

Withered mainstream areas and polarization! (singular thinking 4)

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Remedial educationalist Mia Nijland states in a column that the current time is characterized by rifts in society. Rich and poor, people with and without hope, and, in her field, the healthcare system and children with non-standard care needs. She states “The larger the parents' wish list, the more difficult it becomes to place someone. The more flexible, the easier.” She argues that the primacy lies with the system, not with the care recipients, and that in turn contributes to polarization in society: easy (standard) care in abundance and slimmed-down care for complex care questions, so that the family system (informal care) is left out in the cold. Polarization is often wrongly approached from singular thinking. Why?

In polarization, we fixate on two poles: true and false, news versus fake news, real versus false, or in a social context, rich versus poor, and good versus bad. Singular thinking, because a third factor is overlooked: the area between the two poles, where the polarized elements come from. The gap, divide or rift, is in fact an area. With growth at the poles – polarization – instead of fixating on the poles, one should also look at the intermediate area, the “mainstream” area.

It is also important, with multiple thinking, to switch perspectives. By stating, for example, that the gap between rich and poor has been closed by the Enlightenment – people now live in greater relative prosperity now than in, say, 1823 – a change of perspective quickly makes it clear that the gap has shifted: humanity has attracted wealth at the expense of the ecology, leaving many other species in poverty (on the verge of extinction). Pool 1: rapidly growing humanity (now 8 billion), pool 2: many organisms in need, mainstream area: a planet that adjusts its balance and where the sun still rises and sets.

Let's zoom in on the "rift" in care, about the area between the poles. This mainstream area narrows through standardization. A healthcare provider can refuse a patient who is not flexible enough, as mentioned in the introduction. The system excludes people who cannot be accommodated. This is paradoxical, because care is most needed for “inflexible care recipients”. Standardization (bureaucratization/digitalization) creates its own market: those who fit within the standards can be helped quickly and easily according to proven protocols (almost factory-like efficient).

Profiting most

However, those who do not fit must rely on their own fate or on the help of family or caregiver(s). So pool 1: people with a complex (non-standardizable) care demand, pool 2: inadequate care supply in relation to complex care demand (complex care users are excluded) and, as a mainstream area, a well-functioning market for care and supply, where care is provided with relatively simple protocols. money, status and success is earned.

Two poles and the mainstream area can be found everywhere, for example in education or at work. The "mediocre" can navigate a carefully organized and protocolled educational or professional practice, where much is offered and can be achieved accordingly. In this mainstream area – a market of supply and demand – it is precisely because of standardization that there is little or no room for special people or situations. Due to increasing specialization (actually differentiation, every new direction without closing old ones requires new specialists), the mainstream area narrows, while the poles grow.

Now that so many people have moved to the poles in so many areas, and therefore no longer to the "shrinking" mainstream area, we have the opportunity to build new, more sustainable bridges. Polarization offers the opportunity to bridge the area between the poles, to rebuild the mainstream area. It is precisely when a system is no longer adequately balanced that differentiation is a step towards the next hierarchical integration, towards a new more inclusive mainstream area. To taunt each other from the poles is the worst thing we can do, the best thing is to reach out to each other. Polarization is the first step towards a new ecologically inclusive mainstream area!