
Het Nieuwe Instituut

architecture
design
e-culture

Supplement to the Policy Plan “Creativity as a Necessity”
Summary, November 2013

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Introduction

As the successor to three previous national industry institutes – Virtueel Platform; the Netherlands Architecture Institute; and Premsel, the Netherlands Institute for Design and Fashion – Het Nieuwe Instituut is a product and a part of a changing political reality. Government funding for art and culture in the Netherlands has been significantly reduced in the current budget period. Moreover, the first Rutte cabinet tied the legitimacy of “investing” public resources to an economic perspective more strongly than before. This shift influences perceptions of Het Nieuwe Instituut and will colour the way it is ultimately judged. At the same time, the founding of the institute ties in with the broader question of how culture – and by extension the cultural infrastructure – can fulfil its mediatory role in a reality dominated by economics.

Jet Bussemaker, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science, recently asserted that culture played a role that could not be summed up in purely economic terms. She explicitly emphasised the importance of the creative industry and innovation but also, in accordance with her policy letter (“Cultuur beweegt. De betekenis van cultuur in een veranderende samenleving”, Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2013), stated that attention should be paid to the social context within which the innovation process takes place and that culture fulfilled a function in this regard.

Mary-Ann Schreurs, councillor for culture, design, innovation and public space in the city of Eindhoven, spoke in similar terms recently. At the opening of the exhibition *Designing Health* at the Designhuis, she noted the emergence of a society in which culture and economics are no longer considered two disparate entities but as a hybrid unit. The roles of government and market and those of citizen and consumer are also becoming intertwined, she said. “This is a complex time, but it is so much more interesting than the 1990s, because today we are once more able to think about the way in which we wish to organise our society beyond purely economic terms. Which role do we wish to play as citizens?” Governments, cultural institutions, citizens and designers, she said, must “learn to walk” all over again, because the old rules no longer apply and the new ones are only just beginning to be formulated, much less tested.

The culture minister and the councillor of one of the Netherlands’ most innovative regions share a view of culture that is centred on the creative industry and innovation. Interestingly, each also seeks to embed these phenomenon socially, or more specifically culturally. This perspective, in which the importance of innovation is considered within a social context and includes both an economic and a cultural component, has influenced the underlying assumptions with which Het Nieuwe Instituut has developed its policy plan.

I. Preliminary Stage

Although Het Nieuwe Instituut is a medium-sized player in the Dutch cultural infrastructure, it occupies a key position in the government's creative industry policy and in the fields of architecture, design and e-culture. Het Nieuwe Instituut explicitly seeks to operate in a networked context and on a partnership basis, on behalf of diverse groups of involved and interested parties. The following considerations have been relevant.

Context

Owing to a multitude of factors, including economic crisis and a retreating government, the cultural field is in a state of flux. An open attitude and curiosity toward the potential represented by possible partners are therefore necessary preconditions. The Creative Industries Fund NL, the Dutch Creative Council and various advisory "top teams" have been established in accordance with cabinet policy on the creative industry. The respective professional organisations have united to form the Federatie Dutch Creative Industries. Het Nieuwe Instituut sees distinct opportunities in this network, provided that the parties are willing to apply themselves to developing a set of complementary tools. After all, innovation is a basic principle across the sector.

Policy Formulation

Het Nieuwe Instituut's internal policy formulation process included a four-week retreat period. During this time, the entire organisation carefully considered a discussion paper written by the director, with input from external parties. The institute remained open to the public throughout the period. Before visitors' eyes – importantly for the open culture that Het Nieuwe Instituut strives to maintain – three disparate organisations grew into a close-knit community.

Development of the policy was fuelled by hundreds of conversations with parties outside the organisation. The establishment of Het Nieuwe Instituut is seen as an important step, precisely because of the broadly shared realisation that radical developments in the area of digitisation will have as yet unknown effects on the organisation of the economy, the role of governments, the practice of the entire design field, and the position of the user. In addition, the question of the specific qualities of individual disciplines and the legacies of the various industry institutes remain relevant for the respective communities. These have also been taken up in the future plans as intrinsic parts of the policy.

