality...¹⁰

Howard Becker's perspective on conventions illustrated how crucial conventions are for the functioning of art worlds:

In an art world, "the interaction of all the involved parties produces a shared sense of the worth of what they collectively produce [in a process of conviction building: the model of conventions will further elaborate on this point]. Their mutual appreciation of the conventions they share, and the support they mutually afford one another, convince them that what they are doing is worth doing"¹¹.

Conventions provide a useful art-historical concept for explaining the artists' ability to contribute to the social construction of art works which bring emotional and cognitive responses in audiences (and expectations) because both sides share knowledge of an experience. The shared knowledge of bodies of conventions is part of a common culture.

Members of the art world can therefore rely on earlier agreements and/or understandings that have now become customary, conventional. And different groups know different parts of the total body of conventions used by an art world. Conventions also regulate the relations between artists and (the well-socialized) audience, specifying the rights and obligations of both sides. Conventions therefore cover all decisions that have to be made in the art world. Thanks to the existence of conventions, decisions can be made quickly and artists can devote more time to actual work. Easy and efficient coordination of activity among artists and supporters is also made possible¹². However, if standardized¹³, conventions are not static. They undergo constant adjustments in response to changing conditions and changing strategies of individuals and groups. But rarely do revolutionary changes occur, according to Howard Becker: conventions seem to be natural for the members of the art world, so that breaking with the rules will be perceived as an attack on the aesthetics and status structures of the art world¹⁴.

Knowledge of the relevant conventions and routine interactions following the terms of these conventions, define the outer perimeter of an art world. The diffusion of new conventions coming from the creative core of an art world involves a process in which the first to understand (have the ability to decode) the worth and values of what is produced are the ones most involved in the production (creators, interpreters), followed by "serious audience members" who share some of the

⁸ See especially ed. Orlean (1994) and eds Favereau and Lazega (2003). See also Biggard and Beamish (2003) for a review of this movement.

⁹ See Eymard-Duvernay et al. (2005) for the post-autistic economics network, and Jagd (2004) for economic sociology.

¹⁰ For lack of space (and because it would go way off the topic of this article), the current article will not dive into the whole history of theories and definitions of conventions in the social sciences.

¹¹ Becker (1982)

¹² As the general model of conventions will show, any complex organized human action (i.e. any action in modern societies) necessitates the existence of conventions. Without them, decision-making difficulties would overwhelm the individual.

¹³ The standardization of conventions means that "anyone with experience in the arts can be counted on to know [the] basic minimum. It becomes an automatic basis on which the production of art works can proceed" (Becker 1982).

¹⁴ For an analysis of the political processes at play in the process of conventions-setting in art worlds, see Kagan and Abbing (2006). In that paper, we are establishing under which conditions Becker's assumption does not apply, i.e. in which situations frequent experimentations with rules and an ongoing breaking of rules are tolerated and even stimulated... In short, higher tolerance for rule-breaking is observed when the polity-settings establish "compromises", while a lower tolerance for rule-breaking is observed when the polity-settings establish "consensus".

conventions¹⁵, and through them (and their interactions with wider segments of society), only later do “well-socialized members of the society” and the general public share an understanding and value the products¹⁶.

New conventions introduced by the successful artist work out as a new language¹⁷: Over time, they inter-relate and form a specific self-referential body of conventions, which audiences can learn “by experiencing them”.

However, more than mere experience and accustoming, the processes of construction of conventions involve rhetoric in the building of conviction and suspicion, in symbolic fights over conventional coherence. The upcoming model of conventions maps these processes and allows further understanding of the working of conventions.

Conventions: the concept

The study of conventions calls forward a sociological and economic understanding of the social construction of reality departing both from the perspective of an autonomy of individual choice (as promoted by the methodological individualism of standard economics) and from a strict heteronomy of individual behavior (as would be inferred from a purely structuralist perspective).

The rationality and efficiency of individual behavior does not depend on the individual’s own calculations alone (as the standard economist would argue) but also on their degree of coherence and compatibility with the social environment. Rationality is contextual: There are no inter-temporal universal rules for individual calculation. And rationality is procedural: it is constituted through an interactive social process.¹⁸

Interactive imitation or “Mimesis” in the definition of René Girard, rather than calculation, is the core human behavior.¹⁹ Mimesis works preliminary to interpretations and calculations. Mimesis also structurally integrates the social context into the cognition of the individual. The individual’s decision has meaning only relatively to his/her environment. This environment is constituted of *conventions* which give the individual points of reference to guide him.

Conventions are collectively constructed units of understanding of reality, organizing beliefs and habits around moving structures of interaction. They institute the coordination of action. They are constituted of both routine, non-reflexive relations and of more reflexive interactions through which participants may remodel their collaborations. Owing to an emergent process of rationalization in which individuals involved are inter-dependent, a convention supports discourses and devices constituting an information system (or information screen) that allows interpretation and evaluation of the social environment and of one’s own behaviour. Thereby, conventions overcome uncertainty.

In a given convention, a number of beliefs (as well as a number of habits) are stabilized and considered as ‘common sense’: beliefs about the goals one is expected to aim at (in the social activities relating to the convention); beliefs about what kind of means should be available (in order to attain one’s goals); and beliefs concerning the perception of how things work and, subsequently, the causality models (or theories) one should use to translate means into ends in an appropriate way.

It is the conviction that a certain convention is a reference for the others (the people one is interacting with in a given context) that makes behavior efficient for an individual acting in and/or upon the convention. It is the common trust in the convention that fosters this individual conviction. It is the coherence of the information system of the convention that fosters common trust in the convention. The information system is made of discourses and conversations (with a rhetoric highlighting values, principles, assigning roles to people and defining the boundaries of what is the normal realm of the convention) and of material settings that support those discourses and conversations²⁰. It is the actions by different individuals vis-à-vis the existing conventions that affect the coherence of the information system. Individuals can play strategically upon the information system to try and change the convention, to replace it by a ‘suspicion’ of that convention that becomes an alternative convention, or to move to (or create) a convention of another kind.

¹⁵ These 2 groups, who also form specific *circles of recognition*, “make a greater effort to learn new conventions proposed by innovators” (Becker 1982).

¹⁶ Less involved participants are presented with carefully selected and mediated innovations and new conventions. Cf. also Bowness (1989).

¹⁷ “Language” itself being a typical case of convention (Lewis 1969).

¹⁸ Simon (1976)

¹⁹ Girard (1961). Discussing why imitation is considered as the core human behavior would be very insightful, but beyond the scope of this article. What can be mentioned however is that several streams of analysis point at the crucial importance of imitation, besides Girard’s anthropology: One may even point to evolutionary theories of sexual selection as a biological-anthropological starting-point for the basic social dynamic of imitation and distinction among human societies as observed by Girard (and among chimpanzees as well, as observed by de Waal 2001).

²⁰ Gomez (1996) talks of an “information system” consisting of “wordings” and “material devices”.

Conventions: the model

The present analysis of conventions is interested both in art worlds and in other social groups with which artists may interact. Therefore, it makes use of a general model of conventions that aims to be relevant to all forms of social organization. The specific model described below is inspired by Gomez (1996) who operationalized the concept of conventions into a relatively tractable model, but I also integrate further insights from other theoreticians of conventions. This model depicts conventions as screens of information based on processes of interactive imitation and rationalization, and describes how conventions are organizing shared conviction around common beliefs and values.

Individuals are driven to *imitate* one another and *distinguish* themselves from one another and thereby create a network of interdependent behaviours. The individual is able to perceive indications on how to decide by himself... because he or she is not alone: he/she can find landmarks in the behavior of others; he/she can therefore position him- or herself towards these behavioral guides, and decide whether or not to imitate them. To say it otherwise, in Becker's terms: "Even when you don't want to do what is conventional, what you do want to do can best be described in the language that comes from the conventions"²¹.

The evolution of conventions depends on the intentional strategies of those individuals who decide to play *on* the rules rather than *in* the rules, to modify the terms of imitation rather than just imitate others. Insofar as the individual is able to perceive (parts of) these rules of generally recognized behavior, he/she reaches a level of reflexive awareness. However, playing *on* the rules requires also an awareness of the availability of alternative sets of rules and a competence in handling alternative conventions. These individual qualities will be introduced with the concept of the "entrepreneur in conventions" (in section 2 of the current text). Given these qualities (that would relate to the agent's "practical consciousness" in the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens)²², the individual is then relatively freely engaging in a social space that offers him/her the landmarks around which his/her relative freedom (or 'agency', in sociological terms) can unfold.

Conventions can be defined as screens between actors, allowing them to decide and calculate relatively 'freely' but within the framework they constitute. Individuals are thus free, but not 'sovereign'. The individual is both guarding and being guarded by the rule²³. To accept the convention is to be convinced of its existence. A convention only survives when it is adopted widely enough to become a norm at a given level of social organization. A convention is not imposed upon people, it is not a law (although it can attain as much authority as a law,). It is rather a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is not an exogenous constraint upon the individual, but *an endogenous constraint* adopted to allow behavior. As Becker argued, conventions cover all decisions that have to be made and they organize the members in the art world.²⁴

A convention has the following characteristics:

- A situation of uncertainty overwhelming individuals unless they refer to 'normal' behavior.²⁵
- A 'normal' solution readily available to individuals (without them having to define it by themselves), being both stable and tacit (unlike a negotiated contract).²⁶
- A shared trust in the fact that the convention is being complied with by its adopters and that adopters will anticipate that others will comply too.
- The fact that another solution could exist for the problem the convention is solving.

