Beyond science and art: The role of intuition
11-13 October 2022 – Lorentz Center@Snellius

Scientific output

In an progressively complex and technological world based on rational decision-making, human-centered concepts such as intuition are increasingly being acknowledged to play a pivotal role. However, intuition is as such still underexposed in many scientific research areas and the concept is not well understood. We held an interdisciplinary art-science Leiden Lorentz workshop on intuition, in order to exchange scientific and artistic perspectives in this specific area to create a better understanding of the concept, its role and implications in both science & society.

We found that although definitions of intuition varied (e.g. gut feeling, implicit knowledge, survival evolutionary mechanism or an experienced-based moral compass), both academics and artists agreed that the connection to the environment is important to be able to foster intuition, and that it can be trainable. It is furthermore a concept where all participants agreed about the relevance as a possible guidance and decision instrument. Moreover, we identified possible sources of how intuition can be fostered, for example if possible in nature or by introspection.

The participants also agreed that intuition might help to solve challenges in an increasingly complex society. From a biological or experiential perspective, it might be a source of (unconscious) information which can help us to make better decisions for ourselves and the world. However, open questions also arose; to what extent is it unconscious or can it also be conscious; is it prone to biases; and might it even have a dark side?

Next steps in both science and art should focus on questions, such as how to train intuition; e.g. by learning to pay attention to unexpected feelings, while overcoming potential biases and pitfalls. Several elements remained unsolved; e.g. to what extent does culture affect intuition with possible negative consequences? While preparing next steps, we all left with an (renewed) appreciation of the potential of intuition in our daily lives, our work, and humanity, and the necessity to continue to pay attention to the concept of intuition in both science, art and our society in general, expressed by the slogan: Free Intuition!

Organization

We held the 3-day workshop both at Museum de Lakenhal and at the Snellius building. We started with a day at the Lakenhal, where we got the chance for a sneak-preview of the Exhibition Imagine Intuition led by the artists of the exhibition and several interactive talks. Day 2 and 3 were held at Snellius. During the days we combined interactive talks around certain topics with ample room for discussion. We were encouraged to not only focus on reflections about the interactive presentations, but also to express our reflections in a more visual and artistic way. At the end of day 3 we finished with a group discussion regarding the next steps (e.g. preparing publications), followed by the opening of the Imagine Intuition Exhibition at the Lakenhal.

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