A Flying Start

The preceding period has not only been hallmarked by contemplation, exploration, network expansion and policy development – on the contrary, the legacy of the three industry institutes included a portfolio of 80 ongoing projects, as well as the continuation of archival and heritage duties. We selected the 80 projects on the basis of their potential value for the future agenda, potential working methods, and accompanying audience strategies. This impressive list got the institute off to a flying start.

Stakeholders' Letter

The initial results of the various policy considerations are set out in the so-called stakeholders' letter. This document has been shared with parties including the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment; the Federatie Dutch Creative Industries; the Dutch Creative Council; and the Creative Industries Fund NL. The productive response, in combination with slight shifts in emphasis in the current cabinet's cultural policy, subsequently constituted a reason to more definitively formulate Het Nieuwe Instituut's philosophy, intended working methods and 2014 programme.

2. Vision of Purpose

Some regard Het Nieuwe Instituut's founding as representing a disappointing cultural policy that has exchanged the enlightened, socially minded ambitions of the past for a market ideology. However, the Dutch cultural infrastructure appears to have been built on virtually the same considerations over the years, from formal criteria around aspects such as quality to legitimising concepts such as visitor numbers and public participation. The political tint of successive cabinets seems to matter little. The main difference today is that in previous coalition agreements these considerations have always led to more money being made available for culture. The Rutte I cabinet enjoys the dubious honour of being the first Dutch government since World War II to have actually cut the cultural budget.

Nevertheless, the budget cuts and the emphasis on innovation and the creative industry should not be regarded as deviations from a trend. Rather, they are the temporary results of an ongoing evolution and a deeply rooted conviction that has characterised the 20th century: the fear of the mass and the irrationality of the individual and the associated progress mentality. In other words, Het Nieuwe Instituut should not be viewed solely as the product of austerity measures but also as the inevitable result of an ongoing conflict between the market and the government and between the individual and the collective over how society should be organised.

2.1 Not a Tabula Rasa

At the birth of Het Nieuwe Instituut, a number of conditions were already established. The location, building, museum function and organisation were already in place, as was the sphere of activity, divided into disciplines. Every new hypothesis, every question, every decision must take into consideration the organisation's existing functions and interests. This combination of factors has partially determined Het Nieuwe Instituut's particular character.

The institute's ministerial mandate is sufficiently broad to necessitate stark choices. If Het Nieuwe Instituut is to fulfil its role with authority, it must commit to a multiyear programme-based agenda that transcends the issues of the moment. Het Nieuwe Instituut's individual character, after all, resides in the way in which it manages to integrate its heritage duties with its events- and activities-related tasks and exhibition function. This can be accomplished only on the basis of programmes and meaningful partnerships, which over a period of years will create recognisability and demonstrate the value generated by the institute for those in the relevant professions as well as the general public.

2.2 Founding Principles of Het Nieuwe Instituut

The institute has two important founding principles: 1) the ongoing tension between the collective and the individual and between the government and the market and 2) the problem of the conflict that inevitably accompanies innovation.

Mass v Individual

In the United States in the 20th century, the fear of the mass and of individual irrationality resulted in the disenfranchisement of citizens in favour of consumers. Consumer goods not only constituted a response by society to the citizens' irrationality and the desire for gratification; the accompanying ideology – which was identified as conservative – would supposedly lead to a flourishing economy, industrial advancement, the mass being brought under control and individuals – in the form of consumers – reaching their full potential.

This view of consumers has direct consequences for the idea of democracy and the role of government and intensifies the relationship between politics and economics.