These characteristics are partly taken from Lewis (1969). I am however not strictly following Lewis, for the reason that Lewis assumed that all social agents are fully aware of the convention (it is 'common knowledge'). But the conception of conventions proposed in the present article rather assumes that conventions (1) offer 'incomplete rules'²⁷ that are open to interpretation and (2) conventions interplay with the individual social agent both at conscious and subconscious levels.

A convention allows to rationalize one's behavior. "This is an emergent process, a performance of rationality that is constructed in interaction with others and is rational in the sense that it appears rational to self and others within a social setting but not necessarily in some objective external sense" (Biggart and Beamish 2003).²⁸ This process is not only

²¹ Becker (1982)

²² Giddens (1984)

²³ This is clearly pictured in Kafka's famous short story about the man who fails to enter the guarded entrance of the building of Law, an entrance designed especially for him (Kafka 1955).

²⁴ Becker (1982)

²⁵ The canonical illustration, coming from Lewis (1969) and paraphrased by many others, deal with driving one's car: 'Should I drive on the left or right side of the road?' ...

²⁶ The concept of convention involves a trend of organized social interactions "that develops over time a path-dependent way [with] conventions that maintain stable relations" (Biggart and Beamish 2003).

²⁷ See ed. Batifoulier (2001)

²⁸ As Biggart and Beamish (2003) noticed: "This concern with rationality as an emergent, interpretive, and performance process is rooted in the perspective of American pragmatism, particularly in the work of Dewey and his concern with habit".

involving the conscious mind of the individual, but also involves subconscious levels.

The concept of rationalization points at the procedures and techniques through which individuals confer reason to their decisions (Herbert Simon spoke of “procedural rationality”).²⁹ How do practices become recognized as rational then?³⁰ One rationalizes in front of others, one gives a reason. But then, how can different individuals use the same rules for calculation and thus rationalize in the same way? From the point of view of an individual in a convention, how does one come to comply?

The key concept is individual *conviction*: the individual belief that others act in a certain way in a certain circumstance. Individuals do not check continuously that others follow the rules, because they are convinced that they do so. This trust is a foundation of social life.

A convention has to be convincing, so as to become self-evident (so that even deviant behavior still refers to the convention). A belief is effective when it is shared widely enough to have effects. An effective convention is a convention that is adopted as true. The study of conventions looks at the justifications of choices made. It looks at historical processes, at the evolution of systems of conventional rules (an institution being understood as a system of inter-related conventions).³¹ It also looks at individual strategies aiming at changing conventions by introducing suspicion about them.³² By definition, a convention can be challenged by an alternative convention (lingering as its antithesis). There is therefore a suspicion on the convention, that could take over and destroy the convention if conviction was to fail. A dynamic process takes place. Rationalization changes as the convictions change, and the evolution of conventions can explain the evolution of behaviors.

Becker (1982) observed that one small change often requires many other changes... As this small change introduces suspicion in existing conventions, these ‘many other changes’ are more than a mere technical requirement. In Systems Thinking terms, the small changes with the largest-scale consequences would be labelled as having a “high leverage” on the system (i.e. on the institutions as systems of interrelated conventions), vs. the “low leverage” of the small changes with lesser consequences.

“The social world being woven with conventions, individuals can refer to different conventions, and so justify behaviours that are different because rationalized differently” (Gomez 1996).

Apart from the case of a convention and its potential anti-thesis, there are also many cases of tensions between altogether different conventions solving different problems but being raised simultaneously, involving some of the same people and/or having some characteristics in common. Here again, the individual will choose the convention that he or she judges to be most convincing (and subconsciously feels attracted to). But these interference zones between different conventions will also have the effect of throwing suspicion on each competing convention. Therefore, there is an interaction between the internal dynamic of suspicion and the external competition from other conventions.

However, a special case can occur, when different conventions are associated through a double morality, i.e. paradoxical combinations of apparently contradictory conventions under a discourse justifying double-standards and rhetorically solving its internal contradictions.³³

Altogether different conventions can refer to very different normative principles for making sense of reality, i.e. “orders of worth”. In such cases the competing conventions are based on entirely incompatible paradigms and their confrontations result in contextual compromises rather than in a synthesis.³⁴

What grounds the conviction of individuals about the generalization of a given convention?

Conventions are informational screens that prevent individuals from having to manipulate a large amount of information continuously. The more complex a society (the farther from the ancestral small tribe), the larger the number of conventions that will be used, because they allow easier information management. Because of conventions, information *is* organization. Because of conventions, only new, dissonant, *abnormal* information gets the attention of individuals.

To study conventions, one has to observe the relationships between the convention as screen and the individual cognition and dispositions: to observe by which means behavior-defining common beliefs and habits are formed, transmitted and modified. This set of relationships is the “information system” of the convention.

The researcher analyses discourses and conversations qualifying the convention: Discourse qualifies what is (in)compatible with the convention, where are its borders, how convincing it is. Discourse can be conscious, intentional and direct but also

²⁹ Simon (1976)

³⁰ Howard Becker (1982) already raised this issue, giving attention to mechanisms of rationalization in certain parts of the art worlds, especially around new art (i.e. in change in conventions).

³¹ Such a study of systems of justifications at a large scale can be found in Boltanski and Thevenot (1991).

³² Gomez (1996)

³³ Such cases of double morality can be found for example in the art elites' discourses of cultural democratization, such as e.g. in France with the famous slogan of “elitism for all”...

³⁴ This complex issue will not be fully addressed in the present article. See Boltanski and Thevenot (1991).

subconscious, unintentional and indirect.

However, the information system is not based only on a rhetorical content, but also on the material characteristics of the social interactions it organizes. Therefore the researcher looks at how the discourse is conveyed and how conversations and other social interactions are organized materially.

The power of conviction, and therefore the strength of the convention, depends on the coherence of the discourses, conversations and material settings of social interactions making up the convention as a screening system.

The dynamic of the relationship between the individual conviction and the convention tends to have an exponential character: It normally works into a virtuous cycle both strengthening individual conviction and reinforcing the existing convention against change. Repeated interaction between adopters of the convention and the influence of some authority figures within the convention both contribute to keeping 'normal' behavior on its track. But as soon as noticeable elements of suspicion bring dissonance (especially in the early days of a convention when conviction is still fragile, and in environments involving heightened competition between conventions), incoherence may start gripping the mechanism and turning the dynamics inversely, in an exponential rhythm, so much so that a vicious cycle weakens both individual conviction and the status quo. Such a vicious cycle can lead to an increased discrepancy between the expectations nourished by the new convention and the satisfactions provided by the existing (and increasingly suspicious) convention. The discrepancy can in turn provoke "relative frustration" and a higher probability of social violence, protest, exit or other forms of opposition against the existing convention.³⁵ But discrepancies can also lead to a diversity of conscious or subconscious strategies of reduction of cognitive dissonance.³⁶

A convention cannot be controlled by a single individual, given that each and every individual is participating to its social construction. But strategies of change are possible: groups of individuals (or single individuals with groups of followers) can play on the discourse and/or on the material devices of a convention in order to increase or decrease its power of conviction.

Section 2: Entrepreneurship in Conventions

Individuals are constrained by the screens of conventions they adopt. But thanks to the framework conventions arrange for behavior, strategic action (or 'agency') is made possible within organization (or 'structure'). The model of conventions goes now one step further, explaining the dynamics of the action of individuals who aim to play no longer only in but *on* the conventions... and exploring how artists can be such entrepreneurs.³⁷

The Entrepreneur in Conventions

Any form of social organization is characterized by at least one common convention: a convention relating to purpose. The existence of an organization is linked to a generalized conviction about its role. Every member, every participant needs not have *the* same goal, but each participant does think that the objectives (including personal objectives) can only shape out of collective action.

How are actors lured into a specific instance of collective action and effectively convinced of the fact that there exists a common purpose? (The relative coherence of the conviction will be a determinant factor for the relative strength of the organization.)

One answer to this question has to do with the concept of *Entrepreneurship in Conventions*, i.e. strategies of conviction-building affecting the new adopter.

Other, complementary elements of answer can come from the history of the incoming adopter (his/her habitus, his/her repertoire of dispositions).

³⁵ On these notions, cf. Gurr (1970) on relative frustration, and Hirschman (1970) on the different forms of opposition i.e. different forms of both "voice" (protest) and "exit" (which in terms of conventions, may involve either exiting the convention altogether or becoming relatively indifferent to the convention).

³⁶ The long and complex discussion of 'cognitive dissonance' and strategies for its reduction, since Leon Festinger's first formulation in 1956, is beyond the scope of the present article. See e.g. Harmon-Jones and Mills (1999).