In Europe, the same fear led to and was increased by two world wars, each rooted in the defence of innovation and the associated social order. While World War I is sometimes interpreted as a conflict between industrial modernisation (Germany) and feudalism (Britain), World War II is seen as partly the result of a perverted industrial innovation machine. The war not only resulted in the creation of the European Union but also heightened the importance of the universal representation of European citizens as a fundamental democratic principle.

In short, the notion of the fear of both the individual and the mass and the evolving conflict between two different views of humanity – consumers v citizens – is bound up with ideas the idea of innovation and progress.

Innovation: Not Value-Free

Every product, every technology, every organisational form (e.g., every mode of production, distribution or consumption of goods) is the result of countless considerations, decisions and agreements. It is therefore a construction of differing, largely conflicting interests. Advances do not occur without conflict. This notion deserves a place in the current debate around innovation, which is too often seen as a series of accidents (technological or otherwise) uninfluenced by the surrounding world.

The issue of innovation is closely interwoven with the disciplines of architecture, design and e-culture, and it is seldom untainted by ideological differences, economic interests and geopolitical ambitions. It is therefore the task of Het Nieuwe Instituut to problematise it in terms of its social, political, economic, technological, social and possible ethical implications. Rising above the hot topics of the moment, this organisation is in an ideal position to bring a sense of continuity and transformation to ideas around innovation and highlight its evolving background as well as the radical break with the preceding period.

These two founding principles suggest a wealth of possible subject themes for Het Nieuwe Instituut's programme. In association with the idea of the state, for example, think of the evolving position of the citizen; the role of government; topics such as the welfare state, the two world wars, the organisation of education, sport, health care and food production; the idea of public space; the government's various architecture memoranda; the ecological infrastructure; and so on. And in conjunction with the idea of the market, think of the changing role of the consumer and topics such as lifestyle, domestic interiors,

privacy, genetic technology, fashion, new housing developments, mobility and so on. Though not yet entirely concrete, the contours of the institute's future programme are becoming visible.

2.3 Unique Research Position

Het Nieuwe Instituut derives its special position partly from its possession of an internationally renowned architectural archive. The collection of documents, photographs, models, preliminary sketches and personal notes is impressive, but if the archive is to strengthen its social value and thereby its legitimacy, making it accessible to the general public is a must. This will require research.

Consultation with Het Nieuwe Instituut's heritage department led to the idea of placing the archives at the centre of the institute's operations. Archival research will be linked to the long-term programme tracks the institute intends to follow. In this way, bridges will be built between past, present and future and between the various disciplines. The dissemination and development of knowledge, one of the institute's five official duties, will assume a tangible form.

Working in partnership with knowledge institutes and fellowships, a new Research & Development department will initiate projects based on shared themes. Het Nieuwe Instituut will play a facilitating role with respect to these projects.

Along with academic research, the institute can also facilitate artistic research. The first fellowship was recently set up.

The institute recently entered into a partnership with Delft University of Technology based on an integrated approach to the various disciplines and functions. Together, the two organisations are drawing up a research agenda for the new Jaap Bakema Study Centre, for which the university will provide researchers while Het Nieuwe Instituut makes available its library and archive. Dirk van den Heuvel has been named head of research.

The Jaap Bakema Study Centre, based at Het Nieuwe Instituut, aims to profile itself internationally and hold its own among study centres such as those at ETH Zurich and the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. The study centre is important for the Netherlands' position as an international knowledge leader and also for the positioning of the two organisations, for which talent development and education are primary goals.

3. From Vision to Programme

As a first step toward an integrated way of working, the institute decided to take as its basic organising principle a tripartite division comprising the elements time, space and materiality. These were subsequently converted into three specific programme tracks that will guide the institute's agenda, working method and collaborative models during the current government budget period. The tracks' themes are the calendar year, landscape and interior, and things and materials.