³⁷ The word "entrepreneur" has strong connotations, linking it to market values and the figure of a business 'genius', as popularized by Schumpeter. The term is indeed used the most in the economic and management literature. However, a different use of the term is proposed here, linking it to sociological notions of social 'agency' beyond the traditional realm of the economic entrepreneur. This approach is not totally new, as illustrates e.g. the rise of the expression "social entrepreneur" in recent decades. This paper does not cover existing definitions of entrepreneurship. For an account of definitions of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship as used in art management literature, see Kagan (2004), chapter 2 section 3: 68-69 ff.

It is important to be aware of the plurality of dispositions of each individual social actor, as analyzed by Lahire (2004).³⁸ Conventions function as incomplete rules and are open to interpretation (as already mentioned with reference to ed. Batifoulrier 2001). Therefore, the specific repertoire of disposition of each individual social actor may lead to specific capabilities for entrepreneurship in conventions and/or to a specific receptivity (as 'adopter') to someone else's entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship in conventions is the successful construction of a common purposeful convention. "An entrepreneur is a convincing individual [...] To undertake enterprise is to convince the actors whom are necessary to the realisation of a common objective"³⁹.

The entrepreneur looks for ways to convince others. He therefore plays on the information system of the organization's convention, and tries to modify it to make his own agenda look more convincing.

The entrepreneur is the promoter of a renewed convention, and therefore a creator⁴⁰. As argued in the previous section, if strategies of change are possible, they cannot be imposed by a single individual: they require convinced groups to act upon the discourse, conversations and material settings of the convention. Therefore, the entrepreneur is in no way a human 'Deus ex Machina', and his entrepreneurship starts with convincing selected individuals to shape a closer group or network of allies.

How can the entrepreneur in conventions be successful (i.e. be convincing)? And first, who can be an entrepreneur?

Entrepreneurship in conventions is not a priori reserved to a given category of individual (i.e. the 'entrepreneur' as understood in business language). Rather, entrepreneurship in conventions can come from any individual with the means and the strategy to play *on* the rules rather than *in* the rules, to modify the terms of imitation rather than just imitate others. Insofar as the individual is able to perceive (parts of) these rules of generally recognized behavior, he/she is (relatively) free to try changing them.

An important part of the entrepreneurship in conventions lies in the process by which the individual 'entrepreneur' gains consciousness, making some conventional rules emerge from the subconscious to the conscious level. That emergence of consciousness is not necessarily a straightforward process: conventional rules may be played with while they are still lying mostly at the subconscious level: The entrepreneur may be playing with a conventional 'iceberg', and such a process will require competences beyond formal rationality and cognitive reflexivity, i.e. involving also forms of 'hermeneutic' and 'ontological' reflexivity.⁴¹ These competences involve not only conscious, strategic capabilities but also subconscious, sensitive 'lateral thinking' capabilities such as can often be found among artists.

But such a "reflexive capital", to use Hans Dieleman's expression (in this volume), is not enough: The entrepreneur in conventions is not only reflexive, but also driven by a commitment to and competence for social change. His/her success will then depend on his ability to convince others (which in the art worlds typically starts with constructing a circle of recognition or seizing power in an already existing circle).

To have such means to perceive more distantly and play on the rules, is not open to anyone: An analysis of the specific cultural capital and social capital (in Bourdieu's sense) and history of socialization (and resulting repertoire of dispositions, in Lahire's sense) of the entrepreneur, for a given convention, would be insightful. It can be of great help for an individual to be well-socialized in a number of different conventions and therefore able to handle different information systems: this offers more opportunities to question a given convention.⁴²

An important dimension of such entrepreneurship is to be able to bring suspicion upon the already existing conventions which the entrepreneur aims to modify or eliminate. Then, an important success factor is the ability to get to and weaken the second and third conditions of Lewis⁴³, i.e. to instill a growing belief that compliance is less than general and a growing belief that compliance should be less general indeed.

To be effective in this enterprise, the would-be entrepreneur should look for opportunities on both internal and external dynamics of suspicion: The previous section already discussed the interaction between the internal dynamic of suspicion within the information system of a convention and the external competition from other conventions. An effective entrepreneur is someone who can effectively play with this interaction. He/she finds the relevant balance between internal

³⁸ Lahire (2004) elaborated the concept of "repertoire of dispositions" as a correction of Bourdieu's habitus, focusing on the plurality of socialization at the individual level.

³⁹ Gomez (1996)

⁴⁰ This points at the shared properties of entrepreneurship and creativity. However, the concept of creativity, which is very complex, is not directly dealt with in this paper.

⁴¹ Cf. Dieleman in this volume

⁴² This quality bears comparison to that of the "marginal-sécant" in Crozier and Friedberg (1977): someone at the margin of the organization but who retains specific power resources, thanks to his/her access to outside information (or rather in the model of conventions: access to other screens of information).

⁴³ Which are: (2) All adopters anticipate that others will also comply (adopt). (3) Everyone prefers compliance to the convention to be general rather than less than general.

and external suspicion and the appropriate extent, targeting and quality of suspicion he/she will employ in his/her attempt to promote certain changes.

Next to suspicion building, the effective entrepreneur holds the rhetorical qualities that will convey conviction. Especially, he/she is able to provide a coherent discourse and to interact with others (in terms of the material settings of his/her action) in ways that are also coherent with the discourse and the conviction aimed at. When the entrepreneur want to support an already existing convention, he/she will work to increase its coherence, fine-tuning the discourses, the style and contents of conversations, the settings of social interactions and the values they lift, etc.

The artist as Entrepreneur in Conventions

Many of the conventions that the individual usually refers to in the context of his/her own social environment (i.e. in the different fields in which he/she operates), are less coherent when confronted to the behavior of other people with different backgrounds. The interaction becomes all the more difficult when these people are not pushed to interact intensively and for a long time, by an organization to which they belong (in which case common conventions will eventually emerge).

In such situations, the difficulty is increased even more by the individual's relative drive to reduce cognitive dissonance⁴⁴. A socialized individual who is not used to being confronted to dissonant conventions, will be often likely to overlook them. However, some individuals have a relatively higher tolerance to cognitive dissonance and therefore are more open to experiences that may question their regular assumptions (i.e. their current conventions).

That difficulty would present itself extensively in the case of an art project involving an artist and a given social target group, which is not related to the art world. The group will a priori be likely to overlook dissonant experiences from the artistic intervention that would risk bringing suspicion into their current conventions. However, that difficulty may turn into an essential opportunity for the artist to attempt at an *entrepreneurship in conventions*. As argued in the introduction, this may be the case of a number of artists intervening in society and claiming to be agents of social change.

As the model showed, within a given convention, most information is not processed, and only *abnormal* information really manages to catch attention. But the first reaction of many individuals confronted to such *abnormal* information will in all likelihood be one of rebuttal, denial and/or neglect, so as to avoid the unpleasant experience of cognitive dissonance⁴⁵. Therefore, a powerful entrepreneurship in conventions would then be indispensable. As described in the previous subsection, such entrepreneurship means skilfully bringing both conviction around new conventions and introducing elements of suspicion into the existing conventions.

But why would artists be especially good at that game?

How can artists be entrepreneurs in conventions? More specifically: How can an artist successfully throw suspicion upon some of his audience's regular conventions and bring conviction about alternative conventions?

First step:

Such an artist would need strong rhetorical abilities. These 'abilities' have both to do with the socialization of artists in European societies and with the expectations about artists' roles in our societies. Such qualities are not inherent to being an artist at any time, anywhere. They are social constructs that may, at some point in the future, evolve into something else.

Hereunder, I propose five components for rhetorical abilities that I claim to be relevant nowadays, in North-Western societies (i.e. Europe and North-America):

- *Attention catcher*: the artist is able to catch the attention of her interlocutors more effectively than the average social actor (one's attention is caught when one's "mind focuses on the phenomenon"⁴⁶ calling for attention). Especially, the artist as entrepreneur is able to catch "high quality attention": attention that involves "active mental or intense emotional activity" (Klamer 2002).
- *Sacralizer, eye opener and rule cracker*: the artist is able to open a sacred arena around the 'aura' of the word art.⁴⁷ The artist is able to make the invisible visible, or rather to bring in the conversation things (or ways to look at things, perspectives and angles) that formerly were absent from it. And the artist is able to break some rules/habits that most people comply to.

⁴⁴ On 'Cognitive dissonance' cf. Festinger (1957) and also Harmon-Jones and Mills (1999).

⁴⁵ Again, with the relative exception of individuals socialized so as to express a higher than average tolerance for cognitive dissonance...

⁴⁶ Klamer (2002)

⁴⁷ Abbing (2002) describes this property (although himself working against belief in this notion).

- *Itinerant broker*⁴⁸: the artist does not fully belong to most groups (s)he interacts with, and is also able to insist on playing the outsider at times and the insider at other times, but only up to a certain extent (as being a complete outsider will work against conviction).⁴⁹
- *Exaptation facilitator*: Because the artist often leaves open both the meanings, interpretations and the functions of his or her work, this can open up the “purpose” of any project carried out together by teams of artists and non-artists. This allows a process of ‘exaptation’ (see the definition further down) to occur, and also allows the occurrence of what Oleg Koefoed (in this volume) calls an ‘eventuality’.
- *Structurator*: The artist is granted the social role to be ‘creative’ i.e. to restructure reality in a different way. This attributed role can be manipulated by the artist in a process of entrepreneurship in conventions: The artist can portray himself as a (re)structurator, i.e. a ‘creator’ and thereby acquire a legitimacy to propose alternative conceptualizations and practices.⁵⁰

Some of these components (attention catcher, rule-cracker) are necessary requirements for any social actor to have the ability to act as ‘entrepreneur’ within a convention. The last component (itinerant broker) is allowing the artist to act, within the setting of the art project, as a “marginal-sécant”, with one foot among the target group and one foot outside⁵¹. The ability of the artist to act as a “marginal-sécant” is also being reinforced by some of the other components (sacralizer, eye-opener, structurator, exaptation facilitator), which are essential to the power of conviction, in a community, of elements coming from outside (including from art-world conventions)⁵².

Second step:

The artist as entrepreneur in conventions may even engage himself in an intervention project implying interactions and conversations gathering and rallying a wide diversity of people, i.e. different people who are themselves socialized into different conventions. Those people would otherwise probably not interact with each other (they would even avoid repeated contact, here again to prevent cognitive dissonance)⁵³.

Such an artist has rhetorical abilities that help both attract attention from, and interact with, these different people⁵⁴. Thanks to these abilities, the artist may then foster links between those different people, by creating arenas for conversations and other social interactions where these people, stepping out of their own spheres (or fields) of interaction (ruled by their own conventions), may experience an effective⁵⁵ *inter-conventional* interaction⁵⁶.

The networking abilities of the artist give him the possibility to be an *itinerant broker* between very different people: he has the possibility to be ‘creative’ in networking (to establish links that the average social actor would not make). The artist would then be not only an entrepreneur in conventions, but also a social entrepreneur in inter-conventional interaction.

The rhetorical and networking qualities of the artist as entrepreneur in conventions are linked to the idea that art-related social interactions can provide some valuable tools for entrepreneurship in conventions. In what ways can art provide such tools?

After Dieleman (2001), we can look at art as a social process bringing an awareness of social reality “beyond-rationality” (or rather beyond formal types of rationality)⁵⁷. The art group WochenKlausur claimed along a very similar line: “Through certain freedoms that art has been granted, an area is opening for art where the deficiencies of codified politics can be pointed out and their resolutions can be paradigmatically demonstrated. [WochenKlausur points at] art’s opportunity to approach a problem unconventionally, naively and open-mindedly”⁵⁸.

⁴⁸ The term “itinerant broker” is taken from social network analysis: Cf. de Nooy, Mrvar et al. (2005).

⁴⁹ The reader will see in section 4 that the qualitative study on 2 intervention art projects in Rotterdam qualified the ‘outsider’ property. Initially, I ignored the dangers of this component I introduced: being an ‘outsider’ towards a given convention will soon hinder the entrepreneurship in conventions. Insights from the in-depth interviews hopefully lead to this observation that is actually more appropriate within the model of conventions: Rather than simply the ability to be perceived as an “outsider”, what is instrumental is a rhetorical ability to behave as both an insider *and* an outsider... hence the qualifier *relative* outsider or the better technical term ‘itinerant broker’, instead of ‘outsider’ in Kagan (2004).

⁵⁰ The component “structurator” has been added lately to the list, long after the empirical research was carried out. It will therefore not be mentioned *per se* in section 4.

⁵¹ Crozier et Friedberg (1977): The marginal-sécant is someone at the margin of the organization but who retains specific power resources, thanks to his/her access to outside information (or rather in the model of conventions: access to other screens of information).

⁵² Moreover, those five components of rhetorical qualities might also be instrumental (as an achievement) for the artist to legitimize herself as an artist when confronting her own circle of recognition and/or art world. As will be argued in more detail in the third section of this paper, the social researcher should pay special attention to the conventions held by the artist herself and how her conventions relate to her entrepreneurship in conventions towards the targeted audience.

⁵³ This kind of situation would very clearly occur in so-called intercultural interactions (which are the focus of attention in Kagan 2004).

⁵⁴ Moreover, he/she should be able to avoid extensive disbanding of the group.

⁵⁵ By *effective* is meant: minimizing misunderstandings (substantially and sustainably) and moving towards the shared construction of a common social reality. This notion of effectiveness is compatible with both intercultural psychology and with the model of conventions.

⁵⁶ I use here the neologism ‘inter-conventional’ interaction (i.e. the interaction of participants from different conventional backgrounds) instead of ‘intercultural interaction’ (i.e. the interaction of people from different cultures) which is a special case of the former.

⁵⁷ For a short introduction to Weber’s ‘formal’ rationality, see Kalberg (1980).

⁵⁸ Ed. Wolfgang Zinggl (2001)

In the efforts to get attention and instil conviction and/or suspicion, the experience of art as social process by participants can play a role. In such a perspective, some specific experience processes may occur. Dieleman (2002) identified five processes:

- *Enchantment*: providing an immediate experience of a desired state of reality.
- *Detachment*: confronting the participant to persisting routines (that may grow undesirable when looked upon) and ‘unfreezing frozen frames’ (i.e. constructions of reality involving emotional attachments).
- *Empowerment*: changing one’s self-image and perceived capacities to exercise influence and make a change, reducing inhibitions.
- *subversive imagination*: unleashing imaginative powers that both envision the present state of the world as a critical reflection and remind the participant of desires that have been buried by his/her current conventions.
- *healing*: reducing fear and stress induced by the social context.

Among those five processes, two are especially relevant for both introducing suspicion in a convention and pointing at other existing conventions: subversive imagination and detachment. Besides, the three other processes may contribute to building conviction about some new convention promoted by the entrepreneur.

Dieleman’s process of subversive imagination also points at Herbert Marcuse’s understanding of a subversive power of art in its *Aesthetic Dimension*.⁵⁹ Marcuse pointed out that “the need for radical change must be rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves”; As Becker (1994) observed, belief in the regenerative abilities of imagination was fundamental to Marcuse’s understanding of social change. Beyond mere sensibility, Marcuse saw in the aesthetic dimension of art a potential to transcend art’s social determination and sublimate the given reality in its “overwhelming presence” in order to negate the established, ‘objective’ social order. According to the late Marcuse, only by an estranging form can art contradict the status quo and envision alternatives.⁶⁰ Therefore, an experience of the ‘subversive imagination’ of art requires that art retain a relative degree of autonomy from social order.

However, I shall not follow Marcuse’s and Becker’s radical claim that “the political potential of art lies only in its own *aesthetic dimension*. [...] The more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change.”⁶¹ Such a claim fails to understand the systemic complexity of social conventions. A full autonomy of the art world indeed pulls artists into an autistic dynamic of autopoiesis that leads to a plea for irresponsibility and apolitical, asocial practice, as a statement from the painter Georg Baselitz perfectly illustrates: “The artist is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial; his only responsibility consists in an attitude, an attitude to the work he does... There is no communication with any public whatsoever. The artist can ask no questions, and he makes no statement; he offers no information, message or opinion... It is the end-product which counts, in my case, the picture.”⁶² This quote typically illustrates how an artist, who internalized the principles of a fully autonomous art world, thereby alienated himself from society and from ethical, political or social commitments; such an “attitude” fails to instigate any significant form of subversive imagination. The limits and traps of the conventions coming from the art worlds themselves are addressed further down in this article (in section 3), pointing at the challenge of a ‘double-entrepreneurship’ for artists (i.e. the challenge of having to cope both with the conventions of the art worlds and with the conventions of other social worlds).

Through the case study (presented in section 4 of the present article), another dimension of art as social process emerged, that deserves attention: *Art as Exaptation*: If art is not useless (as a Romantic Order of fully autonomous art would have it), art does not always have a priori functions, i.e. functions determined at the outset of the process.⁶³ The functions can come in the process itself. This process can be linked to the concept of ‘exaptation’ in evolutionary psychology: A property that appeared for some reason develops new functions for itself and fulfils unforeseen goals (this is a process of extension of functionality).⁶⁴ In the case of conventions allowing ‘common goods’ to appear, the exaptation of art can be very helpful, because it can indeed bring different people together, allow those different people to agree to interact with each other where there is no clear purpose imposed on them, and subsequently help them shape a common function (common valuation, common utility) out of it.⁶⁵ If art as social process allows (more easily than other forms of, more functional, social activities) exaptation to take place, this can help understanding how common goods can be created and valued by different people who do not know beforehand that such common goods and values can be found through their interaction. It can therefore help

⁵⁹ Marcuse (1978) and Becker in ed. Becker (1994)

⁶⁰ Marcuse (1978): 7

⁶¹ Becker in ed. Becker (1994): 120

⁶² Quoted from Gablik (1984): 119

⁶³ The expression of a Romantic Order is taken from Doorman (2004).

⁶⁴ Cf. Gould (1991) for an introduction to the original definition of exaptation and Cf. van de Braak (2002) for its relevance in an analysis of creativity.

⁶⁵ Cf. Klammer (2004) on the notion of ‘Common Good’.

conceiving why art is a social activity that offers opportunities for entrepreneurship in conventions.