3.1 Calendar Years 2014, 2015 and 2016

If any institute in the Netherlands should problematise the issue of topicality, it is Het Nieuwe Instituut. After all, innovation is by definition linked to topicality and inseparable from the idea of the *zeitgeist*. Beginning in 2014, the current calendar year will serve as a guiding principle for a range of activities linked to a subject associated with that year.

The year 2014 marks the passing of a century since World War I broke out. This anniversary offers a wealth of opportunities for cooperation and exchange at the national and international levels. Given Het Nieuwe Instituut's mandate, this anniversary is first of all occasion for the institute to examine the history of progress over the past century in the Netherlands. In the light of Dutch neutrality policy, Hetty Berens, a curator at Het Nieuwe Instituut, will lead a research study that will ultimately result in an exhibition provisionally titled *Neutraal*.

Also in 2014, the next architectural edition of the Venice Biennale will take place. Het Nieuwe Instituut is responsible for programming the exhibition in the Netherlands pavilion. Director Rem Koolhaas approached Het Nieuwe Instituut with a request for input based on the core theme of a century of modernity. Within this context, the institute has begun a dialogue with the Mondriaan Fund – responsible for the Dutch exhibition at the art edition of the Venice Biennale – concerning a joint show at Het Nieuwe Instituut charting 100 years of Dutch contributions to the oldest biennale.

The calendar year can repeatedly be used to link the idea of innovation to specific global events, relating it to relevant occurrences in the past, present, and possible future. In 2015, the Milan World's Fair will provide a framework for developing activities related to the symbolic role played by world's fairs in propagating innovation. In 2016, the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games will constitute a similar occasion. Thus, new contexts will arise for activities aimed at, e.g., talent development and internationalisation, and links can be forged with the national exhibitions for which Het Nieuwe Instituut bears responsibility. The use of themes will also offer abundant possibilities for connection with a media agenda, supporting communication regarding Het Nieuwe Instituut's programme.

3.2 Landscape and Interior

In recent decades, the concepts of landscape and interior have become nearly all-encompassing, and yet they function as suitable containers for the institute's second programme track, precisely because they provide a spatial context while remaining highly ambiguous in character. Their ambiguity, after all, is not unrelated to the current social reality. Oppositions between inside and outside, private and public, and physical and digital, once clear, have largely disappeared. The concepts of landscape and interior afford Het Nieuwe Instituut the options of operating on the different scales of architecture and design, in a transdisciplinary manner, and from an e-culture perspective.

An important project in the coming years will be a research study on structuralism. This ambitious multiyear study will be based at the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, a joint project of the archive of Het Nieuwe Instituut and the research programme of the architecture department at the Delft University of Technology (with other international knowledge institutes). The term "structuralism" was introduced in the 1970s to refer to the postwar reaction to architectural modernism. Structuralism in the Netherlands and elsewhere, the New Brutalism in Britain, and Metabolism in Japan were the chief movements that criticized modernism while elaborating it further.

Important aspects for Het Nieuwe Instituut include structuralism's relationship to new social and production arrangements stemming from the ambitions of the welfare state and related efforts toward democratisation and the dissemination of knowledge, power and prosperity. Moreover, structuralism has a transdisciplinary element: the term, after all, comes from linguistics and anthropology. How should we understand this cross-pollination, whose traces we recognise in the work of designers such as Total Design and William Graatsma and Jan Slothouber? What is its cause? What is its impact on the legitimacy of prevailing assumptions? And what are its consequences for theory and knowledge in the design field as a whole in the Netherlands and elsewhere?

Themes have been identified for 2014, 2016 and 2018 that offer different perspectives on structuralism's historical role and link it with contemporary developments around entities such as the welfare state. A programme of exhibitions, expert meetings, conferences, educational gatherings and publications will make the subject accessible for a diverse international audience.

Interior

The institute regards the interior, like the landscape, as a hybrid concept and will address it at multiple levels. Topics ranging from general social issues, such as the influence of digital culture on privacy, to more specialised subjects, such as the ideology behind the layout of the private interior, will play a role here.