A number of material conditions (contributing to structure the material setting of conventions) are necessary for the artist to have the opportunity to expose a target-group to his/her entrepreneurship in conventions:

The organizational setting of the art project should be coherent enough for the art project itself to become an efficient conventional framework (i.e. a convincing set of beliefs). It should offer enough stability to elaborate a common convention providing a common good.

Chances to effectively perform entrepreneurship in conventions will be much higher if the intervention by the artist takes a participative form:

Participants in an art-project will have the opportunity to experience change in conventions more than mere audiences receiving a product of those changes (and hardly having clues about how to decode the new conventions)⁶⁶.

Further research on issues of material conditions (within the analysis of conventions) would be required. The qualitative empirical research on which this article is based (in section 4) did include an analysis of the influence of the financing modes on the conventions at play in art projects. That analysis revealed a complex interplay between the material conditions set by the social conventions of financiers and the entrepreneurship in conventions of the project managers (i.e. the artists in the cases studied).⁶⁷

But these are not the only difficulties faced by the artist as would-be entrepreneur in conventions...

Section 3: Twice Grippped... Intricacies of Entrepreneurship

If the artist may have some opportunities to perform entrepreneurship in conventions, these capabilities and opportunities can however be undermined by a number of difficulties, biases and traps: the artist is indeed not a creator beyond conventions...

The entrepreneur's dilemma

The dilemma for the artist aiming to bring about social change through direct intervention in society is the following: How can he/she behave as an Entrepreneur in social conventions *and* remain an agent of the conventions of his own art world?

Close attention should be drawn to conventions among the group in which an artist tends to belong. It is no news to the art sociologists that the production of art does not exist in a conventions-free vacuum. The processes taking place within such groups constrain both the thinking and actions of the artists, whether we describe this reality in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's fields, Howard Becker's art worlds, subcultures or smaller "circles of recognition" i.e. specific artistic/cultural groups within an art world or across art worlds.⁶⁸

The production of art (which Becker showed to be a result of collective action, therefore involving organization) needs agreement among participants, about materials used, types of abstractions to convey ideas or trigger sensitive responses, the form in which these abstractions will be organized and the relations between the social actors involved (e.g. 'artists', 'participants', 'audiences'). Thanks to conventions, art works are able to evoke an emotional response in audiences. But because of such conventions, the ability of the artist to behave as an entrepreneur in conventions is relatively restrained, as long as he/she is tied to these conventions of his/her art world. In what sense do the conventions of art worlds impose restraints?

One difficulty, with relationship to the goal of social involvement outside the art world, is the art world's distinctive distance from the general public. Because of the complex conventions of his/her art world, demanding a high level of specific cultural capital, the artist will experience great difficulties to be understood in his/her dealings with outsiders... Therefore, for those participants (who are themselves outsiders relatively to the art world's conventions), the artist is very

⁶⁶ This is to be expected given the process of diffusion of new art conventions for traditional audiences, as described in Becker 1982 (and in Bowness 1989).

⁶⁷ For lack of space and because of the complexity of that specific issue, I will not properly summarize this question of financing modes in the present article... Cf. Kagan (2004) where I used and tested a '3 spheres' model (State, Market and Third-Sphere financing) coming from Klammer and Zuidhof (1998). I would nowadays rather replace such a model with a more complex, multiple spheres model, starting with some insights from Boltanski and Thévenot (1991).

⁶⁸ Kagan and Abbing (2006): 3-4, defined the notion of "circle of recognition" for the study of conventions in art worlds.

much *marginal* but not *sécant* at all... The difficulty of conveying the elaborate own 'language' of a specific art world or circle of recognition, is actually also shared with academics, scientists, and many intellectuals, when confronting other social worlds.

It is the inner circle of the audience (who themselves may have been on the artist's side once) who are the "most understanding and forgiving".⁶⁹ Hence the temptation to deal exclusively with one's own circle of recognition...

Another difficulty is that the artist him- or herself is likely to be trapped in the conventions of the own art world (or at least of his/her circle of recognition). The interdependency of the conventions in an art world makes it difficult to step aside. As Becker (1982) observed, "Conventions place strong constraints on the artist because they do not exist in isolation, but come in complexly interdependent systems, so that one small change often requires many other changes." This constrains the artist in her ability to bring about conventional entrepreneurial changes in her work.

Moreover, the conventions of art worlds typically involve a certain number of founding beliefs with a paradigmatic hold on the artist's values. Although a brief description of these paradigms in the context of this article will necessarily be sketchy and insufficient, it is necessary to give -here and now- an overview of this paradigmatic hold on artistic conventions, in order to understand the context in which the artist's entrepreneurship in conventions unfolds.

These institutionalized beliefs both belong to a 'Romantic Order'⁷⁰ and to a 'Technological System'.⁷¹

A short digression: *The Romantic Order and the Technological System*

The main features of the *Romantic Order*, which were relatively unimportant before (several centuries ago, i.e. before the 18th century), are imagination, holistic thinking, attention to feelings, admiration of 'nature' and a focus on originality. In the arts expression replaces imitation. Moreover, these features produce the dominant belief that (1) artists are specially gifted people who (2) create works of exceptional beauty and depth which (3) express profound human emotions and cultural values. This belief is as present today as it has been in the preceding two centuries. At first sight, several features of the romantic worldview could be seen as interesting elements for the construction of an ethical search process of sustainability. But, to best understand how the art worlds are constrained by these beliefs, they have to be placed in the wider context of the Technological System to which the Romantic Order paradoxically contributes (although the Romantic Order apparently negates the Descartes-Bacon Modern worldview)⁷²:

Originally, *technique* dealt with a certain way to do things, a how-to, a set of procedures. With the division of labour and the multiplication of techniques (and of machines), technique (or technology in English) came to deal no longer with just single operations but with larger sets of operations and with inter-related systems of efficiencies under a logic of formal rationality: In the second half of the twentieth century, a 'Technological System' emerged, both fragmenting society under specialization (i.e. 'differentiation' in sociological terms) and reunifying it under the self-justifying goal of efficiency. The technological environment pushes people to believe that every problem is a technical problem: Every issue, every question should be approachable through a technique. The effective growth of technical problems induces contemporary humans to infer that every problem is technical. This in turn contributes to the locking up of society in the Technological environment. Society is still full of short-circuits, of chaos, of not-yet-technicized areas, of unpredictability, of incoherence and of human relationships. The Technological System is not transforming society into a machine, but it is increasingly installing itself within the existing reality.

The main features of the *Technological System* are its autonomy (as an environment of correlated means), its auto-growth (exponential and mostly beyond control) and its self-evidence i.e. its disconnection from ends (apart from a vague idea of a supposedly inevitable self-realization of the individual).

This context fosters the development of an escapist realm of supposedly autonomous art where a 'Romantic Order' would supposedly manage to defeat the logic of formal rationality. But that second world is harmless as long as it plays within the virtuality of its institutional autonomy, i.e. as long as it remains in its designated sandbox. By design, it is intended to be a spectacle of inefficiency, at the service of otherwise generalized efficiency.

The *Romantic Order in the context of the Technological System* (RO/TS) is a romantic ghetto, an escapist pressure-valve regulating the tensions created by formal rationality's structural hold on modern and hypermodern societies (that does

⁶⁹ Becker (1982)

⁷⁰ Doorman (2004)

⁷¹ Ellul (1977, 1980)

⁷² On the Descartes-Bacon worldview as the cornerstone of Modernity, Cf. Bourq (1997): 5-23. Doorman (2004), in his criticism of the Romantic Order, fails to contextualize it as a paradoxical feature of Modernity and a weak structuring structure vs. the stronger structuring structure of the Technological System (probably because the Romantic Order itself takes distance from Bacon's worldview, Doorman seems to have been blinded by his own crusade).

indeed generate a malaise and a romantic yearning among many contemporaries). It is also an order of denials and heightened hypocrisy, where art and art worlds are supposedly all about the spiritual, the unique, the irrational and the non-marketable, while the majority of non-art worlds are in contrast, supposedly all about commodities, the rational, the calculated, the efficient, the marketable, the economic. This institutionalization of art as other-worldly and the “denial of the economy” in art (as coined by Bourdieu)⁷³ have contributed to a self-alienation of the art worlds.

Even though some art worlds in the 20th century have attempted to break their institutional boundaries, unfortunately, they have often not escaped the paradigmatic realm of the RO/TS, and all that was achieved by many avant-gardes was an extension of the sandbox for art to play in.⁷⁴

One crucial belief in most art worlds states that art is for art’s sake only (i.e. belief in the necessary uselessness of art in terms of serving a social function) so that art works mainly self-referentially, ‘autopoietically’⁷⁵, involving a widespread a priori conventional suspicion on potentially effective social action and even political action. Late Marcuse’s defence of the ‘aesthetic dimension’ (and the above-mentioned quote from Carol Becker) contributed to this belief, with the perverse effects that discourses of autonomy in the arts have brought (as the quote from Baseliitz illustrated).

A similar conclusion is drawn by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) about the fallacy of autonomous art: “As soon as they want to fulfil a function other than that assigned to them by the artistic field, i.e., the function which consists in exercising no social function (“art for art’s sake”), they rediscover the limits of their autonomy”.⁷⁶

Another related belief states that the artist holds some authenticity, which should not be lost in the process of interacting with outsiders and of achieving a social function.