With the ambition of bringing the subject to a wider audience, the institute will begin its programme with the reopening of the Sonneveld House Museum in November 2013. The interior of this textbook example of Het Nieuwe Bouwen has been enriched with loans and new purchases. In addition, the Sonneveld House Museum will undergo an artistic intervention twice a year. The designer Richard Hutten has been chosen as the first participant.

The interior programme will begin with two exhibitions that will remain on view until mid-2014. The main exhibition, *1:1/Sets for Erwin Olaf*, is devoted to the theatrical sets the photographer builds for use in his work. It looks at Olaf in the manner of a 19th-century architect who pays attention to *Bekleidung* as well as *Raum*.

In the 1:1 series, which will continue in 2015 and 2016, Het Nieuwe Instituut seeks to draw attention to the specific qualities of the interior as the point where architecture, design and e-culture intersect while devoting in-depth consideration to art-historical subjects such as the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and social issues such as the contemporary importance of the interior for architecture and design in times of vacancy.

The topic of privacy and the interior constitutes the main theme of the 2014 edition of the DEAF media festival, jointly organised by Rotterdam's V2 and Het Nieuwe Instituut.

Every two years, a temporary house will be built on the grounds of Het Nieuwe Instituut, each created by a different Dutch designer (not necessarily an architect but perhaps a fashion designer or game developer). These projects will effectively bring together landscape and interior. Since the houses' openings will coincide with the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, each should address the theme of the concurrent edition. The house's specific location, however, should also be taken into consideration. The first house will be designed in 2014 by SeARCH and the architect Bjarne Mastenbroek.

3.3 Things and Materials

The third programme track is Things and Materials; this theme can encompass objects but also diverse other aspects of the material environment. Alongside the renewed interest in craft and the revaluation of the object, the programme will address contemporary crossovers between nature, science and creativity, such as those grounded in genetic technology, like the works included in the recently opened exhibition *Biodesign* (curated by William Myers). In conjunction with this theme, Het Nieuwe Instituut is working on a multiyear research study of the new relationship between biology and design with a range of cultural, business, governmental and scientific parties.

Things and Materials not only embodies an independent area of interest but also connects in terms of theme and content to Landscape and Interior and to projects arising from the focus on particular calendar years. Thus, a layered narrative can be threaded through all Het Nieuwe Instituut's projects, so that none stands in isolation.

The theme of Drones and Honeycombs unites the three programme tracks through an in-depth look at contemporary innovations by the defence complex.

The role played by the military in the invention of the Internet is well known, but what about its current and future contributions to civilian life? The influence of drones on the industrialisation of agriculture is one recent example of how defence systems drive technological change.

The innovative role drones play within the sphere of Things and Materials reveals a direct connection between World War I and the invention of the airplane on the one hand and the influence of the extreme industrialisation of food production on today's landscape on the other.

4. Local, Regional, National and International Levels

In the coming period, the Dutch government will more closely reflect on its role as the chief funder of the social infrastructure. As a supporting body, the institute must give due consideration to the legitimacy of, as well as opportunities for, funding by the national government as well as by Dutch and foreign cities and provinces; private and public foundations; the European Union; and, of course, private parties such as businesses and individuals. This presupposes an entrepreneurial attitude in all Het Nieuwe Instituut's activities.

Het Nieuwe Instituut must operate on a range of levels. On the local scale, we are currently working with a studio that pairs designers and clients to solve problems specific to Rotterdam and is currently at work on the forthcoming Westblaak skate park. At the Dutch and European regional levels, our focus on innovation and government naturally ties in with key public themes, such as health care, which is increasingly being delegated to lower authorities. Nationally, we will perform various functions, some in the area of heritage. For instance, the Nationaal Ontwerp Archief could be developed further into a nationally important platform for making architectural, design and e-culture archives publicly accessible. International profiling is another area of interest.

International

Het Nieuwe Instituut's internationalisation programme cannot be dissociated from previously existing priorities, such as a focus on selected countries, and instruments, such as the DutchDFA programme. The DutchDFA programme has been discontinued, and the ministry's policy has changed. Our policy around internationalisation takes its cues from the minister's culture letter.

Coordination with the Creative Industries Fund NL

The monies earmarked for internationalisation efforts have been deposited with the Creative Industries Fund NL. If added value is to be generated for the field, coordination is needed. It is proposed that the two Dutch national exhibitions in Sao Paulo and Shenzhen, for which Het Nieuwe Instituut bears responsibility, be used as catalysts for the internationalisation strategy. A more independent course can be followed in the case of the national exhibition for the Venice Biennale, which Het Nieuwe Instituut is also coordinating. All these biennales focus exclusively on architecture. Balancing the representation of architecture, design and e-culture could serve as a possible item for inclusion on the international policy agenda in the coming government budget period.

Sao Paolo and Shenzhen Biennales

The Creative Industries Fund NL and Het Nieuwe Instituut share the ambition of developing a multiyear research plan in Brazil and China. Fixed elements will be a basic programme to be developed by the head curator in consultation with Het Nieuwe Instituut; a multiyear study grounded in the specific context of the biennale; and an exchange programme managed by the Creative Industries Fund NL. Continuity will foster network formation and knowledge exchange between the Netherlands on the one hand and China and Brazil on the other.

In Sao Paulo, curators from Crimson Architectural Historians will hold a discussion with local parties on the current economic and moral crisis in architecture. In Shenzhen, big-city issues will guide The Mobile City's curatorship, with contemporary digital technologies playing a key role.

Europe

With support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Creative Industries Fund NL, Het Nieuwe Instituut explicitly includes Europe in its foreign policy. An intensified exchange at the European institutional level is of great importance in enhancing the Dutch creative industry's legitimacy abroad. In Germany, a so-called network ambassador is being appointed to support Het Nieuwe Instituut in setting up projects with German stakeholders, businesses and knowledge institutes.

Work is also being done to expand markets in selected European locations. For example, in 2014, Het Nieuwe Instituut will develop projects linked to strategic European trade fairs, such as the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan.

International Visitors' Programme

The International Visitors' Programme has proven its effectiveness and will therefore continue. In the coming years, Het Nieuwe Instituut will host themed programmes, day events and regular exchange visits. The ambition is to realise these projects with partners in the Netherlands and abroad.

Business Matchmaking

In the fields of architecture, design and e-culture, Het Nieuwe Instituut can act as a business matchmaker between international commissioning parties, knowledge centres and Dutch design professionals. The Netherlands Architecture Institute has successfully done so in the architectural sector in recent years. Matchmaking can also foster collaboration between Dutch and foreign designers and professionals.

Apart from these strategic tools, in the preceding period, the institute has devoted considerable energy to building a strong institutional foundation for itself, leading to a joint European funding application with the Moscow Design Museum and the Design Museum in London. It has also set up an exchange project focusing on the European avant-garde and social, political and technological innovation in the early 1960s with parties in France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Along with formal policy frameworks, less formal types of international cultural dialogue such as these are important for achieving the internationalisation Het Nieuwe Instituut has in mind.

Conclusion

The past months have been hugely exciting for Het Nieuwe Instituut. The merger process, the realisation of 80 projects inherited from the three previous organisations, the development of a supplementary policy and accompanying networks, and operations in a number of Dutch and foreign locations have demonstrated the organisation's flexibility. Het Nieuwe Instituut looks ahead with confidence to a future that simultaneously has its roots in three domains – architecture, design and e-culture – and boasts a transdisciplinary character. Through dialogue with the parties around it, Het Nieuwe Instituut can grow into an indispensable link in the fundamental cultural infrastructure.

Guus Beumer
Rotterdam, 31 October 2013