As long as the artist remains unknowingly captive of the romantic ghetto of the art worlds, his/her ability to effectively act as an entrepreneur in conventions will be severely limited.

At one extreme, a given artist will lose recognition and status as an artist.

For example, the French art worlds often use a deeply despiseful way to qualify some artists and projects as “SocioCu” _meaning ‘sociocultural’, art for and with the communities with a supposedly lesser artistic value (or even no value at all). I do not imply myself that people involved in community art, art for the community and the so-called “SocioCu” activities in France, necessarily perform better in terms of conventional entrepreneurship for social change. This is another question, and it may very well be that some other factors (including the conventions of social workers) cripple the artist’s effectiveness as entrepreneur in social conventions and change agent, in the context of these practices. The risk of a loss in terms of ‘subversive imagination’ (in Marcuse’s terms) and of other rhetorical qualities of the artist is also non-negligible.

At the other extreme, the artist would have so much incorporated the conventions of the art world, and would be so careful to maintain and improve his/her recognition as an artist among his/her circle of recognition and/or art world, that his/her conventional entrepreneurial abilities would be severely limited.

Our entrepreneur’s dilemma is now clear: it is about instigating change on two fronts, both inwards and outwards. This means double-entrepreneurship. But to start with, this means finding some working tools proving to be relevant for both fronts.

The working conventions of the entrepreneurial artist

The artist may be able to use, as working conventions, elements allowing both some inward legitimacy in the relevant art world *and* some effectiveness in the outward-oriented entrepreneurship in conventions. The rhetorical qualities described in section 2 can indeed be appealing to the art worlds’ Romantic Order. As a relative outsider (itinerant broker) the artist can claim to retain some autonomy. As a sacralizer, attention-catcher and rule-cracker, he/she can be portrayed as authentic. As an eye-opener, he/she can “make the invisible visible” as Paul Klee notoriously affirmed. As a rule-cracker, exaptation facilitator, structurator and relative outsider, he/she can aim at a rhetoric of social uselessness.

One relatively successful group of Intervention Art in the 1990’s openly advocated using some working conventions as opportunities to work outside the current set of conventions of art worlds but with the legitimacy conferred by the art world of contemporary visual art: the Austrian art group Wochenklausur, which drew itself since its inception (in 1993) into direct interventions in society.

⁷³ Bourdieu (1993)

⁷⁴ Cf. Fraser in ed. Welchman (2006)

⁷⁵ On this self-referentiality (with a discussion of its possible decline), see Schinkel (2004).

⁷⁶ Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992): 110.

Among their projects were “Homelessness”: a mobile clinic that provides healthcare free of charge to more than 700 patients monthly (Vienna Secession, 1993); “Drug Problems”: a shelter created for drug-addicted women who earn their money through prostitution (Shedhalle Zurich, 1994); “Language schools”: in the wake of the Balkan wars, 8 language schools for refugees in Macedonia and Kosovo (Venice Biennale 1999).

This collective saves its artistic status through a limited number of very rigid conventions:

1) First at a practical level: accepting invitations only when they come from recognized art institutions: This convention is explicitly part of a strategy: “Just as traditional artworks, material objects, whether paintings or bottle drying racks, cannot initially be art per se, but rather are awarded this appellation through special sanctioning, perfectly normal actions or socio-political interventions can be given this appellation. Following their presentation within the context of art and after the acceptance of their petition to be recognized as art, these actions mutate and suddenly are art. [...] Powerful institutions like museums, schools and media are decisive for what becomes art”.⁷⁷

2) Then at a conceptual level: keeping faith in the artist’s mission and creative potential for social change _inline with Joseph Beuys’ faith in Social Sculpture and Paul Klee’s invisible made visible. Wochenklausur celebrates an ode to “the psychology of the artist and to the abilities that differentiate him or her from others. [They claim that] artists’ sensibilities lead them to notice where trends are heading before others do, that they have the ability to draw attention to problems that are not seen by others, that they make finer distinctions in certain areas, originate issues that attract attention and the like”.

3) Besides, the group argues that it “points to new ways of acting not dominated by market-orientated mechanisms”. Such defiance towards the villainy of commerce is typical of the dominant Romantic Order in art worlds.

However, because WochenKlausur did reach a high level of awareness of the conventions of the art world of contemporary visual art, these working conventions were considered as a means rather than an end in itself. “Because there are no universally valid norms for art, there can also be no absolute “artistic quality” [...] According to these notions [that are dominant in the art world], art is something of genius. It goes beyond conventional standards and thus cannot be measured by these standards. WochenKlausur’s activist art has little in common with such conceptions of artistic quality [...] Whether art has quality or not is merely a question of whether it conforms to certain predefined criteria.” “In view of the American philosopher Richard Rorty’s claim that concepts are continually being implemented as means of achieving certain purposes, all that remains in the end is the question: What is the word art used for? Who achieves what with it?”

Working conventions are not ultimately conventions of purpose, but instrumental conventions (or *process* conventions). This makes Wochenklausur also fit in a world dominated by the Technological System and its demand for efficiency and formal-rational discourses and practices.

Going further, WochenKlausur recognizes art to be useful for a social purpose. “Why art, then? First, with every successful project that is recognized as art, intervention in existing social circumstances wins increased significance. The word “social” is then used more positively again [...] Second, the mythos “art” is of assistance when one is interested in helping realize an intention [...] Third, the media reports less about the most exciting social work than about the dullest cultural events”.

WochenKlausur’s reflexive awareness on their own art conventions have been necessary to their ability to question some of these conventions and therefore to perform conventional entrepreneurship towards both the art world and targeted audiences. This possible way out of the entrepreneur’s dilemma will now be presented: Double Entrepreneurship.

Double Entrepreneurship

One of the conclusions drawn by the end of section 2 was that, as Becker (1982) argued, conventions form “interdependent systems, so that one small change may require a variety of other changes.” Therefore, making changes to conventions in art worlds is likely to be both difficult and challenging. If we add to this the slowness of the traditional diffusion process for innovations in art (which takes place at first through ‘peers’ and through ‘art worlds’ and ‘serious audience members’) and therefore its digestion and institutionalization into official “Art” reserved to cultural elites (including a few professional revolutionaries), we soon come to the preliminary conclusion that any artist who would want, *here and now*, to set social processes in motion among selected target groups, and not to be trapped in the internal strife of the art world, would have to set him- or herself as far as conventionally possible from the traditional distribution-system of his/her art world and would also have to directly involve the chosen social target group (using so-called “participative” forms of action).

Besides this strategic choice, the artist will have to trigger and to manage a double movement of entrepreneurship, as the

⁷⁷ Ed. Zinggl (2001). The quotes on the following page are from the same source, unless otherwise mentioned. (Most of the text is also available on the group’s website.) A member of Wochenklausur also took part in the ‘sustainability stream’ at the ESA Arts conference in Lueneburg in March 2007, in the papers session dedicated to experiences in intervention art and community art.

only way out of the double-bind of the social context: His/her entrepreneurship in conventions towards the participants in a given project, will have to be combined with a similarly wilfully constructed entrepreneurship in conventions towards his/her art world of origin. A double entrepreneurship means an *internal* entrepreneurship upon the entrepreneur's own conventions combined with an *external* entrepreneurship upon the conventions of outsiders.

The previous paragraphs on the "entrepreneur's dilemma" already made clear why an entrepreneurship touching only a designated target-group, will be likely to be restrained by the conventions of the art-world. In another scenario, an entrepreneurship touching only the art world itself, will not bring much 'social change' about, in the relationships with a social group outside the art world (it would rather develop complacency for the current status of social reality _a very common situation in e.g. much of the contemporary visual art world).

To be aware of the necessity of double entrepreneurship, the artist would need to keep a critical distance to both the art world and other realms of socially constructed reality. In this perspective he/she should have developed a high degree of reflexivity. In this sense, the artist as double entrepreneur in conventions bears the comparison with the reflexive sociologist. Such an artist may indeed be compared to a sociologist, as Schinkel (2004) does... But, as Dieleman (in this volume) explains, the kind of reflexivity that is required here corresponds to 'hermeneutic reflexivity', i.e. a type of reflexivity that many social scientists are actually lacking.

But in this process, the 'double' entrepreneur will also have to avoid becoming completely marginal and not *sécant* anywhere anymore (i.e. becoming unintelligible on either side). His/her double entrepreneurship will necessarily have to be convincing for both targets and it will allow both sides to consider the artist as a relative insider (i.e. 'one of us'). The issue with such double entrepreneurship is its intricacy in terms of relative strategic opportunities: The entrepreneur is compelled to play with double-sworded elements of suspicion and of conviction upon two different target-groups through one overall project. Each element is then indeed double-sworded in two ways: its connotation plays across the two targets, as does its implication (in terms of making new conventions more or less attractive).

As earlier noted, to start with, the artist has to convince an inner circle of early adopters. On the side of the art world, this clearly means that the artist must shape (or seize) one's own circle of recognition. However, if this is necessary, this step will not prevent this circle to be altogether marginalized or expelled from the art world⁷⁸. Nor will it prevent the artist from getting trapped in the working conventions of one's own circle of recognition. The double entrepreneurship is a complex and fragile dynamics, and implies that working conventions be kept from crystallizing completely and that the art project be kept from institutionalising beyond a certain level.⁷⁹

Opportunities for such a peculiar process of double Entrepreneurship in conventions will also not necessarily be present. They will especially depend on the artist's position in the art world and on the degree of relative polyarchy in the polity conventions of the art world⁸⁰. Is the artist already recognised as a marginal-*sécant*? How far can the contestation of conventions go in the art world, and how open can participation in the contestation be? Depending on the polity setting of a specific art world at a specific historical moment, the opportunities for double entrepreneurship in conventions, and the best strategies to achieve such a double entrepreneurship, will differ widely.⁸¹

Section 4: The Would-Be Entrepreneur at Work

The qualitative study of two projects of Intervention Art in Rotterdam allowed me to critically observe a few artists at work, as would-be entrepreneurs in conventions.

Two projects of Intervention Art in Rotterdam

An exploratory study of two cases of Intervention Art was conducted during the spring and early summer of year 2004.⁸²

⁷⁸ A circle of recognition can be situated at the periphery of, or altogether outside an art world.

⁷⁹ On different levels of institutionalization, see in Kagan and Abbing (2006) the definition of the institutionalization stages of the core of an art world (for the specific case of 'polity conventions')...

⁸⁰ Cf. Kagan and Abbing (2006)

⁸¹ Unfortunately, that specific issue is too complex to be treated in the scope of this single article. Cf. Kagan and Abbing (2006) for an exploratory overview of the dimension of polity conventions in art worlds.

⁸² As part of the author's M.A. thesis at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Arjo Klamer: Cf. Kagan (2004).

The chosen projects, which can be qualified as Intervention Art (a now quite well-known denomination among art critics), bear indeed the comparison with the projects of the Austrian art group WochenKlausur already mentioned. These projects are born out of artists related to the conventions of contemporary visual art. In both projects, the artists intervene directly in a specific neighborhood and engage into some kind of interaction with the population. In both projects, the artists argue that they want to intervene in society, with a (diversely strong) intention to bring about some sort of social change.

These 2 projects are:

- **Loket op Zuid**, which took place from September 20 to November 10 2002, in the supermarket Konmar in Feyenoord (South of Rotterdam). The artist were commissioned by two museums (WereldMuseum and Historisch Museum) of Rotterdam (under the program CultuurBereik) to open a booth in the supermarket and promote art and the collections of the museums. The 2 artists (Nicole Driessens and Ivo van der Baar) organized several installations, events and and performances during their 6 weeks stay in the shop. More specifically: The artists created small boxes showing pictures of objects from the collections of the museums and put some products (sugar, cookies, etc.) in those boxes, scattered around the shop. The artists also filmed several people from different ethnic origins cooking rice at home, then showed the films and gave the recipes in the shop. They also took pictures of some shop-keepers and workers in the neighborhood, exhibiting them next to pictures of people performing similar activities in other countries (ethnographic pictures from all over the world in the collections of the WereldMuseum). The artists also took pictures of the personnel, made stamps out of them and stamped them on a map of Rotterdam with the shapes of the countries of origin of the personnel as if it were neighborhoods. There was also a coloring contest for children on the basis of drawings of 'monsters' by another artist. Also, hand-lines of people were looked into and sewed, and a few other guest artists operated in the week-ends with their own art concepts.

- **Creatuin** (in Schievenstraat, North of Rotterdam), started in April 2003 and was implicitly still running in late Spring 2004 when the researcher did the interviews (although the creatuin was officially closed in 2004). This was a project of community garden, managed by its own participants, under the initial guidance of the artist Rini Biemans and his team Creatief Beheer (part of a larger program of art in public space involving the inhabitants of the neighbourhood 'Noord'). All sorts of social activities could be thought of in this garden, but in practice the garden was focused on activities for children.

The goal of this exploratory empirical study was to identify, determine and critically examine the possible entrepreneurship in conventions performed by those artists towards participants in the project. The relevance of the identified entrepreneurship, in terms of intercultural interaction, was explored.⁸³

The artists' entrepreneurship in conventions towards their own art world (and therefore their potential double entrepreneurship) was not specifically conceptualised and explored at the time of the study. However, the insights brought by the qualitative research (and especially by comparing the interviews from the 2 projects) contributed to orientating myself towards the realization that effective entrepreneurship in conventions by the artist implies also an internal entrepreneurship turned towards conventions of the art world and own circle of recognition.

This was a qualitative study, aiming to grasp the conventional entrepreneurship of the artists and the conventions of the art projects, as conceived by the artists and by some actively involved participants in the projects. The institutional context was also integrated in the understanding in terms of conventions.⁸⁴

Among the many caveats of that empirical work, I have to stress that the understanding of the project's conventions and of the artist's entrepreneurship by the least involved participants was left out of this study. The study willingly took an optimistic stance in trying to identify the stronger occurrence of entrepreneurship in conventions, leaving out the quantitative study of the impact of that entrepreneurship (e.g. in terms of numbers of participants affected and of the degree of conventional conviction attained for each of them). Preference was given to the process over the effect-size.

When a significant convention was shaping out, its relative coherence was assessed, looking at all available accounts about the elements of a potential information system (but of course the 'emerging' convention is influenced by the a priori convictions, focus of attention and expectations of the researcher)⁸⁵.

⁸³ The focus of Kagan (2004) was indeed also on "intercultural interaction"... But the analysis of the projects' relevance in terms of intercultural interaction will not be reported in this article.

⁸⁴ The implications of the financing mode and of the values and goals of financiers on the conventions in the art projects were explored. This dimension is not directly reported in the present article. See Kagan (2004).

⁸⁵ I.e. in this study, the author did explicitly look for conventions relating to (1) the issue of intercultural interactions (including theories of intercultural psychology) and (2) conventions relating to a sphere of financing and valuation (one of the 3 spheres of Klammer and Zuidhof (1998): Market, Government, Third Sphere).

To identify the artist's conventional entrepreneurship as well as the conventions instituted through the art project, the following dimensions were explored...

... *With the artists:*

- Values, purpose and legitimizing principles in the project
- How the respondent intends to be convincing
- The expected roles and interactions of participants (and the respondent's own role)
- The limits of what is tolerated in the project
- The financing issue (financer values and influence, scope and role of gift economy, of commercialism and of subsidies) with attention to the rhetoric at play in the discourse; how the respondent intends to be convincing on this issue; how roles and 'the limits of what is tolerated' are influenced by this issue
- The practical material settings of interactions in the project (including the use of technologies and the expected room for participants' initiatives and interpretations)
- Rhetorical and other skills (e.g. networking) which the respondent considers to be instrumental and which are being aimed at

... *With the participants*⁸⁶:

- Characteristics of contacts and interactions with others in the project
- Characteristics of information in the project
- Room for interpretation and initiative (vs. role of the guiding hand of the artist)
- Experience of art as social process
- Rhetorical and other skills (e.g. networking) of the artist
- Conviction about the superior principles of the project, about roles in and limits of the project⁸⁷
- Conviction about the financing rationalization of the project⁸⁸

The research data consisted in qualitative in-depth interviews⁸⁹, with the 2 artists and with 2 reportedly active participants for Loket op Zuid and with the main artist and the most active participant for Creatuin. In a preliminary phase before conducting these interviews, written documentation about the projects was analysed (looking for clues about the rhetoric and working conventions of the projects).

Entrepreneurship at work

What did the study reveal about the artists' entrepreneurship in conventions and about the shaping of conventions through the projects?

I will jump directly to the final results of that empirical work. For an analysis of the artists' intentions and of discrepancies with the experience of participants, see the original work.⁹⁰ Of course, a caveat of the study is that the results in no way assess the *average* experience of all participants in the projects.

Concerning **Loket op Zuid**: The artists were relatively successful in creating a convention of 'delegated public service on behalf of the museums' but rather unsuccessful in creating a convention of 'personal contacts between artists and people'. The two conventions were present in the project, but the second one did not go far enough to be convincing, as the interviewed participants noticed (they even felt somehow lost as to the meaning of the project), while the first convention did convince the two participants (about bringing art to the people outside of the museum, as a public good for everyone). Expectably, the presence of the first convention for one participant introduced incoherence and suspicion on the second convention, so that this participant did not experience gift-giving ('actually' happening) in the project. The most striking observation is that the conventions created were of a superficial nature: whether a public service to supermarket customers or a personalized connection between common people and the artist (and art), the experience was superficial, as the structure of contacts and interactions confirmed: Social interactions were limited (offering no lengthy and/or regular activities to participants, the artists could not expect to have conversations of more than a few minutes with them) and those interactions had an 'egocentric' character, taking place mostly between the artists and passers-by in the supermarket (and not among participants). Concerning the rationalization of the financial setting of the project, public financing of the project

⁸⁶ Specific dimensions dealing with intercultural interaction are not reported in this article. See Kagan (2004).

⁸⁷ For this dimension, questions were tailored to address the conventions emerging from the interviews with the artists.

⁸⁸ Conviction about financing values was also assessed, to identify if there was a project convention corresponding to one of the 3 financing spheres of Klamer and Zuidhof (1998). As said earlier, this dimension is not directly reported in the present article. See Kagan (2004).

⁸⁹ Each interview lasted between 1h30 and 2 hours; transcripts lengths are from 9 to 15 pages (all transcripts, as well as the open questions and codes used for semi-guided questions are available in Kagan 2004). The 6 interviews were conducted in the spring of 2004. The interviews consisted of both open questions and semi-guided questions (based on precise pre-defined codes but allowing the respondent to qualify each answer at length).

⁹⁰ Kagan (2004): 93-162

was appreciated, as coherent with the public service convention of the project, while the gifts-relationships were overshadowed by the public financing of the project (this weakened the convention of 'personal contacts between artists and people'). Concerning the concrete material settings of the project, the space where the artists worked had a design that probably hindered contacts and interaction and reinforced the communitarian ambiance of the supermarket (one of 'roads not crossing' and of 'islands' according to a participant). Located at the back of the supermarket, this booth limited the project to a small space, a situation which contributed to hindering participation.

The rhetorical entrepreneurial qualities of the artists were not clearly strong in the eyes of the participants. They did show some of these qualities, but in a soft and smooth way that, though agreeable and nice, may not have challenged the regular social conventions of participants. They also did not challenge the conventions of contemporary visual arts very far (especially because the material setting was keeping the artist at the center of the game), being probably eager themselves to remain recognized as artists by the art-world.

Their great quality was that of 'normalizers', as they (and the participants too) noticed: putting art at the level of the people, down from its pedestal. This quality was mainly to the benefit of the public service convention and of the recognition and appreciation of 'art' by participant. It constituted also a step aside from the usual conventions of art worlds under the Romantic Order (art should be above everyday life, special, distinctive if not sacred).

Concerning participants' experience of art as social process: The project did provide an experience at the level of enchantment and soft detachment/healing (but only at a superficial level), allowing itself to be recognized as art by the participants. Participants did *not* experience the other dimensions, and overall they did not experience art as a social process to an extent that possibly would foster much social change.

This art project would therefore not break strong social conventions.

Concerning **Creautin**: The artist was especially successful in creating a convention of 'community participation'. His success in creating a convention of 'public service and city-marketing' was seemingly less visible for the participant. The interviewed participant seems even not to be aware of the second convention (especially the artist's notion of city-marketing is not present anywhere in the discourse of the participant).

She [the interviewed participant] claimed the participants had come to see the garden less as a public service from the municipality than as a good of their own. This means that the artist may have managed indeed to keep street-level participants away from the other two facets (government and market)⁹¹ of his discourse on the project, so that the participants would not be disturbed by them. This artist explicitly advocates for a "chameleon" strategy of entrepreneurial conviction, adapting his discourse and behavior in different contexts in order to be perceived as an insider by each party.

At the level of the participant, there was only one, but one coherent convention, which was so strong that the interviewed participant was convinced the project should become entirely community-owned. The conviction about the convention of community participation had taken roots so effectively that the participants reportedly spent time struggling to keep the project going on, although the neighborhood municipality was trying to close it down. Social interactions were frequent in the project, and took place most often in the absence of the artists. The leading artist was playing a role of initiator and conductor in the beginning, and then merely a role of facilitator and partner from a distance. In fact, most interpersonal contacts were then no longer organized by the artist himself, but by participants. Together with this characteristic, the long duration of the project was instrumental to the success of the convention of "community participation".

With its community garden, the project offered both a meeting-point and a substance to the constitution of a common good. The space for the project, beyond its lack of 'enchantment' (being not clearly recognized as 'art' by the participant), was an open space, outdoor in public space (a strip of unused land between buildings, entirely visible and accessed from the street). Such a space did offer a suitable potential for interaction, being an open meeting-place for participants.

Biemans was apparently successful in his attempt to generate communicative skills among participants: According to the interviewed participant, the project greatly improved communication between inhabitants in the street. Concerning the rationalization of the financial setting of the project, the initial public financing of the project was acknowledged, but soon overshadowed by the many gifts pouring in from participants and supporters, so that community financing of the project was seen as most appropriate and legitimate.

Several rhetorical qualities of the artist were strongly experienced by the participant. They were also used in an evolving and strategic way: in a first stage, Biemans used qualities of attention-catcher and played the insider, but then left the project to participants, becoming more a supportive outsider. All along, he used qualities of a sacralizer and a network-builder (itinerant broker), to allow himself to be convincing and to allow the project to extend itself. This project however had difficulties with the local politicians and was officially shut down by force... Outside the scope of this empirical study is the question whether the artist failed as an entrepreneur in conventions towards public authorities, which seems to be the case. (But he did succeed insofar as the project convention convinced participants to vehemently protest in the media and in the municipal council, and even to continue the project in a 'civil disobedience' way.)

Concerning the participant's experience of art as social process, the experience of detachment went very far and was integrated with experiences of subversive imagination and empowerment, with the political issue of the continuation of the

⁹¹ For more on the three-faceted conventional entrepreneurship and project convention of Rini Biemans, see Kagan (2004): 130-154.

project. However, besides this development, the experiences of detachment and healing mainly took place at a practical and down-to-earth level. The experience of art as enchantment was most often absent. The project did bring an experience of art as social process at many levels, with the exception of the level of enchantment (in fact the project was not even clearly recognized as “art” by the interviewed participant) but fostering some social change. This art would therefore break some social conventions, especially the political apathy of some urban inhabitants. We are thus facing here an interesting case, where subversive imagination was present even though the project was not clearly recognized as ‘art’ by all participants...

An overall comment raised by the study is that many such intervention art projects run the risk of conveying entrepreneurship at a very superficial level and therefore not seriously challenging existing conventions. The necessary investment by the artist, for example in terms of duration and/or intensity of social interaction and/or of participant experiences in the project, for such a project to move beyond a superficial level, is such that most artists claiming to be agents of social change will likely be rather superficial entrepreneurs in conventions.

Moreover, this difficulty being combined with the double-bind brought by art world conventions and the challenge of double entrepreneurship, the few projects going beyond the superficial run the risk of remaining confidential if they fail to convince their art world. Take the case of Biemans’ projects (Creatuin and others): This artist managed to receive subsidies from the local government, including some subsidies for “art in public space”. But his activities were far from being recognized and appreciated in any of the Dutch art worlds (at the time of the empirical study, i.e. in 2004). In his discourse, the artist tried to reach a double-entrepreneurship by using a double-language (and attempting at what I would call an “inter-conventional entrepreneurship”). Although the question was beyond the scope of the case study, it seems that Biemans failed to achieve entrepreneurship in conventions towards the art world of contemporary visual art, and therefore failed as a double entrepreneur. As a consequence of that failure, he remained at the periphery of the art world and his work would only have a limited impact. However, that specific conclusion was only valid as of 2004: In the meanwhile, a sociological study on Rini Biemans’ projects, realized by Hans Dieleman for the contemporary art center of Rotterdam, contributed to raising the recognition of this artist in the Rotterdam art scene.⁹² Indeed, all the social agents involved may contribute to the relative success or failure of a specific entrepreneur in conventions...

Conclusion

At the outset of this article, the ambition was to take the artist’s claims seriously and to investigate the artist’s qualities as a potential agent of social change, looking into the interactions taking place in the border zone where the artist steps out of the art world and encounters outer worlds. How were these goals met?

The model of conventions allows understanding individual behavior as rationalized through an interactive mimetic process of conviction-building, and also allows conceptualising the strategies of some individuals upon the screens of information that these conventions constitute. This model allows not only conceiving how freedom only can exist within constraints, but also mapping out and analysing the working of agency within structure.

This understanding is instrumental to an analysis of the activities of artists claiming to be agents for social change. The artist as entrepreneur in conventions both benefits from some advantageous characteristics of art as social process (and of the artist’s role bearing skills propitious to conventional entrepreneurship) and is put up with the conventional barriers of his/her own art world (and/or circle of recognition).

Therefore, if possible, entrepreneurship in conventions by the artist is hindered and narrowed by several webs of conventions, unless a reflexive awareness and a double entrepreneurship is attained. The qualitative study of two projects of Intervention Art in Rotterdam illustrated conventional entrepreneurship at work, pointing at the difficulties and challenges facing artists who are committed to becoming agents for social change.

Working on conventional entrepreneurship and on new conventions, the artist not only has to cope with the conventions of both his/her target social group and of his/her own art world (and/or circle of recognition), but also with the institutional and material settings of the intervention art project.

Together with the conventions of the art world, of the circle of recognition, of the target-group, the working convention of the artist’s project and the characteristics of the artist’s entrepreneurship in conventions, the researcher should also give attention to the **institutional setting** of the project. This institutional setting can be understood in terms of a number of other conventions which are working in the background of the specific conventions examined by the researcher. They are contributing to some dimensions of the art project, working as selective filters. For example, in the study of Loket op Zuid

⁹² The report to the contemporary art center of Rotterdam was published in Dieleman (2006).

and of Creatuin, the influence of the ‘financing’ dimension was investigated. But this was just one institutional dimension, and the exploration needs to be carried on...

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